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**In Defence of Marxism: Marxist theories of globalisation  
and social injustice and the evolution of post-socialist  
ideology within contemporary movements for global  
social justice.**

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**Doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) in Human Geography**

## **Declaration**

I declare that all the work contained herein this thesis is the candidates own.

Signed:

Jared Wood.

## **Abstract**

The protests against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle in 1999 have been described, along with the development of World and European Social Forums (WSF/ESF), as the beginning of a new Global Movement for Social Justice (GMSJ). This movement has been argued to represent a 'new type of politics' with an unprecedented ideological and organisational character based on new fragmented power relationships that have undermined traditional class and national relationships and consequently have undermined the relevance of classical socialist theory. In place of nation state-based socialist strategies for delivering social justice, the GMSJ has been established on the principles of autonomy and an absence of representative structures of any kind. Often, these movements are described as (transnational) New Social Movements. This thesis challenges these concepts and argues they fall within a post-socialist orthodox approach to social science. It compares socialist concepts relating to power, class, nations and political organisation with post-socialist concepts, and in so doing, argues that post-socialist ideas have gained an orthodox status in a period when Stalinist models of (national) state planning have collapsed and social democratic parties have capitulated to the demands of globalised neo-liberal capitalism. Under such conditions, it has been possible for post-socialist theory to reflect observed failures of socialist movements and the thesis argues that underlying post-socialist theories of power, globalisation and a fragmentation of material power relations are often excessively abstract and unconvincing.

These arguments are developed through the presentation of research into GMSJ activist organisations, part of the movements that affiliated to the London round of the ESF in 2004. In presenting analysis of in-depth interviews with participants and key organizational leaders, the thesis examines how the contemporary GMSJ remains sceptical that class based socialist theory can mobilise contemporary mass movements. However, it also develops a better understanding of how activists in this new global social movement reflect socialist theories relating to power, property relations and class in their conceptualisation of patterns of social injustice. Overall, the research suggests post-socialist theories have failed to provide a programme or strategy for building a mass

movement for social justice. It argues that, contrary to often stated claims about its Marxist foundations, post-socialist ideology has not been able to outline the systemic foundations for another world. However, the research suggests that the central concepts of Marxist theory relating to power, property relations, class and political organisation nevertheless remain relevant to the GMSJ and that democratic socialist planning is the only coherent systemic alternative to capitalism that has been placed before the GMSJ. The thesis will argue that the GMSJ could help to develop an ideological alternative to global capitalism by engaging with a rich history of socialist theory.

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## 1 Introduction

*"The beers at my hotel bar in Rosario were blissfully cold, and the gang from the Workers' Assistance Centre were all getting a little drunk. Zernan Toledo (who personally favours armed revolution— it's just a question of when) pounded the table... Haven't you read Marx?"*

*"It's different now," I countered. "With globalization... (the movement must) build a resistance-both high-tech and grassroots, both focused and fragmented that is as global, and as capable of coordinated action as the multinational corporations it seeks to subvert." (Klein 2001:439-446)*

Naomi Klein's "No Logo" appeared to capture a moment when a new movement took to the streets of Seattle. Movements opposed to the World Trade Organisation summit of 1999 came together to resist global neo-liberal capitalism. Klein describes the movement not as a traditional class struggle organised through formal structures but as a global network of new, grassroots, social movements, coming together and heralding a new epoch in radical struggle (Klein 2001). The movement described by Klein is conceptualised as a new product of globalised social relations and consciously post-Marxist in both ideological and organisational character. It has been variously described as anti-capitalist, alter-capitalist and anti-globalisation while, more recently, the social forums have described their participants in terms of a Global Movement for Social Justice (hereafter referred to as the GMSJ) and that is the description that I use throughout this thesis.

Klein's thesis is motivated by a moment at the start of the twenty-first century but her conceptualisation of a new type of movement for social justice is just one element of an orthodox thesis that has swept through the social sciences over a period of several decades that cover the

end of the twentieth and start of the twenty-first centuries. The thesis asserts that global social relations have shifted in a fundamental sense that undermines traditional, class based movements against global capitalism. Neo-liberal theoreticians have described this process, from the right, as a final victory for liberal market social structures over state based socialist alternatives (Fukuyama 1992) but the ideology of the left has also embraced this orthodox approach. Communism (that is the Stalinist official Communist Parties) embraced Eurocommunism, which conceptualises a new fragmented pattern of social relationships that rendered class struggle redundant and demanded new social networks to change the culture, not economic structure, of global capitalism (Hall & Jacques 1989, Boggs 1980). Social democratic theory too, has followed. Whereas the post-war period of 1945-1970 was marked by a social consensus that provided wage rises, welfare and profitability the epoch of neo-liberalism has forced social democratic governments into counter reforms (Gough 1979). Welfare has been attacked; Services privatised at the behest of capital and real wages restrained, not least through the transfer of production to China and other low wage regions. Social democrats have sought a new, third way, of delivering social justice (which has replaced talk of socialism) (Giddens 1998). Social democracy has relegated social justice behind a commitment to a profitable capitalist economy, which can provide the resources for state welfare. This has led social democrats to capitulate to the demands of neo-liberal capital and embrace the new orthodox approach to social and economic theory (Glyn 2001).

The new orthodoxy has been reflected in every faculty of the social, political and economic sciences. Sociology has shifted from the study of class oppression and relations of production to post-modern concepts of fragmented power relations (Taylor 1997). The political theory of the left seems to have been caught in the slipstream of the Marxism Today thesis of Hall & Jacques (1983, 1989). The ideas of the "Manifesto for New Times" (Hall & Jacques 1989) have been accepted by all but a tiny number of Marxists within the academy. These ideas include the demise of class as social identity or economic entity; the decline of class based political parties; the decline of state sovereignty and ability of the state to respond to fragmented patterns of social injustice and, crucially, the problems of conceptualising a new social and economic foundation for another world.

The slogan of the ESF is “Another World is Possible” but this, more often than not, is an expression of a general sense of wanting to reduce social injustice rather than a call for a fundamentally new form of social structure. So long as the former Soviet Union existed, political science allowed for the possibility of an alternative social system to capitalism but following the collapse of Stalinism political science has come to represent the a study of the science of capitalist politics that offers little encouragement to the student who wishes to challenge the capitalist edifice itself. Similarly, the study of economics has been further restricted in scope and focuses, more and more, on mathematical representations of free market assertions. “The death of economics” has left students mired in econometrics and differential calculus while contemporary social crises of unemployment and poverty are ignored by orthodox neo-liberal theory (Ormerod 1997).

Geography can still point to David Harvey as one prominent academic defender of Marxist theory. Harvey defends the concepts of Marxism in a broad sense but accepts post-socialist revisionism in respect of political organisation, which he centres on the new social movements rather than organised labour (Harvey2003).

New social movement theory rose to prominence in the late twentieth century but is based on concepts contained within the ideas of Eurocommunism regarding political structures. The anti-state and autonomist concepts of Eurocommunism are, in fact, based on the nineteenth century ideas of classical anarchism rather than a new response to power relations in the twenty-first century. The social forums have based themselves on these same concepts, explicitly excluding political parties from participating in the open space (sic) of the forums and forbidding any form of representative democracy (WSF 2008). These anarchistic concepts of social organisation are also reflected in autonomist elements of the popular ideological approaches of the social forums towards state action. The forums are characterised by scepticism towards the ability of state structures to deliver social justice through either socialist planning or social democratic reform and regulation. However, post-socialism has not been able to develop these ideas into any coherent plan of action

that can guide the construction of either a movement for social justice or an alternative model of social organisation.

Contemporary social and economic theory seeks to undermine Marxist concepts relating to power as a function of property relations, class struggle and state alternatives to capitalist markets. It also questions, in the most fundamental sense, the possibility of social democratic states regulating global capitalism and delivering social justice through welfare and social reform. With its emphasis on affecting cultural change through a classless civil society these ideas challenge both Marxist and social democratic forms of socialist theory and I will, therefore, refer to them throughout this thesis as 'post-Socialist'.

Any orthodox approach to theory has its dissenters and post-socialism is no different in this respect. The international labour movement school has argued for a new focus on class relations and the organisations of the trade unions (Moody 2011, 2012, Wills 2002). Many contributions to the discourse around the GMSJ have challenged certain aspects of post socialism while accepting a broad shift towards fragmented ideology and de-centred autonomous movements for social justice. I identify the post-socialist thrust of contemporary theory as an orthodox position in much the same way as Paul Ormerod uses the term orthodox to describe a general shift towards the analysis and policy of neo-liberal capitalism over a similar period (Ormerod 1997).

My thesis will challenge this orthodox approach to social and economic theory. Through discussion with activists in the GMSJ, I will examine whether post-socialist theoretical concepts really help activists to conceptualise an alternative to global capitalist neo-liberal policy. As a participant in the European Social Forum (ESF in Florence (2002), Paris (2003) and London (2004) as well as protests against the G7 in Genoa and against EU policy in Brussels, I find the post-socialist narrative to be unconvincing. The most prominent forces at the mass mobilisations of the GMSJ seemed, to me, to be those of the traditional class based labour movement and with a distinctly national flavour. In Florence this manifested itself in a mass turnout of Communist Refoundation, a split from the rightwards moving Italian Communist party. In Brussels it was the Belgian trade

unions and neighbouring French unions that dominated. This pattern was repeated at the social forums in Paris and London where CGIL and the TUC and its member unions were prominent respectively.

My research seeks to re-evaluate Marxist theory as an explanation of global social injustice and as a foundation for another world. Marx described his ideas as a materialist response to the relations of production in a capitalist society. In my thesis I will argue that post-socialism has failed to show how the material relations of production and consequent class antagonisms of twentieth century capitalism and imperialism have been altered to the point where Marx's theory is no longer valid. I seek to examine Marx's concepts of power, production, class, state and party and consider whether they continue to inform or reflect the ideological character of the GMSJ.

I have conducted a review of key contributions to the literature dealing with concepts including globalisation, social justice, power and social movements. I have then interviewed participants in the GMSJ and discussed these concepts with them. In particular, I am interested in whether the ideas of post-socialism have been able to provide the foundations for 'another world'. My research aims to test a hypothesis that states that Marxist concepts of power, property relations, class and imperialism continue to provide a valuable theoretical foundation for activists fighting against global social injustice.

What started out as a defence of Marxist social, economic and political theory soon took on the role of defending the methodology of Marxist analysis too. The influence of post-modern forms of social analysis has encouraged the most popular methodological approaches including grounded theory and action research to dispense with grand narratives and seek more nuanced theoretical concepts within the particular relationships uncovered by the research data. Yet if this is the way of the world, in the twenty-first century, no-one has told the physicists. The social and political researcher is encouraged to dispense with reductionist grand narratives and focus instead on fragmentation and individual perception yet physics invests billions in particle accelerators as they seek the Higgs Boson and an over-arching explanation for the behaviour of matter.

Methodologies are determined by the requirements of the research question. The post-socialist orthodoxy has no time for new economic systems and no-one made this point with more fanfare than Frances Fukuyama, when he declared the end of history in response to the collapse of the Stalinist bloc. Fukuyama reflected a bourgeois triumphalism and crisis within both Stalinist and social democratic mass workers' organisations. These ideas were also reproduced in the popular media. The Sunday Times produced a special magazine issue, to commemorate twenty years since the fall of the wall, titled: '1989 – The Year that Changed the World'. Within its pages it establishes the collapse of Stalinism as an epoch defining event and in drawing conclusions from this event it popularises the key themes of post socialist ideology:

*“Historians may come to judge 1989 as an epic chapter in the story of mankind...the great evil of communism that had ruled a fifth of humanity began to crumble. It was the dawn of the world wide web, superpower partnership and the dismantling of nuclear arsenals”*

*(Sunday Times 2009).*

Post-socialist approaches to the methodology of generating theory have accepted the idea that a new social system cannot be conceptualised but must develop organically. As a result theory has focused not on grand narratives but on micro-social relations. However, while ostensibly rejecting grand narrative and ideology, post-socialism is every bit as ideological as Marxism or social-democracy. Ruling out class struggles is just as ideologically loaded as advocating them. Banning political parties is no less ideologically driven than forming them. My thesis recognises the overarching ideological premises of Marxist theory but sees these as cognitive responses to the material conditions of capitalism. The Marxist methodology of dialectical materialism builds theory through the struggle of antagonistic class interests that respond to these material conditions and it is this approach that I defend and employ in what follows.

My thesis was conceived at a time when capitalist triumphalism was in full swing. A global economic crisis, the most serious since the thirties, has rained on that parade but the questions of what to do about that banks, the global economy, global economic imbalances and the provision of state



welfare are unanswered. The immediate response of capitalist states has been to abandon free markets for the wealthy and provide state bailouts of historic magnitudes to the banks and big business while proceeding with neo-liberal cuts for the working class. The cultural aspirations of post-socialism have nothing to say about this. Without fundamental structural economic change the global poor and oppressed will become more poor and more oppressed. The character of a post-capitalist society and the construction of a movement to deliver this is, therefore, the question of our time. If my thesis does nothing else I would like it to be able to encourage some thinking about how the Marxist idea of planning production, according to a democratically arrived at plan, may still offer the foundations of that new society.

In the next chapter I will set out my argument that a new type of radical movement is not inherent in the conditions of globalised social relations but represents an evolution of long-standing anti-Marxist radical currents that can be traced back through the Eurocommunist movement (Boggs *ibid*, Hall & Jacques *ibid*) and New Left trends in the twentieth century (Wallerstein 2002). I will argue that contemporary theory also has its ideological roots in revisionist, reformist currents at the start of the twentieth century (Labeledz 1962) and classical anarchist theory that originates from contemporaries of Marx (Bakunin 1973). Each of these historic trends sought to challenge Marx's focus on the independent political role of the working class, the party and the state.

Encompassing elements of post-modern social theory and socialist revisionism, this orthodox position describes a new pattern of post-socialist globalised social relations. Epitomising this approach was the 'End of History' thesis of Frances Fukuyama, who argued that liberal capitalism has established itself as a final form of socio-economic organisation. Fukuyama's capitalist triumphalism was made possible by the collapse of the former Soviet states after 1989, which helped to establish post-socialist theory as an orthodox approach to social theory.

There can be no doubt that the legacy of Stalinism, including the military suppression of democratic movements in Hungary (1956) and Prague (1968) together with its economic and political collapse after 1989, has critically undermined the credibility of socialist planning as an alternative to

capitalism. Given the position of state socialism as the only systemic alternative to capitalism throughout most of the twentieth century the very idea of making systemic change has been undermined. As Roger Burbach put it:

*"The collapse of USSR pushed revolutionary ideology into retreat while reformism is on defensive and incapable of implementing policies that deal with growing polarization of developed and undeveloped societies" Burbach et al 1997:1).*

Conversely, post-socialist theory, focusing on individual perception and personal identity, has grown in popularity.

In chapter two I identify three broad ideological traditions within the GMSJ; Post-socialism, Social democracy and Marxism. I will argue that all three of these traditions face existential challenges at this time. Post-socialism has failed to explain how a post-socialist movement can exercise power while the foundations of 'Another World' amount to little more than a space within which to discuss the question. Social democracy has not been able to explain why global capitalism might be enticed into a new social consensus that denies hard fought neo-liberal freedoms to maximise returns anywhere on earth. Marxism, I will argue, remains the most coherent framework within which to analyse social relations and is the only ideological alternative to capitalism with a coherent systemic alternative. However, few activists in the GMSJ identify with Marxist theory and the legacy of Stalinist totalitarianism in the former Soviet bloc appears, to most, to clash with the profoundly democratic aspirations of the GMSJ.

It is the association of socialist planning with Stalinism that, more than any other single factor, stands between activists in the GMSJ and Marxist theory but it need not. There is a long history of anti-Stalinist Marxist theory, not least the traditions of Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition in Russia. The GMSJ has no relationship with this tradition at present but an engagement between the new generation of activists and the ideology of democratic socialist planning could yet provide a basis for 'Another World'.

In chapter three I develop my defence of the Marxist methodology that has been historically employed by classical Marxists in the course of social enquiry; namely dialectical materialism. Post-socialist thought is located in a broader post-modern methodological tradition that is hugely influential in the construction of social research. Both grounded theory and action research place an emphasis on elevating individual perceptions of research subjects above any systemic narrative based on an examination of material property relations. Just as the Marxism Today thesis perceives fragmented social relations arising from a globally dislocated sense of personal identities, then a post modern methodology of social enquiry assumes that little of interest can be found by investigating how class or other systemic factors might inform a systemic narrative and focuses instead on how fragmented individual identity might be socially reflected.

The dialectical materialist method of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky et al asserts a material basis to social reality. In the context of this research that material reality is a pattern of property relations that generates social injustice through a process of class exploitation. Contrary to misinformed objections, Marxist dialectics does not assert normative truths that transcend individual perceptions but understands these differing perceptions within a social system of class injustice. A CEO of a global corporation is likely to perceive the benefits of global free-markets somewhat differently to an autoworker whose job has just been relocated to China. Both of these individual perceptions can inform the researcher if they are considered as specific reflections of material property relations and economic relationships that may have imposed a rationale to act in a particular way onto these participants in the global economy.

I will argue that dialectical materialism allows the research to avoid the post-modern pitfalls of a sort of ultra-relativism that prevents the research from drawing any conclusions about how the GMSJ might affect material injustice. It also avoids metaphysical absolute truths by locating all knowledge in the context of material social relations at any given time. In short, there is a material reality but the material interests of antagonistic classes will tend to shape the ideas advanced by different interest groups in response to that reality.

Starting out from this methodological position, this thesis explores what material forces participants in the GMSJ conceptualise to be producing social injustice. Whereas grounded theory and action research builds theory out of empirical perceptions, this thesis sets out to evaluate a hypothesis; that Marxist theory continues to offer a more helpful analytical guide to material property relations than post-socialist theory and that Marxist theory is the only radical ideology that has the potential to outline the foundations of another world by radically re-casting class relations. In chapters four, five, six and seven, I test this hypothesis in discussion with respondents who are active in the GMSJ.

In Chapter four, I discuss perceptions of property relations, class and power. There can be little doubt that class consciousness in radical struggles has diminished but this thesis will explore whether this is best understood as a process within which activists in the GMSJ are embracing new post-socialist identities or whether it is better understood as arising from a loss of confidence in class struggle that has not been effectively replaced in contemporary theory. Chapter four will demonstrate that radical movements instinctively seek to reorganise property relations as an essential part of delivering social justice. I will also argue that anarchistic aspirations to abolish power (Holloway 1998) are utopian. I will argue that post-socialist ideology has succeeded in developing a post-modern perception of fragmented subjective power relationships but that the impact of such ideology on the GMSJ is limited. Power is still perceived by most as primarily a function of material property relations.

Chapter five considers the role and potential of the nation state to influence patterns of global social injustice. Transformationalist globalisation theory has developed a post-state thesis in which the velocity and scale of trans-national information and financial flows has subsumed the ability of nation states to shape global social relations (Giddens, Held, Castells et al). Ranged against this view is the sceptical school who believe the scale of globalisation to be exaggerated (Hirst & Thompson 1999). As one might expect, the sceptics generally hold out more hope for the effectiveness of national political action. Transformationalist globalisation theory argues that

traditional state socialist theory (either social democratic or Marxist) has been undermined by the inability of nation states to control trans-national flows. Sceptics, while defending the potential of national action, have also argued for a diminution of the role of the state in order to respond to the more fragmented demands for social justice in 'new times' (Hirst 1997). I discuss these concepts with activists in the GMSJ but I also discuss a Marxist approach that views the state as complicit in neo-liberal globalisation rather than a victim of it. It is clear that many respondents believe that the state maintains a powerful role in the reproduction of social injustice and in protecting global capital from social movements. Crucially I pose the question; if not the state then what? Empirical evidence suggests that mass movements in Latin America have re-orientated towards state administered reforms to deliver social justice. It is not at all clear, either from radical literature or from activists within the GMSJ, what mechanism could recast social relations in a post-socialist movement.

Chapter six discusses the organisational character of the ESF, as an indication of how the GMSJ conducts itself in practice as well as in theory. The chapter considers whether the social forums should begin to take on decision making and representative roles. Post-socialist theory argues that movements must be post-party in character (Benton 1989) and this approach is reflected in the founding principles of the social forums, which have rejected formal structures and deny the right of any individual to represent another or to speak collectively. However, several respondents expressed a view to me, that this 'open' process has gone as far as it can and that the movement can only develop if it goes beyond providing an open space and agrees a plan of action. To those from more anarchistic traditions this is anathema and such a shift would represent a sharp break with some of the central assumptions of the GMSJ to date. The organisational character of the movement is likely, therefore, to provoke a controversial discourse in the period ahead.

Chapter seven draws together the ideological elements of the previous chapters to explore whether respondents have any sense of an alternative socio-economic system beyond a reformed global capitalist market. I compare the conclusions of chapter two with the ideas of the respondents and conclude that the theoretical foundations of post-socialist theory have had little impact on the GMSJ

but the retreat of socialist ideology described by post-socialism is real. However, it is my contention that this results from a loss of confidence in the ability of the working class to overthrow capitalism rather than a positive embrace of a new form of radical politics.

In chapter eight I present my conclusions. Ten years on from Seattle, post-socialist theory is no closer to establishing the foundations of “another world”. The programme of the 2009 European Social Forum (ESF) is full of aspirations but little progress has been made in establishing the foundations of a different kind of society or a movement that can bring about global social justice:

*Our Manifesto*

*Can we oust the bankers from power?*

*Can we get rid of the corrupt politicians in their pay?*

*Can we guarantee everyone a job, a home, a future?*

*Can we establish government by the people, for the people, of the people?*

*Can we abolish all borders and be patriots for our planet?*

*Can we all live sustainably and stop climate chaos?*

*Can we make capitalism history?*

**YES WE CAN!**

*(ESF 2009)*

The slogan of the ESF ironically repeats the refrain of the president of the US imperialist state – ‘Yes we can’. But the ESF has no more spelled out how it can deliver social justice than has Barak Obama (2008). The social forums were supposed to mark an end to ‘old’ politics involving parties and states with the first ever WSF held in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, in recognition of the centrality of Latin America to radical movements for social justice. Yet the genuine mass movements that have developed behind Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia suggest the tide of history may be turning back toward more traditional organisational state and

party forms. Whereas the first WSF (in 2001) was consumed with the romance of Zapatismo (the methodology of the Guerrilla movement in Chiapas, Mexico) and the abolition of power, the Masses of Mexico have since orientated to the distinctly more prosaic state orientated politics of Lopez Obrador's (failed) presidential campaign. Aspirations to abolish power have given way to the exercise of state power in order to nationalise and re-appropriate national resources.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each of the respondents who took the time to speak to me. Without the enthusiasm, openness and candour of these participants within the GMSJ I would not have been able to complete this project. Thanks also to my supervisor at Birkbeck, Dc Andrew Jones and to all the staff of the Geography Department who have helped and encouraged me throughout. I should also record my appreciation to those undergraduate and graduate diploma students who were so encouraging when I delivered a series of lectures and tutorials on anti-globalisation at Birkbeck. Their questions and perceptions helped me to clarify both my analysis and the narrative that runs through this thesis.

Moreover this thesis is inspired by the global proletariat - workers and poor rural labourers who struggle for social justice and against the tyranny of capital. My greatest hope is that this work may contribute, in any way, to the development of a real strategy for the emancipation of oppressed peoples. The thesis is unashamedly Marxist in its approach, an ideological foundation that is almost entirely discounted in contemporary theoretical accounts yet continues to offer the GMSJ an analysis of global social injustice and a programme for action.

If this thesis is a little one-sided in its arguments for rehabilitating Marxist theory then so be it. Heaven knows, there is enough post-socialist material available for balance. The aim of this thesis is to make a case for a sharp turn in the treatment of Marxist theory in contemporary discourse. The evidence presented herein amounts to a compelling case for the veracity, in the twenty-first century, of Marxist theory.

1. The London round of the ESF in 2004 was organised under the slogan: Another World is Possible.

## **2. In Defence of Marxism: Post-Socialist theory fails to explain patterns of social injustice or create the foundations of ‘Another World’.**

*“Another World is Possible” (WSF 2008)*

The development of a global movement for social justice, through the social forums and other media, has been celebrated by many radical academics including Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein, who both conceptualise the movement as something fundamentally new in character (Chomsky 2003a, Klein 2000).

In particular, proponents of the GMSJ tend to point to an unprecedented global consciousness amongst activists, a de-centralised and non-party organisational approach and a non-ideological analysis of global social injustice as positive elements of the new movement. The movement is seen as a new response to social relations in an epoch of globalisation and is reflected in movements such as the Zapatista uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, which has been described as the first twenty-first century movement (Holloway 1998:129).

Both Chomsky and Klein explicitly counter-pose the GMSJ to previous movements based on socialist concepts of class (ibid) and this approach is also prevalent within the social forums.

Whereas the mass workers’ movements of the twentieth century emphasised property relations, class and the role of the state in exercising power in the class interests of workers, the GMSJ is said to orientate to fragmented concepts of social injustice based as much on cultural influence as economic power.

In this chapter, I will argue that such ideas are not a new response to a new globalised pattern of social relations, but are the product of a still evolving political struggle between capital and labour. The labour movement was characterised in the twentieth century by ideologies of Marxism and Social democracy. Both have experienced crises in the late twentieth century as the collapse of



Stalinism in the former Soviet Union has called into question the credibility of socialist planning and the breakdown of the post-war social consensus has undermined the potential for social democratic reforms.

The retreat of socialist ideas has allowed alternative concepts of social injustice and radical struggle to assume greater prominence. These alternatives are not new and in the following sections I will show how they are rooted in the Eurocommunist ideas of Hall & Jacques (1983, 1989) and social theory of Antony Giddens (1976, 1981, 1990, 1998, 2001). Eurocommunism sought to explain the failures of both social democracy and Stalinism not by analysing the mistakes made by mass Communist parties directed from Moscow or mass social democratic parties in power but by dismissing the whole theoretical basis of socialism. Socialism had failed in “actual existing” forms and should be replaced by identity based networks of fragmented radical movements (Hall & Jacques 1983:33).

The defeat of Marxist forces and left reformists within the mass workers parties has been fundamental in influencing the character of the GMSJ today but the foundations of many of the concepts of the GMSJ can also be found further back in the history of resistance to social injustice.

## **2.1 Marxist Ideology Under Attack: Class, Identity, Power & Property Relations**

*“The relations of organised capitalism structured around class, city, religion and party are melting into air” (Urry 1989:102).*

Karl Marx described, in *The Communist Manifesto*, how capitalist social relations had replaced feudal relations in 19th century Europe; “All that is solid melts into air, all which is holy is profaned” (Marx 1968:38). Within the pages of *New Times*, John Urry attacks Marxism in the most comprehensive and fundamental sense, challenging socialist perceptions of power, class and

property relations. Urry mocks Marx, theorising that fundamentally new social relations call for new political ideas as existing social relations are, “melting into air” (ibid).

The political theory of Hall, Jacques, Urry et al (Hall & Jacques 1983, 1989) was presented as a new political manifesto for new times and corresponded with the social theory of Anthony Giddens, who has argued that Marxist concepts of class, power and property relations, either in a revolutionary Marxist or social democratic form, had been rendered obsolete by new patterns of power and inequality (Giddens 1981, 1990, 1998). Goran Therborn puts this attack on Marxist theory into a historical perspective when he argues that the history of the 20th Century was the history of the working class with mass working class parties that carried out revolutions and took power. Therborn continues that both revolutionary and reformist wings of the labour movement endure but have suffered massive setbacks. In the main, workers parties have embraced neo-liberalism. (Therborn2012:11)

These ideas are fundamental to the ideological current that I have called ‘Post-Socialist’ because they seek to undermine Marx’s fundamental ideas and replace them with the politics of fragmented identity (Hall & Jacques 1983:119) and fragmented power relationships transmitted through global cultural flows. This focus on the impact of globalisation has been developed further through the development of transformationalist globalisation theory, spreading the post-socialist influence from political and social theory into Geography faculties (Giddens, Castells, Held).

In this section I will examine the evolution of post-socialist concepts of class, identity, power and property relations and I will argue that while they address some real processes concerned with changes in the nature of technology, post-socialism has not shown how these ideological shifts are reflected in underlying power relationships that, I will argue, continue to be determined by property ownership and continue to manifest themselves, socially, in the form of a class struggle. Albeit one that is, for the moment, not consciously understood by many of those taking part in it.

By tracing the central elements of post-socialism through the conceptual traditions of Eurocommunism, revisionism of the 1960s and early twentieth century and classical anarchism, this

thesis will argue that post-socialist ideology is not a new response to new conditions but a continuation of post-war political and ideological struggles.

### **2.1.1 Class and Identity**

*“The history of all hitherto existing societies is a history of class struggle” (Marx 1968:35)*

In The Communist Manifesto of 1848, Marx asserted that the struggle between those who owned the productive forces, the bourgeoisie, and those who sold their labour, the proletariat, to appropriate the product of human labour was the primary force that shaped social relations. Marx went on to argue that by creating the proletariat, capitalism was creating its own “gravediggers” (Marx 1968:46) He theorised not only that the working class is oppressed as a class but, crucially, that the working class is the only force capable of overthrowing capitalism. Marx was not unaware of a middle class or petit-bourgeoisie of small business owners and professionals but he argued that capitalism would tend to squeeze these classes and force more and more of the middle class into the ranks of the proletariat as a result of a process of monopolisation of capital (Marx 1968:44).

During most of the twentieth century the global labour movement largely adhered to a class analysis whether in the form of Marxism or social democracy. During the post-war years the major capitalist nations struck a social consensus between capital and labour based on Keynesian economic policy. In these circumstances social democratic theory gained in popularity and appeared to offer a path to social justice but after 1968 welfare and wage restraint provoked renewed interest in Marxist ideas (Crompton 1999). However, within this new Marxist trend were revisionist currents that called into question Marx’s class position. Ralph Miliband has observed that many theoretical attempts to modernise the ideology of the left actually amount to the revision of key foundations of socialist theory. Yet in respect to social class, Miliband might be asked to answer the same charge as he questions the primacy of class struggle and composition of the working class (Miliband 1977:22-42).

This position brings Miliband closer to the post-socialism of Giddens, who has argued that processes within classes are of more significance than processes between classes (Taylor 1999). As Taylor points out, empirical work suggests that social mobility between classes has not increased since the early 1970s, since when inequality between classes has grown sharply (ibid). In the latter part of the twentieth century though, the post-class thesis has taken such a hold on contemporary social theory that it seems to be taken as a given that a classical class struggle, of the sort conceived of by Marx, is of interest only as a historical curiosity.

Post-socialism has sought to develop a theoretical basis to the post-class thesis and prominent amongst such contributions has been the spacio/temporal ideas of Giddens, who argues that social relations have been transformed as a result of the impact of information and communication technology. Together with Manuel Castells, Giddens has developed a narrative that describes fragmented identities existing in a geographically de-fixed global society (Giddens 1990, 1998, Castells 1997). Giddens has built on his earlier work, which had posed a new sociological method as a break with Marx's own historical materialist' approach (Giddens 1981). Lest there be any doubt Giddens also spells out what this means in a contribution to *Living on the Edge*, in which he claims that; "Capitalism has buried the working class" (Giddens 2001:22). Giddens' post-class conclusions appear consistent with the retreat of mass class based political movements at the end of the twentieth century. But his attempts to theorise this and show the retreat to be not a cyclical or temporary ebb in the workers' movement but a permanent shift in response to new social relations is flawed. In particular Giddens has not been able to show how time/space distancing actually transmits shifts in class relations or class composition. The more he tries the less clear the mechanisms are. Justin Rosenberg sums up the effect that the spacio/temporal theory of Giddens, Scholte et al has had thus:

*"The contemporary social sciences, it seems, in their aspiration to a spacio-temporal problematic, stand on the very verge of the possibility of coherence. In globalisation theory... they overstep that verge" (Rosenberg 2000:7)*

In place of post-socialist incoherence, materialist Marxist analysis argues that capitalism has applied Information and communication technology (ICT) to re-enforce capitalist property relations on a global scale.

Giddens, Castells et al hang their concepts of time and space on the development of the internet and global financial and cultural flows. However, the origins of their argument, that class identity has dissolved, are found in Eurocommunism's political response to the failure of the 1974-79 Labour government and the rise of Thatcherism (Hall & Jacques *ibid*). In *The Politics of Thatcherism*, Stuart Hall discussed the recomposition of the working class and liquidation of class consciousness into a sense of "us", which he argues is not the product of "false consciousness" but a reflection of shifts in material class relations (Hall 1983:31).

Eurocommunism asserted that de-centralised or "post-Fordist" manufacturing, together with the failures of social democratic government, had dissolved working class consciousness (Hall & Jacques *ibid*, Boggs 1980). Giddens too conceptualises post-class theory as a post-Fordist response but Bakunin, in the late nineteenth century, substituted the 'mass' for Marx's theory of class (Bakunin 1973:253) and criticised Marxism for failing to understand cultural difference and the need for a different programme in each nation that could not be, "standardised by a great common aspiration." (*ibid*: 240).

The social democratic theory of Bernstein, around the turn of the twentieth century, also incorporated a more significant role for perceptions of identity in influencing class relationships. The 'New left' that began to coalesce during the 1960s absorbed these ideas and began to focus on culture rather than property relations as a key influence on social injustice. The parallel development of dependency theory, pioneered by Immanuel Wallerstein, Andre Gunder Frank and Samir Amin spoke less about class oppression and more about a geographical core exploiting the periphery (Brewer 1990). Even within the revolutionary socialist movement the Cuban revolution in 1958 led some prominent figures to focus on guerrilla struggles in the less developed countries,

especially in Latin America, rather than the potential for building classical proletarian revolutionary parties (Mandel 1964, Lovell 1995).

Post-socialist concepts were therefore developing throughout the various fields of social science but it was the collapse of the former Soviet bloc after 1989 that allowed the proponents of post-socialism to step up their influence in a qualitative sense and establish a post-socialist orthodox approach to political, social and globalisation theory. After 1989 official Communist parties dissolved into looser 'left' formations and mass social democratic parties capitulated to the demands of neo-liberal capitalism, a process exemplified by the morphing of the Labour Party into 'New Labour' in Britain.

This has been reflected in literature that addresses the GMSJ. Naomi Klein addresses a new constituency in place of the blue-collar workers of the USA, specifically; "the next generation of troublemakers and shit-disturbers" on the campuses (Klein 2000: xix). Even some 'orthodox' Marxists, including Alex Callinicos, have argued that new radical movements are once again forming a "new left" (Callinicos 2003:388). Developing the post-class thesis, Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri have argued imperialist capitalist relations have been replaced on a global scale by a global classless multitude (Hardt & Negri 2000:313-414).

Yet for all the popularity of post-class theory it is the very process of globalisation that provides one of the most compelling counter arguments. In *Live Working or Die Fighting*, Paul Mason argues that the political radicalisation of the European industrial working class of the early twentieth century is now being repeated in the course of rapid industrialisation in China. Mason comments that although; "Objectively the global working class still exists. Subjectively, in the minds of the people on the factory floor, things are more complicated" (Mason 2008: xiv).

In spite of the post-socialist turn some important contributions to the discourse around the transnational labour movement have injected class consciousness back into the debate about globalisation (Moody 2011, 2012, Wills 2002, Waterman 2001, Herod 2009). Moody states matters particularly clearly when he discusses the social movement against state budget cuts in Wisconsin:

*“This is about power, class power, not budgets” (Moody201:15)*

Jane Wills also welcomes a call to ‘go back to class’ although she tempers this by citing Fraser’s view that:

*‘Critical theorists must rebut the claim that we must make an either/or choice between the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition. We should aim instead to identify the emancipatory dimensions of both problematics and to integrate them into a single, comprehensive framework’ (Wills 2002:95).*

Overall, there can be little doubt that class consciousness has been set back through defeats suffered by the labour movement and through the advance of post-socialist ideology and this is acknowledged by even the most tenacious proponents of class action, such as the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) to which the Socialist Party (England/Wales) is affiliated: “One of biggest weaknesses of the movement (in Venezuela) is the absence of a conscious, organised, independent movement of the working class and poor (CWI 2008a).” In the remaining sections of this chapter I will argue that the key theoretical concepts that Marx built his class analysis on are still valid in the globalised twenty-first century. Post-class theory deals in subjective perception and identity but does not establish how material relationships have been transformed to such an extent as to invalidate social theory constructed in an epoch of capitalist property relations. The class theory of Marx cannot be simply regurgitated for a twenty-first century constituency or young activists and poor and oppressed global working people. However, the method of building unity amongst the great majority of humanity, around their common position as creators of social value who must sell their labour to owners of private capital remains valid and more convincing than spacio/temporal concepts of identity. The workers of the World must rediscover their capacity to unite in the absence of any other force which has the potential to wrest power from a small global elite.

## **2.1.2 Power and Property**

*“The struggle for power is central to the world we reject” (Holloway 1998:4).*

John Holloway's influential study of the Zapatista movement describes how the former Marxist guerrillas who have formed the leadership of the struggle in Chiapas, Mexico, have abandoned revolutionary socialist strategies designed to seize power in the name of the poor and oppressed. In place of Marxist ideology subcomandante Marcos and the Zapatista guerrillas have adopted a non-ideological position of liquidating all power relationships. Holloway describes the Zapatista uprising as, “the first twenty-first century revolution” (ibid) but I have argued, above, that the post-socialist concepts that inform Holloway are not a product of new 21st century thinking but build on a long tradition of revisionist thinking. This revisionism is rooted in idealist concepts of power that focuses on power as an ideological construct rather than conceptualising power as a material force originating primarily from capitalist property relations. Holloway explains power as a socially fragmented pattern of injustices, in line with post-socialist thought. Flowing from this approach to power he writes approvingly about the Zapatista's rejection of a centralised party in favour of autonomous self organisation. In the following sections I will argue that post-socialist concepts of power fail to correspond to real material forces associated with globalisation while post-party ideas that aspire to abolish power cannot do so without some form of democratic structure in the form of party and state.

Other radical accounts of global social injustice have started out from a similar position to that of Holloway. Celia Dinerstein has traced the decline of traditional class struggle and argues that the relations of property, central to the class struggle, can no longer be seen as the driver of injustice:

*“In the 60s...Despite the continued significance of the labour movement in the contentious politics of the time, labour society was in a crisis (Offe, 1985) since dimensions of life other than ‘work’ were now essential to identity formation and political*



*mobilization. This, albeit contested, claim displaced the centrality of the capital–labour relationship in shaping social conflict” (Dinerstein 2012:588)*

Dinerstein, like Holloway, argues that the Zapatista uprising has demonstrated a new praxis for struggles for social justice based on cultural concepts of dignity rather than economic demands:

*The post-development perspective proposes that human dignity cannot be achieved by improving the management and distribution of wealth, but rather by articulating alternatives to development in response to the crisis of modernity/civilization (Dinerstein 2012:589)*

Idealist, socialistic perceptions of power can be traced back to Saint-Simon and the utopian socialists of the eighteenth century (Engels 1980). Marx and Engels argued that the historical accomplishment of scientific socialism was to unite socialistic aspirations with a materialist philosophical understanding of how to overcome the power of the ruling class (Engels *ibid*). Today, post-socialist theory is attempting to return radical ideology to the naïve idealism of Saint-Simon et al.

The spacio/temporal globalisation theory of Giddens et al rests on this idealist approach to social relations and identifies developments in ICT that have increased the scope and scale of cultural flows with fundamental consequences for perception and thus, social theory: “Globalization is not only, or even primarily, about economic interdependence but about the transformation of time and space in our lives” (Giddens 1998:31). Like Giddens, Manuel Castells identifies ICT as the primary driving force behind the new epoch of globalised social relationships:

*“Power is no longer concentrated in institutions (the state), organisations (capitalist firms) or symbolic controllers (the media or church)... The site of power is in people’s minds” (Emmanuel Castells 2004:359).*

Giddens is also explicit that the spacio/temporal impact on perception (what he calls time/space distancing) has undermined Marxist theory relating to power (Giddens 1981: 90-108). Idealist

concepts in *The Power of Identity* (Castells *ibid*) and the time/space distancing thesis (Giddens *ibid*) have informed globalisation theory yet it remains very difficult to pin down exactly what processes they are identifying. Castells suggests that ICT has fundamentally altered the way in which capital exercises power by individualising the process of work with the effect that class consciousness has not been simply undermined but the exercise of power is no longer a product of class society at all (Castells 2004).

During most of the twenty-first century idealist conceptions of power struggled to assert themselves as both Communist and mass social democratic parties sought to exercise economic power through the structure of the state. However, the idealist quest for 'what ought to be' (Gneus 1965:41) is central to the reformist revisionism of Bernstein and is also fundamental to the eighteenth century thinking of Emmanuel Kant (Labeledz 1965). These antagonistic approaches to theorising power have been identified by Steve Taylor. Taylor describes how C. Wright Mills developed the Marxist thesis that perceives power as the control and command of others by a small elite, who exercise power through their ownership and control of industry, government and the military while Max Weber developed an alternative social democratic thesis in which he was concerned with the right to act rather than the ability to act derived from property ownership (Taylor 1999). It seemed, during the years of post-war social consensus, that the labour movement could exercise a degree of power in negotiating with capital on key social and economic policy decisions. However, faced with a neo-liberal assault on post-war reforms, after 1968, it was necessary to explain why the labour movement had become less successful at mitigating the power and injustice inherent in capitalism. The *Marxism Today* thesis did this by taking Foucault's theory of fragmentation of power relationships to its logical organisational conclusion: "If power is everywhere then the political agenda is radically altered. It makes no sense to talk in any simple way of the priorities or the main thing" (Brunt 1989:157).

In contrast, Justin Rosenberg has argued that the theory of time/space distancing and associated globalisation theory (Giddens, Held, Castells et al) mistakes the social application of ICT for the

properties of the technology itself. Rosenberg, criticising Giddens et al from a Marxist perspective, argues that ICT facilitates an intensification of capitalist social relations rather than reshaping them (Rosenberg 2000). Post-socialism conceptualises technology as entirely independent of social systems and therefore fails to understand the profound influence of prevailing social systems. Ray Kiely, on the other hand, argues that globalisation can only be understood as a process driven by neo-liberal capitalism and not by the technical properties of ICT (Kiely 2005). Kiely also questions whether developments in ICT in the late twentieth century are really as revolutionary as the development of the telegraph in the early part of the same century, which brought the ability to operate financial markets and communicate across the Atlantic for the very first time.

Ultimately, the exploitation of the different facets of globalisation by capitalism is driving social relations but is a process originating in political economy. William Robinson refers to this when he writes that:

*“Globalisation is the underlying dynamic that drives social, political, economic, cultural and ideological processes around the world in the twenty-first century” (Robinson 2008:Preface (xi)).*

But that

*“The new transnational order has its origins in the world economic crisis of the 1970s, which gave capital the impetus and the means to initiate a major restructuring of the system through globalisation over the next two decades” Robinson 2008:Preface(x)).*

The thesis I am presenting argues that it is not a fundamental change in the character of capitalist property relations or an abstract spacio-temporal process that has provoked a new perspective on the concept of power but a shift in the political balance of class forces and it is this reality that provoked the post-socialist concept of ‘New Times’. The collapse of Stalinism and capitulation of social democracy has encouraged disillusionment with Marxist theory that has created a vacuum into which reactionary idealist theory has flowed. This disillusionment has impacted on many

activists from a Marxist tradition and is exemplified in a one-sided integration of Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony into the ideology of the New Left and radical post-socialist theory.

Gramsci is acknowledged as a key influence by several key post-socialist theoreticians including Hall & Jacques (Hall & Jacques 1989), Hardt & Negri (2000) and Noam Chomsky (2004). Gramsci's contention that the capitalist class is able to exert power over workers by incorporating them into a common bourgeois ideology (Gramsci 1971) informs the Eurocommunist current (Boggs 1980) and latterly to the post-imperialist thesis of Hardt & Negri (Hardt & Negri 2000). Gramsci was an original and valuable Marxist thinker and his theory of hegemony has assisted those who came later to understand the role of ideology in the class struggle. This is not, in itself, a departure from classical Marxism. Lenin, in particular, paid great attention to the variable consciousness of the proletariat at different moments in the period before the Russian revolution (Lenin 1977b:112). Marxist historian George Novak has also written extensively on the interaction of material conditions (objective factors) and consciousness and leadership (subjective factors), which can be decisive in the making of history (Novak 1972).

However, in the hands of contemporary theorists hegemony has become a profoundly pessimistic thesis through which post-socialists have drawn the conclusion that the mass has come to accept capitalism as the natural order of things. Of course, Gramsci's prison notebooks were written with the author held in the inhuman conditions of a fascist prison cell, a point acknowledged by Hall & Jacques (Hall & Jacques 1989:125) so his theory inevitably reflects the crushing physical defeat suffered by the working class in Italy, Spain and Germany in that period. Post-socialism is less inclined to adopt Gramsci's earlier revolutionary position which put him at the head of the movement of workers' factory occupations and led him to lead a split from the reformist Socialist Party and create Italy's Communist party (Mason 2008).

But the defeatism of post-socialist theory does not correspond with a fundamentally new pattern of power relationships in a new epoch of globalisation. There is no convincing evidence that the power to determine the character of employment, production, distribution and life opportunities originates

outside of the process of economic production in human society. The historical materialist perception of power and social class, outlined by Marx, remains a more useful model than the alternatives on offer from post-socialist theory. Ultimately the observations of Giddens, Castells et al, who perceive space and time to have changed the way that power is generated and transmitted, lead us backwards to the idealism of a pre-Marxist epoch. That is to a theoretical position that perceives the generation of abstract ideas and identity as determining material social relationships. Such Idealism sits at the heart of the post-socialist thesis and focuses inquiry not on social systems or class relations but on the perception of the individual (Taylor 1999). In so doing, the post-socialist thesis on power disarms the GMSJ and does nothing to help those who seek social justice to understand what is necessary if another world is to be created.

## **2.2 Nation and State**

*“The research set out to investigate the extent to which regionalisation and globalisation are transforming the nature of the world order and the position of national sovereignty and autonomy within it” (Held et al 1999:ixi).*

In this section I will discuss post-socialist theoretical concepts relating to nation and state. The concept of globalisation and consequent loss of national sovereignty is the starting point for the transformationalist globalisation thesis of David Held, who develops some of the spacio/temporal ideas of Anthony Giddens (ibid) and Manuel Castells (ibid). I will argue that nation states have retained greater sovereign powers than is generally conceptualised within globalisation theory. However, the outcomes of the application of the power of nations are very different in the current period to the outcomes observed in the period of social democratic consensus during the post-second world war economic upswing. I will apply a Marxist theory of the state, which understands the state as an agent of capital. Global capital has abandoned the idea of a social consensus and applied neo-liberal social and economic policies. Nation states have been a crucial mechanism for the transmission of these policies that shift economic output from wages to profits and to privatise

state enterprises. Globalisation theory understands this as an inevitable consequence of the compression of space and time whereas I will argue that it is a result of the capitulation to capital of Stalinism and social democracy.

Later in this chapter I will discuss radical post-state concepts that combine the classical anarchist ideas of Bakunin (Bakunin 1973) with New Left ideology (Wallerstein 2002). The post-state position emanates from a perception that the state cannot respond to fragmented patterns of social injustice in contemporary society. I will argue that post-socialist critiques often focus on the role of civil society, in contrast to state action, but it is not clear how civil society might deliver social justice in 'another world', without some form of state structure.

Theory based on the erosion of the nation state has inevitably impacted on Marxist theories of imperialism, which is the focus of the final section of this chapter. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri have made a striking claim that a pattern of rival imperialist nations has given way to a unitary global empire (Hardt & Negri 2000). But post-imperialist ideology has been resisted by Marxist thinkers including David Harvey (2003), who continues to defend a Marxist theory of imperialism, at least to a point.

Throughout this chapter, I will argue that post-socialist and post-imperialist theory does not correspond to new globalised patterns of social relations but reflects the classical anarchist ideas of Bakunin et al and the ultra-imperialism of Karl Kautsky, who polemicised against Lenin's Marxist concept of imperialism around the turn of the twentieth century (Kautsky 1983). I will argue that contemporary geographical theories of global social injustice are mistakenly focusing on globalisation theory, which deals in abstract concepts relating to space and time rather than material social relations. The breakdown of a post-war social consensus in the economically advanced capitalist regions has shattered social-democratic illusions of the state as an arbiter between capital and labour (Weber). The imperialist state in the neo-liberal conditions of the late twentieth century has sought to promote the profitability of capital at labour's expense and has

imposed a geographical pattern of class inequality as capital sought to exploit cheap labour, wherever it may be.

I will conclude this chapter and develop my argument that in the early twenty-first century the fundamental power relations described in Marxist theories of the state and the Leninist concept of imperialism remain a more useful explanation of global social injustice than post-socialist concepts of space, time and fragmented patterns of injustice.

### **2.2.1 Time, Space and the Nation**

*“Watching CNN or Friends or the World Cup on TV in a village, shanty town or global city does not necessarily mean that all viewers share the same experience let alone planetary consciousness, whatever that is” (Sklair 1999:342).*

Geographical concepts of globalisation have identified the demise of national state sovereignty as a key element of the globalisation epoch (Held et al *ibid*). Similarly, in the field of international relations, John Baylis and Steve Smith describe a process whereby the study of international relations is being superseded by the study of interconnected social relationships across national borders rather than relationships between nation states (Baylis and Smith 1997). This process has been described, by Jan Aart Scholte, as the end of the Westphalian state, in the sense that the sovereign rights of states, established under the treaty of Westphalia in 1648, have been fundamentally superseded by a new pattern of social relations that allows sub-state institutions to interrelate on a global basis and therefore outgrow national governance (Scholte 1997). Held's transformationalist globalisation theory takes observations of rapid flows of culture and capital and asserts a new theoretical foundation for global society. As such, transformationalism shares both this characteristic and the underlying theoretical concepts of Anthony Giddens, who has developed a thesis on space and time and its impact on social relations (Giddens 1981, 1990, 1998). Giddens has been criticised for failing to move beyond a very abstract sense of how the process of “time-

space distancing" (ibid) actually transmits itself to influence material social relations (Rosenberg 2000: 87-154). Giddens' ideas reflect empirical observations of intensified flows of culture and finance around the globe but it is not at all clear how these flows have fundamentally re-cast the underlying sources of power in capitalist society. One of Giddens' collaborators, Ulrich Beck, has attempted to make the idea of time-space distancing real. But in doing so has to perform a great logical leap over the gaps in the theory itself. Beck asks, rhetorically, what will become of him;

*"If my own life takes place in common or general space: for example in airports, hotels and restaurants, which are everywhere more or less the same and therefore placeless, and which make the question 'who am I?' ultimately unanswerable" (Beck 2000: 76).*

Using the method of Giddens, Beck hints at a real observed similarity between different airport facilities but then, somehow, transports himself through space and time to the conclusion that he has no identity.

Justin Rosenberg has pointed to the unproven assertions and logical summersaults inherent in globalisation theory both generally and in the specific ideas of Giddens. Rosenberg argues that Giddens has mistakenly elevated the technical properties of ITC to a status that shapes their social application irrespective of the prevailing social system, which is capitalism. Defending Marx's own idea that technology is exploited to re-enforce power relations, specifically that ICT is utilised by global capital to maximise profits and cut wage costs, Rosenberg states that:

"The major difference between Marx's account and that of Giddens is therefore not that Marx is less attentive to the transformations of time and space involved. It is rather that instead of attributing them to the technical properties of a thing, he has sought to show in what way they arise as emergent properties of a particular form of social life" (Rosenberg 2000:107). In the later chapters of this thesis I will discuss, with activists within the GMSJ, the extent to which Giddens' concept of time-space distancing is accepted. Irrespective though, of whether the GMSJ is guided by Giddens ideas he has provided a theoretical justification for the



ideas of post-socialism, reflected in euro-communism and the capitulation of social democracy since the 1980s. Giddens has written of a single planetary consciousness arising out of the loss of geographical fixity of culture and informational flows. This has been developed by several radical theorists including John Holloway, who offers the opinion that the Zapatista uprising, taking place in a remote part of the Lacandon Jungle in Mexico, is not just interplanetary but “truly intergalactic” in its ideological resonance (Holloway 1998: ix). Prominent contributors to the Global Movement for Social Justice have also been attracted to the sense of a global consciousness including George Monbiot, who calls for the movement to construct a global parliament (Monbiot 2000) while Naomi Klein has argued that the ability to communicate on a global scale, through the internet, is fundamental to the rise of a new global movement (Klein 2000). Post-socialist theory conceptualises the state as redundant. Unable to exercise power a new way of influencing global social relations must be sought.

*The state is now too fragmented with power in multiple sites rendering revolution (War of Manoeuvre) impossible. Therefore what is required is a War of position, which is a longer-term and de-centred movement for social justice (Robson 2004:174/5)*

It is misleading though, to describe the concept of an integrated global pattern of economic and cultural relations as unique to the late twentieth century. Twentieth century Marxist theories of imperialism have described similar patterns in the early part of that century (Brewer 1990) while the rhetorical aspirations of interplanetary consciousness can be found in the imagination of Victorian colonialism, as revealed by Cecil Rhodes:

*"The world is nearly all parcelled out and what there is left of it is being divided up, conquered and colonized. To think of these stars that you see overhead at night, these vast worlds which we can never reach. I would annexe the planets if I could" (Leo Huberman 1968:244).*

In contrast to the trend of contemporary theory, Sklair (top) seeks to balance the position of globalisation theory and others, including Jane Wills have also urged caution in acclaiming a new global movement:

*The extent to which it [Seattle] becomes cemented in history as a symbolic turning point depends very much on whether the political momentum of Seattle is sustained and that in turn will depend on organization. The strength of the Seattle protest – its internationalism, resoluteness, and breadth – also harbours its central weakness in so far as the convergence of such an eclectic political grouping is not dependable without a sharpened political focus and enhanced organizational power (Wills 2002:95)*

Wills suggests that the GMSJ is yet to match the level of international integration attained by the labour movement and she argues that more recent gatherings of the social forums call into question the longevity of the new movement's global scope.

Globalisation theory has also been challenged by the sceptical thesis of Paul Hirst and Graeme Thompson, who dispute the idea that the economic character of globalisation has fundamentally changed social relations. *Globalisation in Question* (Hirst & Thompson 1999) suggests that socio/economic flows between nation states have accelerated more dramatically in earlier phases of capitalist development without undermining the nation state itself. This is a position they share with Andrew Herod who questions how valid it is to describe a distinct era of globalisation when the intensification of information flows has been taking place over a century of more (Herod 2009:231)

The sceptical thesis is useful and examines the claims of globalisation theory alongside empirical data that establishes, at least, that globalisation is not a new phenomenon but a development of capital's drive to escape the limits of the nation state. But the sceptical thesis is associated with social democratic political theory and sceptics tend to argue that because globalisation has not transformed social relations, to the extent that is perceived in globalisation theory, then the potential still exists for national governments (or civil society as I discuss below) to enforce reforms and

regulations onto global capital (Hirst & Thompson 1999). Cumbers et al have also called the wilder claims of globalization theory into question:

*“Our conclusions here also point us towards the continued importance of places in forging the collective identities of movements that make up networks. Without essentializing place, it is critical in this respect to recognize the importance of territorially based, historically constructed, social identities, which are at the same time themselves always contingent and in some senses temporary social constructions (see Paasi, 2004; Jones, 2005), in facilitating struggles and collective resistance” (Cumbers et al 2008:198)*

This is also, the position of popular Neo-Keynesian commentators including Joseph Stiglitz and Will Hutton who suggest that neo-liberalism is a policy choice that could be reversed if an intellectual argument can be won for it (Stiglitz 2002, Hutton 2002). But this ignores the changes in global political economy that have taken place and underlie the shift that took place towards neo-liberalism after 1968 as a strategy to restore profit rates at the expense of wages and welfare. The sceptical thesis identifies some problems with globalisation theory but does not explain why social democratic nation states no longer appear to play the role of arbiters between capital and labour in the context of a global social consensus. For this explanation it is necessary to turn back to the ideas of Marxism.

Marx wrote, in *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848 of: “...universal interdependence of nations...From the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature” (Marx 1968:39). Lenin too wrote in terms that would not appear out of place in contemporary globalisation theory: “Marxism takes as its point of departure the world economy, not the sum of its national parts but the international division of labour and markets... (Which)...dominate world markets” (Lenin 1936:30). Leon Trotsky continued this theoretical tradition in his own theory of permanent revolution, asserting that: “The communist parties rest upon the insolvency of the nation state, which has long ago outlived itself” (Trotsky 1969:148).

Marxism cannot be accused of failing to recognise the limitations placed on national sovereignty by a global capitalist economy. Marxism has always perceived the nation state as a structure that defends capitalist interests. In Marxist theory the sovereignty of the nation state is constrained by the economic demands of capital on a global scale, or as David Harvey puts it, the nation state is: “An unholy alliance between state powers and the predatory aspects of finance capital” (Harvey 2003:136).

Similarly Marxists in the twenty-first century can recognise intensifications in a process of globalisation without attempting, as Giddens does, to jettison socialist theory (Callinicos 2003). The political implications of this analysis have been outlined by Alfredo Saad-Filho, who argues that movements should continue to fight on a national plane, “as the nation state remains the pre-eminent source of power” (Saad-Filho 2003). Marxist theory questions the argument that the state has been undermined but perceives a shift in the policy of bourgeois nation states in line with the shift that has been observed towards neo-liberal global capitalist policy. The position is neatly put by John Pilger, who quotes Boris Kagarlitsky, a Russian dissident economist: “Globalisation does not mean the impotence of the state but the rejection by the state of its social functions in favour of its repressive ones and the ending of its domestic freedoms” (Pilger 2002).

The nation state remains a crucial source of power, in particular military and police powers, representing the sum of national capitalist interests. A nation cannot, and never could, act independently of capitalist, even less so imperialist, interests but the relationship between the two has not been transformed in the epoch of globalisation to the point where the nation state has been fundamentally undermined as an institution.

### **2.2.2 The State as an Agent of Social Justice**

*“Statehood and dignity are incompatible” and, therefore, dignity demands the abolition of the state” (Holloway 1998).*

John Holloway encapsulates an antipathy towards state bodies that is felt by many activists and writers within the GMSJ. Popular contributors to the discourse of the GMSJ from authors including Naomi Klein (2000, 2003a) and Noam Chomsky (2003a, 2004), as well as Holloway have all questioned the potential for the state to act as an organ of social justice.

Former social democrat, Paul Hirst, provides an example of this process in his theory of post-state welfare that he calls, "Associative Democracy". Hirst argues that the welfare functions of the state should be dispersed to "social institutions" within civil society in order to offer the users of public services a choice that would "anchor the market" and "enable it to attain socially desirable outcomes" (Hirst 1997:17). This implicit reliance on market mechanisms also extends in theories of localism expressed in, amongst others, Walden Bello's call for local production in place of multi-national corporations in the form of "Deglobalization" (Bello 2002) or Gore Vidal's call for the breakup of both multi-national corporations and the US federal state in favour of local sovereignty (Vidal 2003).

In so far as they fail to draw an outline of another world; neither associative democracy nor localisation theories have been able to move beyond the same very broad principles advanced by Bakunin or Proudhon in the nineteenth century. Phil Hearse emphasised this point in debate with John Holloway at the London round of the ESF:

*"The Zapatistas have created their own liberated zone, through their own uprising. But suppose the same thing happened all across Mexico – the masses rose up and took control of their own workplaces and communities. Now, shouldn't these self-organised communities talk to each other? Plan their futures together? Co-ordinate their economic plans in an overall plan of social development of Mexico? Elect recallable representatives to an all-Mexico assembly to decide these things? ...If they simply turn their back on the Mexican capitalist state without replacing it with something else, well the capitalist state will not turn its back on them." (ESF 2004a)*

Hall & Jacque's *Marxism Today* thesis has been instrumental in setting a post-socialist agenda for contemporary theory. John Holloway's "Reinvention of Revolution" (Holloway 1998) is of an entirely different character to the defeatism of 'Marxism Today' but it nevertheless shares elements of the anti-state position. Holloway argues that the Zapatistas turned away from statist socialist ideology in the form of Leninist/Maoist/Guevaraist traditions as a result of their interaction with the indigenous communities of Chiapas, Mexico. Only by allowing every member of the community to express their identity within the political process could dignity be maintained.

For Immanuel Wallerstein, anti-state ideology evolved out of the events of 1968 when the Soviet state crushed the democratic movement that was the 'Prague Spring', while at the same time, the capitalist state in France mobilised against students and workers in Paris. After 1968, Wallerstein embraced the New Left, reasoning that the communist workers' state is no more progressive than the capitalist French state. Wallerstein concluded that; "Seizing state power solves nothing" (Hobden & Jones 1997:141-2). This line of reasoning, combined with post-socialist identity politics is central to the approach of many contemporary anarchist grass-roots networks (Wallerstein 2002). In this section I will show how post-state theory has evolved from traditional anarchist theory rather than developing out of globalised social relations in the late twentieth century. I will argue that the concept of a state continues to fulfil an essential role in any transition towards another world that aims to marshal real material and human forces rather than existing only in the minds of theoreticians.

The anti-state position is central to the classical anarchist theory of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and Mikhail Bakunin. Proudhon considered the state to be unjust in the same way that a corporation is unjust, both state and corporation appropriate a man's labour. After 1873 the first Working Men's International split between the majority Marxists and the anarchist followers of Mikhail Bakunin. Whereas Marx called for a socialist state to replace the capitalist state, Bakunin objected that; "We think the policy of the proletariat must be aimed directly and solely at the destruction of states" (Bakunin 1973:237). In place of a centralised workers' state Bakunin aspired to autonomous

communities. Rejection of state solutions has remained constant within anarchist thought and is articulated by Noam Chomsky, a high-profile anarchist thinker contributing to the literature that informs the GMSJ. Chomsky is described by his publisher as “one of the pre-eminent public intellectuals of the modern era” but his thoughts on what a world devoid of states may look like have not really progressed beyond the point reached by Bakunin over a century ago; “I don’t feel that in order to work hard for social change you need to be able to spell out a plan for a future society in any kind of detail” (Chomsky 2003). This theoretically undefined approach has allowed contemporary anarchist thought to find common ground with concepts of post-modern fragmentation which combine in the construction of a post-modern anarchism (May 1994).

For most of the twentieth century state socialism characterised the approach of the organised working class. Wallerstein has described how the anti-state position developed its appeal after 1968 but he accepts that, in the early twentieth century, the “decisive argument”, that established the primacy of state socialist ideology;

*“was that the immediate source of real power was located in the state apparatus and that any attempt to ignore this political centrality was doomed to failure, since the state would successfully suppress any thrust towards anarchism” (Wallerstein 2002).*

Through the early struggles of the global labour movement, workers found that the state could not be overcome by fragmented networks and so, for a whole epoch, both revolutionary socialism and social democracy saw state structures as potential mechanisms for delivering social justice. During the interwar years the Russian Revolution proved that the capitalist state could be defeated by organised workers and encouraged revolutionary movements in Europe. After 1945 the post-war years of social consensus saw welfare provision expanding and nationalisation employed to rebuild industry within social democratic mixed economies, which allowed social democracy to authenticate its view of the state as an institution that could regulate and reform capitalism to deliver social justice. A global economic crisis demanded that the period after 1970 was quite different and in place of a social democratic consensus neo-liberal orthodoxy was established resulting in welfare

cuts (Gough 1979) and state action to curtail trade union rights. Privatisation further eroded the state's legitimacy as an actor in the 'new' global economy as, for example, the share of UK GDP generated by state enterprises shrank from 10% in 1979 to 6% in 2004 (Glyn 2006). But the perception that the state could effectively regulate capitalism endured for many social democrats who believed neo-liberalism could be reversed, at least until the collapse of the USSR after 1989. After this time the perceived defeat of socialism provoked a knee-jerk reaction amongst theorists who had accepted the USSR as "actual existing socialism" (Hall *ibid*). Ideologically this was a hammer blow to social democracy. Having accepted that welfare and reform could only be funded from capitalist economic growth social democratic governments came to see profit maximisation as crucial, in order to facilitate investment and growth (Glyn 2001).

Nevertheless, many influential voices within the GMSJ continue to argue that democratic pressure can push capitalism in a different direction (George Monbiot 2000, 2003a, Susan George 2004, Noreena Hertz 2001, Paul Hirst 1997 et al). Increasingly this democratic pressure is conceptualised to act through fragmented cultural relationships rather than directly through state action, an ideology that corresponds with the experience of young activists who, in the twenty-first century, have experienced only state welfare cuts and privatisation of formerly nationalised industry and public services. The GMSJ has increasingly turned away from the state and seeks to substitute the concept of civil society for state action.

The resurgence of anarchist attitudes towards the state's ability to deliver social justice is a consequence of the collapse of "actual existing socialism" (*ibid*) and the capitulation of social democratic states to global capital. Yet the history of actual existing anarchism is hardly a shining beacon of another world. While rejecting the terminology of state, anarchist thinkers often accept some other form of control. Noam Chomsky, a prominent anarchist contributor to the GMSJ, accepts limits to individual freedom; "Anarchism says people have the right to be free and if there are constraints on that freedom they must be justified...you just have to look at specific cases" (Chomsky *ibid*:201/2). But it is not clear who will look at each specific case and with what



legitimacy. Chomsky explicitly accepts that some form of representative democracy will be unavoidable in another world and mentions controls such as the right of recall and avoidance of privileges (Chomsky *ibid*:196), which is, in fact, more limited in democratic ambition than Lenin's concept of Soviet democracy espoused in *State and Revolution* (Lenin 1937).

The anti-state thesis though has grown in popularity. Roger Burbach is clear that:

*"Marxism-Leninism erred fundamentally in asserting that a new order could be ushered in by taking control of the state. A new order must be based in civil society" (Burbach et al 1997:3).*

Wallerstein has explained that state socialist ideology dominated throughout most of the twentieth century because of its immediate relevance to workers in struggle. The role of Stalinism and social democratic states in the twentieth century has undermined confidence that a workers' state could deliver social justice to the global poor and oppressed. But mass movements for social justice, particularly those in Venezuela and Bolivia, have focused on state action as a means to social justice while the movement of the Zapatistas in Mexico has been overshadowed more recently by mass urban movements behind Lopez Obrador's bid for the office of state president. Any state that is to deliver social justice must be democratically controlled from the bottom up but the model for such an outcome is not to be found in contemporary anarchist post-state ideology but in the ideas of Lenin's *State and Revolution*, which called for the rotation of officials, the right to recall representatives and for the disbanding of the standing army. These ideas of democratic socialism, developed further by Trotsky and the left opposition may be out of fashion but remain a more coherent model for a socially just, other world.

### **2.2.3 Globalisation: The Highest form of Imperialism**

*"I don't care what they call it now, global this or that. It's the same force, the same threat to our lives." (Pilger 2002:25)*

Post-socialist globalisation theory inevitably impacts on Marxist theories of imperialism. In his seminal work on imperialism, Lenin argued that:

*“Imperialism emerged as the development and direct continuation of the fundamental attributes of capitalism in general...The old capitalism gave way to the new, at which the domination of capital in general made way for the domination of finance capital. Scattered economies are transformed into a single international capitalist unit” (Lenin 1936:30)*

Lenin's description of early twentieth century imperialism reads like any number of accounts of twenty-first century globalisation. It is therefore not surprising to find that the very modern (or post-modern) objections to Marxist theories of imperialism are evident in the first part of the twentieth century. In this section I will argue that Marxist theories of imperialism continue to describe global social relations in the twenty-first century. An on-going struggle between competing nations and regions for imperialist domination has amended patterns of exploitation since the early part of the twentieth century but the fundamental characteristics of imperialism remain intact.

If Lenin set out the foundations of Marxist theory on imperialism then Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri have produced a seminal post-socialist exposition of post-imperialist theory. In *Empire* they argue that a single global Empire has replaced the competing imperialist states of the twentieth century (Hardt & Negri *ibid*), a position strikingly similar to that argued almost exactly one hundred years previously by Karl Kautsky. Rather than perceive imperialism as an organic consequence of a process of monopolisation arising from the dynamic of capitalist accumulation, Kautsky explained imperialism as just one of several policy choices available to capitalist nations and from this he began to develop a reformist position, based on the potential, as he saw it, to convince global capital of a more just global economic model (Kautsky 1983).

The ideology of a new benign global empire has also appealed to the neo-conservative right (Christian Science Monitor 2008) but even those in favour of a benign empire of free market capitalism are being forced to revisit more traditional imperialist theory. Frances Fukuyama is best known for *The End of History*, in which he argued that neo-liberal capitalism had proved itself to be

unchallengeable (Fukuyama 1992). But his sequel, 'After the Neocons', represents his letter of resignation from the Neo-con right-wing around the Bush 2nd administration (Fukuyama 2006). In his latter thesis Fukuyama asserts the primacy of nation states and berates the neo-cons for their attempt to create a benign imperialism, in which the USA is trusted above all other nations, to exercise military power in the global interest. Fukuyama now calls for interventions to assist in the building of state institutions and to help, not overthrow, failing states.

David Harvey has resisted the post-imperialist tide and advocates classical Marxist explanations of imperialism, describing contemporary international relations as a continuation of an imperialist 'great game' in which the prize is control of oil and gas resources in central Asia (Harvey 2003). Similarly, Andrew Glyn also views global social relations through a prism of imperialist rivalry. Both Harvey and Glyn present contemporary accounts of global social relations that owe more to the traditions of Marxist political economy than they do to concepts of space/time distancing.

Contemporary post-socialist concepts of the nation-state have developed out of anti-state ideas popularised by the New Left (Wallerstein *ibid*) and have impacted on Marxist theories of imperialism. These ideas have informed many theorists and commentators who relate to the GMSJ and have given rise to concepts of a new globalised pattern of social relations and the need for a new type of movement to fight for global social justice (Klein, Chomsky et al). But others, including John Pilger, highlight the continuities that have passed into the globalisation epoch. Pilger describes how the US and Indonesian state's militarily imposed neo-liberal marketisation onto the Indonesian masses. He argues that the Suharto coup in Indonesia in 1967 can be seen as part of the same process that lies at the heart of twenty-first century globalisation. Through the words of a teacher, Sarkhom, who was jailed by the regime at the time of the Suharto coup Pilger says; "If you can understand what happened in Indonesia, you can understand where the world is being led today." Suharto's regime physically liquidated the mass Indonesian Communist party and invited US and European multi-national firms to take over key markets inside Indonesia. Sarkhom continues; "I

don't care what they call it now, global this or that. It's the same force, the same threat to our lives" (Pilger 2002).

Lenin described imperialism as the highest form of capitalism. It had distinct features but did not liquidate capitalist socio-economic relations. Today, it could be said that globalisation is the highest form of imperialism. Once again it has distinct and more developed features but does not render obsolete imperialist socio-economic relations. Post-nation-state theory has not been able to outline how global social justice can be delivered without both confronting capitalist states and utilising a democratic workers' state in the delivery of social justice. Marxist theories of the state remain a coherent and helpful guide to action for the GMSJ.

Assumptions about the viability and desirability of action taken by nation states have a logical implication for attitudes towards political parties, which have traditionally organised around national state apparatuses. In the next chapter I will explore different ideological concepts of party and non-party organisation of the GMSJ.

## **2.3 The Role of the Political Party in Movements for Social Justice**

*"Many groups and political parties at the WSF believe it is they who are directing the movement, they are mistaken. It is in the WSF's corridors, the gym halls, the plastic-sheeted MST encampment under the overpass, where social movements and the marginalized from five continents meet, where the real revolution is being forged." (Klein 2003)*

The post-party thesis is prominent within popular radical writings on the GMSJ (Klein 2000, Chomsky 2003a, Monbiot 2003a et al) and is reflected in the founding principles of the World Social Forum. Although based on the methodology of inclusiveness and the creation of open space and discourse, the Social Forums explicitly exclude political parties from participation. In spite of this,

party activists have affiliated to social forums through the mediums of party newspapers or websites. The presence of left parties is clear on the mass demonstrations that have taken place at the ESFs in Florence, Paris and London. But the post-party thesis continues to inform the agendas of the social forums and represents the logical organisational conclusion of the broad post-socialist thesis that I have described throughout this chapter.

Post-socialist ideology stresses fragmentation, difference and cultural autonomy and the organisational conclusion to flow from this is that ideologically homogeneous political parties have become obsolete. Sarah Benton sets out this fundamental argument in a contribution to 'New Times' titled, 'The decline of the party' (Benton 1989). Benton argues that political parties, as constituted in the twentieth century, represented class interests but as power has become more fragmented and class oppression has ceased to be central to social injustice (Hall & Jacques *ibid*) then the position of the class based party has become untenable.

*"Today we do not believe that the mass can be made into a single, heroic whole by a political party... (which has) not been brought into line with the reality of multiple selves"*  
(Benton *ibid*: 337).

Benton's thesis is a logical development of the identity politics of Castells, Giddens and Hall & Jacques, which are predicated on a fragmented sense of class identity that renders it impossible for any one party manifesto to address the cultural aspirations of society. As a result, political parties have been replaced within post-socialist ideology by New Social Movements (Kriesi 1995 et al). Noam Chomsky sums up the approach of many contemporary activists, who view the fragmented character of opposition as an advantage over the constraints of party programmes:

*"My own feeling is to build on the strengths: recognise what's healthy and solid about not having hundreds, but thousands of flowers blooming all over the place"* (Chomsky 2003a).

The post-party thesis and rejection of the exercise of power as an instrument of social justice is presented as a radical new approach to struggles for global social justice. But in the absence of any alternative strategy it really amounts to little more than a celebration of the accomplished fact.

*“Even to think of the revolutionary seizure of power makes little sense when there is no revolutionary party anywhere in the world with the slightest possibility of taking power”(Holloway 2005:217)*

As I make the final amendments to this thesis the election victory, in Greece, of Syriza might call the assessment of Holloway in question, Syriza could not be called a revolutionary party but does it make no sense to even consider a party such as Syriza shifting further left, leaving the Euro and nationalising the finance sector and commanding heights of the Greek economy?

The post-party thesis also raises the problem of power. If we accept the post-socialist concept that power can be abolished by autonomous communities (Holloway 1998, 2002, Klein 2003a, Burbach 1997) then horizontal networks could logically facilitate the free will of all participants. However, the reality is likely to be a little less benign. Andrew Cumbers et al have addressed this point:

*“Ironically, many of the people that proclaim the leaderlessness of the ‘anti- globalization movement’, such as Naomi Klein or Walden Bello, are proclaimed as leaders or spokespeople by the media, and command positions of discursive power. The reality is that within networks decision-making often devolves to a surprisingly small elite of individuals and groups who make a lot of the running in deciding what happens, where and when” (Cumbers et al :2008:189).*

The concept of horizontal networks and the broader democratisation of culture is often based on the development of the internet and electronic information flows. Yet, as Cumbers et al point out, that is not always the reality of life for those suffering social injustice in the global south:

*A problem for grassroots activists in the Global South is varying and often limited access to electricity, let alone computer technologies. Such concrete realities lead them to be*

*more dependent upon key nodal points (e.g., regional or national offices of particular movements) than in the Global North, where access is more widespread and therefore information less susceptible to selective filtering by gatekeepers (Cumbers 2008:189)*

Like other aspects of post-socialism, the anti-party thesis is presented as a new response to new globalised patterns of social relations. In this section, I will argue that the post-party thesis is, like other elements of post-socialist theory, not a new development but a rehash of ideas found in the ideology of the New Left after 1968 (Wallerstein *ibid*) and the classical anarchism of Mikhail Bakunin (Bakunin 1973). There can be no doubt that post-party ideas have had a profound impact on the outlook of the GMSJ but I will contend that where movements are taking on a genuine mass character, such as in Venezuela and Bolivia, the global poor and oppressed have looked for organisational structures to co-ordinate their movements, including the United Socialist Party of Venezuela and the Movement towards Socialism (Bolivia). Liquidating parties does not liquidate the power of individuals, capitalist structures or capitalist property relations. Radical movements must find a way in which to combine grassroots democratic control of the movement with an agreed and co-ordinated strategy and vision for another world that can provide an alternative centre of power in another world. Such a structure will need to be of the character of a party, whether or not this is explicit in its name.

### **2.3.1 Power and Party**

*“There emerged a novel strategy of resistance based, not upon the revolutionary seizure of power, but upon a process by which capitalism would be subverted from within as a prelude to its displacement by other ways of living” (Tormey 2004)*

New Times (*ibid*) presents itself as a manifesto for a new epoch in social relations, and explicitly brings together the post-modern sense of power with the demise of the party: “There is no single

citadel to be captured, no commanding height, which once scaled, gives a political party power over the civic universe.” (Benton *ibid*). This assumption leads directly to the organisational position of Tormey (above), who seeks a new process to subvert capitalism through a range of power relationships.

Post-party forms of organisation became fashionable through the rise of a new left, after 1968, and were refined during the 1980s and especially after the collapse of the former Soviet Union. During 2008 the popular media in Britain has re-examined some of the debates that shaped the student and workers’ uprising in Paris, forty years previously. The idea of a cultural movement to ‘free the mind’ rather than a movement to build alternative economic and state structures became a central current within the new left and was encapsulated in popular culture, at the time, by John Lennon, who dismissed revolutionary ideology when he urged the student movement to leave alone state institutions and free their minds instead. This revisionist sentiment did not go unchallenged and was the focus of a debate that took place at that time between Lennon and members of the International Marxist group (IMG), in the pages of the journal ‘Black Dwarf’ (Hoyland 2008).

But as the movement receded many activists drew the conclusion that the methods of the ‘old left’ were doomed to failure. Simon Tormey has described how a prominent component of the new thinking was a desire to replace official oppositional politics with a proliferation of ‘new social movements’ and special interest groups. Rather than reflect party organisation these movements drew on the methods of situationism, which sought an organic, anonymous culture that its adherents believed would fatally undermine bourgeois culture itself (Tormey 2004).

The origins of a conscious anti-party ideology are found in the classical anarchist theory of Bakunin (*ibid*). Bakunin argued against centralised structures whether they are in the form of the state or the party, which he perceived as a state in waiting. But anarchist theory does not recognise the realities of material power relations and while Bakunin raged about the Marxist block vote defeating the anarchists in the International Workingmen’s Association (IWA), he had no problem speaking for the entire anarchist movement, asserting that; “we (the anarchists) represent the entire world proletariat



except for Germany” (Bakunin 1973:237). The problem of informal power, which is power that is not accountable through democratic party structures, is pertinent to the autonomous approach of the social forums where prominent individuals such as Klein, Chomsky, Monbiot et al exert real influence over the forums. It is a problem that has been identified by critics including Hilary Wainwright, editor of Red Pepper Magazine, who calls for; “more open collective decision making with clear rules to overcome the problem of informal power” (Wainwright 2008). Wainwright expresses concern that a number of prominent but unaccountable individuals exercise a power to shape the agenda of the GMSJ through their easy access to media and political resources. Even Scholte accepts that there are problems with power in new informational and cultural networks. Scholte has argued that ICT has re-shaped space and time such that fragmented global movements, connected through ICT, can replace traditional political organisational forms. But he also concedes that global social movements are, “limited to mainly white, middle class activists”, who have access to the web (Scholte, 1997). The contradiction between demands for autonomy and the practice of exercising political power has never been satisfactorily resolved by anarchist theory and contemporary anarchistic thinkers have not solved the dichotomy.

In the late twentieth century party structures have come to be associated with the top down organisation of Stalinism and counter-reforms of social democratic governments. Any suggestion of a top down exercise of power within the GMSJ will meet with opposition but any movement that is to coordinate struggles, on a city-wide scale let alone national or global scale, will need to hold those individuals who lead discourse to account. Whether the terminology of party is applied or not, democratic structures to agree a programme of action and a vision of another world will be necessary if the movement is to develop into a genuine mass force on a global scale.

### **2.3.2 Party Traditions in Radical Movements in Britain**

*“A century ago trade unionists and socialist came together to fight for independent representation for the working class. In the past the Labour Party, however imperfectly, provided a voice for the working class. A new workers’ party ... will assist in reaching out to workers and to young people who are not yet active in struggle” (Campaign for a New Workers’ Party-CNWP 2008).*

Britain is unusual in that one single mass party of the working class united the labour movement throughout most of the twentieth century. To a young generation of activists, the Labour Party represents nothing more than the New Labour neo-liberalism of Blair and his successors. Despite this, the historical evolution of the Labour party holds lessons for today’s young activists. The Labour Party itself developed from a more fragmented network of trade unions, Fabians and other socialists organised through the labour representation committee (Cole 1932). It was the experience of struggle that led workers to the conclusion that a political party was necessary if the movement was to be effective on the political as well as industrial front. The Taff Vale judgement<sup>1</sup>, in particular, which sought to make trade unions financially liable for losses incurred by an employer during an industrial dispute, was the catalyst for the first Labour Party parliamentary candidates in 1914 (Morton 1992). After the Second World War, The Communist Party also maintained an influential position within the trade unions but never developed into a mass force like its sister parties in other West European countries (Rees & Thorpe 1998). In post-war Britain the Labour Party introduced legislation for the social democratic consensus politics of the fifties and sixties and maintained a mass individual membership<sup>2</sup>.

The Labour Party’s individual membership collapsed after the 1978-79 winter of discontent when bitter trade disputes between public sector unions and the Labour government led many workers to question their loyalty to the party. Ideologically the Labour party was at a crossroads, one that most social democratic parties, around the globe, were to arrive at eventually. Social democracy had to choose between opposing the market and accepting its constraints of public and social expenditure

(Gough 1979). Labour in government chose the latter and this became the defining feature of New Labour in the 1990s.

In the period since 1968 struggles against injustice on the grounds of gender, race and sexuality have often been conceived outside of party structures, although the Labour Party became central to many activists fighting on these issues. Both the left within the Labour Party and political parties to the left of Labour continued to play a leading role in many of the most notable movements to have taken place in Britain. In the 1970s a popular anti-fascist movement developed in opposition to the National Front. Opponents and members alike point to the leading role played by the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in convening one of the main anti-fascist groups, the Anti-Nazi League (ANL) (Black Star Review 2008, SWP 2008), while the (then) Militant Tendency, inspired the Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) campaigns to oppose the far-right and to campaign against youth unemployment. The Militant also provided the political and organisational leadership in two of the most significant class struggles, aside from the miners strike, against the Thatcher governments. The Militant led Liverpool City Council defied government policy on local authority funding cuts (Mulhearn & Taffe 1988, Liverpool City Council 2008) while Militant also played a leading role in the mass movement against the poll tax, which succeeded in forcing the Tory government to replace the poll tax with a new council tax and in the process, played a significant part in bringing down Margaret Thatcher (BBC 1991, 2006, Taffe 1995).

A new generation of activists associate political parties with the failures of social-democracy and totalitarian models of socialism but it is a mistake to conclude that party structures do not have a central role to play in the organisation of mass struggles for social justice. It is not the party itself but the programme of mass workers' parties, based on the ideologies of Stalinism and social democracy that have been unable to respond to the demands of the GMSJ in the twenty-first century. In the next section I will discuss the relationship today between the GMSJ and political parties.

### **2.3.3 The Party and the GMSJ**

*“Any political party that seeks to exercise political, that is state, control is to be excluded”*

*(WSF 2002)*

The social forums prohibit the affiliation of political parties yet parties remain the most visible presence within the social forums, along with trade unions. In this section I will argue that where the movement has succeeded in taking on a mass character, party forms of organisation have returned to the agenda of the GMSJ. However, the distrust of parties felt by many activists remains an obstacle to their development.

The social forums are convened under the principles established at the first World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre in 2001. According to its ‘Charter of Principles’; “The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks only organizations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world” (WSF *ibid*). This approach was revisited in a debate at the organising committee of the ESF in 2004 but the minutes show that the position remained unamended.

*“Involvement of Political Party Representatives:*

*It was noted that World Social Forum Charter of principles excludes representatives of political parties from participation in the process. Roberto Ferdinand from the Brazilian Council of the World Social Forum clarified that the WSF is a process involving organisations and social movements of civil society not delegates from political parties or governments. Members of parties can participate as representatives of organisations and social movements of civil society.” (ESF 2004b)*

The formal position of the London round of the ESF may have been to disallow the affiliation of political parties, in practice though, parties remain more central to the GMSJ than post-socialist theorists would have us believe. An analysis of those groups to affiliate shows that the six most prominent socialist political parties in Britain all had a presence amongst affiliates (ESF 2004a). The Socialist Party (SP) affiliated its newspaper, ‘The Socialist’, as did Workers Power (through their

paper bearing the party name) and the International Marxist Group (IMG) who affiliated their publication, Socialist Resistance. With an appropriate nod to contemporary theory, the group Socialist Appeal affiliated not under the name of a printed journal but a website, 'In Defence of Marxism'. In addition, the Socialist Workers Party is widely perceived to exercise significant political influence over the affiliated Globalize Resistance and holds many of the leading positions within the Stop the War Coalition, which is affiliated (Thomas 2003). The Alliance for Workers' Liberty (formerly Socialist Organiser) has provided joint speakers at events with 'No Sweat' (ESF 2009) and a youth group, 'International Socialist Resistance', initiated by the Socialist Party (Socialist Party 2009), was also affiliated. In addition a significant number of delegates were members of these parties as evidenced by an abundance of socialist newspaper sellers.

The obvious presence of the traditional revolutionary (mainly Trotskyist<sub>3</sub>) left in the social forums has been extensively commented on, particularly by those who perceive this involvement as a threat to the grass-roots character of the forums.

*"The most disturbing current developments are Trotskyist efforts to control bodies such as the World Social Forum and the ESF. The ESF in Florence in 2002 was heavily dominated by the Fourth International (IMG), one of the oldest international Trotskyist groups. Already the preparations for the European Social Forum in London have been disrupted by the classic assimilation tactics of the Socialist Workers Party and their front group, Globalize Resistance." (Indymedia 2004)*

As one would expect, there are differences in the approach of the various socialist parties. The SWP and IMG have tended to emphasise the positive elements of the social forums (Callinicos 2003) to a greater extent than the SP or Worker's Power, the latter of which has criticised the SWP supporting Callinicos for building a bridge to bourgeois intellectuals within the social forums rather than the working class (League for a fifth International 2004). The formal position of the SWP, however, is also to defend the concept of a revolutionary programme (SWP 2004). Political parties

continue to influence the GMSJ but face a fundamental challenge to the very notion of a party that was not present, to the same extent, throughout most of the twentieth century.

Developments in Latin America suggest that the party is far from a bankrupt concept in the struggle for social justice. The need for a party to coordinate struggles for social justice was advocated by Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, as 'Latin America solidarity' show in their analysis of Chavez's referendum defeat in December 2007:

*"In order to guarantee the continuation of the revolution, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) had to become a party that would subvert the historic capitalist model of the bourgeois state. Chavez argued that it was necessary to go on the offensive with the 'United Socialist Party of Venezuela as the spearhead and vanguard' of the revolution." (Latinamericasolidarity 2007).*

Nor is it just Venezuela where party forms are developing again. The Movement for Socialism (MAS) in Bolivia is taking a similar form while in Mexico the autonomist Zapatistas struggle was replaced by the presidential campaign of Lopez Obrador organised through a coalition led by the Democratic Revolutionary Party, as the focal point of mass struggle in Mexico. The CWI (Socialist Party England/Wales) has observed events in Mexico and argues not to abolish parties but to build an independent party of working class struggle.

*"The coming together of the different movements, strikes and rebellions in Mexico makes it all the more urgent for the working class to develop its own independent organisations, party and programme to overthrow capitalism. A revolutionary party could play a decisive role in unifying the different struggles in Mexico and allow the working class to play a leading role in the fight for revolutionary socialism" (CWI 2006).*

The Marxist analysis of the CWI emphasises the need to bring movements together into one structure, in sharp contrast to the post-socialist theme of autonomy and fragmentation. But even some who have moved on from the traditional workers' party perceive that the de-centralisation argument may have run its course, including Hillary Wainwright:

*“A few years back the focus was on breaking up hierarchy, creating decentralised, autonomous forms of organisation, ensuring space for the multiplicity of initiatives, projects and organisations that made up the movements. The concept of the network expressed the idea of coordination without a centre. But now there is a search for new ways of interconnecting the multiplicity. The search comes out of practical needs, felt after taking decentralisation to its limits, (it is) vital to extending decision-making beyond those who can afford the airfares and the time to attend organising meetings” (Wainwright 2008).*

Wainwright is effectively arguing that the GMSJ needs to re-learn the lessons of the struggles of the twentieth century labour movement. These lessons should include both the need for a centralised structure and the need to democratically control such a structure. This is an issue that has also been identified by Wallerstein:

*“Many have argued that it is essential for the WSF to move towards advocating a clearer, more positive programme” (Wallerstein 2002).*

Critics from both left and right have argued that Chavez’s model for a new united socialist party was a top down affair, dominated by military and state officials. While it was possible to sidestep some of these issues while Chavez was able to utilise a part of Venezuela’s oil wealth to provide social reform, his defeat in the constitutional referendum in Dec 2007 began to cast doubt on whether his own supporters are prepared to see a further centralisation of state and party (Venezuelanalysis 2007). Following the death of Chavez it will be interesting to see how the ideology of the movement in Venezuela develops without a strong figurehead.(

As Wainwright et al have argued; de-centralisation, autonomy and open space can only achieve so much. Without some form of structure to co-ordinate and identify an agreed programme for the movement it is difficult to envisage how the movement can progress from a talking shop into a mechanism by which humanity might arrive at another world. The task facing those who advocate building party structures is to convince activists that such structures be controlled from the bottom

up in such a way that the grass-roots may exercise control while also reaping the benefits of unity and party coordination as the GMSJ struggles against global capitalism.

#### Notes

1. The Taff Vale Judgement of 1901 was the outcome of a legal action between the Taff Vale Railway Company and a trade union, the Amalgamated Society of Railway servants. The court ruled that the trade union was liable for financial losses sustained by the employer as a consequence of industrial action. Trade unions widely perceived this to make the legal conduct of a strike impossible.
2. From 1950 until 1978 the Labour Party maintained over 700 000 members, peaking at over 1 million in the early fifties (Marshall 2009).
3. Trotskyist describes a current of Marxist thought that stands in the traditions of Leon Trotsky, co-leader of the Russian revolution. There are many different international groupings that claim to be heirs to this tradition but the primary feature of Trotskyism is a rejection of the totalitarian character of the former Soviet regimes and a rejection of Stalin's theory of socialism in one country. Consequently, Trotskyists aspire to a global transformation of society into democratic workers' states.

## 2.4 A Post-Socialist Orthodoxy

*"Since the 1980s there has been a wholesale abandonment of Marxist and socialist thinking in the face of an upsurge of neoliberal thinking in the West and the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union" (Cumbers & McKinnon 2007:33).*

In this section I will develop my argument that while social democratic and Marxist ideology continue to inform some participants of the GMSJ, the dominant discourse within the academy and within the literature that informs the GMSJ can be seen as conforming to a post-socialist orthodoxy. In one sense this orthodox position draws on the ideas of Gramsci in that it identifies the challenge of the ideology of global capitalism on a cultural level as crucial to the GMSJ. But the orthodox



position also takes, from globalisation theory, ideas of new material relations of production and information flows that are conceptualised to have underlined twentieth century socialist ideology.

*The Grand Dialectic had been suspended, even reversed. The triumph of neo-liberalism was not simply a question of ideology; as Marxists should anticipate, it had a firm material basis. (Therborn 2012:11)*

Frances Fukuyama's proclamation of the final victory of free market capitalism over state based social democracy or Marxism was, in many ways, to be expected. Like others from a bourgeois neo-liberal background Fukuyama's thesis reflected the confidence of the capitalist class following the collapse of Stalinism. But it not the confidence of capitalists so much as the disorientation and defeatism of the workers movement, reflected in the academy, that has paved the way for an orthodox approach to social relations. This is illustrated by Massimo De Angelis, who directly takes on Fukuyama with a work titled, *The Beginning of History*. De Angelis rejects Fukuyama's assertion that neo-liberal capitalism has established itself as the final form of human society but he accepts the post-socialist orthodoxy in so far as he dismisses all socialist alternatives to that global neo-liberal model (DeAngelis 2007:6).

The idea of an orthodox response to the collapse of Stalinism should not be contentious. It's widely observed that a neo-liberal orthodox approach to economic science has been established, which accepts, as a starting point for analysis, the idea that free markets based on rational personal decision making are the only viable basis for an economic system (Ormerod 1994:38).

In my thesis I use the term orthodoxy to describe a wide body of ideas that are characterised by certain concepts:

- The Failure of socialism and state solutions to deliver social justice
- A weakening of state's ability to regulate capital
- Fragmentation of power
- Fragmentation of class relations

These are concepts that are shared by proponents of neo-liberalism and radical theorists alike. In addition I also include radical ideas contained in new social movement theory, gobalisation theory and other radical ideologies:

- The end of the party and need for a new type of cultural movement
- The concept that Marx's analysis of capitalism may retain validity but the idea of socialist planning does not

My use of the term orthodoxy is not meant to suggest that there is no debate over social theory. The GMSJ is nothing if it is not a meeting of minds that are striving to confront inequality and repression by steering global society in a different direction. But I am arguing that the dominant themes in this discourse are those that characterise the orthodox position. Even then, there are and will always be those who challenge the orthodox position, just as there are in the economic discipline. Orthodox ideas are those that have come to be accepted in the popular media; in textbooks; and in popular theses of the academy and by political leaders as the starting point for a discourse.

Before I continue to examine the scope of the orthodox approach to global social relations it is important to note that some important contributions to the debate do continue to push back against the dominant view. In particular the International Labour movement perspective continues to examine the important role of organised labour in confronting injustice. Jane Wills has discussed a need to address economic crisis after 2008 by re-focusing on class relations in society and not exclusively on cultural questions (Wills 2002:92) while Kim Moody has asserted the central role of the general strike in resistance to global social injustice. Moody highlights the role of organised labour in the Occupy movement in the USA and raises the potential to demonstrate the power of organised labour through strike action (Moody 2011, 2012). Even within this field though, the orthodoxy lurks. Peter Waterman assesses the development of international trade union responses to the challenges of globalisation. In doing so he focuses on the enduring role of organised labour but he locates this in the orthodox position established by Hall & Jacques, which asserts the failure

of socialism in the form of Stalinism. Waterman goes along with the claims of Stalinism to be the true expression of Communism and by so doing he accepts the retreat of the ideology of socialist planning (Waterman 1998:16).

Within the geography discipline David Harvey has resisted a turn away from class analysis and property relations in radical theory; although in some important senses he also accepts the orthodox position on the building of the GMSJ. I will return to the development Harvey's ideas in a subsequent section.

While noting objections to the orthodoxy it should also be acknowledged that a small but significant rump of Keynesians also resist the orthodox position, in so far as it discounts a return to the epoch of state administered social consensus. Popular accounts of globalisation and injustice by Joseph Stiglitz (2002) and Will Hutton (1996, 2002, 2007) argue for state reform and regulation of capital while William Robinson also advocates Keynesian concepts of reform (Robinson 2004).

But in general, radical accounts of global social injustice in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have argued that a new globalised pattern of social relations now demand a new approach to fighting injustice.

I have argued, in this chapter, that new social movement (NSM) theory plays an important part in building the orthodox approach to global social injustice in advancing ideas of fragmentation of earlier class based movements into identity based movements with overlapping fames of coincidence. In particular NSM theory argues that resistance to injustice is to be found exerting a cultural influence on society rather than seeking to change economic relations (Kriesi 1995, Laraña et al 1994). NSM theory has also been influential in establishing the concept of the diffusion of resistance on a global scale. More recently, Cumbers et al have argued that the diffuse placeless perspective of NSM theory needs to be seen in a more sophisticated sense that recognises, "the importance of territorially based, historically constructed, social identities" (Cumbers et al 2008:198). Cumbers et al have also questioned the assumption of NSM theory that the new grass-roots unstructured movements are more democratic than more formal bodies such as trade unions or

NGOs. Often, the leading figures of NSM are, “proclaimed as leaders or spokespeople by the media, and command positions of discursive power” (Cumbers et al 2008:189)

Cumbers et al raise important doubts about the orthodox analysis of NSMs and Cumbers has also defended the relevance of Marx to the analysis of global capitalism. This observation should be balanced though by Cumbers’ acceptance that while Marxism is a valid tool of analysis; Marxist ideology, in the sense of a systemic alternative of socialist planning, is not:

*“We believe that Marxist political economy is still relevant because of its value as a framework for understanding the evolution of the global capitalist system. Marx’s primary contribution to knowledge was as an analyst of capitalism, not as an architect of communism” (Cumbers & McKinnon 2007:33).*

There is a certain irony in the position of NSM theory that in the process of looking to break with a perceived orthodox position of states and parties the theory actually helps propagate a new orthodoxy of fragmentation and cultural struggle. Bonaventura De Sousa Santos illustrates this point in his call for “Justice against Epistemicide” (De Sousa Santos 2014). De Sousa Santos argues that western epistemology has dominated discourse and prevented differing perceptions of injustice from being heard. There can be no doubt that western approaches to the analysis and development of theory relating to injustice have dominated those from less economically developed regions but by failing to locate this process within global economic relations De Sousa Santos is accepting the orthodox approach of seeking a cultural development of resistance in place of state action to reform or revolutionise property relations. It is indeed ironic that Gramsci’s concept of hegemony that informs this concept has itself become hegemonic.

I have dealt with the development of globalisation theory throughout this chapter. The concepts of Anthony Giddens, David Held et al have been influential in establishing the idea that a new way of conducting political action is required, a third way. Giddens influence extends beyond the academy as far as the British Prime Minister at one point. Giddens has called into question the very

fundamentals of Marxist theory with attacks on the method of historical materialism and has successfully helped to expunge the ideology of changing the economic system from popular discourse Giddens (Giddens 1976, 1981, 1990, 1998). In turn, Giddens has influenced Held, whose transformationalist globalisation thesis reflects the key aspects of the post-socialist orthodoxy (Held 1989, Held et al 1999, Held & McGrew 2002).

That is not to say that globalisation theory has uniformly accepted the central thesis of Giddens. I have discussed Justin Rosenberg's objections earlier in this chapter alongside William Robinson, who conceptualises globalisation as a response by capitalism to the economic crisis of the 1970s. I have also discussed Paul Hirst's sceptical take on globalisation theory. In addition to Hirst we can also consider Andrew Herod's reluctance to place artificial temporal lines into a continuous process of developing global flows of information (Herod 2009:231) dating back to the nineteenth century. These are significant departures from the theory of Giddens but I have nevertheless demonstrated throughout chapter two that globalisation theory has strongly tended towards concepts of fragmented social relations and the need for global movements for social justice to organise in new ways.

In a similar way there are many popular contributions to the debate around the GMSJ that can be considered to be political or sociological in their character and which also contribute to the orthodoxy. Naomi Klein became synonymous with the social forums following the publication of *No Logo*, which explicitly rejects the organisations of the labour movement in favour of grass-roots networks of activists. The question of power and concepts of fragmented power relations have also been a key element of the orthodoxy. These concepts have been popularised by both John Holloway, in his account of the Zapatista uprising and by Hardt & Negri in *Empire*. Holloway and Hardt & Negri both call into question the very nature of power and they cast doubt on labour movement strategies to "take" power and exercise it through a social democratic or workers state. These radical takes on power and the type of movement required to confront global social injustice are presented as a radical challenge to neo-liberal globalisation yet in their theoretical foundations

they rely on the very assumptions that drive neo-liberalism; The failure of socialist planning and state administered social democracy, the fragmentation of power and the power of culture rather than economic relations.

Roger Burbach makes the point that:

*“The political playing field is dominated by neo-liberalism and globalization...the secular creeds of the dominant classes” (Burbach 1997).*

Burbach is no doubt aware of many, relatively low profile, political actors and theorists who challenge this domination of the political field but he is right to point out that globalised neo-liberal policy and practice has come to dominate political life on a global scale. To this, I will add that globalised neo-liberal theory relating to class, power, economic relations and political movements has come to dominate the academy across faculties including geography, social theory, political theory, international relations and, of course, economics.

## **2.5 Post-Socialism, Social Democracy and Marxism: Three Ideological trends within the GMSJ**

*“The global social justice movements that have taken shape, meeting at the WSF annually, are an entirely new and unprecedented phenomenon in character and scale” (Noam Chomsky 2004:235).*

The GMSJ is conceptualised as a new type of radical movement. New social movement theory (Kriesi *ibid*, Laraña, Johnston & Gusfield 1994) has merged with political theory (Hall & Jacques *ibid*), social theory (Giddens *ibid*) and geographical globalisation theory (Held *ibid*) to create a movement unprecedented in organisational and ideological character (Chomsky *ibid*). This conceptual approach towards the GMSJ has become an orthodox approach throughout the social sciences but I have argued that it is one sided and unhelpful to the researcher, who is trying to

obtain an insight into the ideological evolution and character of radical movements for social justice in the twenty-first century.

In contrast to this orthodox approach, I have developed a thesis that does not conceptualise the main ideological currents within the GMSJ as “entirely new in character” (ibid) but as an evolution of three broad traditions; Post-Socialism, Social Democracy and Marxism. My approach has a certain echo with Massimo De Angelis’s, who reflects many elements of post-socialist thinking but describes three tendencies within the GMSJ that correspond with the three pre-existing ideological trends that I have identified: “Anarchism, communism and socialism” (De Angelis 2007:245).

In this section I will assess the evolution of each of these three traditions in turn. I will discuss how each tradition influences contemporary theory and I will outline challenges that each tradition faces as it seeks to provide a way forward for the GMSJ. I will argue that post-socialist theory has been unable to show that Marxist theory is outdated. Marxism continues to offer a coherent analysis of global social injustice and an outline for another world, to which the movement aspires.

### **2.5.1 The limits of Post-Socialist Ideology**

*“Tendencies which have been very strongly predominant in the writings of the left in the last few years do not offer socialist solutions to the problems now confronting it: they constitute a ‘new revisionism’, and this new revisionism marks a very pronounced retreat from some fundamental socialist positions...and contributes in no small way to the malaise, confusion, loss of confidence and even despair which have so damagingly affected the Left in recent years” (Miliband 1985).*

Post-socialist ideology has attacked every fundamental element of Marxist theory. But as Ralph Miliband points out, this revisionist process has not strengthened socialist theory but has undermined it without offering any coherent alternative model of struggle or alternative form of social system. Far from defending this charge, post-socialist revisionists accept it and argue that the

absence of any such model for struggle or another world is what enables the GMSJ to appeal to a diffused sense of contemporary social injustice (Holloway *ibid*, Hardt & Negri *ibid*, Chomsky *ibid*, Klein *ibid*). The failure of post-socialism to provide answers is celebrated by Hall & Jacques, who set the tone for post-socialist theory in *New Times* when they proudly declare that they; “do not claim for a moment to have posed all the questions, let alone the answers” (Hall & Jacques 1989:20).

Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt have, popularised this approach when they argue that simply acknowledging the possibility of an alternative social system;

*“...is perhaps as far as we can go with the methodological scaffolding of a critical and materialist deconstruction - but this is already an enormous contribution” (Hardt & Negri 2000:48).*

Hardt & Negri may consider this an enormous contribution to radical discourse but it is an insight that offers nothing to activists in the GMSJ, who already aspire to a different social system but need to move forwards. Neither is Holloway inclined to help in this respect:

*“What follows is an attempt to take the question further (but no, still not give an answer) (Holloway 2005:217)*

Not only is no answer forthcoming but post-socialist theory displays hostility towards the very idea of an alternative within post-socialist thinking:

*“(the purpose of this) book is to engage with the problematic of alternatives to capitalism posed urgently by the life re-acclaiming forces of the alter globalisation movement. But this will not be done through a critical analysis of the “advantages or disadvantages” of different alternative models nor with the proposal for a new manifesto, an ingenious scheme or a brilliant new idea that if all were to follow it would certainly solve all human problems. Instead I want to problematise the question of alternatives by posing the question of their co-optation” (De Angelis 2007:6)*



Post-socialism has been able to incorporate a post-modern approach to ideology that dismisses the validity of grand-narratives (Lyotard 1984) in favour of focusing on relatively narrow empirical questions. This approach discourages investigations of patterns of social injustice based on the character of social systems and stands in the way of any attempt to learn from the past and generalise an organisational or programmatic approach to fighting injustice. In practical terms the post-socialist method is laid bare by Noam Chomsky who concedes that; "Nobody really knows anything much about tactics – at least I don't" (Chomsky 2003a:193).

Rather than assisting the GMSJ to clarify its analysis and programme for action, post-socialist theory has encouraged confusion. When Manuel Castells argues that it is not possible to differentiate between movements or even view them as 'good and bad' (Castells 2004:70), he leaves activists within the GMSJ unable to differentiate between movements for social equality on one hand and nationalistic or even fascistic movements on the other. The failure to differentiate between what is progressive and what is not has had a predictable effect on the ability of post-socialist theory to guide the actions of the GMSJ and often culminates in circular arguments and confusion, as reflected by Holloway:

*"This conflict could only be resolved by the complete destruction of capitalism. What form this may take, how the cumulative uniting of dignities could lead to the destruction of capitalism, is not clear" (Holloway 1998:187).*

The rejection of grand narrative is a foundation of post-socialist theory but it is a position that is somewhat disingenuous. Post-socialist theory denies its own ideological positions and insists on an empirical approach to each issue confronted by the GMSJ. Yet in doing so it explicitly rejects the potential for class struggle in contemporary society and the centrality of property relations to global injustice. In spite of their claims, post-socialist theoreticians nevertheless construct their own overarching narratives about how the GMSJ should build and what its programme ought or ought not to include. There is more than a hint of irony in the full title of New Times, which identifies Hall & Jacques' post-modern work as, "A Manifesto for New Times" (Hall & Jacques 1989). Post-socialism

is not post-ideological but is better understood as an ideologically driven political manifesto, just as The Communist Manifesto aspired to be in 1848.

In his pamphlet, *Socialism Utopian and Scientific*, Frederick Engels argued that the philosophical foundations of Marxism combine the aspirations for social justice of the French utopian socialists, of the eighteenth century, with a materialist understanding of social relations outlined in the classical political economy of Adam Smith and David Ricardo (Engels 1980). Post-socialism challenges this foundation of Marxist theory and places individual perception and identity at the heart of the post-socialist ideology. In place of Marx's programme for class struggle, post-socialism, informed by post-modern concepts of power and fragmentation have, as Ray Kiely has suggested, generated explanations that are so complex that it is not possible to talk of reality.

It is certainly the case that a good deal of literature circulating the GMSJ has a tenuous grip on reality. The influential writer, Naomi Klein enthuses in *Notes from Nowhere* that; "If a book could be a carnival instead of a linear narrative it would read like this". But this carnival arrives at the fanciful conclusion that the autonomous cultural movements have already achieved what international Marxism failed to do; that is to dismantle global capitalism. All that remains is to create a new world through the autonomous social centres (*Notes from Nowhere* 2003:499-510). But there is no material basis for such an assertion. State power and corporate ownership of global resources remain intact but the writers base their position on the perceptions of, "the activist Starhawk". This individual activist has as much right as anyone to his opinion but such individual opinion is no basis for theoretical assertions, unless theory is to be completely disengaged from reality. Post-socialism has achieved a certain resonance in the late twentieth century because it corresponds with an observed shift in the balance of power between capital and labour that has taken place since the end of the 1960s. Post-socialism explains this observed process as an inevitable consequence of the fragmentation of the power of the working class and concludes that social class is no longer a unifying identity around which a movement for social justice can mobilise. Yet it cannot identify

where power lies, if not in property relations and the capitalist state, post-socialism cannot answer the question, posed by Alex Callinicos: "Against who are we fighting?" (Callinicos 2003:392).

Many on the Marxist left would accept that traditional workers' organisations needed to better understand and reflect gender, racial and cultural oppression in the period after 1968. David Harvey, who defends the Marxist analytical method of historical materialism against post-modernism, goes so far as to accept that such identities are as important to a Marxist analysis as class itself (Harvey 1990) while William Robinson argues that the exploitation of immigrant workers must be seen in the context of a drive by capital to increase the rate of accumulation (Robinson 2008:320).

Post-socialism though, has not just described cultural difference within the working class but has driven an ideology that dispenses with the historic role of working class struggle to revolutionise the material foundations of human society, without providing an alternative. It is all very well to analyse autonomous local movements but when we want to understand how global social injustice is generated we would do well to remember that: "The truth, as Hegel said, is in the whole" (Robinson 2008:Preface (xii)).

Post-socialist ideology claims to reject preordained ideological meta-narratives yet in dismissing the fundamental premises of Marxist theory, post-socialism has drawn overarching conclusions about the nature of power, identity and radical movements that are every bit as ideological as those they seek to replace. Celia Dinerstein has acknowledged this much and introduces the term of the "Hope Movement" in place of a movement for a specific outcome (Dinerstein 2012:587).

Yet a movement that replaces a programme for political action leading to changes in economic relations with a movement for "hope" will strike some as hopeless.

This sense of hopelessness only deepens when Roger Burbach et al seek a new left development based on post-modern economies. This is defined as various economies with very low productivity and correspondingly low wages! Though, of course, the authors do not recognise this. They refer approvingly to garbage scavengers, former soviet co-operatives that cannot compete in global

markets and Chinese township enterprises. This is not a break with capitalism but a return to pre-industrial capitalism! (Burbach et al 1997:160)

The ideology of post-socialism cannot show what social force has the potential ability to transform society, if not the organised working class, and it has no coherent vision of 'another world'.

## **2.5.2 Social Democracy and the GMSJ**

*“Social democrats discovered that the constraints their economies faced, internal and external, were much more biting than they had believed. And under these constraints, they could no longer strive for all of their objectives. Something had to give” (Przeworski 2001:320)*

When Hall & Jacques declared that the left was living through New Times they meant that the social democratic consensus, that had briefly constituted a post-war policy orthodoxy, was over. Once again, the term orthodoxy here does not imply that in some sort of pre-Fukuyama sense history had ended and all agreed that social democratic social consensus would forever prevail. It is though, undeniable that social and economic policy (in the capitalist nations) was, on a global scale, characterised by the growth of state welfare and state investment in industry and rising wages as a result of concessions given to unionised workers in the post war period.

This consensus had been challenged by writers such as Milton Friedman and his followers in the Chicago school throughout the fifties and sixties but his neo-liberal (termed monetarist initially) ideas were not embraced by capitalism until a global profits crisis at the end of the sixties (Friedman 2011).

Hall and Jacques recognised that capitalism was not about to embrace social democracy again as it sought to restore profitability throughout the seventies. In 1983 Hall & Jacques published *The Politics of Thatcherism*, which introduced their post-socialist concepts. It was followed in 1989 by *The Manifesto for New Times*, which had a radical veneer but in practice the thesis is a prescription

for dismantling regulatory structures and replacing them with abstract aims and values. Charlie Leadbeater, who went on to become a high-profile 'spin-doctor' for New Labour argued, in *New Times*, that rather than state regulation, the left (by which he means social democracy) must be about personal responsibility exercised through choices made in a free market. This represents an abject capitulation to capitalism. Where Max Weber expected the state to regulate and manage social injustice in a capitalist society (Weber 1947) post-socialists like Leadbeater are content to leave the poor and oppressed to exercise what little power they have as individual consumers in the market.

The post-socialist arguments of former social democrats were not a response to the compression of space and time but to the crumbling of the fundamental economic basis for social democratic consensus after 1968. Andrew Glyn demonstrates that a falling rate of increase in the productivity of labour undermined the capacity for capitalism to produce rising profits in conjunction with rising real wages and state welfare (funded by a rising tax income from rising profits) and this made social consensus unaffordable (Glyn 1991, 2001). Adam Przeworski develops this thesis, explaining that instead of building a new consensus, social democratic parties have been forced to accept a neo-liberal economic orthodoxy because they have no alternative to the restoration of corporate profitability as a foundation for economic development. Przeworski explicitly dismisses any potential for contemporary class struggle and therefore elevates electoral considerations associated with winning the centre ground to the centre of the programme of social democracy (Przeworski 2001:312-333). This is the theoretical background to the political capitulation of mass social democratic parties to the demands of capital in the latter part of the twentieth century.

Goran Therborn has also attempted to, "Explain the Defeat" of socialist ideology

*The Grand Dialectic had been suspended, even reversed. The triumph of neoliberalism was not simply a question of ideology; as Marxists should anticipate, it had a firm material basis (Therborn 2012:11)*

Therborn explains this material change as a shift towards financialisation and de-industrialisation.

For the first time in decades the post-socialist orthodox position of a shrinking state and reliance of free markets has been shaken by the onset of a global crisis, a credit crunch in financial markets, leading the prominent financier, George Soros, to argue that neo-liberal market fundamentalism has now, like social democracy before it, reached a historic impasse (Soros 2008). Additionally the apparent success of state directed capitalism, as practiced in China, has called into question the neo-liberal insistence on ultra-free markets and small states. But China in no way resembles a social consensus. Like the state nationalisation of Northern Rock in the UK, Chinese state direction is aimed not at humanising capitalism but supporting capitalist firms in order to develop the national economy (Hutton 2007:332).

Calls for immediate state reforms or regulations, to address manifest injustice, have been and will continue to arise as instinctive demands from the GMSJ. However, a new stable social democratic consensus, in the form of the post-war period from 1950-1970 does not appear to be feasible in the economic situation at the start of the twenty-first century. Additionally, the importance of a revolutionary threat from international communism, during the post-war period, should not be underestimated. Social democracy was adopted, in no small part, as a defensive strategy to undercut support for revolutionary socialist ideas in the period after World War Two. Without a credible systemic alternative threatening the survival of capitalism the prospects of capitalists freely accepting a redistribution of profits to wages and welfare are somewhat limited.

Nevertheless, there are prominent Keynesian writers who continue to call on global capitalism to revert to a classical Keynesian social democratic model. Joseph Stiglitz (Stiglitz *ibid*) and Will Hutton (Hutton *ibid*) call explicitly for a return to Keynes but they do not deal with the issue of why capital shifted from Keynesianism to a global neo-liberal offensive against wages and welfare. Contemporary advocates of a new Keynesian consensus though, have not been able to identify who or what force will draw global corporations into a new social consensus.

*“There is no corporate willingness to fork out the higher taxes, endorse the new regulations or provide the ‘in kind’ civic support that might ensure the rebirth of collective provision” (Wills 2002:90)*

Like Glyn (above), Hutton has pointed to the limitations of productivity growth, in spite of relatively high profitability in the recent period of capitalist upswing (Hutton 2002:178). If productivity cannot explain rising profitability then it follows that profits are rising at the expense of wages and Hutton confirms this in terms of the real median wage in the USA, which now barely exceeds the level of the mid 1970s (Ibid:188). Consequently, any attempt to restore wages as a share of global economic output would have a serious impact on profitability and lead to a further sharp drop in investment, or “strikes of capital”, impacting negatively on output (Glyn 2001:7).

Globalisation and post-socialist theory has identified a decline in the ability of states to exercise sovereignty as another impediment to a programme of state reform. David Held confronts the limits of sovereignty with a call for a permanent multi-national military force to enforce a ‘Tobin tax’ and for the creation of; “New ways of creating income to invest in human infrastructure such as health, education and welfare” (Held 2002:196-7). Held encompasses both a multi-national and a post-state consciousness in his brand of ‘transformationalist’ reformism. Similarly, George Monbiot also reflects these neo-reformist currents when he argues a global parliament to be established from civil society with cross border constituencies, in parallel to governments based on nation states (Monbiot 2003a).

The radical post-state thesis also informs many former social democrats who have consequently developed theses that seek reforms from global civil society rather than through the state (Monbiot *ibid*, Susan George (2004), Noreena Hertz (2001) Joseph Stiglitz (*ibid*). But this radical departure for social democracy is now serving as a theoretical justification for welfare and public service cuts. The recent UK general election was characterised by the three main political parties arguing over who has the best solution to cutting state expenditure. In so doing calls have already come forward for the voluntary sector to take the load from the state (Cameron 2010). Though featured in a Tory

policy document “Big Society not Big Government” (ibid) these ideas were central to the revisionist ideas of former social democrat and globalisation sceptic, Paul Hirst, whose concept of associative democracy I have discussed in this chapter.

The GMSJ will continue to raise immediate demands for specific reforms in the hope of making an immediate impact on the lives of the global poor and oppressed. However, social democracy as a political ideology is not able to explain how capital will be enticed or coerced into new enduring social consensus. Capital has won a hard battle to extract itself from the post-war consensus and will seek to recover any reforms given with one hand by cutting alternative wage and welfare costs with the other. Glyn appears resigned to this and discounts a significant re-distribution from profits to wages and welfare. Instead welfare can only be funded through another transfer from wage earners; “The fundamental question is whether it is possible politically to persuade wage earners to accept higher taxes to pay for an extended welfare state” (Glyn 2006:163). But he accepts that any additional revenue available from increasing income tax on higher earners will be small, relative to overall government spending, and the potential for social democratic ideology to satisfy the aspirations of the GMSJ is, therefore, limited.

### **2.5.3 Latin America puts Marxism back on the Agenda**

*“We’re moving toward a socialist republic of Venezuela” (Hugo Chavez 2007).*

When Fukuyama proclaimed the end of history (ibid) he could not have imagined that at the start of the twenty-first century, movements describing themselves as Marxist would be so prominent in global struggles of the poor and oppressed. From Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia to the Maoists and Naxalites in Nepal and India and the trade union and workers centres of South East Asia the ideas of socialist revolution are alive. Marxism has not been erased as an ideology that informs the GMSJ but neither are the movements cited developing directly into workers’ states as conceived in classical Marxist theory. The purpose of this section is to consider



how the central ideological foundations of classical Marxism might provide an ideological foundation for struggles of the global poor and oppressed. I will argue that Marxist ideology provides a materialist understanding of social forces and a clear concept of power that allows Marxism to identify the global proletariat as an agent for social change. The primary challenge facing Marxist theory is to raise class consciousness within radical movements and to escape the legacy of Stalinism and appeal to the democratic and cultural aspirations that exist within the global proletariat.

Leopold Labedz, an opponent of communism, recognises the benefits of Marxist materialism when he criticised western sociologists for failing to analyse the revolutionary process and conceded that, "Marxist thinkers often dealt with real problems and were sometimes brilliantly perceptive about them" (Labedz *ibid*:16). Support comes from another unlikely source in Fukuyama's *End of History*. Fukuyama proclaimed Marxism dead yet he also considers the revisionism of the new left to have weakened the ideology of the left, which became mired in post-modernist theory that diverted attention away from real power structures (Fukuyama 2006).

Globalisation theory has focused on shifts in space and time as the process that has undermined Marxist ideology (Giddens, Held et al). In contrast, Ray Kiely has criticised transformationalist theory, from a Marxist perspective, arguing that transformationalism misses the essential political dynamic of neo-liberal globalisation, which is capitalist property relations. Marxist theory offers; "A more convincing account of the nature of the international, or indeed global, order" (Kiely 2005:4). The epoch of globalisation continues to be defined by the class struggle. The rise to orthodox status of neo-liberal economic and social policy; "represents the triumph of capital over labour at this point in world history" (Tooze 1997:227).

A strength of Marxist theory is that it identifies a materialist foundation to social relationships. This was the position taken by Lenin in 'Three Component parts of Marxism', in which he argues that all human perception reflects prevailing material property relations:

*“Just as man’s knowledge reflects nature (i.e., developing matter), which exists independently of him, so man’s social knowledge (i.e., his various views and doctrines—philosophical, religious, political and so forth) reflects the economic system of society. Political institutions are a superstructure on the economic foundation (Lenin 1963:45).*

The materialist method of Marxist analysis informs many theorists even if they rarely accept Marx’s revolutionary conclusions or the centrality of class struggle to social relations. This could be said of Massimo De Angeli’s approval of Marx’s analysis of the historical development of capitalist property relations while taking a simultaneous Gramscian approach to ideology that describes the co-optation of alternative ideology by capital (De Angelis 2007:33-39).

Several radical contributions to the discourse are more explicit in their rejection of Marxism as a basis for struggle. Cumbers et al have argued that:

*“Marx’s primary contribution to knowledge was as an analyst of capitalism, not as an architect of communism” (Cumbers et al 2007:33)*

Leopold Labedz too is perhaps clearer on this point; “It is only when Marx the thinker is disassociated from Marx the prophet, and from the movement of which he is the patron saint, that it is at all possible to do him justice” (Labedz 1962:26). For some this disassociation has rendered Marxism an entirely misleading description of their ideological position. Anthony Brewer deals with this, as I have discussed in this chapter, in his study of Marxist theories of imperialism (Brewer 1990). Brewer demonstrates how dependency theory, conceptualised as a development in a Marxist tradition, actually jettisoned the central class analysis of Marx. In the wake of dependency theory and the experience of the Cuban revolution in 1958 many ‘Marxist’ thinkers began to write off the industrial proletariat as an agent of revolutionary change anticipating the decentralisation of class inherent in post-socialist ideology. Labedz’s advice has latterly been heeded by many contemporary theorists (Hardt & Negri 2000, Saad-Filho 2003, Wall 2005) who argue that a Marxist analysis need not rest on classical concepts of the centrality of class struggle but aspire, as David

Harvey puts it, to: “Keep the spirit of Marxism alive while letting the material body go” (Harvey 1999:557).

More recently, Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales have introduced a new generation to Marxist ideology and have partially pushed back the post-socialist tide that has flowed only one way since the collapse of the former Soviet bloc. In practice, neither Chavez nor Morales has introduced a socialist programme but both regimes have used state powers to partially re-nationalise key national assets, in particular gas and oil reserves, in order to provide state welfare. To date their regimes have carried through only limited nationalisations of industries that were privatised during years of structural adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s:

*“In fact, Chavez has not pursued nationalisation in nearly so radical a manner, or on as wide a scale, as anti-imperialist governments in the developing world had pursued in the mid-twentieth century—for example, Egypt under Nasser” (Venezuelanalysis 2008b).*

Both Venezuela and Bolivia have carried through a significant but limited reform package but the regimes’ attempts to reform, without challenging the rule of capital more fundamentally, are now resulting in a slowdown in the reform process, especially in Venezuela. Latin American movements have nevertheless refocused attention on to the state and property relations but the issues of class consciousness and agency for social change remain a problem for Marxists in Latin America and globally. Events are moving at such a pace in the region that there is little in the way of an academic literature concerning the most current ideological considerations. Marxist groups in Britain have differing perspectives on Venezuela with Socialist Appeal, which influences the Hands Off Venezuela Campaign, somewhat isolated in defending the Chavez regime from the criticism of other Marxist groups. The Socialist Party has highlighted what it considers to be shortcomings in Chavez’s political programme and methods of organisation:

*“Another aspect of the struggle in the PSUV (United Socialist party of Venezuela) is over the question of the program of the party. Chavez said that the idea that the working class should lead the revolutionary movement, and the construction of socialism, were old*

*fashioned and obsolete. The question of Marxism has been pushed to the sidelines by the PSUV bureaucracy” (Socialist Party 2008b)*

Developments in Latin America have brought socialist ideology back into the GMSJ but it would be an over-simplification to see this as a return to classical Marxist ideology. The post-socialist thesis exerts a significant influence, even over figures such as Chavez, who have returned to socialist imagery but not yet to a revolutionary socialist programme.

#### **2.5.4 Harvey’s defence of Marxism Wobbles**

*“I only hope that as the post-modern band plays on, the Titanic does not do anything as inconsiderate as founder (David Harvey, Progress in Human Geography V23 No4 Dec 1999:556-563)”.*

David Harvey has defended a Marxist theoretical analysis of social relations to a greater extent than most and the evolution of his ideas is of particular interest as he both resists but ultimately capitulates to some elements of post-socialist ideology. Harvey’s analysis of neo-liberal globalisation starts out from the same point as Andrew Glyn’s examinations of political economy; that is from a profit crisis after 1968 that eroded the economic position of the bourgeoisie. (Harvey 2003:16). Harvey is clear that; “From the beginning neo-liberalism was a project to achieve the restoration of class power” (ibid). This classical Marxist analysis is also applied to Harvey’s consideration of imperialist relations, which he argues are being driven by a process whereby the US is seeking to gain control of the Middle East, in order to secure oil supplies.

Harvey has been critical of those Marxists who have relocated capitalist oppression away from a class based process of production and into a process driven by geographical location. Like Brewer (ibid) he argues that geographical patterns occur within a class process of production (Harvey 1982, 2003). This position has brought him into direct conflict with the broad ‘post’ thesis, as Andrew Jones refers to in his polemic with Harvey (Jones 1999). Jones sets out a critique of Harvey that argues the latter’s continued conceptualisation of social relations, as a product of two competing

classes, is unable to offer theory or political prescriptions to a multitude of people who do not identify themselves in such terms. Therefore, argues Jones, a far more contextualised theory is required. In contrast Harvey has argued that:

*“While conceptions of justice may vary according to time, place and the individuals concerned, the acceptance of a particular conception without misunderstanding can provide a powerful mobilising discourse for political action” (Harvey 1996 Pg 332).*

Harvey argues that the post thesis cannot unite the GMSJ whereas class based theory can identify a cause around which an effective movement could be constructed (Harvey 1996). In this sense Harvey goes much further than many academic Marxists who accept Marx’s materialist political/economy method of analysis but believe his concept of class struggle to be outdated. But Harvey has been scathing towards such opponents:

*“It is convenient and doubtless comforting, in the face of current economic turmoil to rule out ‘old-time categories’ like capital and labour as far too simplistic for our outrageously complicated theorizations. It goes down even better to fantasize that ‘capitalism does not exist’ (except in our minds). I only hope that as the post-modern band plays on, the Titanic does not do anything as inconsiderate as founder. Even postmodernist academics have pensions. I sincerely hope that no binaries erupt to stand in the way of their collection. (Harvey 1999:563).*

Harvey’s distaste for the post-thesis is evident from this broadside aimed at those who call for a more sophisticated approach to theory than a binary class analysis. However, in his later work Harvey has, himself, made some important concessions to post-socialist ideas relating to the centrality of the working class in struggles for social justice and the importance of the process of capitalist production in shaping social relations. In *The New Imperialism*, Harvey starts out from the premise, shared with most theorists who have commented on the GMSJ that, “A world-wide anti-globalization movement (is) quite different in form from the class struggles embedded in the processes of expanded reproduction” (Harvey 2003:74). In particular, he appears to have been

carried along by his own particular post-socialist current, which he calls the theory of 'accumulation by dispossession'. Marxist theory perceives accumulation as the driving force behind capitalist property relations and locates the process of accumulation of capital within the process of production. Harvey though believes that in the neo-liberal epoch capitalists have ceased to accumulate through expanding production and have accumulated capital instead through a process of re-distribution of wealth, largely facilitated through the privatisation of assets that were previously held in common ownership and retrenchment of state welfare.

In essence, Harvey argues that capitalist accumulation is today based on the dispossession of others in the forms of privatisation and state welfare retrenchment rather than expanded production based on capital investment. There is some economic basis for this argument as demonstrated by Glyn (ibid) but Harvey's political conclusions can be challenged. Apparently accepting part of Jones' critique of his earlier position, Harvey now concedes that movements based on the workplace fail to incorporate social movements. In other words the binary struggle between capital and labour is no longer valid. Harvey does not abandon himself to the post-thesis indiscriminately though and he specifically rejects the thesis of Hardt and Negri who perceive global society as one undifferentiated multitude. Harvey argues that the GMSJ is based on global civil society. He echoes those post-socialist radicals who call for local autonomous networks to replace the state as a mechanism for delivering social justice (Klein, Chomsky, Hirst et al) but he resists the extremes of post-modern thinking. In particular, he argues that social movements can be differentiated according to whether they are progressive or not, although the only criteria he can offer is whether or not a movement arises from expansion of reproduction or from accumulation by dispossession.

Harvey has been justifiably sharp in his criticism of these who have failed to spell out their new discoveries of the way in which capitalism operates (Harvey 2003:87) but he fails to explain exactly how accumulation by dispossession has changed the social relations produced by capitalism. On one hand he defends the dialectical materialist method of Marx but he suggests that a quite fundamental shift has taken place of the social relations produced by capitalist accumulation. In A

Brief History of Neo-Liberalism, Harvey writes; “Neo-liberalism may have been about the restoration of class power (but) it has not necessarily meant the restoration of power to the same people” (Harvey 2005:31). But it is not clear what exactly is meant by this. If Harvey is arguing that some of the personnel who govern the heights of the capitalist economy have changed and that inter-imperialist relationships have shifted power between nations then this would be fairly uncontroversial. But Harvey appears to suggest more, in particular that a systemic shift in the dynamics of global capitalism itself has taken place. Unfortunately this is not developed, apart from an assertion that new fortunes made in ICT together with share packages for CEOs have shifted patterns of class formation. These new observations are of interest but do not undermine the foundations of Marxist analysis of property and class relationships.

Harvey defends many of the analytical methods of Marxism but his conception of how the GMSJ should organise and struggle bears the scars inflicted by post-socialism. In terms of a practical programme, Harvey argues that movements within the USA are critical but he limits his ambition to supporting the Democrats for the very reason that they are not reliant on the white working class (Harvey 1996:364-365). Beyond this he ponders, in the abstract, whether the political party is still relevant (Harvey *ibid*: 434).

The theory of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ is based on a real observed fall in capital investment over business cycles since the 1960’s (Harvey 2005, Glyn *ibid*) but this is insufficient to justify Harvey’s political conclusions including the relocation of class struggle out of the workplace and into the US Democratic Party, which has little appeal to the wider GMSJ. Although Glyn’s data does demonstrate a fall in capital investment during the neo-liberal epoch it also shows that the share of global output taken by wages has fallen to a post-war low in the epoch of neo-liberal globalisation leading to the development of new trade unions, especially in China, a process that Paul Mason believes will; “shape the century” (Mason 2008:7). Harvey defends dialectical materialism and the analytical methods of Marxism but in his theory of accumulation by dispossession, he has absorbed

post-socialist ideology that places fragmented social movements at the heart of radical politics, in place of the organised working class.

### **2.5.5 Can Marxism Appeal to the Democratic Aspirations of the GMSJ?**

*"Who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past"*

*(George Orwell 1949:40)*

Before the GMSJ embraces Marxist ideology, its proponents must demonstrate that it can meet the democratic aspirations of activists seeking global social justice. At present, capitalism has established an orthodox view that the totalitarian degeneration and collapse of the Soviet bloc represents the failure of "actual existing socialism" (Hall *ibid*). As Orwell put it (top), control of the orthodox perception of history confers control of orthodox attitudes towards socialism as an alternative social system in the future. Contemporary Marxists must challenge the orthodox historical narrative of the failure of socialism and raise the concept of a democratically controlled form of socialist state planning if Marxism is to appeal to the democratic and cultural aspirations of the global poor and oppressed.

Marxists who are active in the GMSM, in Britain, generally reject the Stalinist model of communism and stand in the traditions of the left opposition, or Trotskyism. But the theoretical origins of post-socialist ideology are to be located in the traditions of official Communism (including Hall & Jacques) and either refuse to acknowledge or have no knowledge of the Trotskyist position. Nowhere in the Marxism Today thesis (Hall & Jacques 1983, 1989) is there any recognition of the position of the left opposition or Trotskyism, while Carl Boggs, in his account of Eurocommunism, displays a complete disregard for the history of Russian communism and the struggle of the Left Opposition (Boggs *ibid*).

Contemporary radical theory fails to engage with any anti-Stalinist socialist ideology. Peter claims that:



*It was the Communist International, based on an increasing number of socialist states that continued the Marxist tradition, demonstrating this with its consistent support for working class protests and organisations worldwide” (Waterman 1998:16)*

Those who understand the position of the left opposition after the Russian revolution would object that it was the Communist International that time and time again sabotaged efforts to spread the global revolution. This was certainly the position of Trotsky (1935, 1938b, 1939) who argued that the Communist International worked against the revolutionary movement in Spain and in relation to Stalin’s pact with Hitler in order to protect its position inside the USSR. Most often though, radical post-socialism has not even engaged with this question. Klein, George, Bello, Monbiot et al appear not to have considered the possibility of a socialist alternative to Stalinism while Chomsky mentions Trotskyism only from a hostile anarchist perspective.

Roger Burbach et al at least identify the issue of Marxist ideology and the exercise, or what they term the culture, of power. Burbach et al argue that the imposition of communism from above was an adoption of bourgeois culture of power. This is a common anarchistic approach to the question of the democratic control of a workers state. But where is any consideration of how to democratise power as expressed in an organised form? A glance at the index reveals that the ideas of Marx, Stalin, and Lenin have been taken into account but not Trotsky, who not for the first time, is written out of history (Burbach et al 1997:43-45)

Amongst contemporary contributions Alex Callinicos provides rare academic contributions to the discourse within the GMSJ from a Trotskyist perspective. Somewhat ironically, the neo-conservative Frances Fukuyama reveals a better knowledge and appreciation of the democratic position of Trotsky and the left opposition than many so-called radicals. Describing the radical political scene in New York Metropolitan University in the immediate post-war period, Fukuyama writes that: “The Trotskyists understood better than most people, the utter cynicism and brutality of the Stalinist regime” (Fukuyama 2006:16). New Times contemplated that: “It is now difficult to understand the immense credulity of the supporters of communism” (Steadman-Jones, 1989:232) but Trotskyists

might object that the left opposition understood the nature of Stalinism a good half-century before the enlightened theoreticians of the Communist Party, who went on to develop the Eurocommunist/Marxism Today thesis.

Trotsky set out the essence of his position in 1937 when he published, 'The Revolution Betrayed'. In this work he argued that, "Socialism requires democracy as a body requires oxygen", and he dissected the economic and social failures of the USSR under Stalin (Trotsky 1972). Trotsky constructed an argument for a democratic political revolution to overthrow what he described as a bureaucratic caste that has seized hold of the workers' state. The central ideas of both Lenin and Trotsky regarding socialist democracy have an obvious potential appeal to the GMSJ. In 'What is to be done?' Lenin called for "all power to the soviets" (local workers committees) (Lenin 1977b). Eighty years later, In 'Zapatista', John Holloway advocates a social structure based on what he calls a process of command obeying, which he accepts is "broadly analogous to the soviets" (Holloway 1998:130). Manuel Castells describes how command obeying proceeds: "Once a decision has been made the whole community had to follow the common decision, to the extent that, in a few instances, villagers were expelled because of their refusal to participate in the uprising" (Castells 2003:80). The Bolsheviks adhered to the principles of democratic centralism, which has been criticised by anarchist writers for many years, but whereas the leader of the Zapatistas is the anonymous and masked 'Sub-Comandante Marcos' the leaders of the Bolshevik party were elected through the mass participation of workers and soldiers and accountable to the same. Lenin spelt out his position on democratic accountability in State and Revolution, which called for rotation of all state officials, immediate right to recall all representatives and for soviet bottom up democracy (Lenin 1937).

In Revolution Betrayed, Trotsky set out his thesis that saw the struggle between the Left opposition and the forces of Stalinism as a struggle dominated by the material backwardness, both economically and culturally, of Russia after 1917 together with the isolation of the revolution following defeats of revolutionary Marxist forces in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. Those

seeking to build a movement for another world should consider the specific historical context of the failure to establish an enduring workers' democracy out of the Russian revolution. Noam Chomsky is one writer who has commented on this debate:

*“People say, ‘The Bolsheviks had to do it’. Lenin and Trotsky had to do it, because of the contingencies of the civil war, for survival, there wouldn't have been food otherwise, this and that. Well, obviously the question there is, was that true?... Here you get into a question where you don't want to be too cavalier about it—it's a question of historical fact (Chomsky 2003a:225).*

Chomsky urges a careful consideration but accepts the orthodox view. In this respect he reflects the great mass of contemporary social theory, which accepts the orthodox perception of socialist planning as organically totalitarian.

The Marxist programme for democratic socialist planning, in place of the capitalist market, remains the only coherent systemic alternative to capitalism that has been put before the GMSJ. Twenty-first century Marxism must be about the democratic construction of an ecologically sustainable plan of production, matching social needs with economic potential. During the late twentieth century that alternative lost credibility as the former Stalinist Soviet bloc collapsed. Proponents of Marxism must convince the global poor and oppressed that the totalitarian crimes and economic disintegration of Stalinism need not be a feature of a genuine socialist democracy.

## **2.6 Conclusion: “Workers of the World Unite; You Have Nothing to Lose but your Chains”**

*“The only coherent program presented (at the Paris ESF) was for the destruction of the capitalist class and the establishment of a command economy (George Monbiot 2003b)*

Post-socialist theory in the fields of geographical globalisation theory (Held *ibid*), social theory (Giddens) and political theory (Hall & Jacques *ibid*) has asserted that underlying global social relations have been transformed in the epoch of globalisation. These ideas are reflected in radical theory addressing the GMSJ (Klein, Chomsky, Hardt and Negri *ibid*). In this thesis I have disputed this claim and demonstrated that many of the concepts of post-socialist theory can be found in theoretical writings dating back to nineteenth century anarchism, the development of social democracy around the turn of the twentieth century and new left and Eurocommunist ideology in the period after 1968. The rise of post-socialist theory to orthodox status has not occurred because post-socialism has arisen out of new underlying social relations but as a result of an ideological and economic offensive on the part of capital against the organised labour movement. The objections to Marxist and socialist ideas that are raised by post-socialism are not new but in a period characterised by a crisis of social democracy and collapse of Stalinism it has been possible for post-socialists to establish the concept that it is not those particular ideological currents but socialism itself that has failed. The orthodox position has not eradicated all dissent and some, within the academy and within the GMSJ, continue to focus on socialist concepts of class, power, property relations and either state regulation or planning of the economy. However, these dissenting voices are difficult to hear against the deafening chorus of post-socialist theory.

I have argued that Marxist concepts relating to power, property relations, class, nation, state and political party all remain valid in the twenty-first century. Marx's analysis of the process of capitalist production and accumulation of capital continues to describe global capitalism in the twenty-first century. In contrast, post-socialist concepts of fragmented global social relations emanating from a diffuse pattern of identities and culturally produced injustice does not help to clarify how the GMSJ can address global social injustice or what kind of other world it should aspire to. Post-socialism rejects Marxist strategies to take economic power into the hands of the oppressed class but does not replace it with another strategy, other than the creation of open space within which to conduct a discourse.

In the following chapters I will explore, with respondents who are active within the GMSJ in Britain, whether Marxist concepts of power, class and property relations are relevant to them and whether the GMSJ has developed an alternative understanding of capitalist social relations. I will challenge activists from the GMSJ to identify sources of power and social injustice and compare this with Marx's class analysis, on one hand and the temporal/special concepts of post-socialism, on the other.

The GMSJ has highlighted the role of multinational corporations and financial institutions in forcing neo-liberal economic and social policies onto nation states. The mechanisms used by imperialism to dominate the global economy have evolved and changed throughout the twentieth century but a pattern of domination by advanced capitalist countries, in particular but not only the USA, remains. Claims that states have a limited ability to exercise sovereignty over global capital are valid but also miss an essential point that states have always acted as instruments of capital. Since 1968 coercion has been far more in evidence, as a feature of both Stalinist and social democratic states, than reform and social justice. I will discuss with respondents their concepts of nation, state and imperialism and whether the nation state continues to be an institution that wields effective power to influence social relations. In particular I will ask respondents whether the GMSJ has been able to conceptualise a credible way of organising another world, if not through a state of some description.

The social forums explicitly exclude political parties from affiliation. Bakunin rejected the concept of the political party in the nineteenth century and anarchist concepts of parties as coercive and unresponsive to autonomous demands for social justice continue to inform the GMSJ. I will discuss these ideas with activists including many who participate in the GMSJ as members of socialist parties, irrespective of the parties' inability to affiliate collectively. The absence of party-type structures in the GMSJ has been identified as a problem that allows high profile individuals to wield informal power that is not subject to any collective check. I will discuss this concept and also examine whether the GMSJ can progress without a structure that can decide on an agreed programme and strategy to apply to the struggle for social justice.

I have identified three broad traditions into which the ideological approach of the literature can be organised. They are: Post-socialism; Social democracy and Marxism. All three traditions face fundamental challenges if they are provide the basis for another world of global social justice. Post-socialism must get beyond abstract concepts of fragmented social relations and explain who or what force can carry through a transformation to another world. It must show how its theorising on power and identity can be translated into a concrete programme for action and foundation for another world. Social democracy has traditionally rested on the more earthly concept of state regulation of capital to deliver more just social outcomes. Those who argue that the state's function must now be played by some other, more socially responsive, entity must explain what this might be. In any event, those who seek to reform capitalism in the twenty-first century must explain who or what is able to either convince or coerce capital to enter into a new social consensus when the profitability gains of the past period have been made by shifting the share of global output away from wages and welfare.

George Monbiot has argued that socialist planning remains the only coherent alternative to global capitalism put before the GMSJ (top). But Monbiot concludes that socialist planning must necessarily rest on a totalitarian political regime and consequently he argues against any systemic change. I will seek to establish, over the course of the following chapters, whether the GMSJ has developed a distinctly new ideological approach to social justice and to what extent the three traditions I have identified are present within the movement. I will consider what ideological foundations inform respondents' visions of another world and whether Monbiot's contention is fair. This thesis has argued, like Monbiot, that socialist planning is the only coherent systemic alternative to global capitalism. Unlike Monbiot, I argue that socialist planning need not rest on a totalitarian 'commandist' state. There is a rich history of anti-Stalinist Marxist theory, including the Trotskyist tradition, dating back to the Left opposition in Russia after the Russian revolution and I will seek to engage respondents with this democratic socialist tradition.

Post-socialism has achieved orthodox status throughout the social sciences and has influenced prominent theoretical engagements with the GMSJ itself. I have argued, however, that post-socialism does not correspond to material social relations in the epoch of globalisation. My thesis will defend Marxist concepts of power, property relations, class, nation, state and party and will raise these concepts with activists from the movement. Marx addressed the global working class in 1848, when he urged them to throw off the chains of capitalist oppression. This thesis will explore, with respondents from the GMSJ, whether that call has the capacity to organise a twenty-first century movement against global social injustice.

### **3 In Defence of a Marxist Methodology**

*“Each mental image of the world system is and remains in actual fact limited, objectively by the historical conditions and subjectively by the physical and mental constitution of its originator” (Engels 1877a)*

When Frederick Engels wrote these words he was polemicising against the metaphysics of Eugene Duhring. Duhring had presented a grand narrative of all worldly processes based on morality and ethical socialism. This stood in opposition to Marx and Engels’ concept of a class struggle as Duhring sought eternal truths that transcended the material interests of antagonistic social classes. But if Engels were alive today it would not be enlightenment positivism that he would be polemicising against but its opposite; post-modern idealism.

I have developed an argument that Marx’s description of political/economic forces remains more useful, as an explanation of global social injustice and as a guide to action for the GMSJ, than post-socialist theory. In this chapter I will argue that the epistemology of dialectical materialism, as embraced by Marx, Engels and subsequent Marxist theoreticians, provides a methodological guide to the construction of this thesis that has allowed me to avoid the ossified eternal truths of metaphysical narratives but also the excessive subjectivity of post-modern inspired theory. Dialectical materialism is an epistemology that seeks material origins behind man’s ideas but also understands that material forces remain in a constant state of flux and interact with human subjectivity to shape social relations. It is this over-arching assumption that sits at the heart of both the methodology and the discourse of this thesis.

The methodology that I have employed in the collection, analysis and reporting of data is shaped by this dialectical materialist epistemology but also by the extensive scope of the questions at the heart of the thesis, which are concerned with the broad ideological background and character of the GMSJ. As a consequence of this scope it has not been possible to engage in intensive



ethnographic research and so, the legitimacy of the data employed is established by overlaying the perceptions and ideas of respondents from different sources and different ideological traditions.

My opportunity to gain access to participants within the GMSJ has also helped shape the construction of this thesis. As an active participant myself, I have an existing knowledge of the different traditions and groupings within the movement. There is no such thing as a representative body of the GMSJ but the social forum movement is the closest thing to it. I have used the affiliation list to the 2004 ESF in London as a source of respondents and have taken advantage of the possibility to discuss with different ideological traditions in order to gain a broad picture of ideological processes. The data from these discussions has been recorded verbatim and transcribed in full. These transcripts have been coded and data extracted that relates to each of the themes under investigation, which have gone on to form the empirical chapters four, five, six and seven of the thesis.

In analysing the data I have considered two common approaches of contemporary methodology to quantitative research: Grounded theory and Action research. My own approach reflects certain elements of each but is also distinctly different to both. The dialectical materialist approach that informs this thesis takes the empirical rigour of a grounded theory approach but also recognises, as does action research, that no researcher is truly without a subjective position and this will always be reflected in the research and reporting of research. Norman Denzin explains that an action research approach; "forcefully aligns the ethics of research with the politics of the oppressed, with the politics of resistance and hope and freedom" (Denzin 2005:952). Like action research I explicitly acknowledge that my research is motivated by a desire to contribute to the development and success of the GMSJ. I will discuss further the management of subjectivity later in this chapter.

Grounded theory allows the researcher to validate theoretical arguments through empirical data. But grounded theory conceptualises a data collection process that is essentially value free and allows theoretical themes to emerge without any external input from the researcher (Strauss & Corbin 1998:12-13, Grbich 2007:55-67). Although grounded theory started out as a tool of positivist

investigation, in which the data would be expected to reveal the nature of things, it has an obvious appeal for post-modern theorists, who have embraced the idea of individual perceptions giving rise to contextualised and personal truths revealed through ethnographic research.

This thesis will not wait for the data to develop its own themes, as in grounded research projects but is intended to test the usefulness of post-socialist ideas and reappraise the contribution that socialist theory can make to the GMSJ. In this sense, this thesis draws on the approach of action research (Reason & Bradbury 2006). Action research argues that a value free approach to research is impossible, a position that I accept. It has often been utilised by researchers who wish to contribute to a movement they are studying but it focuses on the production of knowledge rather than the production of material economic flows (Reason & Bradbury 2006:ppxxiii). My thesis aims to discuss the usefulness of different ideological approaches to the production of global social injustice through material social and economic forces. Therefore, this thesis will explore a number of hypotheses that I have set out in the previous chapter. In essence the hypothesis is: 'that traditional Marxist ideology explains processes contributing to global social injustice and offers a programme for countering injustice that is more useful to the GMSJ than contemporary post-socialist theory'.

In practical terms, the methodological approach of the thesis is straight forward. The collection of data has taken place through in-depth interviews (Fontana & Frey 2005) that have been subjected to a discourse analysis. This does not mean the process has been without challenges. In particular the vast scope of the field of enquiry has demanded that data be sufficiently rich on each issue that I have dealt with while allowing space to deal with the full range of the thesis. Organising the thesis into themes proved especially challenging as each theme has implications for others and each piece of data could usefully be considered within two or more chapters of the written thesis.

In the next section I will discuss the overall methodological approach of the thesis and I will deal, in subsequent sections, with the definition of the research question; management of subjectivity and data collection and analysis. Finally this chapter will identify some limitations of the research and present my methodological conclusions.

### **3.1 The Epistemology of Dialectical Materialism**

*“The great thinkers of the eighteenth century could, no more than their predecessors, go beyond the limits imposed upon them by their epoch” (Engels ibid)*

The dialectical materialist method of Marxism, as expressed by Engels (above) rejects any sense of eternal laws or morality emanating from the minds of men but also asserts the primacy of given material conditions, at any particular time, in the shaping of subjective perceptions.

Engels’ polemic against the metaphysics of Eugen Duhring is considered by many Marxists to be the most complete enunciation of the Marxist methodology of dialectical materialism. But it will perhaps seem odd, to those schooled in late twentieth century post-modern inspired theory, that Engels took a position against metaphysics at all. Indeed, post-modern influenced theory, which rejects the ‘grand narrative’ (Taylor 1999) has targeted what many perceive as the unfounded certainties of Marx’s class analysis.

But post-socialist theory fails to understand the fundamental difference between metaphysical certainties and the dialectical application of materialism. David Papineau demonstrates this when he argues that:

*“Marxists predict that proletarian revolutions will be successful whenever capitalist regimes have been sufficiently weakened by their internal contradictions. But when faced with unsuccessful proletarian revolutions, they simply respond that the contradictions in those particular capitalist regimes have not yet weakened them sufficiently” (Papineau 1995:130).*

In a similar vein, John Holloway’s thesis on the Zapatista uprising is built on his assertion that Marxism is guilty of the exclusion of subjectivity; “All that is left for Marxists to do is to fill in the details (of history)” (Holloway 2005:122).

This objection could only be substantiated in the face of the most clumsy and one-sided expression of Marxist theory. The role of political ideology, of programme and the leadership of the

revolutionary party occupied all of the major Marxist revolutionary political and theoretical figures, none more so than Lenin, who argued that the overthrow of capitalism could never be taken for granted as a result of its own contradictions alone. Indeed, Lenin's position, which held that in the particular conditions of early twentieth century Russia a socialist consciousness must be brought into the masses from the intelligentsia, has attracted the opprobrium of anarchists ever since (Lenin 1977b:112-132). Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky conceptualised social relations as a class struggle shaped by material class relations of production and an ideological struggle of ideas arising from material contradictions. This should not be taken to mean the inevitable triumph of the proletariat at every point of engagement but a struggle that can be won or lost at any given time. Lest there be any remaining doubt about how the most significant Marxist thinkers deal with the issue of certainty and subjectivity, consider what Trotsky says in response to those who could not understand how the totalitarian ideology of Stalinism was able to triumph over the "superior" democratic ideology of the left opposition in Russia:

*"That kind of objection, which comes automatically to mind, is convincing, however, only for those who think rationalistically, and see in politics a logical argument or a chess match. A political struggle is in its essence a struggle of interests and forces, not of arguments (Trotsky 1972:86)*

In 'The Elements of Social Scientific thinking', Hoover, Donovan and Wadsworth (2004) claim that Marx was striving to release the "inner nature" of human beings. Marx did argue that human beings were alienated by capitalist society and Marxism has always sought to free human kind in a spiritual sense as well as an economic one. However, Marx argued that the process of class struggle is central to social relations and located this assertion within a given but temporary set of material circumstances, or as he put it, economic superstructure, on which all legal and political structures are erected (Fromm 2003:13). Both Marx and Engels were implacably opposed to metaphysical theory as Engels made clear in his polemic with Duhring (Engels *ibid*).

When commenting on political manifestos, such as the Communist Manifesto, it is important not to insist on too literal a reading of some formulations. Were we to do so we would have to take to task the post-modern socialism of Burbach et al for their own determinist approach:

*“The post-modern economies will ultimately become ascendant because global capitalism excludes more and more people, and also because of inherent contradictions and crisis within the system itself” (Burbach 1997:7).*

Burbach et al show the determinist certainty of Marx in his formulation of the proletariat as the grave diggers of capitalism. Unfortunately post-socialist theory has preferred to turn Marxist theory into a one-sided straw man to knock down rather than engage in a rigorous evaluation of its themes.

In 1894 it was necessary for Marxism to distinguish its dialectical method from the inflexibility of Duhring's eternal truths and ultimate understanding of everything. Today, after decades of post-modern theory of power and knowledge, Marxism must make a stand against the idealist subjectivity of relativism. Such subjectivity develops out of post-modern perceptions of identity and power that constitute a vast thesis developed, in the main, since 1968 and influenced by Foucault et al, who located fragmented power relations in the human mind rather than as a product of material relations (Taylor 1999, Grbich 2007). Post-socialist idealism stands in stark opposition to dialectical materialism, which starts from the position that knowledge lies in matter (Taylor 1999:5-17).

Elements of a post-modern approach have been incorporated into grounded theory (Charmaz 2005) and are inherent in the methodology of action research, as Reason & Bradbury explain:

*“The dominant view of social transformation has been preoccupied with the need for changing the oppressive structures of relations in material production...but, and this is the distinctive viewpoint of participatory action research, domination of the masses by elites is rooted not only in the polarization of control over material production but also over the means of knowledge production” (Reason & Bradbury 2006:ppxxiii)*

In contrast to much post-modern methodology, Marx combined the Hegelian dialectical theory of change through discourse with a materialist foundation. I have attempted to apply this Marxist method to this thesis through the examination of shifting discourses of contemporary radical social theory in the context of underlying material socio/economic relations.

There can be no question that the influence of Marxist methodology has lost popularity as the influence of Marxism has receded in the academy. Carol Grbich (ibid) explains how the critical emancipatory epistemological approach grew out of Marxist theory but tends to be concerned with a broader sense of identity rather than focusing on social class. Alvesson and Skoldberg argue that "critical theory maintains a dialectical view of society" (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2000:110) but agree with Grbich that material class relations have been fragmented and subsumed within critical theory, which perceives that: "the main counter-forces of today are feminists and environmentalists" (ibid:14), rather than the traditional class based labour movement.

Post-socialist orthodox concepts have taken root across the social sciences and have combined post-modern philosophical ideas with revisionist political theory. This orthodoxy has rejected Marx's assertion that economic relations will be the primary determinant in patterns of social injustice and that the only force capable of transforming such property relations is the global proletariat. Academic focus of fragmented networks of social movements rather than class based political parties and trade union organisations has flowed from this epistemological approach. This thesis aims to reassess the viability and effect of post-socialist theory through the integration of an empirical investigation into the ideological influences acting on participants within the GMSJ with a theoretical review of academic literature pertaining to the role of power, property, class, nation, state and party in the reproduction and transformation of global social relations. In my attempt to achieve this I have also reassessed the orthodox methodological approach of post-socialist theory and have constructed a thesis that originates in the Marxist epistemology of dialectical materialism.

## **3.2 Defining the Research Question**

*“I am always surprised by doctoral students and colleagues who forthrightly state that they wish to do a qualitative study without any question in mind” (Holliday 2002:21).*

Adrian Holliday cites Janesick (above) to assert the primacy of the research question in the formulation of an appropriate methodology. Holliday believes that research is often motivated by the question: “What’s going on here; how can I explain it?” (ibid: 24).

The underlying hypothesis that is examined in this thesis was formulated as a result of my own activism at demonstrations and forums of the GMSJ, while I was studying a unit of my Economic & Social Policy BSc titled: Globalisation in a Contemporary World. It occurred to me that the main, post-socialist, theoretical trends that dominate transformationalist globalisation theory did not correspond with my own observations of the GMSJ. Further, the theoretical assumptions of post-socialist theory relating to power, class, property relations, nation, state and party did not seem to offer the GMSJ a coherent programme for action and were therefore not helpful to a movement that sought not to simply explain injustice but to end it.

I set out to discuss such ideological concepts with participants in the GMSJ in order to be able to draw some conclusions about the broad ideological character and fault lines within the movement both across and within three traditional ideological currents: Marxists, Social Democrats and post-socialists, who incorporate many concepts from anarchist and globalisation theory.

The arguments of George Monbiot were of particular interest. Monbiot argued, after the London ESF in November 2004, that in spite of all the meetings and discussions that had taken place no-one had been able to identify a new political approach to the struggle for social justice. According to Monbiot the movement still faced the same choice of revolutionary socialist change or reforming capitalist markets to deliver socially just outcomes (Monbiot 2003b).

I will argue that Monbiot is unnecessarily dismissive of socialist ideology but his comments about the absence of 'new' alternatives are justified. Developing these points the hypothesis that I have developed is based on three propositions:

- "Post-socialist contemporary theory does not offer the GMSJ a theoretical foundation on which it can construct a programme for action or viable strategy for the construction of 'another world'.
- Post-socialist theory has been unable to progress beyond abstract concepts of power and identity that are unhelpful in the construction of a mass movement for social change. Marxist theory is more helpful in explaining patterns of social injustice.
- Marxist theory continues to correspond with the experience of activists within the GMSJ and is likely to be a prominent influence on the future programmes and actions of mass movements for social justice.

### **3.3 The Management of Subjectivity: Grounded Theory, Action Research and Dialectical Materialism**

*"No analysis is neutral...social justice researchers are likely to understand their starting assumptions; other researchers may not" (Charmaz:510-511).*

Adrian Holliday argues, from the perspective of grounded theory, that all researchers are "socially located" (Holliday 2002:10). In this thesis the ideological beliefs of respondents and the researcher are not to be avoided but are the very object of the research and by openly identifying the position of both researcher and respondents, this thesis can achieve a greater understanding of the ideological evolution of the GMSJ than could be achieved by an ostensibly normative study that considers ideology in the abstract. However, whilst welcoming subjectivity into the thesis it is



necessary to both acknowledge and understand the limitations of subsequent data within the process of theory construction.

I draw on the two most popular methodological approaches to qualitative data analysis in social science, which are grounded theory and action research. Grounded theory emanates from a positivist tradition, seeking to remove the perceptions of the researcher from the data analysis process and thus allowing the data to reveal its own themes and narratives (Holliday 2002:145). According to Clifford Christians, this approach informed the classical social democratic theory of Max Weber but Christians argues that such a separation of (subjective) morality from human freedom is bankrupt (Christians 2005:140-148).

Proponents of action research argue that no research or theory can be truly value free and will always depend upon the questions the researcher chooses to pose and the respondents that he/she chooses to pose them before (Holliday 2002, Robson 2002, Christians 2005). These choices establish the foundations of a research project before the process of data analysis has even begun and when it does begin the perceptions of the researcher will again dictate the organisation and selection of data and the narrative that will run through it. The dialectical method of Marxism shares this position with action research, in so far as it understands all human perception to reflect a particular perspective on material reality rather than a normative and true representation.

Marx recognised that ideology reflected class interests (Marx 1968:35-46). The truth of bourgeois society was materially and therefore subjectively different for workers than was the case for the ruling class and the point of Marx's philosophy was, famously, not to interpret the world but to change it (Marx 1845). In their 'Handbook of Action Research', Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury argue that action research can be traced back to this "Marxist dictum" and raises again the notion that it is legitimate to conduct research "with the aim of bringing about social change" (Reason & Bradbury 2006:3). Action research has established a tradition within feminist social theory, as Christians points out, with respect to the feminist communitarian model (see also Denzin 2005).

Feminist communitarianism, “generates social criticism, leads to resistance and empowers to action those who are interacting” (Christians: 155). The location of research within a social movement is seen not as weakness that removes objective rigour from research but as a strength, derived from the rooting of theory within society and not abstracting it from the active world (Marshall 2006:335).

This thesis is most certainly located within the GMSJ both conceptually and in practice. The central hypothesis emanates from my own understandings of contemporary theory and the character of the GMSJ. Holliday argues that it is legitimate to treat the personal experience of the researcher as data but also stresses the need for the writer to be aware of the power and privilege they are accorded in such circumstances. My own direct observations of the GMSJ were essential during the development of the hypothesis but during the data collection phase I relied on the concepts and ideas of respondents.

Colin Robson describes a reflexive dialectical approach of ‘real world research’ (Robson 2002), while Holliday offers reflexivity as a way in which the researcher can, “respond to the realisation that researchers and their methods are entangled with the politics of the social world they study” (Holliday *ibid*: 146). Judi Marshall develops these arguments (*ibid*) and suggests that researchers engage in cycles of self-reflection and action. This describes well my data collection phase. After I conducted a pilot interview, I ensured that my voice recording was transcribed within days and I reviewed the raw data obtained. From this I was able to develop the topic guide (see 3.4.5) and shift the focus of subsequent interviews. In this way the data combined with my own subjective perceptions in the form of the initial hypothesis and my responses to the data.

This stands in contrast to the traditional method of grounded theory, which allows data to construct its own narratives while the researcher remains value free. But in more recent years grounded theory has, like action research, embraced post-modern ideas and many contemporary grounded theorists reject the positivism at the heart of Strauss and Glazer’s original methodology. In the application of grounded theory described by Kathy Charmaz, the interaction of the researchers own perceptions and the data proceeds in a similar way to that described by action researchers; “We

begin our analyses early to help focus further data collection” (Charmaz 2005:508). As shown above, Charmaz is particularly concerned with the application of grounded theory to social justice research and in contrast to traditional grounded theorists she emphasises the advantage of the researcher acknowledging their subjective starting point rather than obscuring it. This acknowledgement of subjectivity is, according to Charmaz, prevalent amongst social justice researchers (ibid).

Charmaz explicitly seeks to integrate post-modern sensibilities into grounded theory (ibid:509), which contrasts with my own dialectical materialist approach. Nevertheless, Charmaz’s belief that a social justice researcher benefits from a strong sense of their own starting position is one that I share. Throughout this thesis I have analysed the ideology of respondents with a critical scepticism towards post-socialist theory and a rooting in classical Marxist theory based on an analysis of social relations defined by property relations and class struggle. In a project of such scope it would have been possible to maintain the pretence of normative neutrality while picking and choosing data from particular sources to facilitate the organic rise of a narrative out of that data. It is a strength of this thesis that the writer’s voice is clearly acknowledged and expresses itself in relation to the data.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

*“Interviewing is a powerful way of helping people to make explicit things that have hitherto been implicit” (Skhekedi 2005:49).*

Post-socialist concepts have influenced theory in many fields of social science but common to all currents of post-socialism is the concept that movements for social justice must move on from outdated socialist ideologies. The aim of my empirical research was to probe participants within the GMSJ in order to make explicit their own fundamental ideological beliefs and understandings. The primary data collected for this thesis has come entirely from interviews, from as broad a section of the GMSJ as has been possible. In addition to the empirical data, secondary data has been

extracted from theoretical literature relating to the GMSJ and wider social theory. I describe this process further below and explain how the literature has informed my theoretical discourse in chapter two. The process of reviewing literature commenced in October 2004 and was substantially completed in a period of a year; however, I have continued to incorporate new data from theoretical literature right up to and during the writing up phase. In chapters four to seven the theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter 2 have been integrated with primary empirical data extracted from interviews with participants from the GMSJ. The interview process commenced at the end of 2005 with the last interview being conducted in March 2007.

The scope of the research demanded a focused approach to the collection of data in order to keep the project manageable. The most pressing task in conceptualising the data collection process was to restrict the parameters within which data would be collected. In particular the global scope of the GMSJ raises an issue of practicability. I took an early decision to limit the scope of the thesis to the participants within the GMSJ who are active in Britain. The influences acting on them however, may be imported from anywhere. There is no convenient list of participants in a de-centralised movement like the GMSJ but I was keen to set some sort of qualifying criteria for respondents to help define what the thesis was about. Had I simply spoken to anyone I found interesting the sample could have reflected my own position to an excessive degree, failing to identify counter positions within the movement and failing to capture any sense of the complex ideological character of the movement. I proceeded by taking the list of affiliates to the London ESF, held in November 2004, as a constituency. This definition of a data sample also allowed me to take advantage of the potential to gain access to respondents and I explain how this process also shaped the thesis in 3.3.2, while in 3.3.3 I discuss the sampling process in detail. In 3.3.4 I highlight some ethical questions that arose as a consequence of my dual relationship with respondents; in some cases political comrade and researcher, in other cases political opponent (not in general but in specific contexts) and researcher.

Ultimately I have not incorporated any data from this pilot interview in the final thesis and the substantive interview phase began in March 2006. Interviews were typically of between thirty to sixty minutes duration and were recorded using a digital voice recorder. These recordings have been copied onto a PC as wav files and have been backed up on CDs. Each interview recording has been transcribed in full and this data is also stored and backed up electronically.

### **3.4.1 Locating the Thesis within Radical Literature**

*From the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature” (Marx 1968).*

My familiarity with some of the works of Karl Marx and Lenin immediately caused me to question the assumption within transformationalist globalisation theory that what is now described as globalisation arises from social relations that are fundamentally different to those described in classical Marxist theory. Additionally, Marx’s insistence on an internationalist perspective for the workers’ movement calls into question the degree to which the global consciousness of the GMSJ is unique.

Post-socialist theory is best understood, not as a new response to new social relations but as a continuation of a tradition of radical revisionism that has sought to advance a non-Marxist programme for struggles against social injustice. I have identified this tradition extending back through several waves, in particular, Eurocommunism in the 1980s, the New Left that developed during the 1960s, social democratic revisionism of the early twentieth century and classical anarchism.

I then compared Marxist and revisionist traditions with some of the most popular literary contributions to the discourse of the GMSJ including Naomi Klein’s ‘No Logo’ (2000); Joseph Stiglitz’s ‘Globalisation and its Discontents’ (2002); Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt’s ‘Empire’ (2000); Noam Chomsky’s ‘Understanding Power’ (2003a); Susan George’s ‘Another World is

Possible If' (2004) and George Monbiot's article in 'Anti-capitalism: A guide to the Movement' (2001).

A further analysis of these literary trends, transformationalism, Marxism and contemporary radical anti-globalisation formed the basis of the upgrade report that was submitted in April 2006. The upgrade report identified the question raised by George Monbiot as absolutely central to the thesis. In essence, Monbiot argued that the GMSJ had not been able to identify any systemic alternative to global capitalism on which another world could be built (Monbiot 2003b). The upgrade report developed this and asked whether Marxist theory might yet offer a way forward to the GMSJ. The report argued that the contemporary radical literature of Klein, Hardt & Negri, Chomsky *et al* could not explain material processes that transmit power and injustice and that both transformationalist theory and popular radical theory could be best understood as a continuation of revisionist attacks on classical Marxist theory that continues to offer a more coherent explanation of, and alternative to, global capitalism.

The work of Anthony Giddens, David Held et al offers the researcher a rich source of transformationalist literature while the classical works of Marx and Lenin are also available as sources. In addition the work of David Harvey has provided an important contemporary Marxist perspective. When it comes to the radical literature influencing the GMSJ things become cloudier. In some cases the more prominent works are more journalistic than academic (Monbiot, Klein, George, Stiglitz et al). In each of these cases the contributors might be more than adequately academically qualified to make bona fide academic contributions but the character of these works is not as rigorous in that sense. Assertions outnumber referenced material and the works are aimed, not principally at students but at the active GMSJ. I have also referred occasionally to propaganda material produced by political parties (Sell 2002, The League for the 5th International 2004) where this material helps to illustrate the evolution of contemporary discourse.

My upgrade proposal was discussed, In May 2006 with my supervisor in conjunction with Dc Martin Frost (Birkbeck) and Dc Alan Ingram (UCL). Two principal areas were identified where further

literary bodies of work might be accessed. The narrative developing in the upgrade report argued that the major themes of post-socialist theory could be traced back through waves of revisionism to the New left of 1968 and even to classical anarchist ideas of the nineteenth century. Yet the narrative performed a great leap from the period following 1968 to the transformationalist theory of Giddens, Held et al. It was agreed that I should now turn to the Marxism Today thesis of Stuart Hall & Martin Jacques (Hall & Jacques 1983, 1989) in order to gain a more coherent sense of the path of revisionism through the latter part of the twentieth century. Separately, I also felt that if I wanted to comment on the evolution of social democracy alongside the Marxist left it would be necessary to consider the ideas of Max Weber (1947, 1948).

The upgrade process also identified a concern that the research was not engaging, to a sufficient extent, with contemporary geographical theory relating to the relationships that global social injustice has with space and time.

I have addressed this by considering Giddens' concept of time/space distanciation (Giddens 1976, 1981, 1991) together the ideas of Manuel Castells (ref) and David Held (1999) on this issue. Giddens, Castells and Held consider a process of compression of time and space to have fundamentally re-cast social relations and I am able to explore this theme further, in chapter two, by comparing and contrasting this approach with that of David Harvey, who argues that while the process of compression of space and time has forced Marxist theory to focus more on geographical difference it has not altered the fundamental power relationships within capitalist society (Harvey 1982, 1990). I was then able to integrate this discourse with the literature that had informed my upgrade report, in particular Justin Rosenberg (2000), who dismisses the globalisation theory of Giddens as abstract and unconnected to real material social relations. Rosenberg contends that it is more useful to examine how capital exploits technical innovation, cultural and economic flows rather than seeking an explanation for social relations in the properties of technology itself. Chapter two examines these issues although the empirical chapters, reflect the discussions with respondents, which did not reveal any interest in concepts of time/space compression..

Aside from these specific areas I continued to extend my review of available literature following the upgrade process. Searching for literature addressing revisionism brought me to the work of Leopold Labedz (1962), who shows most explicitly that the roots of post-socialism lie partly in the origins of revisionism around the turn of the twentieth century while a concerted effort to engage with classical anarchist theory demonstrated to me that another part of post-socialist ideology was directly derived from the ideas of Bakunin (1973) and Proudhon (1840).

An important strength of the data collected from the available literature is its interdisciplinary range. Activists in the GMSJ are not concerned with an ideas classification as geography, politics, economics, sociology or philosophy, only with its coherence and relevance to them. It has also become more difficult to locate particular literature within a discreet branch of social science as key contributors have developed their ideas beyond the bounds of their traditional discipline. For example, the social theory of Giddens addresses geographical issue of space and time but also takes on an overt political character in 'The third way' (Giddens 1998). David Harvey has moved faculties; from geography to anthropology but recent works including, 'A brief history of neoliberalism' (Harvey 2005) and, 'The enigma of capital' (Harvey 2010) contain a strong element of political economy and political theory. The literature that informs this thesis has been drawn from many academic disciplines and from work of a more journalistic and even propagandist character. I have acknowledged the origins of important concepts within the thesis and constructed a broad narrative of the evolution of post-socialist concepts throughout the social sciences and the influence of such ideas on the GMSJ.

### **3.4.2 Access to Respondents and Empirical Data**

*“Another very important task lies in establishing the research setting...This setting can in itself motivate the research (Holliday ibid:37)”*



A preoccupation of contemporary theory is the fragmented character of the GMSJ, which tends to coalesce through overlapping networks, existing in space, rather than any discreet structure.

However, if there is any organised manifestation of the breadth of the movement then it is probably the social forum. In terms of defining participants within Britain the list of affiliates to the 2004 ESF, held at the Alexander palace in London, provides a useful boundary for the research (Holliday *ibid*).

In chapter two I have explained how my own experience of the ESF gave rise to the hypothesis at the heart of this thesis. Also, as an active participant in the London ESF and a delegate to the event from my trade union (National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers), I was confident from the outset of this project that gaining access to a significant body of respondents from this constituency would be feasible.

The degree of fragmentation of the GMSJ has provided me with some challenges relating to gaining access to respondents from different ideological and organisational traditions. I am a member of the Socialist Party and a trade unionist with fraternal relationships that extend beyond my own union. It therefore proved a relatively straight-forward task to gain access to respondents from labour movement traditions, whether from a Marxist or Social Democratic variant. I was able to reach respondents either directly or through intermediaries using email and the telephone. Holliday describes the approach that yielded many of my respondents when he describes 'the politics of dealing' and argues that it is possible for the researcher to be accepted as an activist, gaining access through "friends of a friend" (Holliday 2002:164).

Being accepted as a trade union activist has without doubt helped me gain access but this thesis would be fatally limited if I were only to speak to activists from the labour movement tradition as the thesis set out to consider the extent to which post-socialist ideology is informing the GMSJ in a broad sense. Therefore I also needed to discuss with respondents from contrary ideological backgrounds. Gaining access to some of these traditions proved challenging as not only did I lack the personal contacts to gain access to respondents from these other traditions but the absence of representative individuals and the fragmented form of many grass-roots orientated networks made it

difficult to identify a way in which to enter their orbit. Even where I was able to identify points of contact it was sometimes apparent that a lack of trust in academics would constitute an insurmountable barrier to further discussion.

In the main I was able to gain access to respondents by using the list of affiliates to the ESF and googling until I found the appropriate contact information. My problems with gaining access to respondents from grass-roots traditions was eventually resolved, largely through the assistance of Simon Tormey from the Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice (also an affiliate to the ESF) and I am most grateful for both his assistance and the cooperation of respondents from Nottingham Students Peace Group and Trapese.

### **3.4.3 Sampling**

*“In a nutshell, the qualitative response to the issue of reliability and validity is to require researchers to demonstrate that what they do is fit for their research purpose” (Arksey & Knight 1999:55)*

The purpose of my research is to gain further insight into the ideological concepts of activists within the GMSJ. In particular it is important that the thesis is informed by different historical traditions and compares these to the perceptions of contemporary post-socialist theory. In order to improve the validity of the research I have produced what Holliday refers to as “thick data” (Holliday *ibid*:77) through a process of triangulation (Arksey & Knight:21-23). In the context of this thesis, triangulation describes the welding together of data from several interview sources in order to gain an all rounded or three dimensional perspective on key themes.

It was never my intention to seek data sources that no-one had ever thought of approaching. Some of the individuals I spoke with had certainly not been interviewed by academic researchers before but the concept of drawing data from participants within the GMSJ is not new. The unique approach of this thesis was to challenge rather than emphasise the extent to which the GMSJ represents a

necessary ideological break with traditional socialist theory. My priority, therefore, has been to mine data that can assist this specific discourse.

I eventually conducted twenty-two interviews, which generated 83,000 words of transcribed data. This was about ten interviews fewer than I had originally planned. The reduction in number reflects obstacles to access but these could have been overcome, in time, had this been necessary. However, it was evident that the themes emerging in the later interviews were similar to those already identified and were not, in general, offering new perspectives.

At the upgrade meeting, a discussion took place around the merits of adding respondents from organisations that are not affiliated to the ESF to ask them why they chose not to participate. This would have been valuable but would have required a new dimension to the research that would go beyond the parameters I had set, parameters that were already challenging the practicability of the project. Ultimately I was able to obtain a significant amount of material that discussed the limitations of the ESF from many affiliates who, in practice, pursue their objectives principally outside of the ESF process.

This thesis is not a quantitative study and it is not necessary that the respondents reflect the numerical proportions of different types of affiliate to the ESF. Trade unionists and socialists made up half of the affiliated bodies to the London ESF (table 1). Amongst the others the more prominent traditions were grass-roots networks orientating around social centres; peace groups, ethnic orientated groups including campaigns for immigrant rights; gender based groups and groups campaigning for trade/aid justice. An accurate numerical sample from each type of organisation was not required but it was essential that the thesis reflect the perceptions of each major ideological tradition to the extent that conclusions can be drawn about the broad character of the GMSJ.

<b>Type of Affiliate</b>	<b>No. of Affiliates</b>	<b>Target No. of Interviews</b>	<b>Completed Interviews</b>
Trade Union	59	12	<b>6</b>
Socialist	12	2	<b>1</b>
Ethnic based/Migrant Rights	21	4	<b>2</b>
Peace	14	3	<b>2</b>
Grass roots	11	2	<b>2</b>
Gender	7	1	<b>0</b>
Trade & Development	7	1	<b>3</b>
Other Single Issues	11	2	<b>3</b>
Other	12	2	<b>4</b>

Table 1. Affiliates to London ESF by type and number of interviews targeted and conducted.

It is noticeable that I have not conducted any interview with a gender based group. Although there were seven such affiliates it proved impossible to gain access to any of them in spite of emails, telephone calls and mailed requests for a respondent. There is no reason to believe that participants from this tradition would have offered any fundamentally distinct insights into the ideology of the GMSJ but this perspective would have been a welcome addition to the data and might have offered valuable additional thoughts on the balance of class and gender sources of social injustice.

Table 2 (below) lists every respondent who I was able to interview with a very brief descriptive note of their organisation and role within it.

<p><b>Communication Workers Union (CWU)</b>  <i>Trade union representing workers in the telecommunication sector. The respondent was a lay member of the union's national executive.</i></p>	<p>Labour Movement</p>	<p>LAB 1</p>
<p><b>Fire Brigades Union (FBU)</b>  <i>Trade union representing Fire Fighters. The respondent was a senior national officer.</i></p>	<p>Labour Movement</p>	<p>LAB 2</p>
<p><b>General Municipal &amp; Boilermakers Union (GMB)</b>  <i>Trade union representing members across industrial sectors. The respondent was a regional official.</i></p>	<p>Labour Movement</p>	<p>LAB 3</p>
<p><b>National Union of Rail, Maritime &amp; Transport Workers (RMT)</b>  <i>Trade union representing members in road, rail and maritime transport sectors. The respondent was a senior national officer.</i></p>	<p>Labour Movement</p>	<p>LAB 4</p>
<p><b>South East Regional Trades Union Congress (SERTUC)</b>  <i>Regional federation of trade unions. The respondent was an officer.</i></p>	<p>Labour Movement</p>	<p>LAB 5</p>
<p><b>Trades Union Congress (TUC)</b>  <i>The respondent was an appointee of the TUC with a remit that includes the international outlook of the TUC.</i></p>	<p>Labour Movement</p>	<p>LAB 6</p>
<p><b>Tourism Concern</b>  <i>The respondent is a member of tourism Concern staff. Tourism Concern campaigns for ethical practices in the tourism industry.</i></p>	<p>NGO</p>	<p>NGO 1</p>
<p><b>Jubilee Debt Campaign (JDC)</b>  <i>The respondent is a founder member of JDC, which campaigns for the relief of debt obligations for low income countries.</i></p>	<p>NGO</p>	<p>NGO 2</p>
<p><b>War on Want</b>  <i>War on Want campaigns against poverty in low income countries. The respondent is a national officer.</i></p>	<p>NGO</p>	<p>NGO 3</p>
<p><b>Close Campsfield</b>  <i>Close Campsfield campaigns for the closure of the Campsfield immigration detention centre in Oxfordshire. The respondent is a local co-coordinator and activist.</i></p>	<p>Social Movement</p>	<p>SM 1</p>

**No Sweat**

*No Sweat campaigns against sweatshop working conditions.*

Social Movement SM 2

**Campaign for nuclear Disarmament (CND)**

*The respondent is an academic and a national officer of CND.*

Social Movement SM 3

**Hands off Venezuela (HoV)**

*The respondent is an activist and organiser of HoV.*

Social Movement SM 4

**Movement for Abolition of War**

*The respondent is a founder member of the movement.*

Social Movement SM 5

**Muslim Association of Britain (MAB)**

*The respondent assists with press and publicity for MAB.*

Social Movement SM 6

**Globalise Resistance (GR)**

*GR campaigns against the effects of capitalist globalisation. The respondent is an academic and leading activist.*

Social Movement SM 7

**Gay Authors Workshop (GAW)**

*GAW facilitates the publishing of work by gay authors. The respondent is an author who has been published through the work of GAW.*

Social Movement SM 8

**Trapeze**

*Trapeze is a grass roots project promoting autonomous social organisation. It is based on the South Coast of England. The respondent is an activist.*

Social Movement SM9

**Centre for the Study of Global and Social Justice**

*The centre is an academic institution based in the University of Nottingham. It promotes radical analysis of social injustice and encourages students to play an active role in movements for social justice. The respondent is a member of the centre's academic staff.*

Student/Academic STUD 1

**Goldsmiths Student Union Peace Group**

*The respondent is a student activist.*

Student/Academic STUD 2

**New Left review (NLR)**

*NLR is a well established academic journal presenting analysis and perspectives from a tradition associated with the new left, which*

Student/Academic STUD 3

*developed after 1968. The two respondents are editorial staff of NLR.*

**Nottingham Student Peace Group (NSPG)**  
*SPG is an autonomous social movement that orientates to ideas concerning peace and social justice. The respondent is a student activist.*

Student/Academic

STUD 4

Table 2: List of Respondents to the Research

Ultimately the constraints of what is practicable have had an inevitable effect of limiting the extent to which I was able to continue collecting more nuanced data from the respondents but the data sample has proven “fit for research purpose” (ibid) as it has allowed the thesis to illuminate the key themes from different ideological and organisational positions and help to that has encapsulated the essence of the evolution of the ideological positioning of movements within the GMSJ.

### 3.4.4 Ethics

*“Combining the roles of the scholar and the feminist may be problematic and sometimes lead to conflict if the researcher has a different political orientation from the people studied” (Fontana & Frey 2005 ibid).*

During the upgrade process the issue of power dynamics had been raised and I have, therefore, given the question some considerable thought. I took the decision from the outset of the interview phase that I would declare my own political allegiances in the course of each interview. Fontana and Frey describe how this approach, in the context of feminist researchers, has on occasion, led to difficulties, which could also be expected to apply to the socialist or any other ideologically committed researcher. However, the application of this methodological approach to interviewing in the course of this project has not created conflict at any point. My experience has been that respondents are more than happy to discuss the ideological character of the GMSJ with me, as both activist and researcher, and the clear identification of my position has assisted in the direction of interviews and clarification of issues.

I have approached ethical questions concerning my relationships with the respondents in accordance with the principles of: Allowing respondents to give their informed consent to participation; Ensuring their privacy and confidentiality without deception; Accuracy of reporting (Clifford Christians 2005:139-164). Fontana & Frey also suggest that ethics be based on informed consent, privacy and protection from harm (Fontana & Frey 2005:715). However, unlike Christians', my approach made no claim to be "value free". As I have explained above, I have acknowledged my own ideological position during each interview and in doing so I have allowed the respondents to understand my position as both researcher and activist. It is important that respondents understood my role as a contributor to discourse as a participant within the movement so that I will be able to utilise the information given in both capacities, without fear of acting unethically.

The respondents, from whom I obtained data, range from individuals with no representative claims whatsoever to senior national officers of trade unions and leading figures from prominent non-governmental organisations (NGOs). All respondents have been interviewed on the same basis that ensures their anonymity. On this basis every one of the respondents was comfortable with my recording of the interviews. The original recordings are all available with one exception. The voice recorder failed during the interview with MAB and this particular transcript was written up from handwritten notes made during the interview.

Several respondents made it clear that some or all of what they would say represented their personal view and not necessarily that of the group that is affiliated to the ESF. This was not, primarily because the ideological position of respondents was at variance with their organisation's agreed position but because many organisations simply do not have any such position and have never discussed such questions. Even where respondents did not raise the issue of anonymity with me I started each interview by stating that no comment would be attributed to individuals by name and in so doing the basis of all interviews as a source of data is consistent.

A further ethical issue has arisen in the data collection phase connected with the conduct of academic interviews with individuals with whom I may also have either a comradely or to some



extent adversarial political relationship. I have previously met three of the respondents (from RMT, CWU and FBU) but there is a significant possibility that I could encounter others in trade union or labour movement forums where we could be on opposite sides of a debate. If such a situation were to arise it is important that the respondent understands the basis on which they have spoken to me and that respondents can be confident that insights or information offered will not be used against them in such a forum. Colin Robson has referred to such, "Insider problems", arguing that preconceptions and hierarchy (both ways) can be problematic (Colin Robson 2002:535). Robson also acknowledges the potential time saving qualities of pre-existing knowledge and experience on the part of the researcher and raises the need for a clear separation of procedure applied to research and practice in order to take advantage of these advantages without behaving unethically towards the respondents (ibid:536). I remained alert to this issue throughout the interview process although, in the event, none of the respondents raised the issue with me.

### **3.4.5 Developing an Interview Technique through a Pilot Interview: The Topic Guide**

*"Interviewers are increasingly seen as active participants in an interaction with respondents" (Fontana & Frey 2005:716).*

I embarked on this project having never conducted an academic interview. I have some experience of interviewing striking workers or community campaigners and writing up short interview pieces for socialist and trade union publications and this has given me some practical experience of engaging interviewees and directing discussions. However, the extensive detailed interviews that I would be conducting as part of this project would be quite different.

In Nov 2005 I conducted a pilot interview. The aim of the pilot interview was to raise some of the key themes of my research with my two interviewees and try to identify a way through the issues that would provide me with sufficiently thick data to inform the thesis. In addition I also wanted to

refine my procedure for recording interviews and ensure that I would be able to transcribe them accurately.

None of the material from this interview was used in the final written thesis as it dealt with issues that were returned to in later interviews, which provided more focused data. The pilot interview was invaluable though, as it identified some practical issues that allowed me to prepare a more productive approach to the subsequent interviews that were conducted during the period 2005 - 2007. In particular the pilot interview revealed how unfocused the interview had become, guided by a topic guide that identified themes but failed to frame specific questions. Listening to the sound recording of the pilot interview was an uncomfortable experience that revealed to me that my incisive questioning and helpful direction during the interview had resulted in, on reflection, a meandering unfocused chat that explored issues up to a point but too often left them hanging in the air when a further minute or two might have introduced some clarity.

On a separate but no less important note, the pilot interview made it abundantly clear that reliance on a mini-disc recorder with external microphone was going to cause problems. The set up time was considerable, allowing for malfunctions on the part of the equipment and operator, so I went straight out the following day and purchased a one-button operation digital voice recorder.

With the experience of the pilot interview I embarked on my first substantive interview. In March 2005 I drove through snow to Oxford to meet a respondent who was a key organiser of the Close Campsfield (Immigration detention centre) Campaign. Over the next two years I became more skilled at pacing an interview, moving on when necessary or allowing more time when a rich vein of data had opened up but the essential approach was constant. My approach conforms in general to what Fontana & Frey call "formal field interviewing" (Fontana & Frey 2005:705). The setting was always preset by appointment and the interview followed a semi-structured form in which I played a somewhat directive role.

Fontana & Frey describe traditional interview techniques that avoid "real conversations" in which the interviewee answers questions in response to the interviewer. They applaud new techniques, which

increasingly “see the interviewer as an active participant in the negotiation of the interview” (ibid). As I have established above, I have not approached this project within a value free framework of ‘traditional interview technique’. But I was also anxious to avoid an interview technique that; “focuses on existential moments in people’s lives” (ibid:709). I have argued, in chapter 2, against such a subjective approach to theory and the interview technique had to reflect this. Therefore my interview approach comprised an opening phase to the interview, in which I gave the respondent space to raise the issues and ideas that came to them before offering some of my own thoughts in order to provoke or clarify ideas on the part of the respondent.

My approach to the interview process is best illustrated by the development of a topic guide. Appendix A shows the first topic guide used in an interview with a respondent from the Close Campsfield Campaign. The first significant change to the base guide was made immediately after the first interview. The responses of the respondent suggested that many of the respondents would not immediately consider their organisation to be one with a specific ideological standpoint and so the question “What is the ideology of your movement?” was better posed as: “Do you or your organisation subscribe to any particular ideological set of beliefs?” This updated approach remained in the base guide throughout.

By mid April 2006 I had also clarified the questions I wanted to pose regarding respondents’ conceptualisations of the phenomenon of globalisation. In particular several respondents had spoken about globalisation as a continuation of the process of imperialism and I wanted to establish whether they understood the nature of globalisation to be a fragmented post-modern condition or more analogous to Marxist theories of imperialism or dependency theory. Questions that probed concepts of power and whether globalisation represented a force or simply a set of outcomes therefore remained but to this I added a question asking respondents whether they conceptualised globalisation as a new world system.

Towards the end of April 2006 I also noticed that several respondents had cast doubt on whether the GMSJ could be considered to be a transnational movement in a material sense or simply an

ideological sense. A question to this effect was added to the base guide. Additionally, I added one further question as a result of my discussion with a respondent from 'No Sweat'. In written material and in the interview 'No Sweat' has raised the question of whether the social forums should constitute a "clearing house", where similar campaigns can meet and exchange ideas or a "parliament of the movement", with decision making and representational powers. This question was helpful in clarifying conceptions of the movement in an organisational sense and forms a large part of the organisational observations of the final thesis in chapter six. I also took the opportunity to re-phrase the guide in a more conversational tone to assist discussion with the respondents. The topic guide as it stood at the end of April 2006 appears as appendix B.

Towards the end of the interview stage it was possible to focus interviews more specifically on areas where I required data to address particular issues. By the time I came to interview a respondent from Gay Authors' Workshop on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006 I needed to obtain some specific data from a an identity focused group. The guide was used as before but with the need in mind to explore the extent to which this 'New Social Movement' engaged with the social forums and to discuss how such a respondent perceived the exercise of power compared to some of the labour movement orientated respondents, with whom I had spoken.

The topic guide was used as the basis for every interview conducted although in each case it was applied flexibly and according to what the respondent had to contribute to each area of interest and was constructed in accordance with the approach outlined above. For each theme respondents were first asked an initial question that is open in character. This allowed them to express their own preferred way of answering the question. Only after this, or after the respondent had anticipated the broader question, were the more specific questions raised. This approach allowed me to draw conclusions about the issues that pre-occupy the respondents.

The formation and development of the topic guide has proven to be one of the key elements in this research project. Omissions in the data cannot easily be rectified once the researcher has

progressed to the writing up stage so a topic guide that anticipates the themes that will be explored in the final thesis is essential to the effective collection of data.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

*“Seeing research as a pursuance of pathways...illustrates how, no matter how extensive the research, different researchers will always pursue and see very different things in the same setting” (Holliday ibid:77)*

In 3.2 I have outlined the central research question in the form of a hypothesis. The hypothesis is drawn from the theoretical discourse contained in chapter 2 and concerns the veracity of post-socialist and Marxist theory. This thesis will argue that Marxism is more helpful in both explaining and countering global social injustice. Data has been collected, through face-to-face interviews with this question in mind and in the data analysis stage I have attempted to draw themes out of the data that will help to shine light onto the hypothesis.

The thesis seeks to engage with the data through a discourse analysis, through which I have attempted to bring together radical theory with the ideas and concepts of activists who participate in the GMSJ. The strength of the analysis is its consideration of both published theory and the ideas of activists within the GMSJ, established through the interviews that have been conducted. I have drawn on the techniques of grounded theory by coding the data but rather than the data generating its own themes these are broadly pre-established by the discourse in chapter two. Holliday (ibid) refers to the different theoretical interpretations that can be applied to any given set of data while Charmaz suggests how this might be realised during the coding process: “Codes are not objective but we can examine how and why certain codes were developed” (Charmaz 2005:519). I discuss the development of the codes that have assisted the thematic analysis of data in this thesis in the next section.

The final written form of thematic organisation is a result of the codes established from the theoretical position contained in chapter two duly amended in light of the specific data produced in interviews and I elaborate on this process below.

### **3.5.1 Coding and Thematic Analysis**

*“The formation of themes represents the necessary dialogue between data and researcher, which emerges from and then helps further to make sense of the data and then to provide a structure for the writing” (Holliday ibid:104)*

The themes identified in chapter 2 served as the basic lines of enquiry that I pursued with respondents from the GMSJ. Chapter 2 existed only in draft form as I embarked on the analysis of the interview data but it was possible to code each interview transcript, according to which themes the data addressed, using the draft chapter structure from Chapter 2 as an outline. These chapter headings correspond with what Holliday describes as; “natural divisions in the corpus of data” (Holliday ibid:105).

2.1 Eroding the foundations of Marxism: Power, Property Relations and Class

2.2 Nation and state

2.3 The Role of the Political Party in Movements for Social Justice

2.4 Post-Socialism, Social Democracy and Marxism: Three Ideological trends within the GMSJ

Initially I had intended only three empirical chapters. The themes covered in 2.4, which deals explicitly with the evolution of three ideological trends within the GMSJ were to have been developed throughout each of the proceeding sections (2.1 – 2.3). However, it became clear during the coding process that while the approach of each trend could be discussed in each chapter in relation to the specific themes of each section, it would prove difficult to comment on the overall evolution of these trends without bringing in content from the neighbouring sections. By presenting

the development of three ideological trends in a separate chapter I hope to have provided the reader with a coherent account of how perceptions of power, class, nation, state and social organisation have interacted with ideology in the perceptions of respondents from different ideological traditions.

Data was divided into these separate chapters and the “character of each division” (Holliday:90) was determined through a process of overlaying different concepts derived from the data. As significant sub-divisions emerged from within themes sub-headings were introduced to the chapter structures to assist the data analysis and help in the process of embedding the data in an argument (Holliday *ibid*:111). Unlike traditional applications of grounded theory though the thematic analysis is not limited to themes from within the data but the major themes of post-socialist ideology are tested against the data within each chapter. Thus the themes shown above are each discussed in light of both theoretical analysis and the analysis of empirical data.

### **3.5.2 Organisation and Presentation**

*“Organising raw data under thematic headings is an effective means of making sense.*

*There is nevertheless a strong temptation here for the researcher to tie things up too neatly – Packaging and repackaging to produce a finely coherent text in which the ragged edges of the original social setting are clipped off and disposed of” (Holliday *ibid*:176).*

Holliday explains how theming and coding can produce data that is much tidier than reality (above).

Certainly the organisation of my research findings proved to be more complicated than I had expected, principally owing to the intermeshed character of the themes I have investigated.

To separate the comments of a respondent according to whether they are addressing issues connected to power, the state or the character of another world was, on occasion, almost impossible as any abstracted section of a respondent’s comments would more than likely address all three themes. Attempting to abstract the comments of a respondent to the point where only one

theme was being addressed would have demanded a focus on just one or two sentences in many cases, which would have removed the comments from any meaningful context.

By way of illustration, the following comments from the respondent from Globalise Resistance are extracted from Chapter 4, dealing with power:

*“Developments in Latin America have shown the problems of political power. It’s right in front of you; it’s not an abstract debate anymore. You can’t say to a peasant from Bolivia who is facing down the state that the state isn’t really there and we’re part of a global network.” (GR)*

This extract could have been used in either Chapter 3 to comment on the role of the state or to point out shortcomings in the ideology of a global network in chapter 5. Individually though, the references to power, state and global network would mean very little.

This proved to be the most difficult aspect of the data organisation process and continued throughout the writing up phase, with subsequent edits removing paragraphs to other chapters where there seemed to sit more comfortably until the next edit, when I would decide I preferred the original arrangement after all. In the main it was not a question of material being out of place in one section or another but of achieving clarity as theory was constructed. Sometimes the integration of the underlying theory from chapter 2 with empirical data would raise a further question that could be addressed by data currently organised into a different section of the thesis.

These issues were eventually resolved only in the final writing up stage, which was itself a continuation of a sifting process whereby the organisation of data was tested against the theory constructed around it and vice versa. An additional chapter, which forms chapter seven in the final thesis, was then created to consider alternative ideological approaches to the construction of ‘another world’. This further, discreet chapter added clarity to this key issue but otherwise the chapters are derived from the main concepts underlying post-socialist theory.



### **3.6 Limitations**

*“An important ingredient of the rigour and validity in qualitative research is making sure the researcher’s claims are appropriate to the data she has collected and the arguments she has constructed around it – and that these claims are true to the people and their affairs within the setting, without exaggeration (Holliday ibid:175).*

The primary limitations of the data, like the character of the data itself, are imposed by the central hypothesis. The broad scope of the inquiry is intended to examine the correspondingly broad ideological scope of post-socialist ideology and its influence on differing ideological traditions that are present within the GMSJ. In order to obtain a data set with sufficient breadth it has been necessary to limit my inquiry to one based on the conceptualisations of respondents at one given time. Nevertheless, by overlaying the different perspectives of different respondents it has been possible to compare differing ideological concepts.

With this in mind it is important that the thesis makes, “appropriate claims” from the empirical research (ibid). That means acknowledging the vast scope of the GMSJ and, in particular, different national characteristics of discourse within the GMSJ. My conclusions describe discourse amongst activists in the GMSJ in Britain and of those affiliated to ESF.

If the spatial scope of the ideological characteristics of the GMSJ is remarkable then so too is the temporal development of the ideological evolution of the movement. This limitation in the design of the research project was raised during the upgrade process but to have engaged in the kind of ethnographic research necessary to produce rigorous data reflecting temporal processes was impracticable. There is, on the other hand, a strong temporal element to the discussion of the literature and theoretical development of the research as outlined in chapter two. A key argument of the thesis is that post-socialist concepts are not a response to a new pattern of social relations but have evolved out of anarchist and revisionist theory dating back to the nineteenth century. In

chapter two I have examined this evolution and argue that it has culminated in a post-socialist orthodox approach to the issue of social justice, across the social sciences. Therefore the limitation remains but does not undermine the thesis in so far as it examines the broad ideological characteristics of participants within the GMSJ in the context of this theoretical orthodox approach. As I have discussed in chapter 2, the orthodox position I have identified is not entirely homogenous but describes a broad shift in social and economic theory. The conclusions of this thesis must also, therefore, address broad tendencies and paradigm shifts rather than detailed specific theory.

The absence of any ethnographic element to the research also precludes any attempt to compare the stated ideological position of respondents with their observed behaviours.

Therefore it is not possible to comment on whether the day to day actions of activists within the GMSJ correspond with the ideological concepts they share with me in interviews.

However, it is a common feature of the interviews that respondents are quite open about the absence of any consistent ideological discourse within the movement; indeed, this was felt by respondents from all traditions. In other words, this thesis is attempting to explore ideological assumptions that lie behind the actions of respondents. The absence of an ethnographic element does represent a limitation but not one that significantly undermines the ability of the data to throw light onto the hypothesis..The data collected makes no pretence to be clean of ideological premises and the themes drawn out of the data are not a product of the interview data alone but flow from developments in radical theory over a century and more. In particular the data deals extensively with respondents' attitudes towards traditional socialist ideology.

There is therefore a danger that the data could suggest that traditional socialist ideology is occupying the deliberations of the GMSJ to a greater extent than is the case in reality.

However, the contention of this thesis is that post-socialist ideology does not inform the movement to the extent that its academic orthodox status would suggest. The thesis aims to get beyond the assertion that socialism has failed and discuss with participants just how and if they are still informed by the ideas of Marxism, social democracy and the traditional labour movement.

I have been able to interview respondents from each of the most significant radical political traditions and from very different types of movement, organisation, party and network. However, I have conducted twenty-two interviews with affiliates to the London ESF. The total number of affiliated bodies was 165 and the event was attended by over 25,000 individuals, according to the organisers. It goes without saying that this thesis cannot prove that any particular ideological influence is of primary importance to the GMSJ. However, the data is derived from sufficiently varied components of the GMSJ to at least call into question the assertions of contemporary post-socialist theory that regard traditional socialist concepts of power, class, state and party as unhelpful or even obsolete. The data relating to these themes is presented in chapters 4,5,6 and 7 and suggests that, contrary to post-socialist theoretical assumptions (Hall & Jacques 1989, Giddens 1998, Held 2002), traditional socialist perceptions of power, class, state and party continue to shape the ideological beliefs of many activists participating in radical movements.

### **3.7 Methodological Conclusions**

*“Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system or worldview” (Christians 2005:105).*

The basic belief system that has enabled me to develop this thesis is one of dialectical materialism. This approach to discourse has informed the theoretical approach of the thesis in the previous and subsequent chapters and has also shaped my methodological framework. Dialectical materialism understands knowledge as the product of the interaction of ideas emanating from different people who reflect differing material interests. In capitalist society these antagonistic material interests are expressed as class contradictions. Marx interpreted society in this way and developed an analysis and political manifesto based the material experiences of workers in capitalist society.

Post-socialist theory too often deals in subjective concepts of identity in what post-socialists see as a fragmented and diffuse global space (Giddens, Held, Castells, Hall & Jacques). These concepts offer little to the GMSJ if it wants to organise and provide a programme for the movement.

The methodology employed in the construction of this thesis has helped me to compare concepts raised in contemporary theoretical work with major historical ideological traditions and to then combine this with empirical data in order to appraise contemporary theory in a historical context. The dialectical approach assumes constant change and evolution of ideology and clashes between different ideological forces. Alternatively, dialectical materialism avoids the sterile certainties of metaphysics and understands the role of individual perception in the dialectical process of discourse but the materialist assumptions of a Marxist methodology insist that ideological assertion be compared to material forces. This is what I will do in the following chapters, in which I discuss my theoretical thesis, as developed in chapter two, with activists from the GMSJ.

## **4. Property Relations, Power and Class**

*“If you tell people with zippos they can no longer collect rain water on their roofs you will get a rapid popular movement against the government” (War on Want, national officer, NGO3).*

Post-socialist theory represents a challenge to the foundations of Marx's theories relating to property relations, power and class. Revisionist challenges to Marx's ideas have evolved since the time of Marx himself but, in the recent period, transformationalist globalisation theory has asserted that a fundamental shift in space and time has rendered traditional socialist theory obsolete (Giddens, Held ) In this chapter I will develop my argument that post-socialist ideology does not represent a new ideological response to new patterns of social relationships but is better understood as a return to earlier attempts to revise socialist theory that date back to the New Left after 1968, Bernstein's turn of the twentieth century reformism and classical anarchist ideas of the nineteenth century.

Marxist concepts of property relations, power and class provided the foundations for mass socialist movements throughout most of the twentieth century (Wallerstein 2002). Marx's programme for socialist revolution is constructed from a materialist understanding of social relationships that are the product of the capitalist economic superstructure (Lenin 1963). This link between property relations and power also informed social democracy, in the post-war period, which was characterised by its concept of reforming property relations and consequently social relations through a social democratic state that could impose social justice onto capitalism. Post-socialist theory, on the other hand, tends to relocate social injustice outside of the process of capitalist accumulation, preferring to conceptualise injustice as a cultural outcome. Following from these theoretical assumptions, post-socialist theory argues for the GMSJ to develop an autonomous, cultural influence in order to construct another world (Naomi Klein 2000, 2003a, Hardt & Negri 2000, Bello 2002).

In this chapter I will examine concepts of property relations, power and class with activists who participate in the GMSJ. Throughout my analysis I have addressed the question of what social force the respondents conceptualise to possess the ability to transform society and build another world. Marxist theory has lost ground to post-socialist ideas relating to the centrality of class in social theory but the empirical data generated through my research suggests this has been a consequence of a loss of confidence in the ability of the working class to struggle rather than a positive embrace of a new ideology. Participants in the GMSJ have not identified new sources of power and most recognise the centrality of production and the workplace in the struggle for global social justice. In this sense, the ideology of socialism remains a more influential explanation of power and property relations than any concept based on shifts in space and time. It is clear that the transformationalist globalisation theory of Giddens, Held et al has not really touched the majority of activists in the GMSJ in any explicit sense.

The GMSJ tends to look beyond traditional struggles over property relations as a means of fighting for global social justice. Nevertheless, there remains a huge trade union presence within the GMSJ and most participants continue to recognise the enormous importance of workplace organisation and the centrality of a struggle to appropriate the fruits of labour. Crucially, none of the respondents is able to identify any coherent social force that possesses an equivalent latent power to that of the organised working class. The global proletariat is only force that has been identified by the research with the capacity to re-cast property relations is the working class, which has the potential ability to take control of production and exchange and by so doing build another, socially just, world.

## **4.1 Property Relations and Production as Sources of Social Injustice**

*“There has to be a real global impetus for organising working people and I think that all eyes will eventually be on China and how the workers organise and how the workers are helped to organise. The international labour movement has a huge role to play in that. That is where change will come. Ultimately change has to come from working people”*  
*(War on Want ibid).*

Post-socialist theory has combined elements of New Left ideology (Tormey 2003) and the identity politics of Eurocommunism (Hall & Jacques 1983, 1989) with the globalisation theory of Giddens (ibid) and Held (ibid). Each of these post-socialist developments challenges Marx’s focus on property relations as the primary source of social injustice. In this section I will show how this post-socialist concept has influenced activists within the GMSJ. In particular, the GMSJ focuses on cultural concepts of injustice and while most respondents accept that property relations play an important role in the generation of social injustice, they do not see this as a central question in the sense that Marx did.

In this section I will consider how cultural concepts of social injustice have developed alongside anarchistic approaches to the development of the GMSJ. I will discuss these ideas with respondents from an anarchist tradition but also with those located within the social democratic and Marxist left, who incorporate some of the new cultural approach but simultaneously defend, to one extent or another, Marx’s focus on property relations. I will also examine how some cultural or identity based movements have orientated towards the ideas and methods of the labour movement as highlighted by Robinson (2008:320).

Anarchist movements have become a significant component part of the GMSJ and are characterised by a focus on establishing autonomous cultural movements rather than seeking to change the relations of production through trade union or other forms of action located in the

workplace. I was able to discuss some of these concepts with a respondent from a social collective that attempts to create open spaces within which a counter-culture can develop that will replace capitalist cultural values. I asked the respondent if social change was more likely to be achieved in the workplace or elsewhere:

*I don't think that it more likely in the workplace than anywhere else. I suppose on the level we are talking about it is more likely in collectively owned and autonomous spaces like social centres or protest camps and temporary autonomous zones. That's where I feel there is the most potential for change. (Trapese, Social collective, Activist SM9)*

The idea of creating a new counter-culture rather than systemic changes to property relations gives the GMSJ much of its character and distinguishes it from earlier socialist movements. The respondent explains the appeal of establishing an autonomous cultural social centre:

*"You can feel the buzz. We're living sustainably and making our own food. We're challenging something we're against but at the same time living in the way we want to live. Those are the times I feel the most excitement about that and those bigger times are sometimes replicated in the way I'm involved with places like this club. It has now become part of a network around the UK" (Trapese ibid).*

Anarchist or autonomist ideas of cultural change sometimes reflect, what Marx would have called, idealistic concepts of social theory. That is to say they reflect the idea that human thought is something that is independent of the relations of production and material inequality. A respondent from a student peace group told me how they do not initially conceptualise globalisation as a process driven by property relations:

*"I think it's natural. It's in our nature" (Goldsmiths Student Peace Group, activist, STUD2)*

As we discussed further though, the respondent developed their ideas and argued that:

*"The issue of labour, if you go back to Marx etc, it is central to us. The problem is that we do work that is not necessary but standards have changed. Yes, I still think capital*



*dominates but It's not as simple as that and this is where the problem lies" (Goldsmiths  
ibid).*

This undefined sense that something has changed is leading some activists to look for alternatives to the process of production as a source of social injustice. This is to be expected from anarchistic movements but the same could be argued in respect of the trade union movement itself. A trade union official explained that he broadly defends the traditional role of trade unions in the process of production but he highlighted campaigns in the wider community beyond the workplace that have been conducted by trade unions.

*"I am keen that other social movements see what trade unions are involved in, not just inside but outside the workplace, such as fighting racism and fascism and solidarity with immigrant communities which is important." (SERTUC, officer, LAB5)*

This new focus on movements that exist outside of what might be considered to be the traditional trade union movement also extends to some on the revolutionary socialist left. No Sweat is a campaigning group that highlights issues connected with sweat shop labour. Amongst its main organisers are activists, some of whom describe themselves as revolutionary Marxists. The respondent told me that No Sweat's primary orientation continues to be around workplace organisation but they also felt that the socialist left, as well as the trade union movement, has come a long way in its ability to address broader issues of social justice than those arising solely in the workplace.

*"For a long time the revolutionary left, even the anti-Stalinist left, took a view that socialism is about workers' control of industry and the raw economics of it. The stress on democracy, self and liberation was missing. I think the new movement has brought that and I would put more stress on this as my end goal." (No Sweat, Activist SM2)*

The prominence of autonomous groups within the GMSJ has certainly helped to open up a space within which organised labour has come into contact with anarchist ideas. The comments of the respondent above suggest that some trade unionists and socialists are now far more engaged with

ideology that places cultural movements at the centre of radical agendas. Within this space a debate has taken place around the premise that the organised working class cannot unite struggles for social justice but must reach out to social movements if it is to avoid becoming marginalised itself. This debate is illustrated by a report from feminist/community grass-roots organisation, Globalwomensstrike, who arranged a speaking tour of Venezuelan activists to Britain. In Glasgow the Venezuelans told members of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

*“Trade unionists who were with the revolution had to stop thinking they are the vanguard and take leadership from the community, especially from women. If they didn’t join forces with other workers, waged or unwaged, they allowed themselves to be isolated, and ended up fighting among themselves and negotiating the exploitation of workers “.*

*(Globalwomensstrike 2006)*

Global Women’s Strike are referring to the specific role of the trade union structure in Venezuela but their critique is echoed by many participants in the GMSJ whose perception of trade unionism is formed in the context of a recent history of capitulation to capital and the exercise of control over workers at a local level. This has led some activists to criticise the role of unions in the social forums:

*“People I know who were around at the London ESF rejected it largely because, they said, it was being taken over by Ken Livingstone and the big unions. They didn’t feel like there was room for them and set up peripheral open spaces” (Trapese, ibid).*

The cultural perspective of groups such as Trapese is a prominent element of the ideological character of the GMSJ. The respondent from the South-East regional TUC described how the trade union movement has responded to this development with a positive approach towards new movements but this does not mean that the TUC does not continue to identify class and workplace organisation as its central project. It would be an exaggeration to say that class theory has been expelled from the GMSJ as another TUC official explained:

*“We still represent a class and still fundamental to the definition of that class is its relationship to another class. That’s why the focus on labour standards is still critical and you’ll notice that some of the standards are about some of the most egregious violations of the human spirit that capitalism produces, such as child labour or forced labour and discrimination. Of the core labour standards two of them are still about freedom of association and the right to bargain collectively.” (TUC, appointee, LAB6)*

This respondent argues that it is still the workplace that dictates the character of the lives of many people who are considered by the GMSJ to be exploited, a view that is re-enforced by the high profile of trade and labour standard issues within the movement.

Explicit class issues remain important to most activists in the GMSJ and even those who may have been motivated by broader questions of identity have found that the class orientated labour movement has enabled them to mobilise around other questions of injustice. The respondent (above) argues that one of the most prominent cultural movements of the recent past, feminism, has orientated towards the trade unions as it came to recognise the degree to which working class women were organised in the workplace.

*“The feminist movement originally had vast areas of difference with the trade union movement but over the past twenty/thirty years has reached a staggering level of accommodation. There are still feminist critiques of the TU movement but they are just as likely to be voiced from within it these days. One of the reasons feminism did this was the possibility of connecting with so many working class people. Many people felt that the feminist movement represented less women than the trade unions did.” (TUC, ibid)*

This respondent describes a process of a two way transfer of ideas and strategy between the new social movements and the traditional labour movement. There is a considerable literature describing the influence of new social movements but it has little to say about the flow of socialist concepts into the new movements. The website of the Socialist Party recently carried a report illuminating this process. The report describes a mass struggle in Los Angeles for social rights for immigrants. The

report includes the account of Jesse Diaz, one of the movement's leaders, who explained how they came to recognise their own economic power, not only as immigrants but as immigrant workers.

*“When I walked up to the stage and said a few words, people responded to a boycott (strike). There was a roar through the crowd that they wanted to do a boycott. The premise was that the American economy is heavily, heavily dependent on immigrants. Studies have shown over and over that immigrants contribute more to society than they take out” (Diaz 2006).*

Social movements have recognised the potential power of organising as workers who play an essential role in the capitalist process of production. The respondent from No Sweat (above) articulated the need for socialists within the GMSJ to be more responsive to the ideas of new social movements but this should not be exaggerated into a theory of a fundamentally new system of production:

*“Social and economic systems are replaced by wars or revolutions. If this is a new system then I want to know when this happened. If this globalisation is so new then why is there mass production in sweat shops?” (No Sweat, *ibid*)*

For this respondent the existence of sweated labour demonstrates that capitalist property relations continue to shape patterns of social injustice.

The research suggests that the degree to which other activists in the GMSJ share this view is influenced by a geographical differentiation. Property relations and workplace organisation are more likely to be conceptualised as central to struggles for social justice when activists are considering struggles taking place in less developed economic regions. The respondents from No Sweat, several trade unions and War on Want all spoke enthusiastically about the possibility of workplace struggles in the less developed countries, echoing, to some extent, the core/periphery approach of dependency theory.

*“When you see people organising in developing countries, often with no money and you see people on less than \$1 day joining organised labour then you realise that is where change will come. There is a huge sense in the developing world that organising labour is going to bring change, which is fantastic to see and it’s amazing when you come back to the UK and there is this cynicism about organised labour. You want to take everybody over to Haiti, for example and show them this is what it’s all about” (War on Want, *ibid*).*

Closer to home, respondents who are active in the UK are less likely to share the Marxist concept that power lies with the organised working class. The centrality put on the workplace by Marxism and social democracy was dictated by the identification of the proletariat as a coherent force for change and Marx’s location of unprecedented economic power inherent in the socialised workplace. The industrial revolution represented a previously unimagined technological and productive development of capitalism and Marx argued that it was the socialisation of the labour of the working class that made it possible. Consequently it is the working class that holds the very continuation of capitalism in its hands. The economic foundations of capitalism have not changed fundamentally since the time of Marx and the workplace retains enormous social power as the centre around which the production of every facet of life is organised. Even amongst respondents who associate with the grass roots tradition this Marxist concept of power has some resonance:

*“It makes no sense to talk about overcoming capitalism or neo-liberalism if we’re not talking about recapturing the thing that is causing all this, which is economic power”*  
*(Centre for the Study of Social & Global Justice, Academic, STUD1).*

The research reflects the influence of post-socialist concepts towards property relations and cultural patterns of social injustice on the GMSJ. But it also demonstrates that while cultural notions of diffuse patterns of injustice have become more influential as the twentieth century ran into the twenty-first, nevertheless, socialist concepts of the central importance of property relations in determining social relations and generating social injustice remain of considerable significance. Activists in the GMSJ from a socialist or trade union tradition may be less confident to assert

socialist theory but none of the respondents from labour movement backgrounds, with whom I spoke, express an explicit acceptance of post-socialist theory in this respect.

Those respondents who do perceive social injustice to be the product of diffuse cultural relationships have not developed post-socialist theory beyond the assumptions of the New Left after 1968. As such they represent a reaction to the perceived failures of socialism rather than a response to new underlying material explanations of injustice. In chapter seven I will discuss what implications this has for the development of the ideology of the GMSJ.

## **4.2 Power and Global Social Injustice**

*“I would have thought that one of the things NLR would try to bring to the movement is a realist socialist tradition about forms of power and mechanisms that are not naive and don't say that horizontal networks are going to make everything all-right.” (New Left Review, editorial staff, STUD3)*

The research suggests post-socialist attitudes towards property relations and the generation of subjective and diffused patterns of social injustice are reflected in the ideas of respondents towards the issue of power. Key post-socialist contributions to the theory of power include John Holloway's study of the Zapatista uprising, in which he declares the movement to be opposed to power itself (see Ch2) and Hardt & Negri's *Empire*, which suggests that power exists everywhere and anywhere, to the point that it cannot be defined in any meaningful way (ibid).

In this section I will argue that the concepts of Holloway and Hardt and Negri pertaining to a highly fragmented pattern of power relations are not reflected in the research data. However, there is no question that activists in the GMSJ have a concept of social injustice that is less clearly defined in economic terms than is the case in Marxist theory. However, where movements have taken on a mass character the question of exercising economic power have come back to the fore and this is recognised by the respondents in respect of movements in Latin America.

There is also evidence that at least some respondents, beyond the socialist left, are questioning how useful post-socialist notions of power are to the GMSJ. The research suggests that such fundamental concepts of fragmented power have not taken root in the GMSJ. Of all the respondents with whom I spoke only one, the respondent from Goldsmiths Peace Group, explicitly articulated a post-socialist perception of fragmented power relationships:

*“The issue now is that people are so concerned with themselves and what they can do they forget other people are there as well. Most people I know do not feel oppressed by somebody else. They are oppressed more by their own ideas and ambitions.”*

*(Goldsmiths Student Peace Group, ibid)*

The idea of social change emanating from the grass-roots of society in a natural or organic sense is shared with Holloway’s Zapatista thesis (ibid). The Zapatistas have argued that grass-roots social organisation must allow autonomous communities to develop without centralised power structures and this idea is endorsed by the Goldsmiths respondent.

*“I think if we voice our protest and organise, not on a large scale, but come down to the things we all don’t like or want to change than I think change is possible. Will people do it or not? That’s where the problem lies. If you can’t make people do it from a natural point of view I don’t want it to be brought unnaturally because then happiness is not guaranteed.” (ibid)*

I developed this concept in an interview with the respondent from Trapese, an anarchist inspired cultural project. I asked the respondent whether the aspiration of an organic or natural evolution of power structures reflects Trapese’s attitude to how power might be challenged.

*“Yes it does. It does totally. For example, we’ve got a National Health System with a doctor up here and a patient down here. What is a grass-roots response to that? It will look at personal changes but it will also ask what is really causing the problems with our health system? We are all living in this really stressed out society that is making us sick. It’s not suggesting that all these little small changes will get rid of the larger problem but*

*it's saying these are some suggestions and if we all do that then maybe we'll come up with the next step together." (Trapese, ibid)*

The idea of an organic development of ideology, coming up with ideas step by step, is common to participants from a post-structuralist anarchist tradition (STUD2, STUD4, SM9). These anarchist influenced attitudes to power reflect hostility to the over-centralised and undemocratic structures of the Stalinist nations in the post-war period but are also rooted in classical anarchist thought. One respondent (STUD2) argues not only that socialist central planning is inherently totalitarian but even that state regulation of markets represents a totalitarian abuse. These respondents echo the ideas of Proudhon, who as I have shown in chapter two, opposed not the specifics of a state or corporate structure but the very idea of large scale social structure itself.

The appeal of anarchist ideas, in such a worked out form, is limited. In general the Holloway thesis on power does not resonate with participants in the movement but the sense that systemic change seems so far off that shifting cultural attitudes today might be the only way to achieve longer term systemic shifts has permeated the thinking of several respondents. An example of such thinking is provided by a respondent from Gay Author's Workshop (GAW), who considered any discussion of what kind of other world the GMSJ desires to be of no more immediate relevance than:

*"The number of angels that can dance on the head of a pin" (Gay Authors' Workshop, SM8).*

Amongst the range of respondents with whom I discussed these ideas almost all accepted that power is exercised through structures and by elite groups. This is in clear contrast to the approach of the Goldsmiths respondent (above), who argues that oppression is exerted on oneself. The research does though, support a view that many participants in the GMSJ understand sources of power and oppression to be more complex than the class analysis of Marx.

Jubilee Debt Campaign (JDC) was established in the year 2000 with the aim of "Making Poverty History. A respondent explained to me why they believed the movement has developed at this time:



*“I think it was a number of charities, of relief and development agencies coming together and being willing to campaign on a major issue. It was driven by the three main Christian agencies because of the year 2000, which was a great Christian jubilee. To celebrate it with this great act of justice, generosity, compassion and so on resonated with 99% of practicing Christians. Quite rapidly the TUC got involved, the British Medical Council and others”. (Jubilee Debt Campaign, founder member, NGO2)*

For this respondent the power to make change is contained in the ability to shift moral perceptions of poverty rather than setting out to exert economic power. This idea is also part of the outlook of other faith based movements who perceive a much broader sense of injustice and power that “resonates in the psyche:”

*“We feel it is our duty to do something for anyone who suffers injustice. The driving force for these values can be extracted from Islam; Justice for the vulnerable, poor and oppressed and Freedom, not only for owners of capital but everyone. Justice resonates in the psyche of Muslims. It means oppression, injustice, any kind of unfairness from a very simple family matter to bigger things” (Muslim Association of Britain, press officer, SM6).*

This respondent does not conceptualise injustice as primarily a function of economic power. Nevertheless, they share the view of most labour movement activists that structural change is necessary before cultural freedom can be enjoyed:

*“Free choice is determined through structural realities and any change must first be structural” (Muslim Association of Britain, ibid).*

The respondent argues for structural change but not necessarily in a socialist sense. For this respondent social justice can be secured either through the capitalist market or socialist planning or a mixture of both but this does not imply that social justice can be delivered independently of the economic basis of society. In fact the Muslim Association of Britain calls for structural economic changes which amount to a reversal of neo-liberalism and in this sense their view is not so different to that of classical social democracy.

Struggles for social justice in Latin America, especially in Bolivia and Venezuela, have captured the imagination of the GMSJ. In this region struggles have become genuine mass movements that have resulted in the election of radical leftist governments. These concrete developments have led many activists to focus, to a greater extent than when they consider movement in Europe, on material questions of how regimes should exercise economic power:

*“Developments in Latin America have shown the problems of political power. It’s right in front of you; it’s not an abstract debate anymore. You can’t say to a peasant from Bolivia who is facing down the state that the state isn’t really there and we’re part of a global network.” (Globalise Resistance, academic, SM7)*

The research reveals this as a central point of difference between post-socialist and socialist approaches to social justice. Lenin based his own approach on Hegel’s assertion that “Truth is Concrete” (Lozovsky 1924). It is a key argument of this thesis that where social movements have taken on a genuinely mass character then materialist perceptions of power as a function of economic power, that is property relations, have tended to reassert themselves. Holloway quotes subcomandante Marcos with approval when he declares that: “Power is central to the thing we reject” (ibid). But such an abstraction cannot really be translated into a programme of action for a movement on a national scale. The research suggests that activists in the GMSJ overwhelmingly accept that unless structures are created, with which to take and exercise power, then power is inevitably left in the hands of capital. I discussed these rival approaches with two respondents who are connected with the New Left Review. The New Left played an important role in directing socialist theory towards cultural movements in the period after 1968 but the comments of these respondents suggest that they now identify a need to focus more on the need for structural change in order to combat the power of capital.

*“There is a repetitive slogan about transforming the world without taking power, which I think is a delusion.” (New Left Review, ibid)*

The research suggests that post-modern concepts of fragmented power relationships existing between all social actors have gained some significant purchase within the GMSJ. However, activists recognise state and economic power structures that generate and reinforce social injustice and they also recognise the need for structural change to combat them. Socialist concepts of power appear to have withstood the post-socialist ideological assault rather well. The primary ideological barrier to systemic change is not that movements believe that diffuse cultural activities can overcome injustice generated by capital flows and state power but following the collapse of Stalinism there has been no apparent systemic alternative and consequently, no confidence in the idea of systemic change. The perception within the GMSJ that state socialism must inevitably cultivate a new oppressive regime and simultaneously that social democratic states have turned from reforming capitalism to reinforcing injustice through neo-liberal programmes, has left activists with no alternative. I will return to this in chapter 7.

Post socialist concepts pertaining to the generation and exercise of power have inevitably collided with Marxist concepts of social class, which are premised on a Marxist understanding of power derived from capitalist property relations. In the next section I will discuss concepts of class and class consciousness with respondents.

### **4.3 Multitude or Social Class?**

*“I would see class as only one form of oppression, one social relation among many. So I would raise class but also nationality, ethnicity etc. All those things are important and in a sense context will decide which is most important at any given time. Class is not always the most important one” (Nottingham Student Peace group, Activist, STUD4).*

Contemporary globalisation and social theory has tended to pay little attention, if any, to social class as either an explanatory concept or unifying identity around which struggles for social justice can be built. But the dilution of class analysis has not gone un-challenged and the research suggests that it

would be very one-sided to conclude that class struggle has been erased from the agenda of participants in the GMSJ. The rise of identity politics and the argument that Marxist and social democratic theory is too centred on the issue of class has unquestionably influenced many participants within the GMSJ but this shift in consciousness must be seen separately from actual patterns of class relations, which respondents conceptualise in much the same way as before.

In this section I will show how fragmented concepts of power have laid the theoretical basis for the retreat of class consciousness within the GMSJ. Yet, in spite of this, the labour movement remains central to the activities of the GMSJ. I will argue that class relations can be, and often are, more clearly recognised in the context of new industrial development in China and other regions, than in Europe. Activists understand that power relations between different capitalist regions have shifted in the epoch of globalisation but the research has not found an explanation of how the underlying character of capitalist power relations has changed. Class consciousness has been set back, as the research suggests, but this has more to do with a shift in the political balance of forces and loss of confidence in class based ideology than it does in the underlying material relations of capitalism.

The research has found that several respondents describe a fragmentation of the working class, especially when applied to the ability of the working class to act as a political agent. Even where the concept of social class is recognised as a useful analytical tool, many activists such as the respondent below perceive class as just one of many issues around which social movements orientate:

*"I've never bought into the totalising analysis of class that one finds in Marxism, where it is the most important aspect of social relations. I think class analysis is very important and very useful as a theoretical model, this is true of most things, it's a theoretical model, which is different to saying that's how the world actually is. I prefer a trinary class analysis to a binary, you know, with three classes but you can't dispense with it. You need to modify it and the way it plays out in an increasingly informationalised world, as Hardt & Negri put it." (Nottingham Student Peace Group, *ibid*)*

The respondent defends social class as a significant factor in the generation of social injustice but rejects the binary politics of traditional Marxist class theory (Jones 1999). The research demonstrates that while almost all the respondents have some consciousness of class injustice this is not reflected in class conscious demands or ideology within the GMSJ.

Successive waves of theoretical revisionism to class theory have taken their toll yet, in spite of this, the labour and trade union movement has built a powerful presence within the GMSJ. The research shows that class consciousness and the number of participants in the movement who maintain a Marxist class perspective, while a small minority, is more significant than the academic literature concerning the movement may suggest (Held 1999, Klein 2000, Chomsky 2003a). In particular respondents were quick to identify a ruling elite, which most were happy to call a class:

*“There’s just this mad and almost cut off class, almost like French revolution levels and an elite that may include celebrities and pop stars as well as the ruling class proper, who are beyond wealthy; wealthy in a way that is unimaginable.” (Globalise Resistance, *ibid*)*

Of all the respondents with whom I spoke only one, the respondent from Goldsmiths Peace Group, argued that it is not possible to identify a ruling class in contemporary society. Unsurprisingly it is participants from a labour movement background who defend Marxist class analysis most enthusiastically, including some leading trade union officials who defend a classical Marxist conception of class struggle.

*“We know, as a trade union, that there are two classes of people, working class and those who exploit the working class and we’re on the side of the working class, simple as that” (RMT, national officer, LAB4)*

I also spoke with a member of the National Executive Committee of the Communications Workers’ Union (CWU). I asked the respondent if class analysis needs to be updated in the age of globalisation:

*“I don’t think things have changed. Perhaps people’s description has, perhaps the pace of globalisation is faster than before, that’s clear but no, I think it’s all there” (CWU, National executive member, LAB1).*

It is not only respondents from within the trade union movement who argue that language may have changed more than underlying class relations. Some respondents from social movements based on non-class identity accept that certain indicators of membership to one or another class may have changed but not necessarily the dynamic of class struggle itself:

*“Certainly the old class structure in this country has changed so much. The working class with their foreign holidays are now better off than what was called the middle class but class divisions remain. Look at the role of private education and the number of old Etonians in the Conservative Party.” (Muslim Association of Britain, *ibid*)*

The trade union movement remains the largest organised section of affiliated groups to the social forums and many trade union figures believe that the GMSJ is already closely aligned with trade union ideology:

*“A lot of people involved in the anti-globalisation movement have got a theory of class that’s not qualitatively different from the trade unionist theory of class. The normal Marxist terms like means of production, relations of production and so on don’t tend to get used as they might of done but essentially we are still talking about those things” (TUC, *ibid*).*

Again, the terms may require updating but this respondent defends a socialist class consciousness.

The No Sweat campaign is in contact with low paid factory workers in several continents. The concept of atomised social relations gains some support in the context of European improvements but the perspective of large scale industrial development in China focuses attention back onto the working class. The No Sweat respondent told me that in their view the demise of the traditional manual working class has been exaggerated.

*“Explain the existence of massive factories in China. Even in the West. I am working for the T&G organising workers on or around the minimum wage. They are not atomised or free, their work has not been feminised. They are workers in the most traditional sense and there’s a lot of it going on.” (No Sweat, ibid)*

Furthermore, both No Sweat and a respondent from Hands Off Venezuela (HoV), a group that supports the regime of Hugo Chavez, pointed out that many more poor people in the low income countries are joining the ranks of the proletariat as falling agricultural incomes drive them into cities and as wage labourers;

*“The working class is a majority in most of the countries in the world” (Hands Off Venezuela, Organiser, SM4).*

The research suggests that the incorporation of China and other low wage economies into the global economy has not redefined social relations but reproduced classical capitalist class relations on a huge scale. Furthermore, many trade unionists maintain that the shared experience of wage labour remains the most effective identity around which a global movement can be built:

*“Trade unionists from radically different cultures can pretty quickly get together and form a collective understanding because we’re all the same type of people. We’ve all had our labour expropriated. There are certain things in common that make it easy to build solidarity across countries” (TUC, ibid).*

The research demonstrates that every respondent with whom I have spoken recognises that, in the epoch of globalisation, patterns of production and exchange have shifted within the global economy. This includes the respondent from No sweat, who maintains their Marxist identity, but these geographical shifts occur within a framework of global capitalist relations. None of the respondents have exhibited any sense of how these underlying relations have shifted in any fundamental sense.

*“The nature of industrial production and the position of the working class today, in Britain, is very different to 1848. We need to work out what that means. We need to look at the relative importance of productive and finance capital. Where will the class struggle take place? But that doesn’t mean chucking everything out” (No Sweat, *ibid*).*

This process of identifying what has changed and what remains constant is central to determining ideological attitudes towards contemporary struggle. The research suggests that class has not been ‘chucked out’ as a concept by activists within the GMSJ. There is a focus on geographical patterns of exploitation within the GMSJ, which often champions ‘The Global South’ and the theoretical shift in focus from class to geographical location as a generator of social injustice. But many respondents also continue to conceptualise geographical patterns as a product of class relations within a capitalist social system. This leads many activists to reject the term “anti-globalisation” but to question the class interests being served by a particular form of globalisation:

*“To say in general a movement against globalisation is a little bit misleading because it is not against globalisation in the way of putting one country against another but a movement against big companies and monopolies. Chavez himself has said, in a TV documentary called, ‘The Revolution will not be televised’, that globalisation itself is not a bad thing, the problem is control by global monopolies for profit” (Hands Off Venezuela, *ibid*).*

Class relations are more clearly understood in the context of newly industrialised regions but even in Britain, changes in the character of class consciousness are not all in the direction of confused fragmentation. The respondent from Globalise Resistance argues that while the idea of the knowledge economy has been used to suggest that high tech production and service industries have broken down class identity, in fact many workers in the Information/technology (IT) sector are in a similar social position to workers in any other large scale or factory environment.

*“IT has created new kinds of workers and a new working class, Workers now work in call centres, although there are still many working in factories they work in logistics centres*



*and whatever, dealing with distribution or whatever but still central to the system.”*

*(Globalise Resistance, ibid)*

Specifically, the respondent from Globalise resistance argues that the process of opening up professions to competition and an associated drive for efficiency (in capitalist terms) has plunged some layers of the socially mobile middle class into the ranks of the workers.

*“People like me who lecture, OK it’s better than a lot of jobs in a factory, but many aspects of the job like the forms you have to fill in have proletarianised the work in such a way that you start to feel like it. The lecturers’ dispute (trade dispute over pay and conditions-JW) involved people who thirty years ago would have felt themselves to be very much outside that class struggle and you can see examples of that throughout society, which does fit with Marxist theory.” (ibid)*

This is not the whole story. The research shows that class analysis remains influential within the GMSJ but it is undeniable that the influence of class based socialist and social democratic ideology has receded since the collapse of the Stalinist bloc and sharp rightward movement of mass social democratic parties globally. The research suggests that there is no convincing new ideology that has replaced class theory but rather, this process is driven by a loss of confidence in class struggle itself. The respondent from Trapeze sums up the attitude towards class politics of many young activists.

*“I don’t find it exciting. I suppose it’s got connotations of banging your head against the same brick wall that people have been banging their heads against for hundreds of years and it hasn’t worked. It’s not like it’s irrelevant but it’s not where my passion lies” (Trapeze, ibid).*

This respondent captures the essence of the problem facing class based ideology within the GMSJ. At a theoretical level it simply is not capturing the imagination of young activists within the social movements. However, post-socialist ideology has not helped the movement to identify an

alternative force with the coherence and economic power to transform society and deliver another world.

For many activists the approach of the respondents from the NLR echoes their own attitudes towards the idea of class struggle, which is not to dismiss it but neither to prioritise it:

*"There is no black and white way of describing the world as it is in terms of what agencies there are. You have to do it pretty much on a case by case basis" (New Left Review, ibid).*

Activists from a socialist tradition will recognise that class struggle does not have the same instinctive appeal to some new activists;

*"But it does not invalidate the central class analysis of Marxism" (Close Campsfield (Immigration Detention Centre), Organiser, SM1)*

Class analysis continues to inform the GMSJ to an extent that belies the assertions of post-socialist ideology. Only one of the respondents did not make some use of class theory while every other has a clear perception of a ruling elite and most are comfortable referring to the elite as a class. Several of the respondents argue that class identity is less clear than before and several doubt that a movement can be sustained on a class appeal only. However, most also accept that class remains a fundamental dividing line in global capitalist society and readily accept that class struggle has a continuing role to play in the GMSJ. The retreat of trade unionism in the face of neo-liberal attacks and demise of formerly socialist parties has cast doubt on the theoretical credibility of class ideology but post-socialism has not helped the respondents to identify an alternative identity or economic interest around which a viable GMSJ can be built.

## **4.4 Conclusion: The Power of the Organised Working class**

*“Some people I’ve come across who do not seem to grasp the importance of trade unions or even express some hostility to trade unions, a sort of ultra-libertarian position that sees trade unions as part of the problem whereas as far as I’m concerned they are a key part of the solution, not necessarily under their present leadership but I believe that without trade unions there is no way forward.” (ibid)*

In this chapter I have discussed how respondents conceptualise power and in particular whether activists in the GMSJ place property relations and social class at the centre of these concepts. The research has shown that post-socialist concepts of fragmented power relations that are understood to act through many disparate cultural mechanisms have, to some extent, marginalised socialist ideas about the centrality of class inequality and struggle in the generation of and resistance to social injustice.

Several respondents have articulated a sense that the socialist emphasis on class as a primary form of identity, around which a GMSJ can be built, is outdated (Goldsmiths, Trapese, CSSGJ). However, the data has also pointed to an enduring sense that a ruling class maintains enormous power in the globalised contemporary world (MAW, TUC, GR). The research suggests activists in the GMSJ have not explicitly addressed theoretical concepts of power and class or the role of property relations in generating social injustice but draw empirical conclusions as the movement acts on specific questions. As the respondent from GR has argued, it is no use claiming that state power has been fragmented and exists only in the mind to a Bolivian peasant, who is crouching behind a barricade fighting the state forces over his right to have access to clean water.

The research has found no evidence of a widespread ideological embrace of the post-socialist concept that capitalist power and property relations, existing in the first half on the twentieth century, have “melted into the air” (Urry ibid). Rather, the task of transforming capitalist property relations has been returned to the top of the agenda of the GMSJ in those locations where a

genuine mass movement has been able to exert real influence on events. In Venezuela and Bolivia, in particular, the movement has confronted the control of national resources by multi-national corporations by raising renewed demands to nationalise these resources. The governments of Chavez and Morales have done this only to very limited extent but the ideology of nationalisation has been immeasurably strengthened by such measures. The refocusing on these questions, not only in Latin America but in the campaigns described by the respondent from War on Want, in this chapter, has encouraged some activists take a positive view of the scope for socialist movements in the less developed countries or global south than is the case in Britain.

Overall, the research leaves little doubt that even amongst some respondents from the socialist left of the movement, confidence in the ability of the working class to act as a class and confront the power of capital has been eroded. Many respondents from labour movement traditions have accepted that in the short-term, at least, socialists need to turn more to the new movements rather than the organised working class (WoW, GR, NLR, No Sweat). There are some participants within the GMSJ, from a socialist tradition, who argue against this position and attempt to bring the ideology of socialism into the GMSJ in a more explicit way (CWU) but they represent a small minority at present.

Crucially though, any shift away from socialist ideological concepts of power, generated from private ownership of property and manifested in the form of class oppression has not resulted in a clear theoretical underpinning of that shift. Rather, the research reflects the empirical orientation of activists to issue based movements in the recent past. The respondent from the Close Campsfield campaign (top) is one such activist who has turned their attention to the immediate question of closing down the Campsfield Immigration detention centre. This respondent though retains a sense that it is the organised working class, acting through the trade union movement, that can change society. The “ultra-libertarian ideas” of organic change through autonomous cultural movements does not possess the power to effect real social change (ibid).

The research does find that many respondents reflect post-socialist concepts related to a fragmentation of power and class relations but this thesis explains this process as an empirical response to the crises of social democracy and Stalinism that have underpinned an ideological crisis in the labour movement. However, socialist explanations of social injustice, as a product of the power of a ruling class, continue to influence the movement. Socialist consciousness has been undermined by the political crisis of Stalinism and social democracy but there is no evidence that activists in the GMSJ are able to identify a new set of material relations of production that underlay the class nature of capitalism. The materialist analysis of Marxism retains the capacity to analyse social injustice and, as I will go on to argue in subsequent chapters, to provide the basis for a programme for another world.

## **5 Nation, State and Global Consciousness within the Global Movement for Social Justice**

*“The nation state is still a very important actor, in spite of what some people would have you believe. If you turn up on a demonstration it’s not the corporations that turn up to beat the shit out of the protestors, it’s the state” (Nottingham Student Peace Group, Activist, STUD4).*

Globalisation theory has developed concepts concerning the intensification of globalised flows of culture, capital and power, which they suggest have fundamentally eroded the ability of nation states to exert their national sovereignty (Giddens, Held, Castells).

Held’s description of the phenomena that is globalisation starts from the premise that global social relations have moved beyond the limits of the nation state (Held 1999) and this concept has informed sociological (Giddens 1990, 1998, 2001, Taylor 1999), economic (Hutton 2002, Glyn 2006), political (Hall & Jacques 1989, Hardt & Negri 2000) and geographical (Harvey 2003a, 2003b) theory.

The initial focus of this chapter will be a discussion with respondents about concepts of state sovereignty and the state’s ability to regulate capital. A sense that multi-national corporations and global financial markets can often escape national state regulation is present in many writings that are part of a broad anti-globalisation thesis (Klein 2000, Stiglitz 2002, Monbiot 2003a). In this chapter, I will argue that activists within the GMSJ reflect empirical observations of global capital finding ways to avoid national state regulation. However, theoretical concepts underpinning transformational globalisation theory have little resonance with activist in the GMSJ. Most of the respondents continue to identify with the concept of imperialism rather than the fragmented post-imperialist empire of Hardt & Negri (ibid). Many activists in the GMSJ recognise the central role of nation states in shaping global relations, in particular the US nation state, which is widely seen to occupy a position as the world’s only superpower since the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

The research will show that imperialist relations between states and limitations to the effective sovereignty of nation states are more commonly understood by activists in the GMSJ to be a product of a pre-existing process of capitalist development that is not fundamentally different from that of imperialism, as described by Lenin in the early part of the twentieth century. Whereas Lenin described the epoch of imperialism as “the highest stage of capitalism” (Lenin 1940); I argue that globalisation is best understood as new stage of imperialism.

I will contend that a collapse of social democratic strategies for state intervention has been mistaken for a collapse in state sovereignty itself. Classical social democratic ideology perceived the state as an arbiter between economic and social interests (Weber 1947) but the inability of social democracy to influence capital in the neo-liberal epoch has undermined the notion of a powerful state. Marxist theory has, however, always argued that the state should be seen as an instrument of capitalism (Engels 1968b).

In the period after the end of World War Two, the class balance of forces had swung against capital and bourgeois nation states implemented social democratic programmes to rebuild economic infrastructure and to deliver social reform to cut across revolutionary socialist movements in Europe and Asia. Today is very different. The state managed totalitarian version of planning imposed by Stalinism failed in a historic sense (Hall & Jacques 1983, 1989) and the ideology of social democratic state enforced reforms is also in crisis. While socialist theory has entered crisis so too has the capitalist economy. Since a profit downturn around 1968 capitalism has shifted away from social democracy in order to restore global profit rates at the expense of wage and welfare costs. In a period of neo-liberal free market capitalism and socialist disorientation the class balance of forces has shifted towards capital and resulted in an ideological offensive that has recast the role of the nation state from social reform to profit maximisation. It is this process of political economy that has re-shaped social relations rather than shifts in space and time driven by ICT (Castells, Giddens, Held). The research will show that respondents are more likely to share this conceptualisation of the decline of social democracy.

The chapter will then turn to the global character of capitalist social relations, which have given rise to a global response by those who seek social justice. I will argue that this development is not unprecedented, as Chomsky would have it (Chomsky 2003a), but stands in the traditions of socialist internationalism. It was, after all, Marx who closed the Communist Manifesto with the exhortation: "Workers of the world unite" (Marx 1968). However, the research presented in this chapter will show that there is little recognition of this amongst younger activists in the GMSJ, who see the global outlook of the contemporary movement as an exciting feature of a new movement.

Finally, the chapter will discuss post-state theory encompassing perceptions of the demise of sovereignty but also a radical thesis that perceives state power as not necessarily diminished but undesirable. This will be the final focus of this chapter. Radical post-state ideology flows from post-socialist theories of class fragmentation and the sense that while the social democratic or socialist states could represent the interests of a homogenous working class, the demise of such a class leaves the state unable to meet the fragmented demands of social justice (Hirst 1997, Holloway 1998, Wallerstein 2002). The GMSJ want to see the state's ability to act against the freedom of capital strengthened.

Post-socialist ideas in the form of post-state theory have become far more influential within the GMSJ than was the case in post-war struggles for social justice. Some believe the state has been emasculated by the forces of globalisation while others desire it be emasculated by autonomous centres of self-organisation. However, the research will demonstrate that activists in the GMSJ have not identified an alternative to the state when it comes to making real social change. In fact, most advance demands on the state to play a greater role in the delivery of social justice.



## **5.1 Nation States and the Global Scope of the GMSJ**

*“The US is not going to be brought down by social forums so the role of states is very important” (CND, National Officer, SM3)*

Globalisation theory challenges the role of nation states in a most fundamental sense but the research shows that many activists continue to recognise that nation states are unique in possessing the ability to influence global social and economic relations. In this section I will outline the research findings relating to three themes: The way in which respondents conceptualise the character of globalised social relations and the role of the nation state; The potential for a return to social democratic nation states; The global consciousness of the GMSJ and the degree to which the GMSJ acts in a global sense.

### **5.1.1 Conceptualising Globalisation, Nations and Imperialism**

The research shows that the majority of the respondents conceptualise globalised social and economic relations as a form of imperialism. Few respondents articulated any sense of a fundamentally new pattern of global social relations as a consequence of modernity and most recognise the central role of capital in shaping these relations. The respondents tend to recognise that global flows of capital have intensified and that technology has allowed capital to integrate global markets and production to a higher level but most understand this as an extension of imperialist social relations rather than an entirely new pattern. The respondent from the New Left Review (NLR) sums up the feelings of many activists:

*“I’m less keen to stress the sort of uniqueness or idea that globalisation stands everything on its head” (New Left Review, Editorial staff, STUD3).*

The research also finds that some respondents consider arguments about new patterns of social relations in the epoch of globalisation to be more propaganda than empirical observations:

*“There’s a lot of rubbish spoken about globalisation and a lot of it is propoganda that the ruling class would like you to believe. If you look at the figures there are very few global companies. If you look at capital flows around the world they generally only go between Europe, America, Japan and parts of the Far East.” (Globalise Resistance, Academic, SM7)*

Of all the respondents I spoke with only one, from Goldsmiths Student Peace Group, felt that globalisation was fundamentally altering patterns of global social relations. In this case through the construction of a new globalised culture:

*“Perhaps five hundred years ago someone in Germany would not have understood someone in France and now we are more similar and are not scared of each other and understand them. Hopefully in a couple of hundred years we won’t be scared of people in Iran because we will understand them as our neighbours. That would be my dream of globalisation, understanding different cultures, more than anything.” (Goldsmith’s Student Union Peace Group, Activist, STUD2)*

Participants in the GMSJ recognise that governments will often use the spectre of globalisation, as much as the reality, to implement pro-business policies and enforce global competition in the labour market but most also accept that national governments cannot exert their sovereignty to the extent of imposing a social democratic programme of regulation onto capital, as appeared possible in the post-war period. A regional official from the General, Municipal and Boilermakers Union (GMB) told me that;

*“The fashion in which democracy and democratic governments are ceding and losing control to capital and international capital is a great concern. You will have seen the anger amongst our members when the likes of Peugeot or Ford are able to move whole plants, put thousands out of work and move to a new site with no ability for us to control that.” (GMB, Regional Officer, LAB3)*

The respondent described how transnational relocations of production within multi-national companies have lowered wages and threatened job security and these comments were corroborated by several other respondents, particularly those who are officers of trade unions including the respondents from CWU and FBU.

In response to empirical observations of the problems nation states might face in regulating global capital, respondents have addressed the need for new forms of transnational regulation. Many approaches to new global forms of regulation advanced within the social forums have been entirely utopian, such as George Monbiot's call for a global parliament (see chapter two) but the respondents tend to seek more practical regional coordination of regulation. This is often conceived as a way for nation states in Europe or other regions to counter the strength of the only remaining imperialist power on a global scale; The USA.

Respondents from a trade union background point to an intensification of transnational flows of labour and capital but they do not generally conceptualise this as a fundamental break with the imperialist economic relations of an earlier period. The RMT respondent, in particular, defends a Marxist theory of imperialism, arguing that the epoch of globalisation should be understood as a new phase of imperialism that began with the fall of the Soviet Union and is characterised by the subordination of the United Nations (UN) to the specific national interests of US imperialism.

*"There would not have been the acceleration in globalisation that took place, if the Soviet Union had been in place. That market has now been opened to the most ruthless people and it is clear that globalisation is about extracting maximum profits for a few at the expense of the many. What you've got now is no balance of power. The UN is secondary now to the USA which is imperialist. It pushes its policies past the normal barriers of its administration."* (RMT, National Officer, LAB4)

Far from undermining the nation state per se, the collapse of the Soviet Union has allowed the USA to exercise an unprecedented level of global power in its position as the world's only remaining superpower.

*"I think the collective view of the NLR is probably that the fall of the Soviet Union means that all bets are off" (New Left Review, ibid).*

This is backed up by other respondents such as the respondent from Jubilee Debt Campaign (JDC), a prominent NGO campaigning on poverty. The respondent from JDC claims that instead of a global village emerging, the end of the Cold War has removed the possibility for countries to play off the US and Soviet Union leaving smaller nations vulnerable to US threats to cut aid and/or trade relations. This has created a situation where activists perceive that the US is able to exercise imperialist domination to a greater extent than ever before.

*"Since the 1980s countries have started to be pressed into the neo-liberal mould, doubtless to the benefit of Western multi-nations. It was a shift in ideology here in the West but it was also a shift in practice. Countries couldn't say no to the offer of loans because they'd have gone back to the Stone Age, they had no option. The macro-economic policy of many indebted countries has been controlled from Washington since the 1980s." (Jubilee Debt Campaign, Founder member, NGO2)*

This focus on the need to oppose the power of the US as a national force is absolutely fundamental to many activists perception of global injustice and can point to the need, not for a new politics expressed through the social forums, but for state action.

*"Well you're not going to get a real alternative while the US is in the position it is in. The US is not going to be brought down by social forums so the role of states is very important. It is hard to see how the US will be brought down in the sense that it stops having massive interventions in other places." (CND, ibid).*

The USA, as the world's sole superpower, is perhaps a more powerful nation state than has ever gone before. In order to counter its influence, some respondents argue that other nations must act as regional bodies. In practice the idea of a co-ordinated resistance to US imperialism is often expressed as a call for further European Integration, in order to develop a social democratic Europe

as a counterweight to US neo-liberalism (Hutton 2002:315-316). This is an idea that was raised by the respondents from New Left Review:

*"I don't think that globalisation has completely neutered the nation state but these institutions are going to have to change. I think there are still important roles for regional institutions. US dominated institutions have a powerful effect on the world economy."*

*(New Left Review, ibid)*

The general concept of transnational regulation of capital may be popular with many of the activists but the character of such regulation is far from clear and respondents from different ideological traditions within the GMSJ would have very different ideas about this. A respondent from the International department of the Trades Union Congress described their own sense of a formal international financial system:

*"Trade unions recognise that if you're going to control multi-national capitalism you will need supra-national structures that will not look fundamentally different from the WTO, for all the problems with it". (TUC, Appointee, LAB6)*

The research finds that many activists in the GMSJ are frustrated by the failure of nation states to regulate global capitalism. However, few have pointed to any fundamental cause for this failure. There is certainly no widespread understanding of shifts in space and time that have neutered the nation state. Activists in the GMSJ have different ideas about how some influence might be exerted over global capital but all rely on the mechanism of the state to a significant extent. Throughout post Second World War period state regulation of capital and social relations was synonymous with social democratic reformism. In the next section I will argue that it is the particular concept of social democratic states that has been undermined by global economic relations and not the position of the state itself. The research suggests that the respondents share the conclusions of Cumbers et al, who identify:

*The continued importance of places in forging the collective identities of movements that make up networks (Cumbers et al 2008:198).*

### **5.1.2 The Social Democratic Nation State**

It is not the viability of the nation state itself that has been undermined by global neo-liberal capitalism but the model of the social democratic 'welfare state', which was a product of the potential for rapid economic growth in the post-war period and a defensive strategy against the threat of revolutionary socialist movements.

Many activists in the GMSJ express a desire to return to the golden age of Keynesian social democratic reformism. This is the stated position of the Trades Union Congress and many individual trade unions. I discussed the potential for a neo-Keynesian consensus with an officer of the South East Regional Trades Union Congress (SERTUC). The respondent was confident that even in the present epoch of globalisation, business and government could be persuaded to adopt a new social consensus, if the movement can convince them that such a move would increase economic efficiency. Amongst other respondents the sense that a new period of social democratic global consensus is possible is more limited. However, most place the winning of particular reforms or regulation at the top of their agendas, whether that be the labour standards sought by War on Want, the debt relief that Jubilee Debt campaign demands or the protection of state reforms in Venezuela that is the aim of Hands Off Venezuela. I discussed the potential for such reforms with a respondent from Jubilee Debt Campaign who remains confident that lobbying national governments for a change of policy can still deliver effective reforms. In fact, rather than lament the impact of globalisation on the ability of states to regulate, this respondent perceives a positive globalisation effect arising from the desire of nations not to appear to be lagging behind reforms elsewhere.

*"We've convinced the British government of our case and they will not impose policy conditions as a condition of debt relief and aid but this is only in the last year. That is a big ideological shift. The British government has come round to our point of view. Bill Clinton did it first and all the others had to follow. We in the international campaign often focus on a country we think we can move and then others have to follow. They feel they can't be left out." (Jubilee Debt Campaign, *ibid*)*

The optimism of this respondent, however, is not reflected throughout the GMSJ and the research finds that most activists accept that regulation implemented by a single nation state is likely to be less effective in the era of globalisation. The respondent from the GMB explains how the ability of major manufacturing employers, in this case Fords, to shift production away from high wage or highly regulated nations is now greater than ever before:

*“If you look at the ability that Fords has to move parts from Britain abroad at such a rate of knots, that was never there in the 1950s. It just was not there because of the whole logistical issue of getting components and the final product out to customers. This is so much greater now than at any time in the World’s history that I think the ability of multinational companies to move around the world has never been greater.” (GMB, *ibid*)*

If Fords are able to exploit global opportunities to locate production in relatively unregulated labour markets then it is many times easier for firms in the new economy sector of telecommunications. A respondent from the Communication Workers’ Union (CWU) reflected the concerns of workers in an industry that has become synonymous with off-shoring and outsourcing to low wage regions.

*“If India said, ‘we’ve now got a minimum wage of \$x an hour’ they (capital) would just move somewhere else. And if one firm said, ‘We won’t outsource’ then other telecom operators would come in from Europe and fill the void, the British government would not have any sway over that. The world has moved on. Now it is about global economics. Not one single national state could dictate by reformist means or restriction” (Communication Workers Union, National Executive member, LAB1).*

Trade unions continue to campaign for state regulation but many trade union officers and activists believe there are major political barriers to overcome:

*“I don’t think that trade unions are any less statist than they ever have been. It is probably true to say that trade unionists now have a different conception of what is achievable in state ownership than they had in 1945 but I’m not certain this is any more than a pragmatic adjustment to political reality” (TUC, *ibid*)*

For the majority of activists within the GMSJ, overcoming the challenges of reforming global capital remains the most immediately identifiable route to social justice. The research suggests that the ideas of post-socialist globalisation theory have done little to change this.

*“National governments can make change, yes. Bolivia is a very good example of that. Look at what America is doing and their security services are manoeuvring again. In relation to El-Salvador they’re absolutely wetting themselves over these lefties. It’s really quite incredible. The South American model is one to watch” (War on Want, National Officer, NGO3).*

The research has shown that events in Bolivia and also in Venezuela have had a profound impact on the GMSJ. More respondents cite the regimes in these two nations, as an inspiration, than any other movement. As this respondent from War on Want shows, perceived successes of state reform programmes in both nations have given confidence to many activists in the GMSJ that the state can still make socially just reforms. I will examine the impact of developments in Venezuela and Bolivia further in Chapter seven.

### **5.1.3 The Global Consciousness and Scope of the GMSJ**

Concepts of a global village or global consciousness, popularised by globalisation theory, are exaggerated. Leslie Sklair has pointed out that the shared experience of watching a particular TV programme does not create an undifferentiated consciousness from African villages to London and New York (Sklair *ibid*). I have also observed that mass demonstrations around the ESFs have been characterised by the political and organisational presence of nationally constituted trade unions and political parties. The research suggests that any concept of a global consciousness is treated with scepticism by activists in the GMSJ.

I discussed the idea of a global consciousness with a respondent from the Movement for the Abolition of War, which is a pressure group dedicated to finding new, non-militaristic, forms of global



conflict resolution. The respondent argued that far from living in a single global community the communities that many of the world's poor live in remain technologically and socially distinct from the wealthy nations. According to this respondent, local conditions continue to influence identity to a far greater extent than any concept of a global community.

*"I think that position is a bit idealistic when you think that three quarters of India lives on a dollar a day and has never seen a telephone or computer. I think this is kind of Hampstead language rather than the real world we're in. National identity is still very important. It's not enough to be part of a global community of eight billion people. You have to have some loyalties and connections." (Movement for the Abolition of War, Founder member, SM5)*

Activists are concerned with these global questions but the day to day work of organisations fighting for social justice often remains a more local affair, as a senior official from the Fire Brigades Union explained when I asked whether the national basis of trade union struggles has been undermined.

*"I think that is overstating things. Clearly, in terms of how all of this directly affects people it is the interaction of an employee and their employer in the work-place. In our case that is local authorities, so in Hertfordshire it is Hertfordshire fire-fighters facing Hertfordshire County councillors. The way our members would see it is that if shift systems or something are influenced by European legislation then we can see the sense in co-ordinating with other people in Europe to get the best deal we can. However, when it comes down to it we will organise on a local and national level to do what we do including any local industrial actions" (Fire Brigades Union, National Officer, LAB2).*

The social forums, including the ESF, have played a role in facilitating the international links that have attracted many young activists to the idea of a global movement for social justice but the idea that the process of building a struggle across borders only arose with the Seattle WTO demonstrations in 1999 or with the creation of the social forums (Klein 2000, 2003) is mistaken. It is

important for young activists in the GMSJ to learn about the prior internationalism of socialism and to take what is useful into the contemporary movement.

Internationalism is an extension of the socialist spirit of class solidarity and this has not disappeared between the defeat of the international brigades in Spain and the protests of the GMSJ. The research suggests that campaigns which are conceptualised as part of a pattern of new social movements have international links that pre-date Seattle and the social forums. This is illustrated by the respondent from Close Campsfield:

*“An interesting link with the international aspect began in 1997 because I was invited to attend a conference in Lyon, organised by an organisation called Federation of Associations for Solidarity with Immigrant Workers on the subject of detention. This was followed by a three day conference on the subject of detention and they then organised another one a year later near Geneva. These were European conferences, held in 1997/8. We organised one here in Oxford in 2000 attended by 160 people from over 20 countries. It must be around that time that Seattle happened and so the WSF has an interesting input to make to international action” (Close Campsfield, *ibid*)*

Close Campsfield is affiliated to the ESF and has attended each of its major gatherings up to and including London 2004 but the respondent felt that the ESF was more of a coming together of existing networks than a new form of transnational organisation, a view that is shared with the respondent from the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, who also told me about long-standing international networks their organisation has been involved in.

*“We’ve always been involved in various networks. There’s a thing called ‘Abolition 2000’ which is a sort of global anti-nuclear network and then there’s ‘Abolition 2000 Europe’, which focuses on trying to progress things through the European parliament. There was also the International Peace Bureau based in Geneva. Then the campaign against foreign bases has a long standing thing around Hiroshima which is a sort of global call on*

*the nuclear question. So we have been quite embedded in international relations.” (CND, ibid)*

Many respondents gave similar accounts of how their specific international relationships have been developed over years. All the organisations I spoke with are affiliated to the ESF but it is noticeable that it is direct links with activists in other countries rather than the ESF itself that are often behind the transnational development of the groups involved. For Tourism Concern, engaging with activists from the global south has been central to the organisations work for many years, predating the emergence of the social forums.

*“Tourism Concern was set up about sixteen years ago as a networking organisation that was our remit. It was set up as an advocacy group because people in the South didn’t feel their voices were being heard. It was very much to connect with groups overseas who were having problems and were not in an environment where they could express those issues and be safe” (Tourism Concern, Member of staff, NGO1).*

The idea of a global movement is central to the appeal of the movement to many activists but the research suggests that the transnational scope of some movements has developed more pragmatically. An example of this is Tourism Concern, which campaigns for ethical tourism:

*“Tourism in an export industry that you consume in the place of production, unlike any other export industry. We go there to consume and it is by its very nature it’s defined in a transglobal way. We couldn’t do it any other way” (ibid).*

It can be seen from the accounts above that campaigning networks are not an innovation of the ESF but the ESF has played a role in facilitating the development and widening of international relations for some participating groups in the GMSJ. Even so, some affiliates to the ESF believe it is they, rather than the ESF that has been the primary vehicle for the rise in global profile of activists from the global south.

*“My impression is that Jubilee 2000 started in Britain and built an international following and there is an awareness that we must listen to people from the global south, I think there is more awareness of that. They themselves are so much stronger. They were brought to prominence by Jubilee 2000. There were civil society groups springing up everywhere as a result of this debt campaign in the North.” (Jubilee Debt Campaign, *ibid*)*

The research also reveals evidence that some trade union based activists believe the importance of the GMSJ in rejuvenating transnational campaigning has been exaggerated. The respondent from the General, Municipal and Boilermakers Union (GMB) suggests that trade unions are being driven to broaden their international links by the requirements of their day to day struggles to defend their member's terms and conditions. The GMB is attempting to prevent the export of relatively well paid jobs from Britain to low wage regions while simultaneously giving direct assistance to trade unions in those regions in order to try to raise wages globally. In the case of the Fire brigades Union (FBU) the existence of EU legislation covering the provision of public services in member countries has prompted the union to seek a more highly coordinated response with workers, in their sector, from around the EU. The FBU has taken the step of organising a meeting of European trade union organisations that have fire-fighters within them and that is scheduled for July 07. I asked a senior national officer of the FBU whether the union's European initiative had been influenced by the broader GMSJ.

*“I think because a lot of safety legislation and so on applies across the whole of Europe and a lot of the pressures that have led to the campaigns (of the GMSJ) are part of this same process. In that sense it is a reflection of it but I don't think a lot of our members would say, ‘Yes we are influenced by the anti-globalisation movement therefore we need to do this’. Most of them would understand the logic of some sort of international network for their trade union. (Fire Brigades Union, *ibid*)*

The link between the GMSJ and the international initiative of the FBU is tenuous. Both are responses to the same global economic processes but one has not facilitated the other. Trade

unions are paying more attention to transnational campaigns as a response to the practical challenges posed by global capital but these are normally manifested in local or national disputes with their direct employers. In those industries, such as telecommunications or auto manufacture where the nature of global capitalism is felt particularly sharply there is perhaps more explicit awareness of the issues raised by the GMSJ but even then it is a small minority of trade union activists who have actually attended the ESF or marched with the GMSJ.

The research has found that the character of transnational campaigning is complex. There is no question that the emergence of the GMSJ has encouraged activists to think globally but this can manifest itself either as an ideological global consciousness or as a pragmatic response to campaigning. In addition, many activists from both social movements and trade unions point to their longstanding transnational links that existed before a more general sense developed of a global movement for social justice.

#### **5.1.4 Nation States and the GMSJ: Conclusions**

The research suggests that respondents recognise an intensification of global flows of capital, labour, information and culture but they tend to see this as something that is occurring within a global pattern that is significantly influenced by nation states. Many would like to see new alliances between nation states to challenge the power of the USA, which stands in a uniquely powerful position after the collapse of the former Soviet Union. Some call for supranational institutions but still recognise the centrality of nation states in establishing and maintaining such bodies.

During the post war period many nation states were able to implement a social democratic programme of regulation of capitalism. In the economic conditions that have existed since the end of the upswing around 1968, social democracy has retreated in the face of neo-liberal demands for profit maximisation. It is the particular social democratic model of state regulation that has been eroded in the epoch of neo-liberal globalisation rather than state power itself.

The desire of the GMSJ to act on a global scope is real and activists are enthusiastic about the potential to conduct a supra-national discourse at the ESFs. However, the research also reveals that many affiliated groups, in particular but not only trade unions, have developed international relations and structures that exist independently of the social forums and often through formal labour movement structures.

## **5.2 The Internationalist Traditions of the Workers' Movement**

*“One can't restate it enough times, to any movement consisting of people under the age of twenty, that here are the traditions of when people from different countries got together. I think people who come from a socialist tradition will be aware of these long standing internationalist links, people who don't would not necessarily know them.” (New Left Review, *ibid*)*

Activists within the GMSJ tend to have little awareness of the scope or scale of the international reach of traditional socialist movements. In contrast to the GMSJ, the first socialist international, the International Workingmen's Association, established by Marx and others in 1865, was politically and organisationally integrated across Europe and conducted debates through democratic structures in order to arrive at an agreed political position. By the time of the Comintern (3<sup>rd</sup> International) communist parties from nations across Europe, Asia, North and South America were organised from the local level through to the World Congresses of international Communism. The degeneration of the Comintern under the leadership of Stalin has soured this legacy but the data suggests that young activists in the GMSJ are unaware of the international integration achieved by the Communist parties in the early twentieth century. This was a point put to me by the respondent from the NLR who explained that perceptions of uniqueness are inevitable when a new generation of activists engage in struggle.

*“The international nature of the movement around the ESF is real but I wouldn’t say it is a particularly exciting or new development if you look at the first, second and fourth international as well. But there is a real trend. International demonstrations are a relatively new thing such as the demonstrations at the ESF which were preceded by Seattle and others.” (ibid)*

The traditions of internationalism live on through the trade union movement, which retains international structures that are often more developed than the social forums and informal networks of new social movements. One of the most significant effects of neo-liberal globalisation has been the intensification of global wage competition. Workers in relatively high-wage economies have been warned that unless they cooperate with employers to reduce costs through lower wages or higher productivity, production will be relocated. This represents a major challenge to trade unions in both the economically developed capitalist nations and in the newly industrialised nations where workers are told their low wages are needed to maintain inward investment. The respondent from the RMT explained how global wage competition affects the union’s members in the shipping industry.

*“Globalisation has a real effect on our members because it means competing with Malaysian and Pilipino workers, who only get 20% of the wage of a British sea farer. That’s no disrespect to Malaysians or Filipinos, who I work with in the international transport workers’ federation. They have good unions and our job is to raise the standard of living for all workers. If we get a better rate of pay then they should also get it.” (RMT, ibid)*

This is typical of the approach of several trade union respondents, including a regional official in the GMB, who told me that their union is making direct links with trade unions in low wage regions in order to support their struggles for higher wages. This will benefit members in those regions but also act against wage competition on a global scale. No Sweat orientates to the trade union movement through its campaigns against sweatshop labour and their respondent told me that

globalisation has acted as a catalyst in the generation of a new internationalist perspective within the trade union movement:

*“(it) is a fantastic tradition that is being re-discovered. It is about the brutal logic of global capitalism. Either we stand together or fall. It is a matter of life and death. Unless we support each other jobs can just be exported around the world and we all lose out.” (No Sweat, Organiser, SM2)*

Many trade unionists within the GMSJ will point to the traditions of international solidarity within their movement. When I spoke to an officer of the South East region TUC (SERTUC) the respondent used an example from the nineteenth century to illustrate how the trade unions have always understood the need for unity amongst the workers of the world.

*“The London dock strike in the 1880s was saved by money raised by Australian dockers, £4-5 million in today’s terms. Trade unions in this country have a long and noble history of supporting workers in struggle from apartheid in South Africa, the Pinochet coup in Chile and a host of others.” (South East Region TUC, Officer, LAB5)*

The labour movement can boast of internationalist traditions dating back to the nineteenth century but as the movement shifted to the right during the 1980s the spirit of international solidarity was somewhat lost in the pragmatic approach to partnerships and business unionism.

*“The anti-globalisation movement has woken the trade union movement up. I may be speaking out of turn but it seems to me that for a long time the trade unions have been paying lip service to international solidarity. Of course during the Spanish Civil War the trade unions were organising to send people over there and for solidarity but that went into the background.” (War on Want, ibid)*

A respondent from the CWU develops this point and argues that the social forums have allowed a more genuine transnational discussion between trade unions than was possible through official trade union international structures, including Uni, to which the CWU is affiliated.



*“From a personal perspective I think Uni has its place but it’s heavily bureaucratic and not dynamic so the social forums would always be a better place to meet trade unions from the same sector. The other thing we’ve noticed is the CWU don’t send their officers to the forums, they send lay members such as myself and other unions do likewise. When we talk we can cut through the crap you sometimes get when general secretaries talk to general secretaries who are always ‘on message’ whereas we can actually talk more fully about it. So the WSF will always be better than any international trade union grouping and we can also talk to young people who are not representatives of any trade union.”*

*(CWU, ibid)*

Many activists from a trade union tradition have seen new opportunities for the trade unions to widen their traditional base of support by engaging with the GMSJ. The respondent from SERTUC outlined the range of international work carried out by trade unions and highlighted some new links and relationships that are being developed, directly, through the ESF. These tend not to be relationships of a new type but have certainly been new relationships. This respondent reflected that, perhaps oddly, SERTUC has shared almost no contact with the trade unions in France, which is so close and yet British trade unions know so little about how French workers organise. Some New links, fostered through the ESF are helping to bring some of the more informal character of the French labour movement into the British trade unions. There is also a suggestion, raised by a respondent from the Trades Union Congress International Department that within the unions there is a new global consciousness within the trade union movement in contrast to earlier traditions of solidarity.

*“Trade unionists have also always understood that an injury to one is an injury to all. If you stop a trade union functioning in South Korea that has an impact on trade unionists in Britain, it’s not a different world. What the anti-globalisation movement has brought to the discussion is a sense of more equality between trade unionists, less of a hierarchical*

*relationship, perhaps this is a bit of a rash generalisation, a sense that our interests are not connected but are one and the same thing.” (TUC, *ibid*)*

According to this respondent, it makes no difference whether a smoke stack is in Britain or China; it still pumps stuff into the upper atmosphere with the same effect on everybody.

*“It is no longer the case that an injury to one is an injury to all because, in the globalised world, we are actually suffering the injury“ (ibid).*

This respondent has a good knowledge of the history of international trade unionism yet he identifies with the concept of a more globalised consciousness, even amongst trade unionists, developing in the epoch of globalisation. Rather than conceptualising struggles as being primarily national in character the respondent argues that international support and solidarity for the struggles of others have transformed into a single global movement. In the past workers expressed solidarity for the struggles of others in different countries. Trade unionists have refused to load ships carrying arms to use against the Russian Revolution and there have been examples of secondary strike action to support workers in other countries including action by Unilever workers in support of Indian colleagues in the 1970s. This is considered by the respondent from SERTUC as distinct from a singular global movement. On the other hand it could quite easily be argued that the effects of Franco's victory in Spain, seen as part of the rise of Fascism in Europe had a profound and direct impact on workers throughout the world. At root the trade union tradition of solidarity developed precisely as a recognition that if workers wages and conditions were attacked in one form or one country that attack would soon be made on all.

Trade union traditions of internationalism go back throughout the last century and the respondent from War on Want has argued that these traditions are now regaining prominence (above). Other respondents from the trade union movement identified another characteristic of the interaction between the GMSJ and the trade union movement, which is the possibility for an explicitly political discourse:

*“The International Transport Workers’ Federation was established by Tom Mann and first met, in London, over 100 years ago. The international unions of chemical workers, of miners, automobiles and then the international and world federations of trade unions have been around for years. What they haven’t done is combined politics and trade unions together; they’ve been completely trade union. The WSF is the first to have political organisations and trade unions together. It’s a fantastic piece of organisation.”*  
*(RMT, ibid)*

The respondent portrays the ESF as an important step forward in uniting different struggles for global social justice. The RMT has been one of the more visible British trade unions present at the ESF and RMT general secretary, Bob Crow, has spoken at sessions at the Florence, Paris and London events but the RMT’s day to day struggles for social justice take the form of industrial negotiations and disputes while the union also conducts political campaigns against rail privatisation and for rail safety. In these respects the ESF is not a significant factor at all. The ESF may have played a brief but significant role in turning the attention of key officers of the union back towards the political sphere but the RMT has subsequently backed calls for a new workers political party and has supported candidates in elections standing under the umbrella of the Trade Unionists and Socialists Coalition, a development that owes more to traditional methods of socialist political action and has developed outside of the GMSJ or social forums.

Globalisation has forced the trade union movement to re-evaluate the effectiveness and scope of their international relationships. Whether international work is pursued through traditional trade union structures or the ESF, most trade unions are paying it more attention than in the recent past. But while this is significant it is often overstated. The respondent from SERTUC perceives that solidarity with others has developed into a sense of one single global struggle but there is little evidence from the research to support this. In reality international relations form a tiny part of the work of all the trade unions to which this respondent belongs. British trade unions continue to engage mainly in struggles rooted in local and national pay and condition bargaining while attempts

to resist neo-liberal globalisation usually take the form of demands on the national state to offer protection from global markets.

The history of internationalism at the heart of socialist ideology and the organisation of the Labour Movement has been obscured by the collapse of Stalinism and crisis of social democracy. Young activists in the GMSJ instinctively seek to rebuild these traditions but know little of them in a historical sense. Above all, the history of internationalist socialism demonstrates that the need for a global response to the global integration of capital is not a unique condition arising from the new conditions of the late twentieth century but is a response to the characteristics of capitalism and imperialism.

### **5.3 Radical Post-State Theories and Social Justice**

*“There would be a lot more people working for the state in the trade unions’ view than in the anti-globalisation view so there is a difference in the vision” (TUC, *ibid*).*

It is one thing to argue that nation states have lost the sovereign ability to reform and regulate global economic and social flows but there is also a current within the GMSJ that argues that the state is inherently unsuited to delivering social justice in the fragmented globalised conditions of the twenty-first century. Rather than seeking to reassert state sovereignty over global capitalism, some activists celebrate the decline of the state which they conceptualise as an oppressive monolith. Contemporary concepts of the state have been shaped by the collapse of Stalinist totalitarian states and the capitulation of social democratic states to the demands of global capital. This has served to undermine the legitimacy of the state as an agent of social justice in post-socialist literature. In this section I will describe the central importance of the Stalinist totalitarianism to contemporary post-state theory. However, I will argue that instinctive hostility to state structures is not a response to new conditions but a retreat into classical anarchist theory, which has not developed into any coherent theory of social organisation in a post-capitalist world.

The research suggests that many activists have concerns about state regulation becoming a coercive force. Post-state theory has a clear connection with the anarchist theory of Bakunin and Proudhon but even some of those who could be considered to be part of a broad social democratic tradition reflect these concerns.

*“The last thing I want is another Stalinist society where the state decides what individuals do every day but I don’t want BP to decide what happens every day. I come somewhere down the middle” (Movement for the Abolition of War, *ibid*).*

For many young activists the state is very real and its power to coerce citizens, if not capital, is very much intact. Because of this some activists are attracted to anarchistic ideas which are based on opposition to any form of state structure. Yet the research also shows that while a vague anarchistic anti-state mentality has attracted many young activists it has not developed this into a coherent ideology or programme for the GMSJ. Post-state proponents might argue that the GMSJ is young and post-state solutions must be given time to evolve organically (Trapese, NSPG). However, radical post-state ideas date back to Bakunin and Marx, as the respondent from the Trade Union Congress International Department points out:

*“Questions of public ownership and how far you go from the NHS to the means of production vary. But I think it’s true to say that the impact the anti-globalisation movement has had on that sort of view is merely the latest wave in a series of things that keep battering away at the trade unionist view of statist socialism” (TUC, *ibid*).*

The tendency to move away from a centralised state socialist concept is part of a broader post-socialist ideological wave. Many of the elements of globalisation theory and the ideology of the GMSJ can be traced back to the developments of Eurocommunism, the New Left, revisionism and classical anarchist theory. The respondents from the New Left review (NLR) explained how the ideological foundation the New Left shifted its focus away from statism.

*“The NLR is a journal that has been around for 40 years and came out of the new left in the late 1950s/1960s, which was a sort of non-Stalinist, anti-centralist socialist and*

*communist left. It has always been a general and theoretical project opposed to Stalinism” (New Left Review, ibid)*

The response of the New Left to the degeneration of Stalinism was to reject the idea that a central state could play a role in the construction of a socially just world. The research has found some support for this approach, in particular amongst those respondents from an anarchistic tradition. But there is no evidence of any coherent systemic alternative emerging out of post-state ideology.

This is certainly the case for a respondent from the Centre for the Study of social and Global justice (CSSGJ), who feels that the ideology of a centralised state acts as a constraint on the creativity of the movement.

*“What seems to me more problematic is the traditional Leninist model of talking about the state as a transitional thing between a bad place and a good place where the state is a vehicle to get from one to the other. The transitional mindset is damaging for political and radical energies. I think that is very resonant of debates in the Soviet Union around November 1917 to Feb 1918” (STUD1)*

Like many of those who are inspired by the new left, this respondent does not believe it is necessary for the movement to identify a systemic alternative:

*“I’m with the infantile leftists of 1917/18 who said one thing we can do is be an example, not of a statist politics but of a communal collective politics of collective energies. Now that’s terribly naïve and pretty utopian and I can be struck down dead by all those people who know their historical sources better than me but statism is an ugly feature bubbling under progressive politics” (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, Academic, STUD1).*

Anarchist ideology asserts that the state will inevitably build its own position rather than facilitate a socialist transformation into a post-state form of advanced communism. The respondents from the NLR reflect this to a point but do not completely dispense with statist solutions:

*“You have to look at the role of the national state and the role of classes within each state and how state power actually functions within each one. You cannot just take the state for granted as blocks that act on each other. I think you have to analyse each separately”*  
*(New Left Review, ibid).*

This approach sits well with a post-modern contextual approach to social theory but it does not help to understand what alternative to the state might exist that could facilitate the delivery of social justice. In fact, the comments of the respondent from NLR only state that a discourse is required and does little to clarify the substantive questions.

The research reflects an undeniable hostility on the part of some activists within the GMSJ towards the concept of state managed regulation of social reform. Those opposed to state mechanisms per se are in a small minority. However, the broader concept that the state needs to find fundamentally new ways of responding to social injustice is more pervasive and militates against the development of traditional socialist strategies within the GMSJ. Nevertheless, when movements develop demands for social change the first call is often for state action, in the absence of any material alternative.

The research shows that in spite of post-state theory, in the abstract, the most popular movements amongst respondents are those in Venezuela and Bolivia where state reform and nationalisation of economic resources are central to movements for social justice.

## **5.4 Nation, State and GMSJ: Conclusion**

*“Scattered economies have been transformed into a single international capitalist unit”*  
*(Lenin 1936)*

There is little evidence, within the research, that transformational globalisation theory (Giddens 1990, Held 1999) or the post imperialist theory of Hardt and Negri (2000) has exerted any explicit

influence over activists in the GMSJ. The research suggests that most activists do not conceptualise globalisation as new underlying pattern of social and economic relations but rather a development of imperialist relations as outlined by Lenin (top).

The research demonstrates a clear perception amongst the respondents that the ability of the nation state to regulate capital has diminished, to one extent or another, in the period of globalisation. It is this that has placed the aspiration of acting globally at the heart of the imagery and imagination of the GMSJ. But the mass forces involved in demonstrations at the G8 (previously G7) or EU summit have been mobilised by the local and national labour and trade union movements.

Some respondents do reflect the claims of writers such as Noam Chomsky and Naomi Klein (see chapter two), who argue that the evolution of a GMSJ has generated an unprecedented global consciousness (Goldsmiths, Trapese, TUC Int, CWU). However, such an argument ignores the rich traditions of internationalism that were central to the labour movement through the International Workingmen's Association of 1865 and subsequent socialist internationals. The research reveals that the GMSJ is yet to consider this history and, consequently has not been able to develop a global consciousness of social injustice into a real unity of purpose and programme for action.

The literature around the movement tends to emphasise the post-state theory of the Zapatistas and the ideas of the New Left, which conceptualise the state as part of the problem rather than a structure to deliver social injustice. . In this respect the totalitarian legacy of Stalinism looms large. Some activists go further towards a theoretical post-state position but this is confined to a small and defined anarchistic current. The post-state position of the respondent from Goldsmiths reflects contemporary post-socialist theory but is also entirely consistent with the classical anti-state ideology of Bakunin and classical anarchism of the nineteenth century. Just as Bakunin's anti-state position failed to take the labour movement forward at that time it is significant that post-state ideology has not been translated into a radical programme for social justice but has been embraced



by the neo-liberal coalition government as theoretical cover to welfare and public service cuts in the most recent period.

Most of the respondents to this research are concerned with finding ways in which nation states can effectively regulate capital. In this respect the state reforms of Hugo Chavez and Evo Morales in Venezuela and Bolivia respectively are seen as a model. I will develop this idea more fully in chapter seven.

Both Stalinist and social-democratic state strategies have been undermined by their failure to deliver social justice in the second half of the twentieth century. The overly centralised one-party Stalinist state holds no attraction to the GMSJ while the experience of most respondents, of social democratic national governments, has been of cuts and the removal of regulation of capital. The social democratic concept of the state as a neutral arbiter of class relations looks unconvincing in an epoch of global neo-liberalism.

Marxist theory has always understood the state as a capitalist structure that acts not as a neutral arbiter between capital and society (Weber *ibid*), but in the strategic interests of capital. As such, nation states have progressively shifted their roles from that of managing the post-war social democratic consensus of the 1950s and 1960s to that of pioneering a neo-liberal assault on wages and welfare in order to boost the profitability of global capitalism. The retrenchment of state welfare and state regulation of capital does not reflect a new underlying pattern of globalised social relations but reasserts the character of global capitalism.

Post-state theory is part of an instinctive de-centralised and autonomous approach to the construction of the GMSJ and social forums. These concepts have not helped the movement to develop a systemic alternative to global capitalism but they have impacted on the organisational character of the GMSJ itself. It is this process that will be the subject of the next chapter.

## **6. Organising the Movement for Global Social Justice:**

### **The character of the European Social Forum (ESF)**

*“The ESF is really one of the very few games in town. If you are talking to students who are asking; where can you get a sense of the movement of movements, their passions and energies? Where to go to get a feel for the things that are animating people and where you get some opportunity to get involved in what people are talking about? It is the social forums.” (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, Academic, STUD1)*

The phenomena of new social movements came to academic prominence in the 1990s (Kriesi 1995, Laraña 1994) but it was as a result of the development of the World Social Forum at Porto Alegre and huge gatherings of movements at the WTO summit in Seattle in 1999 that the concept of a global movement for social justice took hold. In chapters four and five I have discussed the ideological character of the GMSJ and in this chapter I will turn to what is conceptualised as a new type of radical political organisation employed by movements in the GMSJ (Chomsky 2003a, Laraña *ibid*, Kriesi *ibid*, Castells *ibid*, Klein 2000).

The decentralised and global (at least in aspiration) organisational character of the GMSJ is often explained as a function of modern information and communication technology (ICT) (Castells *ibid*). In the first part of this chapter, I will consider the impact of ICT on the respondents to this research. I will argue that while ICT has shaped new ways in which the GMSJ can disseminate information it has not fundamentally overcome the need for groups of people to organise and join together in a physical sense, in order to struggle for social justice. I will also discuss the organisational methods that the social forums have adopted, which reject the concept of political parties but have failed to show how a coherent movement might be organised in the absence of party type structures.

The GMSJ and social forums are best described as a meeting of pre-existing movements. On one hand the social forums have attracted post-modern anarchist or post-socialist inspired social movements and on the other, the labour and trade union movement has also taken a prominent

position within the forums. This chapter will discuss the contrasting methods of the GMSJ with traditional party structures.

The research shows that many activists display an instinctive resistance to hierarchical structures just as they do to state mechanisms. Nevertheless, socialist political parties are prominent within the GMSJ and new parties have developed in Venezuela and Bolivia, where struggles for social justice have taken on a mass character.

The labour movement, in particular trade union bodies, provides almost half of all the affiliates to the London ESF but the research shows there remains a fundamental tension between the representative democratic structures of trade unions and the open space of the forums. This tension will be explored in the penultimate section of this chapter.

The final section of this chapter will consider a question raised by several respondents who have argued for the social forums to shift from playing the role of a clearing house for the movement, that is a space in which autonomous movements can meet and network, into a parliament of the movement. The research shows that in order to develop the programme of the GMSJ beyond abstract calls for an open space and a discourse, the movement needs to be able to agree a programme of some sort. There are also problems associated with the exercise of informal power by autonomous individuals who are not under any democratic control of the movement that can only be resolved through the adoption of agreed positions. However, it is clear that any move to impose majority decisions onto currently autonomous groups could break the GMSJ apart.

## **6.1 ICT and new forms of organisation**

*How did we get by without the internet? Ideas do transmit, they may be adjusted to fit a new cultural framework but nonetheless it is unstoppable. You can't stop an idea." (Gay Authors Workshop, Author/Activist, SM8)*

Manuel Castells has argued that ICT has enabled the GMSJ to form less centralised networks of activists that can co-ordinate struggles for social justice without highly a centralised party organisation based around one ideology or programme for action (Castells 1989, 2004). Anthony Giddens has also cited ICT as a major factor in undermining traditional organisations of the labour movement, which is central to his theory of time/space distanciation (Giddens 1990). Harry Cleaver too has focused on ICT in his thesis on the Zapatista uprising (Cleaver 1998).

The research demonstrates that most participants within the GMSJ identify the internet and ICT as an important resource that can be utilised by their movements. Those from cultural movements tend to perceive ICT as more significant to their movements than many others. The respondent from Trapese, a collective that promotes cultural initiatives organised through autonomous social centres, illustrates this:

*“I often wonder how they did things before the internet and web based resources and media. It is massively important; the immediacy and ability to get information transferred quickly, photos and video and that kind of stuff changes our ability to campaign”*  
(Trapese, Social Collective, Activist, SM9).

ICT has played a key role for Trapese yet the respondent did not suggest how these faster flows of images and data might have materially changed the character of campaigning undertaken in the GMSJ. It may be possible to publish photographs and articles on the web much more quickly than in the past, when such material would have to be printed and distributed but none of the respondents was able to show that technology has fundamentally altered the message within.

The research shows that while Developments in ICT have had a profound effect on the precise way in which social movements communicate; ICT has not shifted underlying patterns of power and exploitation to the extent envisaged by post-socialist ideology. Furthermore, the impact of ICT on the organisation of the GMSJ has been questioned by some. The Gay Authors' Workshop (GAW) is a movement concerned with exerting an influence on culture rather than political structures or

institutions. However, GAW has been unimpressed with the impact of ICT on the organisation of the London ESF, to which they (eventually) affiliated.

*“Interfacing with the ESF was all done on-line. My access point was the public library where I could get on-line for an hour and frantically get my contacts going to organise a space at the ESF. That was a big restriction.” (Gay Authors Workshop, *ibid*)*

Even in a world city like London it is not always easy to get on-line and lack of access to ICT is a problem that Castells has highlighted as a barrier to the GMSJ reaching out the poorest people on the globe (Castells 1997 pp150). The respondent from GAW went on to explain how the on-line registration process for the London ESF became so problematic that GAW had to resort to the oldest method of communication known; that is to go and find the organisers and speak face to face. Only then did they succeed in getting a seminar timetabled.

*“I remember the on-line forms made it difficult. On one you were allowed fifty words to describe your proposal but it counted the spaces and punctuation and kept rejecting the form. But we finally submitted our proposal and became aware that we were not getting anything back from the ESF. Then I went round to the office and came into contact with some guy who was organising the arts stream at the ESF and they had meetings at UCL. I can't remember but at that meeting I met people and spoke to them about our aim to organise presentations at the forum and through that I got the name of this arts stream guy. This was a constant thing for a small organisation. I was having to make calls to his mobile. Just prior to the publication of the schedule he said I've got you down for this one event and we said OK, that's great.” (*ibid*)*

Cumbers et al have highlighted the relatively high costs of gaining access to ICT can magnify the problem of poverty excluding some of the most oppressed people on the planet from participating in the GMSJ (Cumbers et al 2008) but this is not a new problem in and of itself. According to a national officer of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) the RMT had

stepped in at the WSF in Mumbai to assist a group of Indian women workers who had been unable to afford the delegation fees to the event.

*“I went to the WSF. Three years ago in Delhi, when we arrived there were young women who had walked for sixteen hours with their clothes on their heads because they couldn’t afford bags. When they arrived they didn’t have enough money to pay 30p for a chic-pea curry. In India women do much of the heavy work and the Indian trade union leaders were spat on by these people. They say the trade unions have nothing to help people in such poverty. So where you have third-world countries with low levels of trade union organisation there can be an anti-trade unionism that sees them as purely bureaucrats and part of the establishment that looks after an elite group.” (RMT, National Officer, LAB4)*

The research shows that ICT cannot be a panacea that will, in itself, democratise movements for social justice.

The research also suggests that theorists may have become a little too preoccupied with internet based technology when improvements in print media may also be having an important effect on the ability of some movements to develop. The respondent from GAW explained how their network has been made possible by new technology but rather than e-mail and the web it is the ability to publish printed material more cheaply that has been so important to them as it has allowed their publishing house, Paradise Press, to put the work of marginalised authors onto the shelves of niche bookstores.

*“One of our biggest sellers has been a fictionalised account of the life of a man who lived through the homophobic governmental drive of the 1950s. Commercial publishing houses don’t want this. In fact, the lesbian and gay niche market is hungry for this sort of information and it flies off the shelves.” (Gay Authors Workshop, *ibid*)*

Nevertheless, the comments of the respondent from Trapese reflect how many young activists in the GMSJ wonder how on earth movements were organised before the web and email became as

widely accessible as they are today. Yet organise they did. Technological development have helped to facilitate flows of global capital and global movements for social justice but there is no evidence that the development of ICT has shifted the relationship between these forces in any fundamental sense. The Communications Workers' Union represent members working in the globalised telecommunications industry itself and a respondent highlighted the huge impact of Indian call centres on British workers' jobs. The respondent insisted that such a development does not call for the organisational methods of trade unionism to be re-evaluated but for a strengthening of these forms.

*"Globalisation is a new word but it has been going on for some considerable time. It's accelerated because technology is changing, certainly in the sector I organise, in communications. Globalisation has always been there but it's accelerated now due to technology" (Communications Workers Union, National Executive Member, LAB1).*

I put it to this respondent that many within the movement feel that classical socialist concepts of a struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat have been superseded by a new pattern of global relations.

*I don't think things have changed. Perhaps people's description has, perhaps the pace of globalisation is faster than before, that's clear but no, I think it's all there. My own experience of talking to Indian workers is that they're absolutely switched on to what is happening. They are very aware of what is happening, they might use different terminology to describe it but it's exactly the same (ibid)".*

By their nature, cultural movements prioritise the publication, on-line or otherwise, of material designed to influence culture. They need to spread their ideas beyond the constraints of an organisation and so developments in ICT are a significant enabling resource for many new social movements. However, many poor and oppressed people are excluded from access to new technology and it is an exaggeration to say that ICT has allowed a completely new type of movement to set the agenda of the GMSJ. The research shows that while the technology of

spreading informational flows has been transformed in the epoch of globalisation, many respondents have a clear sense that the spread of ideas predates the internet. The respondent from GAW put it like this:

*“This (international cultural influence) is not a new thing. Fernand Braudel wrote that across the civilised world ideas transmit and cannot be stopped. There is technology or hardware involved but there is an idea. (Gay Authors Workshop, *ibid*).*

ICT has become an important means of communication for the GMSJ but it does not provide an explanation for an ideological shift away from socialist ideology or the organisation methods of the labour and trade union movement. ICT has transformed the way in which the ideology and demands of the GMSJ are spread but the research has not found any convincing evidence to suggest that the ideology or organisational forms of the social forums have been decisively shaped by developments in ICT. An explanation for this must be sought in the balance of forces between capital and labour and the exploitation of technology by global capitalism rather than the nature of that technology in and of itself.

## **6.2 Social Forums and the Political Party**

*“The key point of difference between struggles of today and those of decades back is that struggles today proliferate or multiply in very different and creative ways, which go against a Leninist narrative whereby we try to harness all this energy behind a political party, which is vertically organised with a leadership, central committee, cadres, masses and so on.” (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, *ibid*)*

The post-party thesis rests on several assumptions including the fragmentation of the working class; the cultural diversity of new social movements; a perceived inevitable degeneration of hierarchical parties into bureaucracies and the need for more than one ideological approach to social justice. These ideological foundations influence many of the most prominent accounts of the GMSJ,



including the writings of Naomi Klein (ibid), George Monbiot (ibid) and Susan George (ibid); all of whom deal in networks rather than formal party structures. These post-party themes originate in an anarchist tradition which rejects all forms of representative politics, including political parties with elected leaders. The research suggests that these anarchistic ideas have influenced many activists from the grass roots tradition of the GMSJ. The respondents from Trapese and Nottingham Student Peace Group both encompass a post-modern anarchist trend (May ibid, Newman 2001, Call 2002). These concepts are recognisable in classical anarchist theory (Bakunin, Proudhon) but emphasise, in particular, the need for autonomous action to an extent that it is even critical of other anarchist traditions.

*“A lot of my friends are involved in the anarchist federation but there’s a lot of cynicism about it as a group because it looks a lot like an anarchist political party. They have a list of principles you sign up to and a very conscious structure” (Nottingham Student Peace Group, Activist, STUD4).*

In the section below I will discuss, with the respondents, anarchistic concepts of autonomy as they are manifested in ideas about cultural movements together with fragmentation of the GMSJ and the political party.

Hostility towards party structures often originates in an assumption that structural political change will be impossible until the culture of imperialism and capitalism has been undermined and this will only be achieved through challenging the cultural norms of capitalist society through art, literature and non-conformist behaviour. The research finds that many activists believe that a new society must evolve naturally or organically out of autonomous cultural movements, often arising out of local cultural centres.

*“I think there is a feeling that it will develop organically. One thing in Nottingham has been the squatting of empty buildings to use as a centre and throw parties. These things spread out and people pick up on the idea (ibid).”*

This idea is central to the thinking of the respondent from NSPG, Trapese and Gay Authors' Workshop and Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice (top).

The concept of a movement comprised of many autonomous movements acting to influence cultural attitudes might be expected to call into question whether it is really helpful to conceptualise the GMSJ as one identifiable movement. The research suggests, however, that even those respondents from anarchistic traditions are reluctant to go this far. There is a clear identity that activists have absorbed through the major gatherings and protests of the movement but there is also a recognition that the sense of where the movement actually is has become less clear.

*"There is such a thing as a global social justice movement but I think some of the theories that we are everywhere; that it is messy and unfinished; that it's nebulous; I think that's all true." (Trapese, ibid)*

In the course of discussions I conducted with activists from the GMSJ none questioned the validity of identifying this as a common movement but several did point to the diffuse character of the movement. This included respondents from an anarchistic tradition (Trapese) and those from trade union backgrounds (GMB, FBU).

The research confirms that many participants in the GMSJ are deeply sceptical, if not hostile, to the role of political parties. The influence of post-party ideas has even influenced leading 'hard left' figures in the trade union movement, a description that can be applied to the respondent from the RMT:

*"What we need is a world movement. We don't want individual political parties that believe they will change things on their own. You need movement, anti-war, anti-missiles, a social justice movement; that is what will win over hearts and minds." (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, ibid)*

Although Chomsky, Klein et al have celebrated the diversity of the GMSJ, the research shows that a minority of activists have come to view this fragmentation as a weakness. The respondent from No Sweat is convinced that as the movement develops it will confront the need to formulate an alternative, 'another world' in the language of the GMSJ. The struggle over the ideological character of the GMSJ will lead activists into party type structures:

*"I think we can play an important role in supporting the establishment of radical independent trade unions but in terms of a more ideological development I think there is still a role for a revolutionary party. Leon Trotsky spoke about a revolutionary party as a lever that turns bigger cogs and perhaps this is relevant in a situation of mass campaigns." (No Sweat, Organiser, SM2)*

The research suggests that while many activists display a theoretical hostility towards political parties it is precisely those who organise along the lines of a political party that are behind much of the organisation of the large-scale events of the GMSJ and its component movements. Several respondents, from what might be called social movements, Close Campfield, Hands off Venezuela, No Sweat and Globalise Resistance identified themselves as members of socialist parties including the Socialist Workers Party, Alliance for Workers Liberty, Socialist Appeal and United Secretariat of Fourth International. In addition, one of the trade union respondents who is an NEC member for his union identified himself as a Socialist Party member. This influence of the socialist left within the GMSJ in Britain is widely recognised and not universally popular. It is not only those who may wish to emphasise the role of parties who make these points. The respondent from The Movement Against War is concerned that:

*"(many participants at the London ESF were) manifestly those of some texture of socialism, pink, scarlet or red selling papers. You know you have to run the gauntlet of papers each morning. You have to say that somewhere behind it all there is a core of organisers, I don't know, perhaps the Socialist Workers' Party, who have their levers on*

*things and this results in collisions.” (Movement for the Abolition of War, Founder Member, SM5)*

Where party structures have been established, such as the PSUV in Venezuela, respondents can exaggerate the grass-roots character of figures such as Hugo Chavez, who is often cited by the respondents as an inspiration to the GMSJ:

*He’s (Chavez) not a party political creature, he’s a social movements creature, a neighbourhood movement creature and from that point of view he is part of the insurgent civil society movement as much as the Zapatistas (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice).*

It is a little ironic that some respondents from a grass roots, autonomous tradition have celebrated the centralisation of Chavez as its very opposite. The polarised pro or anti-party debate has allowed no room, up to now, for an alternative position of demanding democratic Party structures to address the need for a coherent powerful movement and the control of that movement from bottom up. For all the calls for grass-roots democracy and support for the social reforms of the PSUV none of the respondents has raised the need for a democratic PSUV.

The organisation of struggles for social justice will throw up the need for centrally coordinated action in order to seize resources and defend communities. Parties may be seen to develop in reality if not in name but this is likely to be a protracted process that will be more likely to develop outside of the social forums. Before the ideology of the party can be rehabilitated in a more conscious sense, participants within the GMSJ will need to be convinced that a party can embrace democratic control from below and avoid the taint of Stalinist commandism. In section 6.4, below, I will consider further, how respondents conceptualise a more integrated decision making form for the GMSJ.

### **6.3 The Labour Movement and the Social Forums**

*“There is an enormous amount in common between concerns about social justice, exploitation and the way that people become things rather than people. There is a lot in common about what might be called the downside of globalisation.” (TUC, Appointee, LAB6)*

The respondent (above) argues that the labour movement has much in common with the GMSJ in its critique of capitalist globalisation. The prominence of TU bodies at the social forums supports this view as does the evolution of the ideas of the GMSJ, which have developed out of an ideological struggle within the global labour movement. The influential political theory of Hall & Jacques, Giddens and Hardt and Negri all flow from the political positions of mass Communist and Social Democratic parties adopted during the 1980s. Post-socialist ideology was theorised by academics who were observing political defeats, suffered by labour after the breakdown of the post-war social consensus.

In spite of these setbacks, the labour movement remains a powerful organised force today. In addition to the trade union bodies that affiliated to the London ESF, several key organisers of social movements are long-term trade unionists themselves and their movements enjoy a particularly close relationship with the trade union movement, such as the respondent from No Sweat, who told me how trade unions and workplace action are central to their opposition to the exploitation of sweated labour in the garments industry.

*“The stuff we do splits down into direct action and propaganda targeting big brands to raise awareness. Some of this is done at home, like unionisation campaigns in the sports shop industry alongside the GMB and also making links with workers and their unions in Mexico, Haiti, Argentina, Indonesia and others. At the London ESF we organised a meeting where a Mexican worker from the maquiladora zone spoke alongside British trade unionists.” (No Sweat, ibid)*

In this section I will discuss the interaction between trade union bodies and the social forums. The research suggests trade unions have one of several aims when they become involved in the forums including:

- The development of a political programme
- To bestow the legitimacy of the trade union movement onto the forums
- To facilitate ad-hoc interactions with other trade unions and movements.

Different trade union bodies with different political outlooks relate in different ways to the social movements and the involvement of trade union bodies in the forums reflects the ideological fragmentation at the heart of the GMSJ and the retreat of socialist ideology within the mass parties of labour. The involvement of trade unions in the forums also raises important questions of democratic accountability for trade unions whose policies are decided within their own membership structures and cannot be altered to maintain the consent of open forums. I will deal with each of these issues below.

The research suggests that some trade unions have become involved in the GMSJ in order to pursue their union's political aims following the rightward lurch of the Labour Party. This certainly explains the approach of the respondent from the RMT that has been disaffiliated from the Labour Party but continues to seek political change:

*"We realise that economic pressures go beyond the industry that you work in. For instance PFI (Private Finance Initiative), which is a direct result of Gordon Brown's privatisation mechanism, is a government decision to hand an industry over to privateers. This cannot be challenged purely in the workplace, it must be opposed politically and it's only right for the union to get involved in that kind of politics in order to look after its members."* (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, *ibid*)

This is a conclusion the Trades Union Congress (TUC) reached in 1900 when it voted to support moves towards the establishment of the Labour Party. The resolution to do so was moved, at the TUC's 1900 congress, by the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants, a forerunner of today's

RMT. The RMT sees itself as being at the forefront of political campaigning by the trade union movement but it sees the priority in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to be the creation of new, post-Labour Party political forces. The union had its affiliation to Labour cancelled by the party NEC after the union's Scottish region affiliated to the Scottish Socialist Party. It was clear from my discussion with a senior national official that he sees the ESF as a way of campaigning on a political level in opposition to New Labour.

Some trade unionists see the GMSJ as an opportunity to re-build a radical political movement and want the unions to take a lead in constructing this movement in order to more closely align it with the existing mass membership of the trade unions:

*"It is important that trade unions are in the vanguard of social movements and bring the legitimacy of having 7 million members." (South East Regional TUC, Officer, LAB5)*

The respondent from the South east regional Trades Union Congress (SERTUC) believes that the GMSJ needs to reject post-socialist ideas regarding representative structures and urges the trade unions to bring their democratic legitimacy to the ESF and GMSJ. The research though, shows this to be a largely hypothetical position as no trade union is prioritising their work through the ESF to any great extent. The primary ambition of most respondents from trade unions is to develop their own independent international links rather than to shape the development of the social forums.

Since the disaffiliation of RMT, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has also broken with the Labour Party at the behest of the union membership. Following their bitter industrial dispute against the Labour government in 2002/3 delegates to the union's annual conference voted to disaffiliate. A senior national officer at the FBU headquarters explained that his union's relationship with the ESF is, perhaps, less developed than that of the RMT. Even so, he believes that the GMSJ has influenced the FBU albeit in a more ad-hoc sense.

*"I don't think we've debated it as much as some other organisations within the trade union movement have. I know that some of our regional bodies have been more involved. I think you can see the influence of the anti-globalisation movement within the union. If you*

*look back at our 2002/3 pay dispute I think the style of our campaigning was influenced by some of that other activity like the flags and colour and so on” (Fire brigades Union, Officer, LAB2).*

But it would be easy to exaggerate the impact of the GMSJ on the FBU. The research shows that whatever the reasons for trade unions turning to the GMSJ the interaction between the two is often of a very limited character. In the FBU only, “a number of individuals (FBU)”, were directly involved with the ESF but they have brought some of the methods and ideas of the GMSJ into the union. The respondent felt that the influence of the GMSJ may be more in terms of presentation than a far reaching organisational shift and doubts whether it really reflects a grass roots development within the union.

*“One of the features of the anti-globalisation movement is that it is a movement from below. How much that genuinely took place in our dispute and how much was actually co-ordinated from above by officials from head office?...It’s one thing for people to make their own flags and another for head office to distribute ten thousand flags to people.” (Ibid)*

The FBU’s limited involvement with the ESF is mirrored by that of the London Region, General Municipal & Boilermakers’ Union (GMB). According to an officer of the union’s regional committee the region had affiliated to the London ESF because;

*“The region saw it as a good thing to do. It wasn’t an affirmation that we were completely and totally linked to all the organisations that make up and inform the ESF.” (General Municipal and Boilermakers Union, Officer, LAB3)*

The FBU and GMB are content to support those aims of the GMSJ that correspond to their own union policies and to abstain from a wider debate about the character of the GMSJ. Rather than the trade unions acting as a vanguard there is more evidence that trade unions are reflecting the ideological diffusion of the social movements within the ESF. This has encouraged some degree of realignment within and between some trade unions and socialist organisations. The respondent



from Globalise Resistance also articulates the idea that social movements are competing with the organised working class in the vanguard of struggle.

*“We’ve just seen eruptions in France but the key thing is they would never have happened without the last five years, which created a consciousness amongst young people. The no vote (to the proposed EU constitution) in France was essentially a movement of the grass roots, built up through ATTAC and things like that.” (Globalise Resistance, Academic, SM7)*

The research demonstrates that, on the basis of a certain accommodation of post-socialist ideology by sections of ‘the old left’, a limited rapprochement has been possible between some Marxists and social democrats who share an enthusiasm for the new movements. The SERTUC official explained how this is taking place:

*“In the past we wouldn’t have been seen within a mile of something like Globalise Resistance but through the ESF we work alongside them and see them as a legitimate organisation” (South east Regional TUC, ibid).*

Alex Callinicos, a leading figure in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), criticises other socialist groups for not engaging more enthusiastically with the ESF and GMSJ (Callinicos 2003) and it is certainly the case that some socialist groups have been far more conditional in their involvement with the ESF and GMSJ.

Many socialists have embraced the social forums but there are others who take a more sceptical, if broadly supportive, view. Some feel that the labour movement is not using its numerical and organisational strength to argue its ideological position, including the Communication Workers’ Union respondent, who sits on the union’s National Executive Committee and is also a member of the Socialist Party, the second largest group on the socialist left in Britain. This respondent was surprised to learn that 38% of affiliates to the London ESF came from trade unions, telling me;

*“That doesn’t really come out when you’re there. I think it is punching below its weight”*

*(Communications Workers Union, ibid).*

The research finds that a key limitation to the further integration of trade unions into the GMSJ is the lack of accountability within the ESF which allowed unrepresentative ideas to set the movement’s agenda. The respondent from War on Want put the issue bluntly:

*“Because of their membership structures the trade unions are accountable whereas the NGOs weren’t and could come up with any hair brained campaign. But why should a trade union body be influenced by this unaccountable organisation?” (War on Want, Officer, NGO3)*

Trade unions are, to one extent or another, subject to the democratic control of their members and have agreed positions on most of the questions that come up for debate within the GMSJ.

Addressing this, the respondent from the Communications Workers Union emphasised that a trade union delegate to the ESF cannot just take part in an open discussion but must reflect their unions’ democratically decided policy. The SERTUC respondent also raised this issue, identifying some potential areas of contradiction between a trade union, representing a relatively narrow membership based interest and some elements of the anti-globalisation movement, which themselves do not appear accountable to anyone.

*“As an officer of the TUC I can’t go into the ESF with my own agenda. I have to reflect what is broadly the policy and aims laid down in our structures. Many environmental groups would like to see car factories closed down but what about workers in that industry who would lose their jobs and suffer socially and economically? There are not black and white answers to these questions” (South East Regional TUC, ibid).*

In fact, some of the larger NGOs have raised similar issue themselves. Jubilee Debt campaign was the umbrella under which several anti-poverty protests took place at the Edinburgh summit of the G8 (2005). A respondent from JDC argues that conflicts over the authority of individual NGOs would make it impossible for NGOs to submit to a parliament of the GMSJ. According to this respondent,

such organisational conflict was behind the decision to wind up Make Poverty History, against the wishes of many activists.

*“My impression is that the NGOs couldn’t all be in control of the messaging, that’s what it is. Oxfam, Christian Aid etc, within their own organisations they are in control of the messaging but in Make Poverty History they had to go along with others and they found it quite difficult...The idea the social forums could become a sort of parliament, a bigger version of Make Poverty History I find inconceivable” (Jubilee Debt Campaign, Founder Member, NGO2)*

The respondent from CWU also doubts the different interests and different ideological approaches contained within the ESF is any basis for a representative and structured body. The issues around which a structure could be built would be so general that the structure would be rendered pointless.

*“As far as becoming some sort of governance, the ESF isn’t going to do that. Perhaps you could get to a consensus but the consensus would be quite broad. You could have a very good guess at what these demands are without even debating them.”*

*(Communication Workers Union, ibid)*

This is a crucial issue affecting the development of the social forums and I will return to it in some detail in the next section of this chapter.

The research shows that trade unions are by far the most significant organised presence within the GMSJ in Britain and the labour movement’s presence within the GMSJ is further bolstered by activists from socialist organisations. In addition many organisers of social movements began their political lives as trade union organisers and the unions provide significant funding for the social forums and GMSJ. The high profile of the trade union movement within the ESF is resented by some participants who are uncomfortable with the national structures of the trade union movement and see them playing a controlling role over the movement alongside politicians such as Ken Livingstone. This is felt particularly keenly by participants from an anarchist background such as my respondent from Trapese, who explained that;

*“People I know who were around at the London ESF rejected it largely because, they said, it was being taken over by Ken Livingstone and the big unions. They didn’t feel like there was room for them and set up peripheral open spaces.” (Trapese, *ibid*)*

But although the trade unions and political figures have taken an increasingly prominent organisational role in the convening of the social forums there is little evidence that this is yet being reflected in its ideological character. The data supports the perceptions of the TUC respondent:

*“One thing I got the sense of is that the anti-globalisation movement is not learning a lot from the trade union or socialist movement in the UK” (Trades Union Congress, International Department, *ibid*).*

The research shows that with few exceptions trade unions and individual activists have largely accepted the ideological character of the ESF and GMSJ and support it as a “good thing”, without making much of an effort to influence the “grander debates about what the nature of the movement should be” (General, Municipal and Boilermakers Union, *ibid*).

## **6.4 ESF: Clearing house, or parliament of the movement?**

*“I do think there is some need for a decision making structure” (Globalise Resistance, *ibid*).*

In the last section I have highlighted differences in approach between the labour movement and the GMSJ towards the development of representative decision making structures in the GMSJ. Some activists have responded to the issues raised regarding the development of the GMSJ with demands for a more coherent structure. So far though, the research suggests that the big questions that would define the character of the GMSJ have yet to be confronted. Without a far clearer ideological foundation it is difficult to imagine that the ESF could play the role of a parliament of the

GMSJ. At present the organisational character of the movement is more of the anarchistic character envisaged by, among others, Naomi Klein and Noam Chomsky.

In this section I will argue that most activists in the GMSJ are happier to celebrate what has been accomplished in convening the social forums than to discuss difficult questions that might define an organisational and ideological programme for the movement. In the final part of this section I will also address the problems this approach has to confront regarding the development of informal power in the absence of democratic accountability of individuals.

One group that has advocated a more coordinated GMSJ, with decision making structures, is the No Sweat campaign. No Sweat calls for the social forums to take the step from acting as clearing houses, where like minded activists can meet and discuss ideas in open space, into a parliament of the movement that would be able to direct the GMSJ according to democratically agreed decisions. It is a view that the respondent from Globalise Resistance also has some sympathy with but for others any process of centralisation could undermine the 'new' movement.

The Social Forum process represents the most successful attempt to date to bring together a vast network of disparate movements in an open space, where collaboration can be built on a basis of mutual learning and respect. The absence of any centralised or representative structure has been a feature of the initial principles of the social forum process and is enshrined in the WSF Charter of Principles (WSF 2002). The ESF gatherings at Florence 2002, Paris 2003 and London 2004 were heralded by many activists as a new movement that is able to celebrate and build on the different ideological traditions of the movement rather than forcing activists into a party type structure behind an agreed programme. A national officer of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND) explains this approach:

*"The alliance between CND and the Muslim Association of Britain (with reference to the Stop the War Coalition) has been so creative because we all bring different things to it which none of us alone could have achieved. I suppose one of the things about the social forums is they can be a bit like that. Organisations coming together can amount to more*

*than the sum of their component parts” (Campaign for nuclear Disarmament, National Officer, SM3).*

The diffuse character of the GMSJ is widely celebrated. For many, any opposition to the neo-liberal orthodoxy is to be embraced rather than critiqued. This approach is demonstrated by a respondent from the Centre for the Study of Global and Social Justice, which is based at Nottingham University and aims to bring together academics with grass roots activists.

*“Remember the dark days when Fukuyama had the trumpet to his lips proclaiming the death of opposition and progressive politics; the elites can’t do that now. They know we’re out there, they know we have spaces and we’re doing stuff. I remember the Guardian leader saying it’s incredible, like seeing the birth of young people’s engagement with politics.” (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, *ibid*)*

It is understandable that activists wish to support any challenge to neo-liberal capitalism but the creation of space within which such challenges can converge can only be a starting point. The research shows that a growing number of participants at the ESF have begun to question how far this open space approach can go, if it is not going to come to any conclusions about how to further develop its structures. The Close Campsfield (immigration detention centre) Campaign organised a well attended session at the ESF in London that enabled many different participants to hear about and discuss the issues they raise. However, this discussion, in the space provided by the ESF, played no role in the organisation and development of their campaign on the ground.

*“The workshop we organised at the London ESF attracted over 100 people, which is a lot for a workshop but not many people from Oxford (where the campaign is based) went down for it. It was mostly London and international visitors. Most people in Oxford have done what they can do”. (Close Campsfield Immigration Detention centre, Activist, SM1)*

The experience of the London ESF led the respondent from Close Campsfield to question whether the social forums are really capable of developing an identifiable GMSJ at all:

*“I suspect someone has tried to construct a movement where there isn’t really a single movement. Various groups came together in Seattle, trade unions and fair trade groups but this didn’t constitute a movement that was a coming together. It was very important on the street but there was no structural coming together”. (ibid)*

The research suggests that many activists within the GMSJ have doubts about whether the social forum process can sustain and build the GMSJ without developing a more integrated sense of the movement’s aims and actions. At present the GMSJ: “Is much more event than process focused” (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, *ibid*)

Earlier in this chapter, I argued that in spite of the fragmented nature of the GMSJ, an ideological concept of a single global movement does exist. However, in an organisational sense this is less clear.

*“There’s no ongoing structural connection (between ESF affiliates) but there is an ongoing sympathy and interest in what’s happening” (Movement for the Abolition of War, *ibid*).*

Ultimately this could, in the view of the respondent from Globalise Resistance, lead to the decline and dissolution of the GMSJ as currently conceptualised:

*“There is no reason the social forum should be the thing that will come and change the world” (Globalise Resistance, *ibid*).*

The ESF and social forum process has been successful in articulating the discontent of a new generation with neo-liberal capitalism but a failure to identify a next step for the movement threatens its viability. The research has identified the failure of the ESF, to address the ‘big’ questions that define the ideological foundations of a movement, as a critical block to its development at this time. This point is illustrated by respondents from New Left Review (NLR), who identified;

*“A certain tendency at the social forums to be very affirmative; here we are, this is the movement and how great it is” (New Left review, Editorial Staff, STUD3).*

This desire to be affirmative rather than tackle the big questions defining the movement has led, in the view of other activists, to a loss of momentum in the movement:

*“There is a slight plateauing (in the development of the ESF) because there are only so many times you can say ‘globalisation is bad’; there comes a point at which you have to be able to offer a viable alternative.” (War on Want, ibid)*

In some cases the approach of listening to other groups without really engaging in a discussion about the development of a unified movement led participants to feel remote from the movement as a whole:

*“We’d go and listen to things but we didn’t engage with other people. You tend to congregate with people who you are in touch with. When I went to Florence (ESF 2003) there were countless numbers of people but I felt quite lost, which is not my usually how I am. I didn’t find it at all engaging. I felt quite isolated and lost in the whole thing.” (Tourism Concern, Member of Staff, NGO1)*

There is a need for any movement that aspires to change and not just describe the world to develop decision making structures and adopt an agreed programme. However, the research suggests that, at present, any attempt to force a disparate network of movements into a centralised structure under the parliamentary control of the ESF would cause the implosion of the movement.

There is not sufficient ideological unity amongst different sections of the GMSJ to sustain a more organisationally coherent structure. The Movement Against War seeks to broaden the non-nuclear agenda of CND and by linking poverty and social justice with war and shares a lot of common ground with other participants in the GMSJ. But their spokesman is clear that a parliamentary structure to direct a broad organisation of the GMSJ would be premature.



*“We’re not in a position to reach agreed positions. If we try to do that we will cause polarisations, splits and whatever else. What we need is this great forum where people can come together to share their histories and ideas. But if we try to say that to be in the social forum you must accept A, B and C then we’re finished.” (Movement for the Abolition of War, *ibid*)*

There are also sections of the GMSJ that would withdraw from the GMSJ should it attempt to construct representative structures of any kind. A web posting by the ‘Wombles’, an anarchist collective, reports on the London ESF thus;

*“This emphasis on the "central" is also demonstrated by the ESF's organisational structures. Even if the ESF publicises itself as "decentralised participatory democracy", it is in reality hierarchical and thus becomes a field where other hierarchical organizations, such as political parties, try to control it in pursuit of their own interests.” (Wombles 2004)*

No Sweat points to the success of their own movement in uniting different ideologies under its umbrella campaign.

*“No Sweat is a radical campaign and is for a radical re-organisation of society. Within it we have a steering committee which meets every month and decides what we do. It is organised on an ad-hoc basis, open to whoever wants to come along. There is probably a mix of Marxists, a few anarchists, radical liberals...or radicals who are not revolutionaries” (No Sweat, *ibid*)*

This is a similar situation to those found inside many other campaigns or movements. Globalise Resistance, Close Campsfield, Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, Hands off Venezuela, Goldsmiths Peace Campaign and CND all told me that their organisations embraced activists from a wide ideological spectrum. But these issue based organisations have a clear set of relatively limited immediate aims and objectives. The research suggests that, in contrast to the relatively focused demands of No Sweat, the ESF must attempt to hold together conflicting ideological trends in the much broader pursuit of ‘another world’.

While the ESF plays the role of a 'clearing house', putting similar campaigns in touch with one another, it too can steer around some potentially divisive ideological conflicts. An attempt to construct a sovereign parliament of the movement would demand a discussion on an agreed ideological analysis of neo-liberal globalisation. As both the respondents from GR and MAW have warned, such a move is more likely to split the GMSJ than to bring it closer together. In practice, moves towards a more parliamentary social forum have been extremely limited and this is acknowledged by No Sweat, whose respondent admitted to being surprised at how little discussion took place at the ESF in Paris and London, between different traditions, about the big strategic questions facing the movement. Although the respondent from Globalise Resistance shares the desire of No Sweat to, "take part in grander debates about what the nature of the movement should be", (Globalise Resistance) the research reveals that broad ideological debates are not really on the radar for most groups of activists.

#### **6.4.1 The Problem of Informal Power**

Cumbers et al (2008) have discussed how the networked horizontal approach of the social forums has been developed in order to avoid hierarchical structures and the imposition of strategies for confronting injustice in a way that is itself, potentially unjust. Cumbers et al also show, however, that in reality leaders can emerge and in a structureless movement there is no democratic check on the role of prominent individuals.

The research finds that the majority of respondents believe that a parliamentary structure for the ESF would be a step too far. Nevertheless, the sense that the most high profile participants in the GMSJ should be subject to some kind of democratic scrutiny attracts widespread sympathy.

*"The ESF is not democratic. It comes under the unholy influence of a few key individuals.*

*Some of the most influential bodies have strange sources of funding. The organised trade union movement has come under attack from the autonomists yet some of the most well*

*known spokespeople, like Hilary Wainwright or Monbiot, are self appointed.” (Close Campsfield immigration detention centre, ibid)*

The respondent from Globalise Resistance spoke in a similar vein, complaining that:

*“The ESF is organised by an unaccountable bureaucracy of people who cannot be held to account” (Globalise resistance, ibid).*

Tourism concern also felt frustrated that they had been unable to penetrate a clique at the heart of the organisation of the London ESF.

*“At the ESF in London we tried to be more involved (following a marginal involvement at Paris) so we were going to meetings right from the start. We found it completely frustrating because it was managed by a clique and decisions were made into which we had no input. We attended as many meetings as it was possible to attend but we did feel, again, very marginalised by a controlling clique who was managing it.” (Tourism Concern, ibid)*

The social forums have been established in accordance with the concepts of autonomy and horizontal organisation but as the anarchistic, grass roots campaigner from Trapese explains:

*“You always have hierarchies of experience, age and all sorts of things. It’s very difficult, even impossible to achieve truly horizontal organisation but that would definitely be a priority and structures are put in place to achieve that.” (Trapese, ibid)*

Many participants articulate this feeling that someone else seems to be in control. Respondents did not all point the finger at the same ‘controllers’ but those identified included the trade unions, big NGOs, the Socialist Worker’s Party and individuals such as journalist George Monbiot and Hillary Wainwright, editor of the socialist magazine, Red Pepper.

In response to the range of views within the ESF about its structure the forum process has tried to steer a course which attempts to hold together as many movements as possible by not moving too far from its present manifestation.

However, this is not an approach that can take the movement forward and poses a risk as more participants at the ESF articulate the frustrations of the respondent from Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, who summed up the way that many participants feel when he lamented the most recent ESF in Greece (2006).

*“I came away from the Greek ESF very depressed about it. It had a very wooden feel with the same organisations, the same characters and format and I felt it has almost become a show; exactly a clearing house for organisations, which already have their line and passions and are there to make points of contact.” (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice)*

The social forums have provided an opportunity for thousands of young people to come together, many crossing national borders, to discuss how to combat the effects of neo-liberal globalisation. But if the movement is to attract the masses of young and oppressed people in Britain and around the globe it must develop an ideological clarity and programme of action around which a more structured movement could be built.

## **6.5 Organising the Movement for Global Social Justice and**

### **The character of the European Social Forum (ESF):**

#### **Conclusion**

Noam Chomsky has described the GMSJ as a movement of unprecedented character; a view that was popularised by Klein's No Logo, and is also prominent in Holloway's account of the Zapatistas. But the research suggests that this is something of an exaggeration. The ESF represents a space in which pre-existing ideological traditions have come together to meet at large events rather than a structural or ideological convergence into a new kind of movement. Rather than Chomsky's unprecedented movement, the GMSJ is better characterised by John Pilger as the, “old unending

world company” (Pilger 2002:15), that is a continuing movement of the world’s oppressed people against the power of global capitalism.

Castells has argued that developments in ICT have altered global patterns of social relations to such an extent that the struggle for social justice demands a new type of movement. This idea is also central to Giddens’ space/time distanciation thesis, which holds that ICT has altered the relationship between space and time rendering obsolete the classical social theory of socialism and social democracy.

The respondents to this research recognise the importance of ICT to the new movements but have less profound concepts of how technology has changed social relations than Castells or Giddens. ICT has had a significant impact on the way in which activists and organisations within the GMSJ can communicate and reach a community beyond their immediate orbit. But the originality of this process is often overstated. The research has discussed accounts of international solidarity going back to the Russian revolution and as the respondent from GAW said, “Ideas do transmit, you can’t stop an idea” (ibid). This was as true when the ideology of socialism spread across the world in the early twentieth century as it is in cyberspace today.

New technology is used by participants in the GMSJ and in cases such as the off-shoring of telecommunications jobs ICT can present challenges for the GMSJ. But the research has not uncovered evidence that ICT has fundamentally changed global patterns of social injustice or power relations in capitalist society.

The research shows that the GMSJ has, in an ideological sense, moved away from the idea of traditional socialist political parties in favour of looser networks of autonomous movements.

However, in a practical sense the research also reveals that parties continue to be important actors in the organisation of both movements within the GMSJ and the major gatherings, at the ESF and WFS. The trade union movement also plays a crucial role in supporting, financially and politically, the social forums. Many organisers of autonomous social movements are rooted in and continue to

participate in the formal labour movement but it is also clear, from the data, that the labour movement is not asserting its ideological traditions within the GMSJ.

Post-socialist ideology exerts a powerful influence on the organisational character of the GMSJ but the research also highlights a frustration, felt by some respondents, with the failure of the social forums to go beyond the provision of an open space for discourse. These respondents want to see the forums become organising bodies where policies and tactics can be agreed. The respondent from No Sweat refers to the need for a parliament of the movement but it is clear from the data that such a development would lead to splits and possible fragmentation of the GMSJ as it is currently constituted as there is insufficient ideological unity to support a single agreed approach to struggles for social justice.

The research demonstrates that many activists within the GMSJ favour the forms of organisation associated with new social movements (Kriesi *ibid*) but they do not primarily conceptualise these forms of organisation as a response to the possibilities presented by ICT or fundamental shifts in the character of global capitalism. Respondents explain the character of the GMSJ in contrast to failures of the labour and trade union movement, in particular the collapse of Stalinism and capitulation of mass social democratic parties. In the next chapter I will bring together the ideological concepts discussed in chapters four and five and the organisational concepts discussed in this chapter and I will argue that post-socialist theory has not been able to develop its ideas into a viable systemic alternative to global capitalism.

## **7. Another World is Possible: Systemic Alternatives to Neo-Liberal Globalisation**

*“I’m not necessarily motivated on a day to day basis by some sort of future possible world; I’m much more motivated by something more immediate. I can see things around me that need to be done and I can do it, that’s how I see it. Maybe what characterises this movement to me is its total commitment to pragmatic organising and probably, actually, a lack of political or ideological debate” (Trapese, Social Collective, Activist, SM9).*

In this chapter, I will draw together concepts relating to power, property, class, nation, state and party that I have discussed in the earlier chapters and examine how attitudes towards these concepts have shaped respondents’ approach to the possibility of systemic alternatives to global capitalism. I have identified three broad ideological approaches to conceptualising social justice: Post-Socialism; Social Democracy and Marxism. In the following sections I will discuss the potential for each of these traditions to provide the systemic foundations of another world.

The research shows that post-socialist theory has served to re-focus movements for social justice away from systemic alternatives and overarching ideological concepts. Many activists, within the GMSJ, share this, rejecting the very concept of ideological discourse. Instead, these activists prefer to focus on specific local initiatives that might mitigate particular injustices of global neo-liberal capitalism.

The rejection of ideology or systemic change is a central theme of John Holloway’s analysis of the Zapatista movement. In this chapter I present research suggesting that while concepts advanced by Holloway may have influenced or are reflected by respondents, especially those from an anarchistic tradition, they have failed to provide a vision of another world or a programme around which a truly mass movement for global social justice could be built. I will develop this argument in the next part of this chapter.

In contrast to the autonomous, organic approach of post-socialist ideology, social democracy raises the need for state and supra state forms of regulation of capital. Social democracy addresses the instinctive demands of poor and oppressed people for reform and there are many respondents, in particular from the trade union movement and some NGOs, who believe that capitalism can be re-structured along the lines of a new global social democratic consensus. However, the research calls into question whether those who argue for a social democratic alternative have identified a force that is capable of coercing or enticing global capital to accept new limits on its mobility and freedom to maximise returns wherever and however it can. Andrew Glyn has argued that the economic basis for a new social democratic consensus is not present in the contemporary global capitalist economy (Glyn 2001) but the research has found no evidence that proponents of a new social democratic alternative have confronted these issues. The research shows that the concept of immediate reforms remains central to activists within the GMSJ but this does not amount to confidence that a new period of structured social democracy is a viable foundation for another world in the early twenty-first century. The potential for a new systemic form of social democracy to deliver socially just outcomes from global capitalism will be the focus of the second section of this chapter.

George Monbiot was correct when he concluded that the only coherent program for another world, presented to the ESF was a classical Marxist state socialist program (Monbiot *ibid*). The research has shown, in the previous three chapters, that Marxist concepts relating to power, property, class, nation states and parties remain, to differing extents, important to the GMSJ. However, a huge challenge confronts the ideology of socialist planning as a structural basis for another world.

The research shows that proponents of Marxism must demonstrate that a socialist planned economy can be operated under the democratic control of society if it is to appeal to the activists whose perception of Marxism is influenced by the history of Stalinist totalitarianism in the former Soviet bloc. In this chapter I will argue that an extensive democratic socialist thesis, dating back to Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition to Stalinism, speaks to these issues. However, the anti-ideological approach of the GMSJ obstructs the incorporation of the historical evolution of



democratic socialist ideas into the actions or analysis of the GMSJ. If the GMSJ is to have any role in forming another world it must move on from discussions about providing a space for discourse to discuss what sort of world it seeks to build. The concept of a democratic socialist, planned alternative to global capitalism is the subject of the third section of this chapter.

## **7.1 Post-Socialism and Post-Ideology**

*“After 1989 everything split. Historical labels don’t really tell you much about a person’s politics and that’s why I’m not keen on them. What things are called is not as important as the results they produce.” (CND, National Officer, SM3)*

Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri’s *Empire* has informed many students of globalisation. Within its pages the authors set out an explicit post-imperialist thesis, which contends that, the nature of the globalised economy, class structure and patterns of social relations have changed to the extent that classical Marxist theories of imperialism cease to have any meaning. This approach is shared with the transformationalist globalisation theory of Giddens and Held, who argue that classical international social relations have been superseded by new global interrelations through a process of space/time distancing.

If it were the case that participants within the GMSJ adhered to such a radically new analysis of global economic and social relations this would imply the need for a completely new ideological response. The respondent from Goldsmith’s Peace Campaign (Goldsmiths) rejects Marxist ideas about socio-economic systems.

*“We’re not oppressed by globalisation because it will happen anyway and I don’t see globalisation as imperialistic or anything” (Goldsmiths Student Union Peace Group, Activist, STUD2).*

The research shows that a similar post-socialist approach to conceptualising globalisation as an organic phenomenon has influenced a section of the GMSJ. However, this influence is very limited and is articulated mainly by activists who sit in a clear autonomous or anarchist tradition.

The data suggests that activists in the GMSJ have not embraced any coherent post-socialist concept of social injustice or an alternative society. When these foundations are explored the theoretical underpinnings of concepts of social injustice appear to owe more to Marx than Giddens' concepts of social relations cast by shifts in space and time. The data reveals that most of the respondents conceptualise globalisation as a development of imperialism rather than a fundamentally new phenomena. In this section I will argue that the more significant impact of post-socialist theory has been to encourage a reluctance to discuss ideological foundations or systemic foundations of another world, rather than a real shift in these foundations.

This non-ideological approach to the GMSJ is articulated most explicitly by respondents from an anarchistic tradition, such as the activist from Nottingham Student Peace Group, who explains:

*"(My approach is) about actually challenging oppression here and now, wherever it arises. It's a methodology rather than an ideology" (Nottingham Student Peace Group, Activist, STUD4).*

If those from an anarchistic tradition are the most enthusiastic about a movement that spurns ideological characterisation, those from other traditions also identify this feature of the GMSJ, including the respondent from the TUC International Department:

*"It is not so much about overall ideological vision, it's about practices. It's about day to day how you go about it" (TUC, Appointee, LAB6).*

As I discussed in the previous chapter, a small but significant body of activists within the GMSJ are now questioning whether the movement needs to develop beyond providing space for discourse and begin to confront fundamental questions about the ideological character and direction of the movement and the world it aspires to. The failure of the movement to take up these issues has led

to a sense of frustration amongst some activists, who feel that their NGO (or it could just as easily be their Trade Union or local campaign) is already well organised and striving for specific aims and the role of the social forums should be a place to discuss where, collectively, we are aiming to go.

*“I thought this (discussion about the ideological character of the movement) was the real missing ingredient. In fact I came away with a concern for the level of my own conceit because I thought it was very basic stuff and I was absolutely frustrated that nothing seemed to go anywhere. I’d go into a talk and it would be packed out but I wasn’t learning anything new. I wondered how it was I could know so much; had I been around too long? I saw it very much as a training and learning session for people who weren’t involved in the sort of work I was doing” (Tourism Concern, Employee, NGO1).*

The research suggests that activists within the GMSJ have not accepted the premise that social relations have been fundamentally reconstituted as a result of overarching shifts in time and space as perceived by Giddens et al. Most respondents continue to perceive social relations to be an outcome of a political and economic struggle in which social class and imperialist relations play significant roles. The research suggests that most activists conceptualise globalisation as a particular form of transnational socio-economic relations that have been constructed through the power of global capital.

*“The idea of universal history, of interconnectedness and the opening pages of Marx’s communist manifesto describes a process whereby countries are becoming more interlinked, competition drives out indigenous practices, these are processes described by Marx in 1848. We find them in Hegel in 1820, Kant 1789. If you were to change the names on the front of these analyses you would come up with similar so called original analyses of the 80s and 90s by people like David Held, Alex Callinicos and so on who are saying very similar things to what was said 200 years ago.” (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, Academic, STUD1)*

The research suggests that ideological concepts inherent in socialist ideology, relating to the nature of social injustice in a capitalist world, continue to inform the movement to a greater extent than the theoretical concepts of post-socialism. Post-Socialist theory has, nevertheless, had a profound impact on the character of discourse and organisation within the GMSJ by encouraging many activists to explicitly reject the method of constructing an ideology that can set out the foundations on which another, socially just, world can be constructed. It is this approach that John Holloway highlights in his analysis of the Zapatista uprising towards power and the foundations of another world, risk disarming the GMSJ.

### **7.1.1 Zapatismo: A Non-Ideological Model for 21st century Struggle**

*“Nowhere else in the world do you have this incredible capacity of a popular movement to hold out against a country of 100million people, a country with a vast army that is next to the USA with all the geo-political significance that implies, never have we seen such a group survive so long without being smashed. What an inspiration to the rest of the world!” (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, Academic, STUD1)*

Holloway describes the Zapatista uprising, in Chiapas, Mexico, as the “first twenty-first century movement” (Holloway *ibid*), a concept that has been taken up by a number of activists from a grass-roots tradition. The comments of the respondent from CSSGJ (above) illustrate the appeal of the Zapatistas but at the same time reveal a lack of balance in the assessment of many proponents of Zapatismo. The respondent highlights how the Zapatistas have held out against the Mexican state but it is misleading to suggest this is unique. Without commenting on their own ideological positions, movements including Hezbollah, Hamas, Naxalite Maoists and others have faced more concerted military repression than have the Zapatistas.

The military significance of the Zapatistas is exaggerated in Holloway's thesis and the same can be said of their ideological development, which is not to offer a way forward for the movement or a vision of another world but is to deny any such ideological guide to the movement. The limits of this approach are recognised even by proponents of Zapatismo:

*"In the last couple of years the Zapatistas themselves have said, OK, we've come so far and established a set of communities, an autonomous zone if you like, where next?" (ibid)*

The failure to answer this question has led Zapatismo and contemporary anarchist theory up an ideological cul-de-sac which will never lead to a clear vision of the character of 'Another World' to which the GMSJ aspires. Consequently the ideology of Zapatismo has largely given way to the more traditional state based movements of Chavez (Venezuela) and Morales (Bolivia) in Latin America since the turn of the twenty-first century.

Zapatismo rejects the idea of a pre-conceived social foundation in another world. This is an idea that was contained in nineteenth century classical anarchist thought (Bakunin *ibid*, Proudhon *ibid*) but has become more prominent through the growth of grass-roots movements. The research demonstrates that activists in these movements have no sense that they want to set about the construction of a new order.

*"I wouldn't want to take state power; I wouldn't want to have state power. There isn't any desire to be in that position" (Trapese, *ibid*).*

The Zapatista approach to the formulation of another world is premised on, what I described in chapters two and four, as a post-modern perception of power, which draws on the social theory of Foucault to argue that power has become dispersed throughout a myriad web of social relations in the globalised world. Zapatismo does not seek to take power in a revolutionary movement but to abolish it.

If the idea of taking power does not appeal to some participants then others consider the idea of exercising power to develop systemic alternatives to capitalism as entirely utopian. The research

has found that many participants conceptualise the task of the GMSJ as a project to undermine the culture of global neo-liberal capitalism and thus lay the foundations necessary to undermine it.

*“Politicians are only able to oppress if the culture accepts it. The question of an alternative model to capitalism is like asking how many angels can dance on a pin. It’s not relevant to me, working in the cultural field. Some people are very hooked into politics and Westminster news but my feeling is that the political sphere follows change rather than leading it. It takes its cues from culture.” (Gay Authors Workshop, Author, SM8)*

The ideology of Zapatismo and contemporary anarchism replaces class struggle and structural change, which is central to Marxist ideology, with the aspiration of a democratic cultural development. This is often expressed as grass roots democracy and in this sense it corresponds with a concept at the heart of the GMSJ. It is an approach that borrows from the Gramscian theory of hegemony which stresses the way in which bourgeois power is exercised through the ideological subjugation of the working class rather than through overt forms of coercion. In order to combat ideological coercion Holloway et al raise Zapatismo as a rejection of any form of political leadership, which they perceive as just another attempt to impose ideological hegemony.

The method of Zapatismo seeks not to harness social power to lead the construction of a new social foundation for the world but to reject the very concept of exercising power. The research finds that activists from grass-roots movements imagine another world that will develop organically out of the struggle rather than conform to any pre-determined ideology.

*“How can we come up with a set of rules or find consensus. Maybe they will just come up. I don’t think there can be a theory where someone says, ‘OK this is it!’ Because then the idea will have to be dictated to other people and they will have to conform to that idea again. Nobody came up with the idea of capitalism and said here it is. It just happened and change has to just happen. It will happen naturally if we all keep up the fight, name what is unjust and fight for it then maybe it will come naturally and everybody will agree.” (Goldsmiths Student Union Peace Group, ibid)*

Autonomy and self-organisation within local social centres is the aim of the respondents from Trapese and NSPG and the research confirms that very little previous thought has been addressed to the question of how these social centres would coordinate their struggles once they have developed locally.

*“How do these groups interact though? That is a very good question. How would you organise a national public transport system? I don’t claim to have easy answers but we can learn this as we build the social centres and see what works, what doesn’t work. We could look at the old postal services, they were not centrally organised across different countries but you can still send a letter to another country. It might take longer but it will get there. I don’t think things will always run smoothly. If you want the trains to run on time get the fascists. You don’t ask the anarchists. Hopefully we won’t be in such a hurry to get everywhere” (Nottingham Student Peace Group, *ibid*).*

Respondents from a contemporary anarchist background often talk about a need to create a new culture, such as a culture in which we do not need to rush around, before posing a new systemic organisation of society. This however will not be enough for oppressed people who move into struggles for social justice. It is no accident that Hugo Chavez has chosen to print extracts from the new state constitution of Venezuela on the packaging of cheap, government subsidised foodstuffs. Chavez realises that that the provision of affordable food by the state will have a more profound effect in mobilising mass support for his project of ‘socialism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century’ than any abstract cultural aspirations could ever have.

The anarchistic methodology of Zapatismo is founded on a combination of post-modern concepts of power and social structures but also on classical anarchist ideology. The research shows that within the international gatherings of the GMSJ post-modern anarchist ideas have gained a significant influence within the movement.

*“I would say that the increased prominence of anarchist strands is something that’s changed. I suppose Wallerstein would call these anti-systemic. I just call them anarchist, they have recognisable traditions” (New Left Review, Editors, STUD3).*

Holloway argues that any form of ideological grand narrative such as socialism will fail to respond to the specific context of struggles for global social justice. But this idea is in danger of becoming circular and meaningless within the GMSJ, where support for Holloway’s thesis also points to a contradiction inherent in Holloway’s non-ideological thesis:

*“The problem with John (Holloway) is that he seems to have gone almost too doctrinal. He is almost too wedded to an ideological view of things. The idea that we could transplant Zapatismo/council communism back into the European context without a huge number of variables being altered or manipulated to make the model resonate is nostalgic.” (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, *ibid*)*

If the argument that any ideology is unresponsive to local struggles for social justice is itself too ideologically pre-determined then where can the argument go? Post socialist claims of ideological abstinence even extend to a reluctance to embrace an explicit anarchist tradition, as the respondent from Trapese explained:

*“A lot of people do have a, sort of, classically anarchist perspective and it’s definitely been an important input on me but I wouldn’t say that necessarily a lot of people are really aware of that analysis” (Trapese, *ibid*).*

The concept of rejecting ideological premises and allowing the organic development of ideas in open space is fundamental to radical post-socialist approaches to social justice. The respondent from NSPG explains this in terms of a method rather than an ideology, in fact it rather more than this. The non-ideological approach of post-modern anarchism does not allow for the possibility of the movement developing a party structure or basing itself on a class struggle. Economically the ideology of post-modern anarchism does not allow for a centrally planned economy. In other words the post-ideological logic of contemporary anarchism does make ideological judgements when it



specifically rejects certain strategies for the movement but as Monbiot has pointed out they do not offer an alternative strategy for the struggle or model of a future society. The respondent from NSPG illustrates this:

*This doesn't answer the question but it does problemise the solution that is being offered at the moment. I'm very wary of saying the solution for people in Latin America is this. I would like to see a more autonomistic approach. (Nottingham Student Peace Group, ibid)*

Autonomism rejects existing socialist and social democratic solutions but offers no specific alternative. The approach of post-modern anarchism has been popular with many young activists who have a healthy suspicion of discredited parties and reject the ideologies of Stalinism and social democracy, which in recent years has equated to capitulation in the face of neo-liberalism. But in spite of huge gatherings of the GMSJ at social forums and elsewhere post-socialist theory has not been able to develop, indeed refuses to develop, beyond simply calling for open space in which to create new ideas.

Post-socialist theory has grown in the fertile ground created by the rotting ideas of Stalinism and the capitulation of mass social democratic parties to capital. The desire to see a new type of political alternative has thrived and appeals to activists in the GMSJ, not only those from anarchist traditions.

*"Whether you take the tradition of socialism or capitalism, both have failed in the West. There can be a third way to incorporate the benefits of both and everything must change to accommodate this. I'm not claiming anyone has a specific model. It's about people achieving justice and getting closer and closer to it." (Muslim Association of Britain, Press and Publicity Assistant, SM6)*

This respondent does not reject the search for an ideological foundation of another world but does not believe that traditional socialist ideology can play that role. Even the respondent from Goldsmiths, who identifies with autonomistic grass-roots movements, also suggests that a fusion of traditional socialist ideas might hold the basis for a socially just world:

*“Personally I’m divided between both (Marxism and social democracy). I agree and disagree with both. I agree with a third solution. How can we fuse both sides of the left and go up the middle and find something where we can all be equal, happy and at peace?” (Goldsmiths Student Union Peace Group, *ibid*)*

George Monbiot’s contention that no-one has yet been able to present any alternative to reformism or revolutionary socialism is valid but the research shows that some respondents believe that the process of open debate throughout the GMSJ can still create a new approach to the ideology of social justice:

*“Monbiot’s missed the possibility that there isn’t a systematic alternative put forward as yet but there could be one. What he seems to be saying is there is no current systemic alternative so we have to go back to Keynesianism. I would say; No we haven’t had a systemic alternative but it should be possible to build one.” (New Left Review, *ibid*)*

The research suggests that only a small section of the GMSJ embraces post-socialist concepts that reject the idea of constructing an alternative social structure to enable the construction of another world. However, the failures of mass social democratic parties and Stalinism in the latter part of the twentieth century have undermined support for socialist systemic models.

## **7.2 Social Democracy and the GMSJ**

*“We’re not going to see some socialist movement overthrowing it (capitalism) and completely transforming property relations or anything like that. What you do have is countries like Venezuela where there is, well a capitalist country involved in a sort of internal transformation. I don’t know if it’s a modified version of capitalism or some sort of socialism. (*ibid*)*

Social democracy developed as a revisionist departure from Marxism that sought an alternative socialist model to state planning based on a capitalist economic system (Labeledz *ibid*). Like the pioneers of social democracy, the respondent from CND has drawn the conclusion that revolutionary change is utopian but through a series of considered reforms a new social model can be evolved. The research shows that a number of activists share this approach.

Many trade union officials see the idea of a return to the classical post-war Keynesian model of social consensus as a realistic aim. This position is reinforced by several prominent theses (Hutton 2002, Stiglitz 2002 et al) but none of them deal with the issue of why the post-war consensus broke down in the first place and consequently they cannot explain what force will be able to push neo-liberal capital into accepting new restrictions on its freedom to flow around the globe in search of maximum returns. In this section I will discuss the attraction of classical social democracy to the GMSJ and examine some of the limitations placed on social democratic strategies.

There are two related but distinct strands of reformist ideology that inform the GMSJ. In addition to those arguing for a return to classical Keynesian consensus there are others who recognise the failure of post-war social democracy to defend social justice against capital and conclude that new institutions and a new type of movement is needed. In particular, what could be described as a form of transnational neo-reformism attempts to overcome the ability of capital to escape national regulation by moving around world markets. I will argue that activists within the GMSJ have different ideas relating to the loss of national sovereignty. Some argue that concept of loss of regulatory power over capital is more powerful as an ideology than in reality while others call for new transnational forms of regulation. Where calls for a new regulatory framework are made they rarely propose any specific measures.

In this section I will argue that a long-term, sustainable, reformed structure based on global capitalism is unlikely to deliver a socially just, other world. The research suggests that demands for immediate reforms will continue to arise in response to experiences of social injustice but when reformist theory is faced with task of constructing a specific programme of reforms it becomes either

utopian or falls back on the same old Keynesian ideas of the immediate post-war period social democratic consensus.

### **7.2.1 Classical Social Democracy**

*“Using European examples we can show that Keynesianism is not a failed model. The key struggles at the moment are the defence of the model in Germany and France while stopping neo-liberalism coming in through the back door” (South East Regional TUC, Officer, LAB5).*

The respondent (above), a regional official of the TUC, is convinced that the social models of Germany and France offer a real social democratic alternative to neo-liberal capitalism. The trajectory, however, of European capitalism is towards the neo-liberal model, a trajectory that is reflected in European Union rules on market liberalisation and public spending as well as shifts in German and French domestic policy over the past decade. If social democratic policy is to replace neo-liberalism then capital will need to be convinced to give up its transnational freedoms to maximise profits and accept an effective form of regulation.

*“I think they (capitalists) probably can be convinced. There is a business case to be made for it. You can have social democracy and still provide the productivity they want. In a volatile social environment their money can suddenly go down the drain like in Iran or wherever. Keynesianism can produce profitability and an environment where this profitability is secure.” (ibid)*

This respondent emphasises the high levels of hourly productivity in France and argues that Keynesianism can rescue capitalism from crisis.

*“The Keynesian model can make the market work in the interests of workers. Without Keynesianism after the Second World War we would have had the spread of fascism. He was attacked as a deviationist but he saved capitalism from itself” (ibid).*

The respondent conceptualises the struggle against neo-liberal capitalism not as a struggle between classes but an ideological cross class struggle between social democratic capitalism and neo-liberal capitalism

*“Trade unions would probably see the struggle today less as between the workers and bosses and more between the two models of European social democracy and North American de-regulation and the rest” (ibid).*

Social democrats tend to conceptualise the struggle for social justice as a struggle of ideas rather than a struggle between antagonistic social classes. In chapter two I have described how Joseph Stiglitz argues that the rehabilitation of Keynesian policy requires not structural but ideological change. He argues, like the respondent above, that the leaders of the IMF, World Bank and WTO can be convinced of the ideological sense of Keynesianism.

The French and German Keynesian models provide an alternative capitalist model to Thatcher and Regan’s neo-liberal models that were established during the last two decades of the twentieth century. The research confirms however, that few within the GMSJ consider France or Germany to be models of social justice. In Germany a rapid programme of neo-liberal counter reforms, introduced by Schroeder’s SPD government and continued by Germany’s ‘Grand Coalition’ under Merkel has cut sharply the share of national income accounted for by wages while simultaneously lifting corporate profits (Stewart 2005) while in France the 35 hour week and public sector pensions have come under attack..

Some social democrats remain optimistic and enthusiastic about the potential for a new social democratic consensus between capital and labour. Others within the movement support, in a broad sense, a social democratic approach but come to this position, not through a positive embrace of the reformist ideology but because they have lost confidence in the possibility of a more fundamental revolutionary change.

*“Yes. Depressing isn’t it. But I do think that’s what most people think. Reform what you’ve got to make it better” (War on Want, National Officer, NGO3).*

Many younger activists in the GMSJ are also searching for a way to effectively regulate global capitalism but while some old stagers can still remember the labour government of 1945 the new young activists of the GMSJ have only ever known Blairism. For these young activists social democratic parties are not about expanding welfare but are about cuts and wage restraint. The capitulation of mass social democratic parties to neo-liberal capital has left activists suspicious of the aims of such parties, or trade unions, today.

*“A common complaint...is that the anti-globalisation movement is opposed to exploitation and we are opposed to a certain rate of exploitation” (TUC, *ibid*).*

Many activists seek a more fundamental change than a shift in the rate of capitalist exploitation but in the absence of a revolutionary threat from the contemporary labour movement it is difficult to imagine how capitalism can be coerced into accepting socially justice reform:

*“The British trade union movement is hardly radical at this time. I think there are a number of people in the unions, at executive level, who are left, who are revolutionaries but the vast majority is not any more” (Communications Workers Union, National Executive Member, LAB1).*

The absence of a mass revolutionary threat gives capital space within which to resist reformist demands while the failure of the global capitalist economy to deliver a rising rate of increase in labour productivity places a demand, from within, on the capitalist economy to squeeze wages and welfare. The research demonstrates that activists from different ideological traditions have recognised this point:

*“The key point where capitalist ideologues gained a lot of confidence was the oil crisis in 1973/4. It is from that moment that the forces of the right are able to say; ‘the welfare state is too bloated, we’re spending too much’, there are all these developing countries developing their own economic powers and it allows that moment of crisis in the welfare state that we got in this country with Callaghan and the perceived failure of corporatist social democracy.” (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice)*

The respondent from Globalise Resistance (GR) gives a similar account but goes further, suggesting that globalisation is a convenient cover for neo-liberal policy rather than a causal force, which is better understood in terms of the economic logic of capitalism.

*“To me it is more that neo-liberalism represents a set of ideas that at the start of the 1970s were a fringe idea pushed by a small group of right wingers. When capitalism had to be re-structured in the seventies because of crisis in the world economy and the defeat of the left, which was a crucial aspect of it, it was then able to become the hegemony...Its ideas are the commoditisation of everything, the idea that private is always better than public. Public services should always be a minimal thing, there should be minimal state intervention and you see those ideas all the time. That ideology has taken over all major establishments in politics. If a factory shuts there is no attempt to do anything about it, it’s just blamed on globalisation as if it’s this magical force” (Globalise Resistance, Activist, SM7).*

The respondent describes what they conceptualise as a neo-liberal agenda pushed by political/economic interests. The respondent reflects the triumph of these ideas over the social democratic consensus of the post-war period. A triumph that has called into question the possibility of capital accepting a new consensus without being confronted by a movement so powerful that it could, if it chose to, overthrow capitalism altogether:

*“For a thorough reform of capitalism, in order to make it more domesticated, that in itself would require a massive shift in the balance of political and class forces in order to restrain capital to do that. I think that given you are assuming that all of these energies and political will are being gathered then you may as well aim further than that and use it to generate a genuine alternative. So rather than have all this energy stopping short of its goal you might as well push on. The idea of being reformist instead of totalitarian is exactly what was dismantled by neo-liberalism” (New Left Review, ibid).*

The research suggests that reforms will continue to be demanded as an instinctive and pragmatic first step in confronting social injustice. However, few activists in the GMSJ expect a new golden era of social democratic progress. Those who do advocate a return to the days of social democratic consensus have not been able to do so, as Therborn has put it, “explain the defeat” (Therborn 2012:11). That is, they have not been able to explain the defeat of social democracy by the forces of neo-liberalism and they have not identified how social democracy could establish its control of global free markets.

## **7.2.2 Social Democracy and the Nation State**

The inability of nation states to effectively regulate global flows of capital has been central to globalisation theory. This concept is reflected in radical critiques of global capitalism and has led some of those seeking a reformed model of capitalism to look for supra-national regulatory structures in place of the nation state.

*“I think the fact that we’ve gone up to a European level shows how far we’ve lost confidence in the possibility of doing it at a national level. A lot of our focus is on the possibilities of reform and regulation at a European level because we do have a transnational structure there that has the weight in a globalised economy to do that, if anything does.” (Trades Union Congress, *ibid*)*

The TUC respondent neatly sums up the attitude of those activists who perceive that global markets have escaped the social regulation and reform imposed on them during the years of classical Keynesian social democracy after the Second World War. Like many others, the respondent argues for the need to create new transnational regulatory mechanisms in order to construct another world in a systemic sense.

*“We’ve gone beyond the Keynesian model, defined as coordination. We are not dealing with coordination but how to deal with a global economy with global TNCs and so on*



*where the role of the state is severely limited. But no-one's arguing for a global state or global government or something like that." (ibid)*

Reformist ideology is thus presented with a huge challenge. It must identify a mechanism for effectively regulating global capitalism and show what forces will be able to convince or coerce capitalism into a new social consensus with those who currently perceive it as the driving force behind global social injustice. The research suggests this is unlikely but the absence of a widely supported revolutionary alternative means that the pragmatic instincts of the movement will continue to raise demands for reform and regulation until a convincing basis for building "another world" on a post-capitalist economic foundation is established.

### **7.2.3 Reforms as empirical demands**

A fundamental systemic shift to a new post-war style of social democracy is unlikely and the research shows that many respondents question whether such a development is possible. Nevertheless, most activists do pursue immediate reform and regulation as a practical step forward. Respondents from Jubilee Debt Campaign, Tourism Concern and War on Want have all raised examples of what they see as successful regulation or reform of capital in the current era. The debates within the social forums and other gatherings of the movement tend to concentrate on day to day tactical issues and immediate demands for reforms rather than ideology and the character of 'another world', a point made by the respondent from TUC Int Dept:

*"It is not so much about overall ideological vision, it's about practices. It's about day to day how you go about it" (ibid).*

In the previous section I have discussed the 'non-ideological' approach of post-socialist theory. This has also impacted on social democratic approaches to reform, which have tended to move away from the concept of an overarching model of social democracy and concentrates, instead, on empirical calls for specific reforms.

*“If you speak to our partners they are not keen on an economic model that keeps them poor or oppressed, affected negatively by trade. But they are not saying smash capitalism. It might be a little too luxurious to say that capitalism has got to be smashed before there can be change.” (War on Want, ibid)*

The re-focusing of reformist strategies away from state regulation has also encouraged the concept of the GMSJ influencing shareholders in order to modify their behaviour. A respondent from the Movement Against War told me how impressed they were with an idea advanced by Dan Plesch;

*“Which is that shareholders should become personally responsible, including criminally responsible, for what the company does. This seems to be a very sensible way forward” (Movement for the Abolition of War, Founder member, SM5).*

This respondent was at pains to emphasise that this was a personal view, not that of MAW, which has never discussed the question of an alternative to neo-liberal capitalism. The respondent is not alone in seeking a way forward by acting through the personal responsibility of company shareholders. The best known such attempt has been organised as a movement for corporate social responsibility (CSR) and has been adopted as a central campaign by Tourism Concern. A national officer of this NGO explained how they approach the issue.

*“Incorporating policies of corporate social responsibility into this huge business is very hard and we’ve been struggling but we have made progress when I never thought we would. The UK leads the world in corporate social responsibility. I think that is through our work, absolutely. All the thirteen top (tourism) companies have now appointed a person to manage their Corporate Social Responsibility issues within the organisation. Of course, sometimes they are taken from the call centre and work half a day a week but in the case of First Choice, one of the big four, they are really building the department. They come here and bring their first report of corporate social responsibility for us to make comments on and I’m sitting next to the M.D in the first ever multi-stakeholder meeting with all sorts of oppositional people looking at how to move forward.” (Tourism Concern, ibid)*

The 'Make Poverty History' and the Live 8 events in July 2005 focused on the possibility of immediate reforms with a limited but achievable scope. A respondent from a leading NGO, which was instrumental in the activities of 'Make Poverty History', argued that public opinion can be mobilised with the effect of influencing government aid and trade policies in the G8 nations. This, it is argued, can have a real impact on the lives of people who have suffered the greatest global social injustice.

*"You've seen it with the recent debt write-offs. In the past Zambia was made to charge for healthcare. What's the first thing Zambia does when its debt is wiped off? Abolish fees for healthcare. Democratic space and sovereignty has to be given to these countries in the future. Now that is not inconceivable." (Jubilee Debt Campaign, founder Member, NGO2)*

The idea of trying to get corporations to accept their corporate social responsibility has gained a significant media profile but the research suggests that its appeal is mostly limited to non-governmental organisations. It is not something that is raised by the trade unionists, socialists, anarchists or other grass roots activists who generally seek a solution to compel corporations to act differently rather than seeking to influence them through a strategy of self regulation. The research suggests that the concept of a global capitalism that will police itself through a sense of social responsibility is seen as utopian by most respondents. Nevertheless, those same respondents do utilise demands for specific reforms in order to mobilise the movement and, if successful, to achieve one actual step towards a more socially just world.

### **7.3 Revolution: Another World built on Socialist Planning**

*"The idea that because the Soviet Union has collapsed Marxist ideas are finished is laughable. Just because Stalinism has collapsed and people like the Euro-Communists, Jacques etc, have allowed this point of view to thrive." (Close Campsfield Immigration Detention Centre, Organiser, SM1)*

Rumours of the death of socialist ideology have been greatly exaggerated. It is plainly true that former workers' parties have veered to the right and the ideas of socialism have been set back but Marxist ideology has never been eradicated within the GMSJ. In the British context, the Socialist Party (SP) enjoys significant influence among trade union delegates to the ESF while the influence of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) at the London ESF, has been identified by many participants within the GMSJ, some who perceive it positively and some negatively. The labour and trade union movement accounts for by far the biggest section of affiliates to the ESF.

In this section, I will argue that the failures of actual existing (that is Stalinist) socialism do not undermine the ideology of democratic socialist planning. George Monbiot is fundamentally justified in his assertion that the only systemic alternative to global capitalism on offer to the GMSJ remains socialism based on state planning.

The research shows that respondents from several NGOs and Trade Unions have raised the ideas of socialist planning, arguing explicitly for the controlling economic interests to be in the hands of the state and run according to an economic plan. This defence of state planning is accompanied by a realisation that any new form of planning must share the democratic aspirations of the GMSJ.

*“There clearly was social advancement in the Soviet Union but then it stagnated. For a feudal country to achieve what they did, including full employment, was unknown. But there were anti-democratic factors out there and you cannot have socialism without democracy.” (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, LAB4)*

Post-socialist ideology has made some inroads into Marxist theory relating to power, property relations and class but it is the relationship between socialism and democracy, which presents the most significant challenge to those who advocate a socialist path to social justice.

In the following section I will discuss the legacy of Stalinism and its impact on the GMSJ today. The failures of the Stalinist application of Marxist theory have led contemporary theory to pick and mix aspects of Marxist ideology with other theoretical approaches and this will be the focus of the second part of this section. I will also consider a long history of left opposition to Stalinism. The

Trotskyist Left opposition advanced a democratic critique of Stalinism while defending the model of central planning as a systemic alternative to capitalism. The Trotskyist left opposition will be the subject of the third part of the section. The final part of this section will deal with the resurgence of socialist imagery and language in Latin America, in particular the movements that have developed behind Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and Evo Morales in Bolivia.

### **7.3.1 Legacy of the Soviet Monolithic State**

*“I’m not opposed to small scale private enterprise, I think that can be very useful in meeting supply and demand at certain levels and harnessing dynamism and creativity but there has to be something where the key economic functions are in the hands of the state and the state represents the people, however that is arrived at.” (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, *ibid*)*

The research has found that the concept of the state being the most socially just agent to direct “key economic functions” is still important to many activists especially, though not only, amongst those from a labour movement tradition. Few go as far as the respondent from RMT, who is unequivocal that:

*“Surely socialist planning has got to be the answer” (National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers, *ibid*)*

It would, though, be an error not to recognise the explicit hostility felt by other participants in the GMSJ towards the ideology of state orientated socialism. The post-socialist idea that any system of planning economic activity must be inextricably linked to a totalitarian state has been firmly established within the discourse of the GMSJ.

*“I suspect most people involved in something like JDC will be extremely unsympathetic to any sort of state socialist utopia or monolith. I personally would not like a system where there is only one employer and if you lose your job you can’t even get a job in the shop around the corner” (Jubilee Debt Campaign, *ibid*).*

The concept of the state as an inherently coercive structure has become accepted within contemporary social and political theory. It is also reflected by many of the participants with whom I spoke (Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, Goldsmiths, Nottingham Student Peace Group, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Trapese) and many of those who participate in the GMSJ describe socialist planning as a concept that has had its time. This even extends to respondents who defend the historical role of the Stalinist Communist state in the past:

*“The Soviet system collapsed for a range of reasons on which nobody will agree but planning lives on in a way. Capitalists plan but the idea that you can plan five or ten years in advance and set targets for industrial development was probably an idea of the thirties.” (South East Regional Trades Union Congress, *ibid*)*

There are a small number of activists, mainly from an explicit Trotskyist tradition, who defend the concept of democratic state planning as the economic basis on which another, socially just world can be constructed. For many more, planning at a state level continues to be one mechanism, amongst other less specific concepts of local grass-roots organisation that are thought of as possible routes towards social justice. This sense that socialist planning is not able to fully address the aspirations of the GMSJ, together with the capitulation of social democracy (see above) has led many within the GMSJ to seek a way of combining ideological elements of different models.

### **7.3.2 Ideological Pick ‘n’ Mix**

Contemporary radical theory has tended to take an approach, encouraged by post-modern philosophical concepts, which seeks to take those parts of differing ideological traditions that appear to fit a given situation, in an empirical sense.

*“I certainly believe in economic regulation; of government direction of the economy. I don’t think that has to equal a totalitarian plan. It seems to me that if you have a democratic pluralist state it could direct the economy but we need a variety of mechanisms to balance local knowledge about production. I am sceptical of a sort of all seeing centralised socialism. I think with neo-liberalism we have to take what’s right and discard what’s wrong. Part of what’s right is the idea that no bureaucratic centralised institution can really know what people want.” (New Left Review, *ibid*)*

The NLR respondent advances their specific view of central planning but also holds open the possibility that aspects of neo-liberal choice might play a part in a socially just social model. Such an approach is failing to develop concrete ideas about the shape of a future world and only becomes specific in so far as identifying what the movement is against. The difficulties facing many activists in the GMSJ in conceptualising an alternative economic system are summed up by these comments from an organiser of the Movement for the Abolition of War.

*“My sympathies and instincts are for the co-operative movement and all that goes with it which does not mean a planned economy. It means a disciplining of the existing structures. I think there are a lot of steps other than a planned economy but you do need a planned economy for things like water, energy and the use of natural resources. There has to be some kind of decision making process to work for the common good. The last thing I want is another Stalinist society where the state decides what individuals do every day but I don’t want BP to decide what happens every day. Somewhere down the middle I come. The Movement for the Abolition of War has not thought this out at all. I’m not sure where I come down.” (Movement for the Abolition of War, *ibid*)*

Those from a former Marxist tradition are not immune from this process of ideological picking and mixing. In chapter two I have highlighted the role of former leading theoreticians in the Communist Party in establishing a post-socialist orthodoxy and the research suggests that several respondents from formerly Marxist traditions have sought to extract the name of Marx from the theoretical foundations of the ideology he pioneered.

*“I suppose NLR possibly and me certainly have tended to side with those bits of Marx where we cannot come up with a blueprint. The inevitable progression to proletarian revolution is not something that I think too many people (associated with NLR) would subscribe to.” (New Left Review, ibid)*

The practice of borrowing those parts of Marx which critique global capitalism without accepting a Marxist foundation of socialist planning is popular with several of the respondents. Interviewees from New Left Review; Movement for the Abolition of War; Goldsmiths Student Peace group; Fire Brigades Union; Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, Trades Union Congress International department; Trapese and the Nottingham Student Peace Group all spoke about taking parts of Marxism without subscribing to the ideology as a model for a future society. This type of re-thinking of Marx may be open and inclusive but it can leave socialist ideology with nothing to say about a strategy for action or an alternative structure of society. Once the central role of the working class and a socialist planned economy are removed from Marxism there is little left of the Communist Manifesto (Marx ibid) other than values. For some participants common values are an important starting point but also represents a step backwards ideologically into what Marx called utopian socialism (Marx 1968:59).



### **7.3.3 The Trotskyist Left**

*“There clearly is a way in which to have a socialist state which is not totalitarian but is bottom up. In terms of structure it would be central but in terms of how it comes to decisions these can be done on a democratic basis, I don’t see why that shouldn’t be.”*

*(Communication Workers Union, ibid)*

For many the collapse of Stalinism and consequent democratic aspirations of the GMSJ demands a completely new post-socialist politics but for some socialists within the GMSJ this is not the case. The two most significant socialist organisations, present within the GMSJ are the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Party. Both have a Trotskyist heritage that looks back to Leon Trotsky and the Left opposition, which opposed Stalinism and presented a democratic critique of the soviet regime following Lenin’s death in 1924.

The influence of Trotskyist thought is extremely limited at this time but it is of interest to the research because it relates to an ideological tradition that directly confronts the post-socialist assertion that socialist planning must be associated with a totalitarian political system. Respondents who identify with this tradition argue that there is no logical reason to exclude the possibility of a system of state planning that is directed by democratic structures, from bottom up but in a way that converges into a plan on a national and international scale.

The research suggests that the ideology of Trotskyism has not been considered by the GMSJ as a distinct ideological current that stands in opposition to Stalinism. Rather, it would appear that most activists are not conscious of any socialist democratic alternative to the former Soviet regimes that post-socialists have labelled ‘actually existing socialism’ (Hall & Jacques ibid). This even applies to some participants who are happy to invoke the theoretical traditions of Marxism, such as the respondent from NLR, who I asked to appraise the significance of Trotskyism to the GMSJ.

*“I’m trying to remember all this stuff. It’s hard to say because what you had in place was a planned economy so you had a critique mounted of it with a number of valid points. But where you don’t have a system like that in place it’s not clear to me how much of that would translate into a capitalist situation. There are a number of caveats about a fully planned economy and the Trotsky and Left opposition stuff would chime in with that and some would go further. As with everything you would have to read it again and see what applies.” (New Left Review, *ibid*)*

The difficulties faced when trying to engage the GMSJ with the ideas of Trotskyism have encouraged some on the Trotskyist left to advocate the construction of a less ideologically defined movement, in the short term. Globalise Resistance was established by members of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and many of its organisers, including my respondent, are SWP members. A respondent explained why they felt it was time to launch Globalise Resistance:

*“It was a way of getting involved in the movement without having an ideological slant. You didn’t have to be a Marxist or Green. You didn’t have to subscribe to any particular ideology. We would also put meetings on that try to involve the key arguments in the movement. For example the question of political power is a debate we put on with people like Toni Negri.*

*JW: But you wouldn’t go so far as to say GR is based on a socialist ideology?*

*No, I think it’s more about posing the questions.” (Globalise Resistance, *ibid*)*

The Socialist Party, on the other hand, puts more emphasis on offering answers, a point articulated by a member of the SP, the respondent from CWU, who explains how they perceive the role of the SP’s international body, the Committee for a Worker’s International (CWI).

*“The CWI has got a distinct policy and view on how to change society. The banner of the social forums is that another world is possible. The CWI banner is ‘a socialist world is possible’. It is a clear view and unlike many other organisations who repeat mantra style that the world needs changing but cannot provide any answers.” (Communication Workers Union, *ibid*)*

In spite of this reluctance of the respondent to tie the movement to a socialist perspective he does articulate the ideas of Bolshevism in a theoretical sense. In particular, the role of Soviets is advanced as central to the task of creating a democratic new world.

*“To me the workers and community councils (established during the Russian revolution) are the answer to how you stop bureaucracies but it won’t happen in some sort of perfect way in the way of Russia in 1917. There will be weird mixtures and there will be different sorts of experiments, I would imagine.” (Globalise Resistance, *ibid*)*

The question of how to guide many unstructured popular resistance movements against neo-liberals capitalism in a socialist direction is the subject of differences between competing socialist parties that are present within the GMSJ. The tradition of democratic socialist planning has the potential to address the democratic aspirations of the GMSJ while also providing a coherent foundation for the construction of a coherent movement and another world. The research suggests that no alternative model of another world has evolved through the GMSJ but the concept of democratic state planning is not one that has been discussed by activists, who have little or no familiarity with the international struggle of the left opposition in the period after the consolidation of Stalin’s power in the former USSR.

### **7.3.4 Socialism in the 21st Century – Venezuela and Bolivia**

Movements behind Chavez and Morales in Venezuela and Bolivia have re-focused attention on the imagery and slogans of socialist ideology. This focus has gone beyond the socialist left and grass-

roots campaigners and is reflected in a report from an official Trades Union Congress delegation that visited Venezuela in 2006.

*“Venezuela is undergoing significant change. For many among the mass of poor Venezuelans the change in their daily lives as a result of the government’s social programmes is fundamental and is the main way in which the country’s oil wealth is being redistributed. There is huge popular support for president Chavez’s governments desire to demonstrate that ‘another world is possible’” (TUC Report of delegation to Venezuela, May 2006.)*

More respondents raised Venezuela as an example to follow than any other single movement globally (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, Close Campsfield, Globalise resistance, Hands off Venezuela, Jubilee Debt Campaign, National Union of Rail Maritime and Transport Workers, Trades Union Congress, Trapese, War on Want). For many in the movement Venezuela represents the first major reversal of the neo-liberal wave that has swept the globe over the past decades. At last the movement can go beyond talking and see real social reforms taking place.

*“Millions of people in Venezuela are already living in another world, they can read, have healthcare. That to me was very powerful, making it a reality now.” (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, *ibid*)*

Participants within the GMSJ have different concepts of the nature of the Chavez regime from a Leninist Vanguard (Hands off Venezuela) to a product of the new social movements (CSSGJ) via social democratic custodian of the mixed economy (JDC). Whatever the precise character though, it is beyond doubt that the government of Hugo Chavez, together with the movement in Bolivia have brought the ‘old’ socialist ideas of nationalisation and state welfare back onto the agenda of the GMSJ. The respondent from Hands off Venezuela (HoV) takes a very clear cut view of Chavez’s project, perceiving the government as the vanguard of a classical Marxist revolution.

*“It is very important to defend the revolution where it clearly exists. There are many armchair revolutionaries talking about revolution here there and the other and then when there is a revolution they do not recognise it or they don’t do anything to support it. This is why for me the work we are doing here through Hands off Venezuela is so important as there is a revolution going on in Venezuela and we are going to do all that is possible to make sure it is successful.” (Hand off Venezuela, Organiser, SM4)*

The uncritical support for Chavez offered by HoV is not repeated by other respondents, even amongst the socialist left. The research suggests that many participants, including socialists, are uncertain about where the project of Chavez will end. The respondent from Globalise Resistance thinks the Chavez regime will be just one of many such situations around the world where socialist ideology seeks a way of applying itself to contemporary conditions.

*“You see a similar situation in Venezuela where there is a grass roots movement doing similar things but then you have a state run by radical generals. There are some right wing generals there too but you have a state that’s definitely, through the pressure of the movement, making lots of interesting reforms using the oil money. Delegates to the WSF saw various literacy projects, experiments with workers’ control of factories and things like that. It is uneven in different parts of the country but Chavez knows his support comes from the people trying to control their own lives. I think there will be all sorts of these situations around the world.” (Globalise Resistance, *ibid*)*

Other respondents tend to conceptualise Chavez’s project as less ideologically driven and more a pragmatic response to the present situation that Venezuela finds itself in.

*“The impression I get is that he has discovered a coincidence between what he is trying to do and some of the basic ideas of socialism, which is why he uses the language of socialism now when at the time of his attempted coup he was not.” (Close Campsfield, *ibid*)*

The respondent from Jubilee debt Campaign (JDC) also raised Venezuela as an inspiration precisely because they do not perceive Chavez's project as ideologically socialist:

*"I don't know the details of Venezuela but he's not trying to bring in a complete systematic planned state economy. I know he's taken over the oil but that's perfectly consistent with a mixed economy." (Jubilee Debt Campaign, ibid)*

This mixed economy solution is described by the respondent from War on Want as;

*"The new old way of doing things" (War on Want, ibid)*

This respondent believes that state reform of capitalism, in the character of Chavez's reforms, is viable on a global scale.

*"I would like to see his model being rolled out elsewhere. The thing about Chavez is that the government is actually taking control away from corporations. Capital has succeeded in many places by emasculating the nation state. The governments may still have responsibility for law and order, again the tea and toilet issues but trade goes on almost supra governmentally. That is one reason why Chavez is such a beacon because he's said no, we provide for our people. We trade for the benefit of our people through nationalised industries. We're not offering tax holidays to get corporations into Venezuela. (ibid)"*

Movements in Latin America have gone some way to re-habilitate the concept of state action delivering social justice. The state in Venezuela has been seen to provide healthcare and education for many poor people for the first time and it is widely understood that Chavez's reforms have only been made possible by the partial nationalisation of the country's oil wealth. Nationalisation of oil has returned property relations to the centre of political struggle in Venezuela. President Evo Morales has taken similar action in Bolivia, in response to grass roots demands to nationalise the gas industry. The respondent from Globalise resistance feels that Bolivia, in particular, shows the

potential for the concrete demands of the movement, for control of resources, to encourage broader systemic socialist ideas to grip the GMSJ.

*“Bolivia is more based around what I think is a key thing. How to have a planned economy that is democratic and responsive to peoples’ needs? Through their struggle against water privatisation they’ve built up local committees, factory committees and things like that. There is a point at which they are so strong there is almost a dual power in the country between these organisations and the government.” (Globalise Resistance, *ibid*)*

In spite of these comments, not many activists in the GMSJ would recognise a planned economy at the centre of Morales’ project. In Bolivia and Venezuela discontent is developing at the grass roots with what are perceived to be broken promises by the government in respect of its challenge to the power of big business. Nevertheless, the examples of Venezuela and Bolivia have combined with a wider resurgence of socialist ideology and imagery in Latin America to contradict contemporary post-socialist theory.

*“I think many people will think they don’t like the alternative of socialism or communism, whatever you want to call it, because so many lies have been told about the ideas of Marxism or communism. But looking at some of the other alternatives, if you read Chomsky or something, they do a very good job of criticizing the capitalist system with a lot of data and figures and analysis and so on but then at, the end of the day, the analysis has no alternative.” (Hands of Venezuela, *ibid*)*

The role of the state, the central importance of property ownership, the possibility and desirability of taking power have all been rescued from obsolescence by events in Latin America. More than this, the movement in Venezuela and Bolivia has demanded a more concrete programme of action than the GMSJ has been able to develop through the social forums.

## **7.4 Conclusion: Systemic Alternatives to Neo-Liberal**

### **Capitalism**

*“It is true that there are complicated fragmentations and reformulations of class and nation states going on all the time but all the time you have capital and you have labour I think you have a place for Marxist analysis more generally.” (New Left Review, *ibid*)*

George Monbiot has pointed to the absence of any systemic alternative to capitalism apart from a socialist planned economy (*ibid*). However, the clearest finding of this research in relation to the character of ‘Another World’, to which the GMSJ aspires, is the failure of the movement to engage with the question to any meaningful degree. The research has shown that most activists are content to take a few immediate steps in order to resist the relentless march of global neo-liberal capitalism while only a minority of activists within the GMSJ have any concept of a systemically different world.

In many cases (Trapese, Nottingham Student Peace Group, Gat Authors Workshop) the solutions sought to address specific forms of social injustice are conceived as cultural influences that participants hope will undermine capitalist hegemony within the minds of individual citizens as either an alternative or a precursor to structural political and/or economic change. The post-socialist concepts at the heart of the twenty-first century ideology of Zapatismo promote Autonomist and grass-roots democracy but although these ideals have motivated activists to take their own local, autonomous initiatives they are entirely utopian and abstract when applied to the character of a large scale social system. Abolishing power is meaningless to many of the poor and oppressed in Latin America and because of this movements in Bolivia and Venezuela have rallied behind the red flag and idea of socialism in the twenty-first century (Chavez 2005).

Monbiot sets out the two alternative strategies for the GMSJ: A new social system of socialist planning or regulation of global capitalism in an effort to,

*“Capture and tame the beast whose den we already inhabit”. (Monbiot, *ibid*)*



But the mass social democratic parties that aimed to tame the beast of capitalism throughout the twentieth century have capitulated to the demands of global neo-liberalism. Monbiot could object that he does not advocate a return to classical social democracy but a new method of reform and regulation carried out by trans-national institutions. In this respect he would gain the support of several of the respondents to this thesis, who perceive new limits on national government's ability to reform globalised capital and therefore seek new regional or global bodies. It is evident however, that none of the respondents has a clear idea of how this might work or how it might come about. The most well known demand of this character has been that of a Tobin Tax on all cross border financial transactions but this idea has not been raised by the respondents. There are vague notions of reforming the IMF, World Bank and WTO but nothing specific in the minds of the activists with whom I have discussed. More fanciful ideas, such as Monbiot's call for the GMSJ to establish a global parliament to operate in parallel to national governments (ibid) appear irrelevant to the GMSJ.

A new transnational form of reformism remains undefined but significant support exists, especially within the trade union movement, for a return to a classical form of Keynesian social consensus. Such a systemic model is clearly defined by its historical evolution and some respondents believe that social democracy could manage global capitalism back into a relatively high growth epoch with rising wages, welfare and profits as was the case during the post-war boom of the 1950s and 1960s.

Activists in the GMSJ will instinctively make demands on any individual or institution they perceive to be in a position to act in interests of social justice. However, none of the social democrats I have spoken to have been able to present a convincing case that social democracy could again become a systemic orthodoxy in the sense that existed in the post-war period in Europe and to a lesser extent throughout the capitalist world. The research has not revealed who or what can convince, cajole or coerce capitalism into a new social contract that would require capitalists to give up the

global freedoms to exploit that have been won as a result of political struggles going back to the global economic crisis of the early 1970s.

Monbiot rejects the alternative of a socialist planned economy because, he believes, a socialist planned economy must necessarily rest on “totalitarian commandism” (Monbiot 2003b). Of all the positions taken by post-socialist theory this is surely the most powerful one in holding back a rehabilitation of Marxist theory and it is evident in the perceptions of most respondents to this thesis.

Nevertheless, the research does not reveal a movement that has consciously dismissed the possibility of a democratic form of planning. What emerges from the interview data is a movement that has not engaged with this concept in any meaningful sense. The Trotskyist tradition dates back to the period following the death of Lenin in 1924 but apart from existing Trotskyist left parties there is little consciousness of the current. Even within the Trotskyist milieu there are tendencies to avoid raising such ideas in order to maintain unity with those activists who have been influenced by post-socialist assumptions about Marxism.

As the respondent from NLR alludes to (top), socialism continues to correspond to the socio-economic relations that underpin globalised capitalism. Post-socialism has not established a new theoretical understanding of these relations that leads activists in the GMSJ to embrace a new systemic alternative. Respondents may not be prioritising these questions of the overall character of their movement at this time but when pressed most identify with socialist ideology to one extent or another.

At present the GMSJ is focused on incremental, empirical campaigns and demands for a reformed global capitalism. That is not to say there is not a strong sense that global capitalism must be replaced, at least among many activists, but there is no sense of what form of social organisation might replace it. Socialist planning remains the only coherent systemic alternative to global capitalism but the ideology behind it is mired in the history of Stalinism. Whether or not the concept of a democratic form of socialist planning could appeal to the new generation of activists referred to

by Klein is a crucial question for the GMSJ but the first step is for the movement to engage in a discourse about the big systemic issues.

## 8 Conclusions

*“Let the ruling classes tremble at the communistic revolution. The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win” (Marx 1968:63).*

Post-socialist theory emphasises new patterns of socio/economic relations that are conceptualised as the consequence of a fundamentally new form of global capitalism made possible by rapid global flows of capital and information (Giddens 1981, 1990, 1998, 2001, Castells 1989, 1997, Held 1989, 199, 2002). This new pattern of globalised social relations creates, according to post-socialist theory, new fragmented patterns of social injustice that can only be countered by a new type of radical politics (Hall & Jacques 1983, 1989, Laraña 1994, Kriesi 1995, Klein 1999, Chomsky 2003a).

The thesis that I have presented demonstrates that key concepts of post-socialism have not developed out of a new globally fragmented pattern of social relations but have evolved from long standing tendencies that have sought to oppose or revise Marxism. Giddens announced his “New Rules of Sociological method” in 1976 and examined “The Consequences of Modernity”, in 1990. Post-socialist social and political theory has adopted the ideas of Eurocommunism, which in the British context declared, “A Manifesto for New Times” in 1989 (Hall & Jacques). The theory of Giddens and Hall & Jacques is, in turn, rooted in post-modern ideas of fragmented power (Foucault) and revisionist currents that sought to shift the focus of radical struggle away from a programme of reconstructing property relations (Labeledz 1962). Concepts relating to post-state and post-party ideology and fragmented social structures date back to the classical anarchist ideas of Bakunin and Proudhon, who were contemporaries of Marx.

The research presented in this thesis shows that post-socialist ideas have influenced the ideological outlook of activists and the character of the movement collectively. However, the research suggests that post-socialist ideas have done more to undermine confidence in traditional socialist ideology than to construct any coherent alternative framework for understanding global social injustice or to

outline how the foundations for another world might be laid. Many post-socialist concepts remain largely abstract and do not help the GMSJ to construct a programme for action.

Nevertheless, the research recognises that radical theory and the ideological character of the GMSJ have shifted away from classical socialist theory of both social democratic and socialist variants. Even amongst activists from a socialist or trade union background there is a tendency for class analysis to be put on the back burner while the new global movement is built. However, the largest component part of the social forums is still the trade unions, followed by socialist parties, which are not allowed to affiliate to the forums as parties but do so through journals or campaigns they run. The research suggests many of these respondents have not given up on class struggle but do not see it as a viable strategy at this time.

The research confirms the assertion of George Monbiot, who contends that the only coherent alternative to global capitalism, put before the social forum, is socialist planning (ibid). Monbiot though, also highlights the great obstacle that stands between the global poor and oppressed and socialist ideology; the legacy of Stalinism or what Hall & Jacques refer to as actual existing socialism (ibid).

Monbiot reflects an academic and political orthodox view of the history of Stalinism but to dismiss socialist ideology because of the manifest injustice and failure of Stalinism is one-sided and abandons a valuable tradition of democratic socialist ideas. The concept of democratically controlled socialist planning offers the GMSJ a potential foundation for another world but, at present, these ideas are not being discussed by most activists in the GMSJ.

Post-socialist theory attacks socialist ideology relating to power, property relations, class, party structures and the ability of nation states to deliver reforms. Since Hall & Jacques produced their "Manifesto for New Times" (Hall & Jacques 1989) the forces of Euro communism have driven Communist parties to embrace the market in place of socialist planning while the right of the mass social democratic parties has succeeded in reconciling social democratic governments to counter-reforms and capitulation to the demands of global capital. Post-socialism has succeeded in

highlighting crises faced by both Marxist and social democratic ideas but it has not replaced them with a new foundation for confronting global social injustice and building another world. Not only do Marxist and social democratic ideas confront a historic challenge at this time but post-socialism also faces its own existential challenge to identify what it really is and how it can build a socially just world.

## **8.1 Property, Power and Class**

The research finds that activists in the GMSJ tend to understand the exercise of power to be derived from the capitalist organisation of property relations. Giddens, Held, Castells et al assert that the intensification of information flows, on a global scale, has recast power relations fundamentally. But not one of the respondents, with whom I spoke, has engaged explicitly with theoretical concepts of time, space and social relations or even the development of ICT as a significant factor in and of itself. In fact, the only time the role of ICT was raised at all was by the respondent from GAW, who pointed to the limitations of ICT as a factor in the development of social movements. The respondent from Trapesa felt the internet had played an important role in opening up communication between radical groups but no respondent suggested that ICT has materially altered patterns of social injustice.

Hall & Jacques have asserted that identity politics, specifically applied to gender and race, have replaced class at the fulcrum of radical struggles for social justice. The evidence of this thesis offers no support to those who seek to dismiss struggles over the appropriation of economic resources (property relations) from the centre of the GMSJ.

Post-socialist theorists are unable to explain how processes like time/space distancing have materially asserted themselves on social relations and often focus, instead, on individual perceptions of identity that transcend 'old' national and class formations. The empirical data suggests that contemporary globalisation theory is, essentially, of an abstract character offering little

of interest to actual movements that perceive globalisation to be a force for injustice. In this particular sense respondents reflect the Marxist critiques of globalisation theory of Justin Rosenberg (2000) and Ray Kiely (2005), who understand ICT to be a tool of global capitalism rather than a technology that re-casts power and property relations in and of itself.

Respondents continue to conceptualise property relations as one of (if not the most) significant generators of social injustice. This is closely linked to perceptions of power, which respondents overwhelmingly accept is a factor of property relations. Multi-national corporations are widely understood to possess the power to circumvent national governmental control and establishing a limit on such power is a primary concern of many respondents. Most respondents identify a ruling elite or class, which derives its social power from economic privilege.

The Zapatista thesis of Holloway et al (Holloway 1998) briefly popularised a post-power ideology at the end of the twentieth century. But mass movements in Mexico and more broadly within the GMSJ have since shifted their focus from the abstract aim of abolishing power back towards the exercise of economic power in order to deliver social justice.

The concept of the working class is a more complicated matter. Most respondents accept that the working class exists and there remains a significant socialist trend within the GMSJ that defends Marx's analysis of society as a history of class struggle. But many more cannot visualise a movement based primarily on class consciousness at this time. The Respondents did not argue that globalised power relations have transformed class relations. Rather it is a lack of confidence in the working class moving into struggle, after years of neo-liberal ideological offensive, that influences the ideas of former card carrying socialists or Communists (CND, War on Want, Tourism Concern, Close Campsfield), while a lack of familiarity with the traditions of class struggle leads many younger activists to overlook such possibilities (Trapese, NSPG). Only one respondent (Goldsmiths) expressed a view that the working class no longer exists in a material sense. Many more, even from anarchist traditions (NSPG, Trapese), accept that class movements remain valid but are not posed in the respondents own experience of activity through social movements. Post-socialist theory

reflects a real retreat of class struggles in the face of neo-liberal capitalism and consequent ideological disorientation but it has not embedded a new theoretical concept of power and class within the GMSJ. Marxist explanations of material class injustice remain the most coherent available to the GMSJ and will regain ideological currency if those moving into political struggle find that socialist ideology corresponds with their own experience.

## **8.2 Nation and State**

A sense of a global consciousness is central to the appeal that the GMSJ holds for many activists. On one hand it reflects a thought out response to the failures of national social democratic governments as reforms have given way to counter-reforms in the face of a neo-liberal tide. But the idea that this represents an entirely new state of affairs, encapsulated by Naomi Klein in the highly influential 'No Logo' (Klein 2000), fails to recognise how socialist theory had developed a global consciousness that was established, during the nineteenth century, when Marx called on "Working men of all countries (to) unite" (Marx 1968 pp63 ). Bukharin further developed Marxist theory relating to the global scope of social theory (Brewer 1990), while Lenin wrote of, "a single global plan of production" (Lenin 1940:118). The research finds that many, particularly younger, activists identify with the concept of a new approach to a global movement but others expressed frustration with the GMSJ's rather naive view of the development of global consciousness. The movement needs to absorb far more knowledge of earlier phases of radical struggles in order to recognise that a global movement is posed primarily as a consequence of global capitalist or imperialist socio-economic relations.

Post-socialist theory argues that a process of globalisation has undermined the nation and that radical ideology now needs solutions that are not based on a state apparatus. According to Wallerstein, a new type of anti-systemic politics emerged after 1968 (Wallerstein 2002). The Prague spring had acted as a catalyst in exposing the degenerate nature of Stalinist state socialism while,



in the same year, state repression of a mass revolutionary movement of workers and students in France has similarly revealed the character of social democracy. After 1968 social democracy faced an economic crisis which dictated that the reformist programmes of social democratic parties in government turned into their opposite as profit maximisation became the aim of orthodox policy. Observing this process, on one hand, and Stalinist totalitarianism on the other, some radical movements sought a different path and combined the post-modern ideas concerning the fragmentation of power with anarchist notions of individualism. Antipathy to state provision of social justice extends beyond those respondents from an explicitly anarchist tradition but there are few who do not inevitably end up making demands on the state to provide welfare and intervene in markets to engineer more socially desirable outcomes. In practical terms, reformists have not identified any alternative to a state structure as a vehicle for reform or regulation.

Marxist theory, on the other hand, has never bought into the social democratic theory of Max Weber et al, who conceptualised the state existing independently of the ruling class and working class. Marxist respondents conceptualise the bourgeois state as a coercive body that defends the prevailing economic interests and so Marxism does not perceive the capitulation of social democracy as the demise of state power but rather, the application of state power to a new project that aims to restore profitability at the expense of workers' wages and welfare. A Marxist theory of the role of the state can offer the GMSJ a concrete way forward that does not rely on utopian post-state abstractions. In *State and Revolution*, Lenin set out the principles of a transitional state through which the socialist revolution could be defended from opposition while also beginning to transform economic relations. Trotsky has argued that this process was ended under the rule of Stalin and that rather than the state "withering away", as the need to ration production diminished, Stalinism reasserted the control of a totalitarian state (Trotsky 1972:49). Such theoretical arguments however are overwhelmed by the experience of Stalinism and social democratic government in the second half of the twentieth century. This recent experience represents the entire conscious lifetime of young activists in the GMSJ so socialist ideology faces an enormous challenge if it is to combine the pragmatic embrace of a state solution with the democratic aspirations of the GMSJ. On the

other hand, no-one has identified a realistic alternative and where movements take on a mass character a sense of pragmatism always seems to give rise to demands for immediate state reforms.

### **8.3 The Political Party**

In 'New Times', Hall & Jacques announced the end of the party and the rise of a new network of autonomous social movements (Hall & Jacques 1889). This position is based on a concept of fragmentation of class and identity rendering it impossible for a party based on the unity of the working class to construct a programme that can appeal to disparate subjective interests. However, it is clear from the research that the influence of the organised labour movement, within the GMSJ, remains significant. Half of affiliates to the London ESF were from trade union or socialist bodies and several respondents, who are active in other campaigns or movements, also play an important role in the trade union movement. Nevertheless, amongst many respondents, including some from a socialist tradition, there is a sense that the party flag must be lowered in favour of the looser network. The perception that the GMSJ does not enjoy sufficient ideological unity to maintain unified party structures is a common one held by respondents who variously celebrate or regret this absence of a common programme.

In Florence, in 2002, the overwhelming tone of the ESF was of a new unstoppable force while by November 2004 the event in London heard many activists express concern that the social forum process has gone as far as it can in providing space in which to discuss ideas. A number of respondents put it to me that it is now time to move on, on the basis of an agreed programme for action. As the respondent from 'No Sweat' put it; it is time for the social forums to become a parliament rather than a clearing house of the social movements. The experience of the Chavez government in Venezuela, cited as an inspiration by more respondents than any other single movement, suggests that this is one debate that will continue to divide and perplex activists for

some time. The struggle of workers and the poor in Venezuela has encountered well funded and organised opposition from wealthy vested interests and the need for the movement to organise against this has convinced the vast majority of organisations and autonomous movements to join the newly created Venezuelan Socialist Party (PSUV). However, the PSUV has been fiercely criticised for its top down centralisation and the inclusion in its leadership of many military officers. What Venezuela demonstrates is that the GMSJ has not found an alternative to the party that is sufficiently coherent as to be able to confront an organised ruling class. But the refusal of Chavez to break decisively with the top down methods of party organisation that characterised the former Communist Parties there is likely to be a further anti-party reaction at some stage within the ranks of activists in the GMSJ.

In spite of the hostility felt towards party structures by many activists in the GMSJ, it is undeniable that where real mass movements have effected social change in Venezuela or Bolivia the process has led to the creation of new mass political parties. But the research also demonstrates the profoundly democratic cultural aspirations of the GMSJ, expressed not only by those from anarchist traditions but also by those on the Marxist left who explicitly reject the traditions of the Stalinist Communist International or the top down experience of the British Labour Party. A centralised party remains the only practicable way to organise struggle but one that is based on commandism, from an elite leadership down, will fail to deliver social justice just as social democracy and Stalinism have failed in the latter part of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries.

## **8.4 The challenges facing three ideological traditions: Post Socialism, Social democracy and Marxism**

Post-socialism urges the GMSJ to lament the failure of actual existing socialism in the form of state planning. It further points to globalisation as force beyond the control of nation states. In the face of this the only choice is to accept the inevitability of the global capitalist market and seek to play a

transformationalist role in shaping the culture of capitalism itself. Post-socialism has encouraged the GMSJ and the academy to seek to exert cultural influence rather than systemic change. But the collapse of the neo-liberal global economy has again raised the issue of identifying a viable systemic alternative. Sixteen years after 'The End of History' (Fukuyama 1992), Frances Fukuyama, once the epitome of capitalist triumphalism, accepts that most significant economic crisis since the 1930's great depression has sent ideological as well as economic shockwaves around the globe (Fukuyama 2006). This thesis has identified three broad ideological traditions within the GMSJ: Post-Socialism, Social Democracy and Marxism. Each one faces a historic challenge if it is to inform a movement that can build another, socially just, world in the twenty-first century.

#### **8.4.1 Post-Socialism**

In spite of the collapse, on a global scale, of almost every regime opposed to the system of capitalism, capitalism has not been able to use its supremacy to address social injustice but has reinforced it. Young people have used whatever means of communication are available to protest against the reality of neo-liberal global capitalism and in so doing have constituted a GMSJ. The experience of Stalinism and the shift of mass social democratic parties from reforms to counter-reforms has eroded confidence in the idea of class struggle or socialism itself but post-socialist theory has not been able to demonstrate, to participants of the GMSJ, how material socio-economic relations have been shifted in such a way as to undermine the fundamental assumptions of socialist theory.

Post-socialism has been attractive to the GMSJ in so far it appears to reject authoritarian certainties associated with state socialism of either Marxist or Social democratic variants. But the ideology of open space in which to discuss individual perceptions of injustice can only go so far. If the movement is to influence the world, let alone construct another one, it must eventually agree on the starting point for a new society and seek to exercise power in order to overcome the old order. The

post-socialist concept of cultural struggle to change individual behaviour, rather than systemic change has had some influence on the GMSJ but the evidence contained in this thesis suggests that post-socialism has not provided an explanation of social injustice that is widely accepted by activists in the GMSJ. Further it has not provided a framework for the construction of a mass movement that might be able to transform existing social relations. Critically, post-socialist ideology has nothing to say about the character of another world itself.

#### **8.4.2 Social democracy**

Demands to reform the existing capitalist system arise as an instinctive reaction to social injustice and will always be a feature of the GMSJ. However, social democratic states that facilitate a generalised reduction in social inequality and a systemic development of state welfare have largely given way to neo-liberal policies of profit maximisation. Whether social democracy can re-establish the type of trans-national social consensus that existed after 1945 and that many activists seek to restore, is questionable.

Anti-state ideology is popular in the abstract but paradoxically, the anti-statist GMSJ embraces the state social democratic programme of Chavez and Morales in Venezuela and Bolivia. The strength of social democratic theory is its perceived pragmatism. A new post-state form of social organisation may be popular in an abstract sense but when it comes to delivering real material social reforms activists look to the state to deliver.

The onset of a global economic crisis has already resurrected discussion of social democratic economic policy and, in particular, Keynesian ideas. Long standing proponents of social democracy such as Hutton, and Stiglitz hope for a return to the social consensus of the post-war upswing with social reforms accompanying economic reconstitution but they are likely to be disappointed. As Andrew Glyn has shown, the economic pre-condition for a social consensus is not present in today's global economy (ibid). Without a rapidly increasing rate of labour productivity it is not

possible to maintain profitability while simultaneously increasing real wages and welfare costs on business. In the absence of a mass revolutionary threat to the rule of capital it is difficult to foresee capital entering into a new consensus to the detriment of its profitability.

### **8.4.3 Marxism**

Marxism is unique in offering a coherent systemic alternative to capitalism. But like Monbiot, most respondents to this research accept post-socialism's assertion of that socialism has failed. In particular, the post-socialist idea that socialist planning can only be organised by an undemocratic, monolithic bureaucracy continues to influence activists.

Marxists will respond that a rich history of struggle exists, within the international socialist movement, for a non-Stalinist democratic model of planning that dates back to the Left opposition in Russia after the Death of Lenin. However, most respondents are closer to the outlook of MAW than they are to the Marxist left on the question of central planning:

*“The last thing I want is another Stalinist society where the state decides what individuals do every day” (SM5).*

The comments of the respondent from MAW capture the profoundly democratic aspirations at the heart of the GMSJ. Activists seek to establish control over their own lives and perceive this as impossible while dominated by multi-national corporations or a Stalinist state bureaucracy. These democratic and cultural aspirations will remain central to radical movements for social justice.

The issue of class also remains a problem for Marxist ideology. When pressed to consider the dynamics of class society many respondents consider class relations to be little changed from earlier in the twentieth century. However, it is undeniable that for most activists, especially but not only amongst the newer generation, class is not an issue they conceptualise as one that can unite struggles for social justice. Marx though, developed his theory of class struggle in response to the material conditions of capitalist society. Class consciousness can be rebuilt so long as it reflects a

material reality that will lead the movement to draw similar conclusions to those engaged in mass struggles against global capitalism over the past century or more. In a period of global capitalist crisis, austerity politics will help the ideology of class struggle to rise again.

## **8.5 The Thesis: Achievements and Limitations**

The primary aim of the research was to assess the extent to which Marxism, both the theoretical analysis of Marxism and the methodology of Marxist analysis, can offer the GMSJ a useful framework with which the movement can analyse global social injustice and construct the foundations of another world. In chapter three I highlighted an important limitation to the claims of the research, which considers only the ideological concepts of activists within the GMSJ based in the UK. These respondents to the research have discussed their ideas concerning a movement with global aspirations and have commented on ideas emanating from different nations and the theory developed can help to understand concepts of global social injustice in a general, global sense. However, it must always be remembered that the theory and conclusions are derived from respondents based in the UK. Nevertheless, with that limitation noted, the research has been able to establish that although the number of radical activists who identify explicitly with socialist ideas and socialist ideology has been fallen in the latter part of the twentieth century, nevertheless, the way in which activists conceptualise global social injustice owes more to traditional socialist theory than it does to post-socialist concepts based on space, time and fragmentation.

The methodology of dialectical materialism has been central to the development of this thesis. In Chapter three I have argued that dialectical materialism is an epistemology that allows the researcher to integrate concepts of material forces with the subjective role of ideology. Post-socialist methodology rests on a post-modern rejection of grand narrative. While this allows contemporary research to expand its frontiers it also directs research away from identifying and confronting key determinants of social injustice. Where Marx identifies the relations of production

and consequent class struggle as the most important condition of social injustice, post-socialist theory speaks in terms of fragmentation and injustice within all human relationships. This may be true but if, like Marx, we aspire not only to interpret the world but to change it, it is necessary to sort out what is primary and what is secondary.

The rehabilitation of Marxist method has emerged as a crucial element of this thesis and suggests further research that might be undertaken. In his "Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism", Giddens (1981) argues against Marx's concept of class struggle acting as the historical motor of history. Giddens bases his critique on a straw man, who asserts the economically determined victory of the proletariat at each and every point of capitalist crisis. Within the contemporary academy there have been precious few attempts to defend historical materialism (or dialectical materialism as I have described Marx's methodology). Giddens' time/space abstractions have had long enough to establish how social justice is produced and it is now time for radical social scientists to consider whether the character of global capitalist societies, in the twenty-first century, can be better explained by developing the class analysis of Marx.

The research addresses the broad character of radical ideology and because of its vast scope it has not been possible to conduct primary research that explores how the concepts of individual respondents have developed over a period of time. Rather, the research compares the ideas that respondents have articulated in interviews with secondary material dealing with the evolution of the ideology of social justice. Practicability has also demanded that the research limit itself to considering primary data from respondents who are based in the UK. By using the affiliation list to the 2004 ESF in London the research has ensured that respondents have included activists from different ideological traditions within the GMSJ as it exists in the UK.

The research has challenged the post-socialist orthodoxy that prevails in the academy, in the sense of replacing socialist theory with concepts of fragmented power relations, cultural identity and unstructured networks. The post-socialist position has grown in influence within global movements although the research suggests that socialist labour movement ideology retains a greater foothold n



the GMSJ than is suggested by contemporary academic discourse. The thesis has been able to present evidence that demonstrates a failure of post-socialist theory to present a coherent analysis of global social injustice and also, that activists in the GMSJ may not be confident of the ability of the working class to struggle but they continue to reflect the ideas of Marxism in relation to key theoretical concepts such as power, property relations and class itself. The underlying conceptualisation of power and the central role of property relations in the generation of social injustice have been retained by activists in the GMSJ, even if they do not focus on these theoretical questions at present. Post-state theory appears to have some currency in the GMSJ but primarily in an abstract sense. Although many activists are wary of state power movements still default into demands for state reform and welfare. Following the banking crisis of 2008 the state has re-emerged as a fundamental instrument of social organisation. The Eurozone crisis, together with the crisis of the globally integrated financial system, raises serious questions of globalisation theory in relation to its concepts of the decline of the nation state. This is an area that could benefit from further research that engages with the ongoing crisis.

Where socialist theory faces its most serious challenges is in relation to concepts of class as a mobilising identity; party forms of organisation and the viability of socialist planning. Each of these concepts merits further research. The ideas of Eurocommunism relating to the dilution of class consciousness continue to enjoy orthodox status in the academy. I have argued that, to use the language of post-socialism, this process has been a reflexive one. In other words, post-socialism has fought an ideological battle to undermine class consciousness in academic theory and political practice. Stalinist, Social democratic and neo-liberal theorists all share an ideological logic towards a position that conceptualises social relations as having changed so fundamentally as to render socialist ideas bankrupt. Convergence around this ideological perspective allows ex-socialists and capitalists to agree that it is all different now and the market cannot be challenged. However, empirical evidence suggests that many aspects of class inequality are as great now as ever and have increased in recent decades:

*“The evidence on social mobility is complex and sometimes contradictory. But the broad picture is fairly clear. We currently have relatively low levels of social mobility, both by international standard and compared with the ‘baby boomer’ generation” (Clegg, Nick 2011)*

There is a considerable literature addressing the issue of class and inequality in contemporary capitalist society which is outside of the scope of my research. Further research could allow the integration of the research on the theoretical concepts of activists in the GMSJ with empirical quantitative studies of injustice and class indicators. I have identified a shift from the post-war social consensus to neo-liberal global policy from around 1970. The withdrawal of capital from this consensus poses an existential challenge to the ideology of social democracy but also calls into question the analysis of post-socialism. Post-socialism claims that class based patterns of injustice have receded in importance yet there is strong evidence that although social democracy succeeded in ameliorating the class struggle in the 1950s and 1960s, class inequality has intensified again in the neo-liberal epoch.

*Distributional changes are an important part of the economic history of the OECD countries over the twentieth century. In the UK, income inequality in the 1970s was substantially lower than 40 years earlier, and is now much higher than in 1979. (Atkinson 1999)*

This point is re-enforced by research by Gottschalk and Smeeding, which shows the impact of a shift to neo-lib socio/economic policy on a global scale. Gottschalk and Smeeding demonstrate that the greatest growth in income inequality between 1980 and 1995 has been seen in the UK, which was subject to the neo-liberal policies of the Thatcher governments. This will come as no surprise to defenders of social democracy but it is the social democratic Nordic countries, Sweden and Denmark and also in The Netherlands that have shown the next largest increase in income inequality (Gottschalk & Smeeding 2000:297).

Further research is required and should address the hypothesis that, in the period since 1979, class antagonisms expressed as inequality has reversed the mid-twentieth century trend towards a more just society and has reasserted capitalist patterns of class injustice. This is most pronounced in the USA and UK but is fast becoming a feature of most capitalist economies. Rather than globalization changing capitalist relations (Giddens, Held, Castells, Hall & Jacques) it is arguable that global neo-liberalism has re-enforced the class struggle identified by Marx.

In terms of the importance of class to activists within the GMSJ it would also be interesting to conduct research into what the movement understands by its identification of the 99%. "We are the 99%" has been taken up by Occupy movements around the world and suggests a powerful identity based on the distribution of wealth. This is, perhaps, the strongest indication yet of a return to a concept of injustice based on the unity of all those different sections of society who constitute an exploited 99%. How closely does the 99% correlate to Marx's identification of the proletariat and petit-bourgeoisie? Does the identification of a 99% suggest that the petit-bourgeoisie has been proletarianised by the drive towards monopolisation of wealth predicted by Marx? These are issues that could form the focus of further research.

The thesis I present discusses respondents' theoretical concepts of party and autonomous forms of organisation. The research captures the scepticism felt by many activists towards centralised structures and I have highlighted a contradiction between this position and the involvement of parties in the GMSJ. In particular I have shown how movements in Bolivia and Venezuela have given rise to new mass parties. The GMSJ is in a very early stage of development compared to the mass movements of Bolivia and Venezuela. Further research could usefully discuss with activists how they conceptualise the movement could grow into one on a truly mass scale without taking on more centralised forms of organisation.

This thesis though, addresses one question above all else: Does the failure of actual existing socialism prove that socialist planning cannot form the foundations of a socially just other world. I have argued that the post-socialist position has ignored the logical possibility of central planning

existing under democratic control and has also ignored a considerable history of democratic, left, critique of the Stalinist model that was seen to fail. The attitude of most respondents to this question is one of indifference. The question of whether planning could replace the capitalist market is seen as abstract and a question that does not arise in the foreseeable future. This is a failing of the movement for without an assessment of the real history of socialist theory in action it is not possible to properly take from it what might be useful in the future. As Noam Chomsky said:

*“Here you get into a question where you don’t want to be too cavalier about it—it’s a question of historical fact” (Chomsky *ibid*).*

The concept of a planned economy in which economic resources are directed by the popular will, expressed through democratic industrial and social structures, deserves to be looked at again by academics and political activists alike. Post-socialism puts the development of ICT at the centre of its thesis but if ICT offers capital the opportunity to integrate the world into a global village then it offers the same opportunity to planners.

This raises what economists, somewhat dryly, describe as the Economic calculation debate (Coyne, Leeson & Boettke 2005).). According to the capitalist critique of economic planning there is no mechanism, other than the market, which can take account of the millions of individual purchasing demands of consumers and allocate resources to the appropriate producers (Hayek 1935, 1978, 2009, Coyne, Leeson & Boettke *ibid*). However, Kyle Thompson (2012) suggests that ITC might offer a solution to this problem as it is now possible to record, analyse and act on such a vast base of data based on previous choices.

I have argued that in order to construct another world the GMSJ must confront the issue of how another economic system could replace capitalism. This should include discourse around the economic viability of socialist planning. The research has found though, that this is not a debate that the movement has engaged with in any significant sense. If my thesis succeeds in provoking further research let it address this question.

## **8.6 In Defence of Marxism**

Post-socialist ideology, premised on the failure of socialist theory, has achieved orthodox status both in the academy and the political practice of former Communist and social democratic mass workers' parties. However, the research suggests that respondents do not understand social relations in the epoch of globalisation to be fundamentally different to those of an earlier twentieth century manifestation of capitalist imperialism. When concepts of property relations, class and power are explored with activists in the GMSJ, today, it is clear that the attitudes of most respondents have more in common with traditional socialist theory than they do with post-socialist concepts which seek to replace class based property relations with space, time and ITC as sources of social injustice. Mass movements for social justice appear to quickly incorporate demands to nationalise and control economic resources as they move into conflict with capital and this is reflected, within the GMSJ by activists' keen interest in movements in Venezuela and Bolivia, where socialist imagery and slogans have returned to the fore of radical movements.

Post-socialism corresponds with the retreat of socialist political forces after the collapse of Stalinism and capitulation of social democracy in the late 1980s and subsequent two decades. Concepts of fragmentation and autonomy provided a theoretical backbone for those who sought to revise socialism into nothing more than abstract values, posing no material threat to capitalism or its global structures. However, post-socialism offers no hope of delivering social justice for those who have lost their jobs or essential welfare support because of crisis in the capitalist economy.

The research has demonstrated that the theoretical ideas of Giddens, Hall & Jacques, Hardt & Negri and other leading advocates of radical post-socialist thought are not articulated by most activists in the GMSJ. However, the central ideological feature that is shared by post-socialist theory and the movement is a complete failure to engage with the possibility of a democratic form of socialist planning. At a time when capitalism is manifestly encountering an economic crisis as serious as anything since the 1930s, it is inevitable that Marx's critique of capitalism is enjoying a limited rehabilitation. However, the research shows that, so far at least, both theory and activists are

separating Marx's critique of capitalism from his ideas for an alternative society based on socialist planning.

The left opposition developed a significant democratic resistance to the failed model of Stalinism, or actual existing socialism as the Eurocommunists would have it. However, the research shows that activists in the GMSJ have not examined these historical facts at this time. The democratic social ownership of the means of production remains the only systemic alternative on offer to global capitalism markets but the possibility of establishing democratic, bottom up control of a socially owned economy is not considered in any serious sense in contemporary academic literature or within the GMSJ. It is time for that historical re-evaluation to begin in earnest.

## **Appx A (Topic Guide March 2006)**

### **Topic Guide - An outline of issues for discussion with participants in the anti-globalisation movement**

#### **Research Questions**

**Briefly describe your organisation**

Aims and structure

In what way does your organisation participate in the anti-globalisation movement?

What is the ideology of your movement?

Does your ideology provide you with a set of principles or objectives to aspire to or a plan of action?

#### **Do you engage in debate about the ideological direction of the movement?**

What ideological tendencies do you perceive within the movement?

Do you have to make ideological compromises in order to participate in the movement?

Who influences you and your organisation

Other participants

Literature

Which international movements or issues do you follow and take inspiration from?

### **What does globalisation mean to you?**

- A new world system or the latest phase of capitalist development?
  - Is globalisation a force or a description of observed processes?
- Who drives globalisation and in whose interests?
- Who exploits who and how?
- Is traditional Marxist and/or social democratic social theory relevant to the era of globalisation?
  - Is there still a bourgeoisie and proletariat
  - Is class struggle viable
- Does the new movement seek to go beyond the traditions of class based struggle?
  - Is the movement primarily fighting a spatial distribution of inequality or a class based inequality?

**Has the movement found a 'new politics'? Monbiot says we have only two choices; to reform global capitalism or to adopt socialist planning.**

- Has anyone come forward with an alternative model?
- Who can enforce reforms?
  - Nation states or new international regulation?
  - Why should corporations accept limitations on their freedom to employ capital as they wish?
- How can a planned economy disentangle itself from totalitarian commandism?
  - Has the collapse of the Soviet bloc not rendered socialist planning obsolete?



- Can alternative models of planning meet the democratic aspirations of the movement?
  
- Has the Labour movement itself lost confidence in socialist ideology?

## Appx B Topic Guide at end of April 2006

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### Topic Guide (Revised) - An outline of issues for discussion with participants in the Anti-Globalisation movement

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**What is the aim of your organisation?**

- Can it be summed up by any particular ideology?
- Are there any ideas that particularly influence you?
- Do you perceive yourself or your organisation to be part of a wider movement?

**How important are the social forums to your movement?**

- In what way do you engage with the social forums?
- How are the aims of the social forums different to your organisation's aims?

- Is any ideology or tendency dominant within the social forums?
- Are there any ideas or currents within the forums that you are opposed to?

**What type of organisations should the social forums be?**

- An open space or a parliament for the movement?

**Which movements in the world most interest you at this time?**

- How are those movements organised?
- What demands do they make?
- What are their aspirations?
- Are these models for other movements?
- Do these movements have shortcomings?

**Who exercises power in the globalised world today?**

- Has globalisation led to new power relationships?
- In the era of globalisation, are the people who exercise power different to before? Or has globalisation changed the way in which power is exercised by the same individuals?

- Is the movement around the social forums transnational in reality or does each round of the ESF reflect the national movement in that country?
- Does this internationalism represent a completely new type of movement?
- Is this transnationalism more significant than the internationalism of the labour movement?
- What other ways do you or your organisation have of building transnational relationships?
- How important is the internet and ITC to the movement?

**Who exercises power and suffers exploitation in the era of globalisation?**

- Can exploitation be explained by a Marxist model of class society in which the ruling class (bourgeoisie) exploits the working class (proletariat)?
- Is exploitation based on which country you live in more than which class you are in?
- Is this different to other periods of capitalist development?

**Another World is Possible: What kind of world?**

- Who should hold power in that world?
- Monbiot's choice between 'commandist' socialist planning and regulated global capitalism; is there anything else?
- Is it necessary to break with the economic system of capitalism to achieve social justice or can capitalism be reformed?
- Is there a new way to regulate?
- Is transnational regulation viable?

- Can socialist planning appeal to democratic aspirations?
- Does the idea of a socialist planned economy still exist as a model for a future society or only in its aspiration of greater equality?
- Has Latin America and Venezuela brought socialism back to the fore in the movement?

**Who has the ability to effect change?**

- Can anti-globalisation or the movement for social justice be seen within the history of class struggle?

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