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The state of emancipation – with, within, without?

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Abstract

This article examines the vexed question of the state, civil society and emancipation. After criticising the Liberal perspective on state and civil society, it outlines and considers the two main Radical (communist) perspectives: the mainstream and dominant Marxist state-centred approach as exemplified in specific ways by Lenin and Gramsci, and the society-centred approach including the works of Marxist Autonomists and Anarchists. In relation to the global South, both perspectives are critically reflected upon, especially in the light of the problematic relationship that often arises between Left-leaning governments and social movements. It is shown that, for state-centred intellectuals and activists more comfortable about thinking emancipation in and through the state, the society-centred conception raises challenging questions about 'the political', 'politics' and state-civil society relations. Both conceptions though offer important arguments and, in rendering the controversies between the two positions, it is important to recognise points of convergence. The article ends with some brief thoughts on the state and emancipation in post-Apartheid South Africa.

This article is about social emancipation in the contemporary capitalist world with a particular focus on the vexed question of the state[1]. It considers current debates surrounding the state and civil society by criticising the hegemonic Liberal notion of civil society and by setting out two Radical conceptions (one state-centric, the other society-centric) that explicitly seek to articulate a project of genuine (post-capitalist) emancipation. In shifting forms, these two approaches have deep historical roots, including the First – Socialist – International before the turn of the previous century and the controversy between early Marxists and Anarchists. Debates between these two conceptions of emancipation have acquired renewed resonance with the rise of 'alternative globalisation' (and 'localisation') movements over the past twenty years.

The Liberal notion of civil society, which pervades the international development industry, is based on a state-civil society dualism that speaks about a universalising civil society waging war against a particularistic and centralising state. At the same time, though, civil society is framed as existing '*with*' and alongside the state and, most importantly, ultimately inside a state-civil society consensus about social order that reproduces class domination and undercuts processes of emancipation. Of the two Radical notions, the state-

[1] This article has benefited greatly from the comments of two anonymous reviewers.

centric one has been dominant historically within communism. This state-centric position (which is consistent with a large body of classical Marxist and Social Democratic thinking) argues for political strategies against the state and it proclaims the possibility of emancipation in, through and by means of (and therefore '*within*') the state. The alternative perspective involves society-centred emancipation and is in line with versions of Anarchist, Communist Libertarian and Marxist Autonomist (and other forms of anti-statist communist) thought that speaks not of acquiring state power (either through the electoral system or on an insurrectionary basis) but of developing counter-power (or even anti-power) inside the bowels of civil society despite (or '*without*') the state. These three conceptions I refer to respectively as the *With* (Liberal), *Within* (Radical state-centric) and *Without* (Radical society-centric) perspectives.[2]

The primarily focus of this article is on the two Radical conceptions, and the ways in which these conceptions assist in emancipatory praxis (or the thinking and 'doing' of emancipation). In this regard, it is important from the outset to be sensitive to issues of representation. The two conceptions are often presented by their proponents in dualistic terms and as involving – invariably – competing and antagonistic strategies vis-à-vis each other (as if a particular movement by necessity must be animated by either society-centric or state-centric change). This claim seems problematic, in ways similar to the rigid distinction sometimes made between the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition (Fraser and Honneth 2003). Hence, specific social and political movements regularly entail a fluid combination of state- and society-centric activities – the case of the *Chavista* movement in Venezuela might be said to illustrate this. At the same time, though, one particular conception (and practice) may be hegemonic within a civil society movement. As a result, it is important to unpack the self-representations of/by movements – for example, movements that claim to be society-centric have at times pronounced state-centric leanings, at least in terms of tactics.

One of the central problems encountered in seeking to understand the controversies around the state and emancipation is that they take place at different and shifting levels of analyses (involving a range of philosophical, theoretical and political commitments about strategies and tactics) that on occasion are conflated and not properly articulated and delineated. For instance, similar political tactics may be found across the state-centric/society-centric divide but – simultaneously – specific theoretical arguments about the form of the state might be at loggerheads. This article tries to be sufficiently sensitive to these differing levels of analysis. In the end, I seek to explore (at least tentatively) whether 'or', 'and' or 'and/or' should conjoin *With*, *Within*, *Without* when it comes to emancipatory practice. However, no rigid position on this matter appears possible, necessary or desirable.

[2] The with/within/without distinction is thought from de Souza's (2006) phrase "together with the state, despite the state, against the state", although the two sets of distinctions do not overlap.

In terms of presentation, I first set out the Liberal perspective in order to more readily identify the broad parameters of both Radical approaches. Secondly, I examine these two approaches in some detail and with reference to particular struggles around the globe. Before concluding, I talk briefly to the politics of emancipation in post-Apartheid South Africa.

'With' the state in perpetuating class domination – the prevailing Liberal version[3]

In classical European political philosophy and theory, civil society is sometimes contrasted to a state of nature (for example, Thomas Hobbes), more often to communitarian relations (for example, Ferdinand Tonnies) and, most often, to the nation-state (for example, John Locke, Georg Hegel and Karl Marx).

Hegel argued, generally, that the egotisms and inequalities of an unbridled civil society under modern (individualistic) competitive capitalist conditions were productively managed by the universal nation-state ruling over and pacifying 'uncivil' society, thereby making it more 'civil' (i.e. the state was the solution to civil society egotisms). In Marx's view, any such notion of universality was a mere pretence (or a "false universal") – Ehrenberg (1998: 2) – and the nation-state served the specific interests of the bourgeoisie with its economic dominance firmly rooted within civil society. In Marx's words, "this slavery of civil society is the natural foundation on which the modern state rests" (quoted in Femia 2001: 136). Therefore, the institutional separation between state and civil society under capitalism mystified class domination, with the state being a particular organisational expression of relations of domination existing first and foremost within civil society. 'Bourgeois' civil society, with its particularistic class-based bickering, could only be overcome by the universalizing and emancipating role of the proletariat.

The dominant understanding of civil society in the contemporary world (including within the worldwide development system) is a sanitized Liberal one – including in relation to Africa – which turns both Hegel and Marx on their heads (Baker 2002). 'Civil society', in current Liberal thought, regularly forms part of a conceptual couplet: either the civil society-state couplet or the civil society-communitarian couplet (which are two of the three versions in the classic arguments about civil society noted above). For Liberals, these couplets imply that civil society (seen almost in its entirety as a progressive social force) struggles against the modern state (with its democratic deficits and often authoritarian rule) and against pre-modern communitarian sociality (often lodged in rural areas where civil society is said to be incipient and undeveloped); state and communitarian relations both entail totalising

3 This discussion of the Liberal version admittedly does not do full justice to the complexities and variations within the Liberal tradition, but I do believe it captures a significant if not dominant trajectory within contemporary Liberal thinking on civil society (particularly as found in the development literature).

compulsions and commitments contrary to the supposed voluntary and contractual civility of 'civil society'.

The first couplet depicts civil society as the universalising logic inherent in capitalist societies that opposes the particularistic interests of the state, and it becomes the driving force behind processes of democratic modernity. Civil society is defined in relation to the nation-state and, generally, this relationship is portrayed as antagonistic throughout much of Africa, with civil society as progressive and the state as regressive. In terms of the second couplet, the concept of civil society is compared, in typical modernist and modernisation language, to communitarian forms of social organisation that apparently continue to structure (in particular) rural social realities. Communitarian relations (for example, chiefdoms and customary tenure) are said to be regressive particulars that result in democratic and development deficiencies. They undermine the unequivocally progressive and universalising content of civil society and its modernist endeavours vis-à-vis the (un-democratic) nation-state.

This dominant Liberal understanding of civil society – and more broadly the current fixation with civil society – arose in the face of an anti-statist moment globally and is undoubtedly linked to new forms of imperialism. Anti-statism entailed successful struggles against centralised 'Communist' rule in central-eastern Europe, Neo-Liberal downsizing and restructuring of the Keynesian welfare state in advanced capitalist nations, and sustained opposition to authoritarian and military states throughout 'peripheral' capitalism. Civil society was designed to recover for society a range of powers and activities that national states had usurped in previous decades. Ironically, despite the revival of civil society under anti-statist conditions, the dominant Liberal interpretation of the concept is statist or at least state-centric.

The Liberal position entails an instrumentalist view of civil society as a formidable weapon for democratizing the nation-state, rather than viewing civil society, for instance, as in-itself a site of struggle for hegemony or as an end-in-itself i.e. a pre-figurative form of politics for a new society. Democracy is conceived as effectively external to civil society and is lodged rather (in statist fashion) in liberal democratic state bodies. Civil society organizations have no legitimate existence independent of their role in interacting with the state, and the strengths and weaknesses of these organizations are identified in terms of their regulatory state-centric functions in building and defending liberal state democracy (for example, many civil society groups promote the realisation of human rights, and the state is implicitly – but problematically – recognised as the legitimate guarantor of these rights – Baker 2003, Neocosmos 2006).

On one level, then, civil society is defined in opposition to (or against) the state (in a way similar to the Radical state-centric view). On another level, though, the boundaries of civil society overlap with the boundaries of liberal politics as defined by the state; in other words, civil society although "defined in opposition to the state, also ends at the boundaries of liberal politics" (Sader 2002, 93). Any antagonism between state and civil society occurs within a broad state-civil

society consensual paradigm (the "consensual state domain of politics" – Neocosmos 2004: 11) in terms of which the state delimits and structures what is acceptable oppositional (i.e. civil society) politics. Ultimately, civil society (as conceptualised in this perspective) is supportive specifically of the liberal state form, leading to state-civil society collaborative and partnership arrangements that facilitate overall social domination. Politics beyond this consensual domain are viewed by both state and civil society at best as illegitimate politics and at worst as criminal behaviour (what the Radical society-centred view would label as the popular sphere of, or authentic, politics). In this sense, the Liberal perspective depicts civil society '*With*' the state in perpetuating class domination.

In the end, the Liberal perspective undercuts both Hegel and Marx. Whereas Hegel saw the state as moderating and reconciling the particulars of civil society, the domesticated Liberal approach (domesticated by both state and capital) perceives civil society as the incarnation of reason, the universalizing mode of social organization and defender of democracy (much like Neo-Liberal 'free' marketers posit the capitalist market). This approach demonizes the modern state (at least its authoritarian traits) but obscures its bourgeois form. Hence, the capitalist form of the Liberal state – and indeed the capitalist market – is treated as a necessary historical given, and is considered as the very foundation of a strong and vibrant civil society. Capitalist society is compartmentalized, fragmented and partitioned out according to the tripartite realms of economy, state and civil society, and thus its totalizing logic is undetected and left un-analyzed. This entails a de-economised version of civil society devoid of class relations. Civil society, as Marx understood it, is thereby sanitized and cleansed – civil society comes to represent an unadulterated realm of un-coerced freedom where the oppressed defend themselves against the ravages of the state. Civil society is not a problem; rather, it is the solution to the woes of state-regulated capitalism.

In summary, the dominant Liberal view depicts civil society as the universalizing logic inherent in capitalist societies that opposes the particularistic interests of the state (and of communitarian relations), such that it becomes the driving force behind the twin goals of democracy and development. This view fails to recognise (unlike classical Radical civil society thinking[4]) that civil society itself is in various ways a site of domination, inequality and conflict: the moment of social domination inscribed within civil society is ignored and, further, contradictions internal to civil society become displaced and take the form of tensions between civil society and the state.

[4] The fact that the international development system, including multilateral institutions (such as the World Bank) and international NGOs, readily deploys the notion of civil society in a domesticated and sanitized fashion is part of the "perverse confluence" in the use of terms (Dagnino 2008) existing between current Liberal and Radical thought.

Radical civil society ('within' and 'without')

Radical understandings (based loosely on Marx's rendition of civil society) conceptualise 'civil society' as a site of both social domination and social conflict (with domination and conflict regularly reproduced within the state). In some way, social movements animated by emancipatory politics invariably enter into conflictual relations with social classes and groups that seek to defend prevailing systems of domination. This would involve movements addressing and confronting – conceptually and literally – governments/states in specific (historical and spatial) forms.[5] I consider these movements, even if existing outside the consensual realm of liberal politics, to be inside civil society; this is true even of strongly anti-statist movements that are labelled by Liberal politics as beyond the civility of civil society because of their supposed un-civility[6].

In this section, I outline the two Radical understandings of civil society and emancipation that have post-capitalist (communist) connotations but not necessarily post-capitalist implications. At a general level, I refer to these as 'state-centred' and 'society-centred' conceptions. I use this dualist-from of presentation heuristically as a first step to making sense of existing Radical emancipatory thought and practice. A much more nuanced understanding, which would entail unpacking (and possibly) transcending this dualism, is not fully pursued in this article but would be critical to emancipatory practice[7].

In this respect, different writers use various terms and phrases which, although not necessarily appearing and operating at the same level of abstraction and analysis, in some way conceptually capture the spirit of the broad (dualistic)

[5] Quite often, progressive social movements are linked to (non-grassroots based) intermediary Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) that lend support (both discursive and material) to the struggles of movements (other NGOs are more regressive). NGOs supporting progressive movements regularly exist at the more 'civil' end of progressive trends within civil society, because they often abide by the prevailing ideologies and tactics animating the worldwide development industry. But not all progressive NGOs fit the same mould.

[6] The state-centric Radical conception and practice at times adopts the same approach as the Liberal view to emancipatory anti-statist movements.

[7] Although the discussion of radical civil society that follows is drawn primarily from academic writings, I recognise that these writings often dress up in theoretical clothing the experiences, thoughts and expressions of movement activists. Further, my thinking around emancipation is also more directly experientially-based. My political activism dates back to the politics of the United Democratic Front in South Africa during the 1980s, and subsequently included a long stretch of time in rural Zimbabwe – notably during the Fast Track land redistribution process from the year 2000 onwards (and interlinking with war veterans and others involved in the land re-occupations). Currently, I am a 'resource person' for rural movements and progressive NGOs in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, involving small-scale farmers and agricultural labourers; as well as a 'resource person' for a Latin-American-African People's Dialogue initiative driven by groups in Brazil and South Africa. My experiences during the Zimbabwean land reform process and my encounters with indigenous South American activists have influenced significantly my thoughts and feelings around emancipatory politics; and I have used these influences as a basis for introducing from 2009 a South Atlantic Studies Honours course (entailing comparative studies of South American and Africa movement politics) at the university where I teach.

distinction. These include (respectively, state-centred change and society-centred change) the following notions: politics of hegemony (and the politics of demand) vs. politics of affinity (and the politics of the act) (Day 2005); counter-hegemony vs. anti-politics (Baker 2002); politics of representation vs. politics of presentation (Badiou 2005, 2006); tactics vs. encounters (*Colectivo Situaciones* 2005); instrumentalist politics (and acquiring power-over) vs. expressive politics (and pursuing power-to) (Holloway 2003); and becoming the constituted power vs. building constitutive power (Hardt and Negri 2000).[8]

During the rising dominance of the Liberal concept of civil society in the 1970s and 1980s, more radical civil society discourses and politics (both state- and society-centred) also existed, including in South America and Eastern Europe (Baker 2002). Years of military rule in a range of South American countries highlighted the need for the defence of civil and political liberties. Civil society was seen (in the sense formulated by the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci) as a theatre of social struggle involving counter-hegemonic opposition by popular classes to state authoritarianism. Often, though, the authoritarian state was simply portrayed as dominating society by constituting and structuring it, and there was only limited recognition that civil society also dominated the state through a specific form of class rule. Like the Liberal notion, the struggle was therefore perceived as between democracy (civil society) and authoritarianism (the state). But a number of social movements, such as the trade union movement aligned to the Workers' Party in Brazil, pursued an explicitly socialist agenda in a state-centric version of the Radical perspective.

Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary in the years immediately preceding the end of Communist rule also witnessed radical initiatives, with many scholars and movements viewing civil society (at least initially) as a counter-power (but not as strictly counter-hegemonic in the Gramscian sense). More specifically, in the face of totalitarian rule, civil society was identified as an end-in-itself (rather than as a means for seizing state power), or as a kind of autonomous social democracy with pluralist forms of self-organization and self-management involved in building communities. This social organizing, as a form of building independent sites of popular power, was encapsulated in the notions of the 'self-limiting' revolution and 'anti-politics'. Any democratizing of the state through civil society was understood not instrumentally but simply as a (mainly inadvertent) by-product in what was essentially a society-centric notion of emancipation. This view therefore rejected state politics and emphasized independence from the state, corporatist institutions and political parties; and it

[8] The classical distinction was between the notions of 'political revolution' associated with Karl Marx and early Marxism and 'social revolution' propagated by Anarchists (or 'anti-state socialists') such as Mikhail Bakunin. For literature from the 1870s pertaining to this, see www.marxists.org. The dualist-type distinctions in the paragraph do not necessarily originate with the writers cited (who in the main support society-centred change), but are found often in their works.

advocated internal democracy involving the re-socialization of power as counter-power.

From the 1990s, the differences between the state-centred and society-centred perspectives became increasingly delineated and subject to intense debates among both intellectuals and activists, with the work by John Holloway – based on his analysis of the Zapatista movement in Chiapas in Mexico – being of some significance. His notion of "changing the world without taking power" (or '*Without*' the state) involves a sustained critique of the Radical state-centred perspective that portrays civil society as counter-hegemonic and state-focused (i.e. taking power, by means of and '*Within*' the state, to change the world). This perspective is often linked to Leninism but, despite the significant differences that Carroll and Ratner (1994) rightly stress between Vladimir Lenin and Gramsci, it is also in many ways Gramscian. A fruitful way of exploring these two conceptions is with reference to the Zapatista movement, known initially for its uprising in January 1994 against the North American Free Trade Agreement. The Zapatistas are normally painted as representative of society-centred change. Irrespective of Burbach's (1994) – dubious – claim that the Zapatistas are the first "postmodern rebellion" as well as the marked congruence that undoubtedly exist between specific post-modernist commitments and certain Radical society-centred arguments, the controversies between the two Radical perspectives occur broadly within modernism. In fact, the situational singularity of the Zapatista experiences has universal import. The five interrelated points highlighted in relation to the Zapatistas should be seen in this light.

First of all, the Zapatistas question the conception of emancipation as occurring in a pre-determined way along a fixed trajectory to a pre-defined end. This is encapsulated in the phrase '*preguntando caminamos*' (translated awkwardly in English as 'asking we walk'). This goes contrary to the politics of demand that (in response to the classic Leninist question of 'what is to be done?') regularly posits a well-defined and delimited process of emancipation as embodied in a set revolutionary process (for instance, the National Democratic Revolution). Secondly, the Zapatistas criticise vanguard-ism and hierarchical structures which are often associated with the politics of representation ingrained in state-centred change (as exemplified by traditional socialist trade unions and political parties); a rhizome-like organizational form is often linked to the politics of the act. Thirdly, the Zapatistas are strongly anti-statist in arguing that emancipation cannot be reduced to transformation in and through state structures – rather, they emphasise autonomy vis-à-vis the state, as witnessed in their building of autonomous regional spaces and councils (Dinerstein 2009) which are designed as experimental pre-figurative forms of local politics. Fourthly, searching questions about the authentic subject of historical change arise within anti-politics movements – in particular, no ontologically-pure transcendental subject (notably the working class) exists at the forefront of 'the' struggle; rather, diverse subjectivities emerging contingently engage in diverse struggles (these include indigenous peoples and peasant farmers or *campesinos*, as in the case of the Zapatistas; but also marginalised dwellers living in urban slums or *barrios*, whose agency is unfortunately under-stressed in Davis's – 2006 – influential

work, *Planet of Slums*). Finally dignity, identity, culture, territory and spirituality are central to the Zapatistas, along with the 'construction' of expressive communities more generally – a 'colder' focus on strategies and tactics, as seen in the politics of hegemony, leads to instrumentalising the human (and humane) project of emancipation.

To emphasise, though, these five (and other possible) differentiations do not necessarily overlap in a clearly demarcated fashion, with state-centred qualities by necessity lining up on one side of the fence and society-centred qualities on the other side. In practice, any social movement may exhibit a fluid combination of both general strategies (if indeed they are separate strategies) for social change. As a result, in reality, a range of hybrid movements and emancipatory processes occur. For example, the *Movimento dos Trabalbadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST) in Brazil seems to display a mixed variety of features – it is peasant-led and peasant-based, engages in autonomous action (including illegally taking over large-scale farms or *latifundios* based on a call to 'occupy, resist and produce') but it is sometimes labelled as vanguardist and hierarchical (or Leninist) in structure (De Souza 2009). Even the Zapatistas have not been adverse to negotiations with the state and to the politics of the demand; and specific groupings within the diverse unemployed workers movement and *piqueteros* (picketers) of urban Argentina, who are sometimes declared as the clearest expression of expressive politics, have at times pressurized and sought concessions from the state (Petras 2002).

This broad (state-centred/society-centred) distinction though is sensitive to two key interlinked issues, namely, 'the political' and 'politics'. For my purposes, 'the political' refers to the realm of the modern state, and pertinent questions concern the embeddedness of social (including class) domination within the very form of the state as well as the state's functioning in flooding and capturing civil society as a means of thwarting opposition and closing down autonomous spaces for resistance. A number of communist scholars (loosely-labelled) raise these issues, including Marxist Autonomists (such as John Holloway), Communist Libertarians (see Berry 2008), Anarchists (for example, Richard Day – see Day 205, Graeber 2002 and Franks 2007), plus others who are more difficult to label (for example, Cornelius Castoriadis, Alain Badiou and Jacques Ranciere). Other critical (but non-communist) intellectuals, such as James Scott (1998), do likewise. Scott's fascinating study of the state, under conditions of 'high modernism' in both capitalist societies and Soviet Union-style socialist societies, shows how the state invariably seeks to transform non-state spaces into spaces that are defined and categorised by – and made legible to – the state. The work of activist scholar Ernest Wamba-dia-Wamba (in relation to the Democratic Republic of Congo) and his notion of "communalist palaver" is of particular significance (Presbey 1998, Wamba-dia-Wamba 1985).

Despite their differences (and there are many), all of these writers claim that the state's domination of capitalist society is tied up inextricably with the very fabric and form of the modern state. In Holloway's (Marxist) case, this involves deriving (historically and logically) the (fetishised) state form from the essential

social (class) relations under capitalism. For others (for instance, Badiou and Ranciere), it involves conceptualising 'the political' in a non-reductionist way largely independent of class and the economy, and considering how the state compartmentalises, constitutes and stabilises society in a domineering manner. For Holloway and others, then, just as Marx spoke about the logic of capital, it is necessary to identify and highlight the logic of the state as an alienating force of societal oppressions. As a result, there is need for an emancipatory politics unbound from the state or at least a sufficient distance from it. State-centred theorists, such as Hilary Wainwright (IIRE 2005: 52), while not denying that state institutions controlled by Left parties regularly – as a pronounced trajectory – "lord it over the people", nevertheless claim that "the pull of the state away from the people is not inscribed in the state's character [in a law-like fashion] but is historically produced and subject to historical transformations". This implies that emancipation in and through the state cannot be ruled out *a priori* and is contingent on the balance of social forces (Bensaid 2005, McNaughton 2008).

Pursuing further this question of 'the political', it is clear that – for emancipatory social movements around the globe – the state is a particularly contentious realm of struggle when controlled by Left-leaning parties (Vanden 2007), as can be noted in reference to three countries (Zimbabwe, Brazil and Venezuela)[9]. In Zimbabwe, the ruling Zimbabwe National African Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) has had a problematic relationship with social movements. Initially, in the early years of independence, the party sought to inhibit the growth of autonomous trade unions and social movements, and effectively took them under its organisational wing. The emergence of an autonomous trade union movement and urban civic groups in the 1990s was met with repression by the party through the organs of the state. The exact relationship between ZANU-PF and the 'fast track' land movement (starting in the year 2000) is controversial. Critics claim (see Hammar et al. 2003) that the land movement was simply an electoral ploy of ZANU-PF and that it was initiated and stage-managed by the ruling party. Others (see Moyo and Yeros 2005) argue that the land movement cannot be reduced neatly to the party, and that the movement had (at least initially) a degree of autonomy from the party. However, during the course of 2000 and 2001, the party increasingly sought to direct and channel the land movement and in so doing subdued it.

With regard to Brazil, the trade union movement played a significant role in the struggles against authoritarian rule and formed a solid support base for the Workers' Party that eventually obtained power under President Lula in 2002. During the earlier years of opposition (notably during the 1980s), the leaders of the unions and Workers' Party had apparently "broken with ... vanguardist traditions, [had] become critical of bureaucratic state-led development, and ...

[9] In this regard, two other nations where general questions about Left governments and emancipation have been of paramount importance in recent years are Haiti and the *Lavalas* movement (see Hallward 2008, Nesbitt 2009) and Nepal and the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) (see Giri 2008, Singh 2005, Vanaik 2008).

committed themselves to building democracy from the bottom up" (Heller 2001: 155). The MST, probably the most militant land movement internationally, has consistently sought to maintain its autonomy vis-à-vis Lula's party. Although at times the MST has expressed and demonstrated its support for the Workers' Party in the latter's repeated attempts at electoral victory nationally, this has neither involved principled support nor the formation of an alliance. As a result, in the light of the right-ward turn of the Workers' Party (particularly once in power) – including a pronounced neo-Liberal project – the MST has kept its organisational distance from the party and has thereby maintained its organisational independence. To quote Joao Pedro Stedile of the MST: "Whenever a mass movement was subordinated to a party, it was weakened by the effects of inner-party splits and factional battles. The movement had to be free from external political direction" (Stedile 2002: 80).

Venezuela, like Zimbabwe, has seen the emergence of strident urban opposition (largely middle-class and of European descent) against the government of Hugo Chavez. Chavez's urban support base is in the *barrios*, where the masses of urban poor live (including large numbers of indigenous people and *mestizos*). Chavez's ruling party (the United Socialist Party of Venezuela) has a fluctuating and ambiguous relationship with progressive social movements, in part because the party is marked by 'hard-line' and 'soft-line' political currents (Ellner 2008). In general, though, it encourages the existence of progressive groups within the broad *Chavista* movement. At the same time, there are groups with rich historical radical traditions that seek to remain autonomous of the *Chavista* movement although offering critical support for the party. This is captured by the comments of a community activist in Caracas in response to the insistence by the *Chavista* vanguard youth organisation that the community name its soup kitchens after the *Chavista* mayor: "Why can't we name the kitchen after Benita Mendoza, a working woman here in the *barrio*; she has raised three kids and been left by three husbands" (quoted in Fernandes 2007: 120).

The necessity for some form of autonomy for social movements in relation to Left-leaning governments seems clear. At times, progressive ruling parties in power turn against movements (for example, in the case of the Workers' Party and the MST); or they swallow up the space for civil society by ensuring that all social movements become mere wings of the party (as in the early years of Zimbabwean independence, and with the contemporary 'fast track' land movement); or they tend to de-mobilise social movements altogether (as seemingly the case of the African National Congress – ANC – in South Africa since the end of Apartheid, as touched on later). Insofar as 'the masses' are mobilised by dominant Left parties, this is done instrumentally to defend 'the revolution' (or to ensure that the party retains state hegemony). Irrespective of the form that the undercutting of social movements takes, 'the party' (as Frantz Fanon – 1967 – noted decades ago in Africa) becomes 'The Party' and a process of substitutionism occurs – 'The Party' (the one and only party according to party ideologues) substitutes itself for social movements and for the people. After occupying national power structures, normally with significant social

movement support, Left-leaning governments (in the form of a distant and alienating state) subsequently pursue (often with great intent) an oppressive 'power-over' its 'emancipated' citizens; in the light of this problematic trend, society-centred groupings – as an alternative to seeking hegemony – seek to animate 'power-to' or liberatory power within an emancipating civil society.

In Venezuela, the Chavez government continues to push forward radical measures despite reactionary initiatives by the opposition (Harnecker 2009). Ciccariello-Maher (2007: 42) highlights the dialectic between state power and social power by indicating how, through the formation of local communal councils by the state on a nation-wide basis, "sectors of the state are working actively to dismantle and dissolve the old state apparatus by devolving power to local organs capable of constituting a dual power". While such a claim may romanticise the *Chavista* movement, there is some evidence that the Venezuelan state is working to dismantle the old state apparatus by devolving power to local civil society organs. These parallel structures are not simply designed to make the state socially accountable (which is the 'soft-line' – or even state-focused – stance in the *Chavista* movement), but they also exist as legitimate sources of power in their own right with distinctive responsibilities for bringing about emancipation in Venezuela (which is the 'hard-line', or society-centred, approach). Venezuela's *Chavista* movement involves a strong 'statist' moment but also significant mobilisation of social power.

The state-centred notion recognises and accepts that the state in capitalist society reflects and refracts the contradictory social relations that animate capitalism (similar to Nicos Poulantzas's notion of the state as the material condensation or crystallisation of contradictory relations). Besides class domination, built into the state form are contradictions, conflicts, tensions and ambiguities that can be tactically exploited by emancipatory forces that have at least one foot in (or one eye on) the state. This suggests, then, that the state does not exercise 'power-over' without simultaneously generating significant (un-captured) internal sites and spaces available for emancipatory praxis. In this regard, the case of Venezuela under the presidency of Chavez (and of Bolivia under Evo Morales) is sometimes said to offer a useful counter-weight to Holloway's position – the state in Venezuela would therefore provide some basis for social transformation. The Venezuelan example is perhaps suggestive of a complementary relationship between state-centred and society-centred visions and strategies of change, without denying though the prevalence of tensions and trade-offs existing between them.

This leads to the second issue, that of 'politics' beyond, unbound or at a distance from 'the political' (seen as the alienating and distant state form that dominates and oppresses society). French (anti-)philosopher Alain Badiou calls for a politics "outside the spectre of the party-state", for "thinking politics outside of its subjection to the state", with this invariably involving "a rupture with the representative form of politics" (Badiou 2006: 270,289,292). His notion of an 'event' (meaning the emergence of authentic egalitarian subjectivity) seeks to capture the sense of this rupture – a political event entails a radical break with

the 'state' of the 'situation' by social elements that exist at the edge of the situation, that are seemingly incapable of being represented by the state, and that remain un-captured by the state's logic. Badiou's friend and compatriot, Jacques Ranciere (1994, 2006) argues along similar lines in advocating a form of politics that breaks from the state (or 'police order') and that goes against the grain of all societal classifications and identities imparted and enforced by state and capital.

Castoriadis (1997: 3, 4, 5; Castoriadis 2001) speaks of 'the political' as "explicit power, instituted as such" (akin to constituted power) and he also highlights the need for a 'rupture' (or the arising of liberatory politics) that "puts into question the established institutions" and leads to "the project of an autonomous society". This involves a clear recognition that, contrary to what at times appears to underpin the state-centred notion, power is not simply centralised spatially and institutionally (in the state) but is – at least in addition – dispersed throughout the breadth and depth of society (along the lines of Michel Foucault's argument about capillary power) (Ojeili 2001). For this reason, Holloway (n.d.) speaks of an "interstitial revolution" taking place within civil society that does not obtain its meaning and relevance with and in reference to the state. Authentic emancipation involves exploring and activating latent potentialities in civil society as a means to social empowerment, without necessarily being directly and openly anti-hegemonic vis-à-vis the ruling bloc as understood in the Gramscian sense.

The critical point that arises is embodied in the notion of 'anti-politics', that is, the claim that the interstitial revolution involves imagining and practicing a fundamentally different form of politics, unrecognisable from the politics of state-centred emancipation. Holloway (n.d.: 5) puts it this way:

> The state seeks to impose upon us a separation of our struggles from society, to convert our struggle into a struggle *on behalf of, in the name of*. ... The drive towards self-determination moves in one direction, the attempt to win state power moves in the opposite direction. The former starts to knit a self-determining community, the latter unravels the knitting.

Implicit is the notion, for Holloway, of building expressive communities that present themselves for themselves, in opposition to winning state power instrumentally through forms of representation.

In this respect, the thoughts (in large part unavailable in English) of the Argentine militant research group, *Colectivo Situaciones* (*CS*), are very instructive, in part because of their close links with militant groups (including unemployed workers' movements) in urban Argentina since the late 1990s.[10] To quote them at length, *Colectivo Situaciones* (2002) argue that political activism generally

[10] The specific writings of *Colectivo Situaciones* on knowledge production deserve attention in their own right from university-based intellectuals who desire to undertake emancipatory research. See Dinerstein (2003) and Khorasanee (2007) for a better understanding of *CS* in the context of contemporary struggles in Argentina.

> has remained tied to a mode of instrumentality: one that connects itself to other experiences from a subjectivity always already constituted, with prior knowledge – the knowledges of strategy – charged with universally valid, purely ideological statements. Its way of being in relation to others is utilitarianism: there is never affinity, always agreement; never encounter, always tactics. Political activism – above all the party variety – can hardly constitute itself into an experience of authenticity. … What interests it of an experience is always "another thing" than the experience in itself.

Colectivo Situaciones speak[11] about an "authentic experience of anti-utilitarianism", a process of inexplicable "composition" (viewed as different from articulation, agreement let alone alliance). It is tantamount to falling in authentic love (an event for Badiou like any genuine political event) that "transforms the 'self' into the 'common'". This is not about politics (or the logic of confrontation and "the battle for power") based on pre-constituted transcendental subjectivities (for instance, the working class); rather, it entails immanence (i.e. "inhabiting the situation"), a never-ending "constituent becoming" involving the contingent (re)-creation "of values, of experiences, of worlds", and the formation of "new modalities of instituting collective life and attending [to] immediate necessities". *CS* argues that the politics of state-centred change does not address the question of building a new humanity. Further, the politics of state- and society-centred change are not mere duplicates of each other or opposite sides of the same coin (i.e. counter-power replacing – and becoming – power). The politics of affinity is rather an entirely different way of imagining, thinking and doing politics. As they say:

> If the [political party] elections attempt to represent all that exists and, for that reason, decree the nonexistence of that which it does not manage to capture and measure, the experiences of counterpower [more aptly, anti-power][12], to the contrary, exist only in a situation, in a territory, in spatiality, a bodily disposition and a self-determined time.

In summary then: "There does not exist a single set of given rules".

Arguments like this clearly undercut the instrumentality of civil society. State-centric theorists and activists who wish to acknowledge the significance of autonomous movements – and thereby seek a dual strategy for emancipation from their perspective – need to seriously reflect upon and heed these arguments if they are not to remain trapped within an instrumentalist logic of

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[11] The quotations are from the two pieces from *CS* listed in the references at the end of the paper. Neither piece is properly paginated.

[12] The notion of counter-power is suggestive of struggles against existing forms of (state) power but not against power as such (hence, the notion seems consistent with a Gramscian counter-hegemonic project); in this sense, it implies struggles contained *within* the logic of power as inscribed within the state form. The more appropriate term for the '*without*' stance, and one more in line with the arguments of *CS*, is 'anti-power' – insofar as this implies struggles against the logic of power and outside the pace and rhythm of state-directed politics (formulated by Alain Badiou as politics 'at a distance' from the state). Anti-power though does not negate movements engaging with the state, but such engagement would not be on the state's terms or turf.

social movements that might bring about structural transformation (and improve social conditions) but leaves human(e) emancipation largely unaddressed and the human condition unchanged.

However, the general claims of society-centred theorists are not devoid of serious problems. These theorists at times seem to overplay the logic of domination inscribed in the state, thereby abandoning the state to the machinations of capital; and they appear to underplay the moment of domination within civil society and thereby over-romanticise the possibilities of autonomous civil society action (thus in some way reproducing the Liberal image of civil society) (Ross 2008). In fact, given their own emphasis on the particular logic of the state (which cannot be reduced to class logic) in constituting, structuring, infiltrating and encompassing society, the very notion of autonomous sites of struggle (outside of the state's reach) – let alone of a 'project' of autonomy – might seem dubious.

However, their claims allow for possible alternative renderings of civil society on two levels that are worthy of further reflection and action. First of all, the forging of a project of autonomous society – entailing the building of popular sites of struggle – seemingly leads to a blurring of the distinction between 'the political' and 'politics' (or between state and civil society more broadly). This is evidenced in the formation by the Zapatistas of 'autonomous' self-governing regions with local councils, health clinics and rebel schools. Insofar as there would continue to be a relationship of subordination between state and society, it would be the state's subordination to society (which, ultimately, is the exact opposite of the normal setup). Beyond this, though, the project of autonomy may, in the course of struggles, lead to a profound questioning of the state-civil society distinction in its entirety.

The second point is that, if the state-civil society distinction is to retain some degree of usefulness for emancipatory politics, this would require a critique of the notion of 'the civil'. Certainly, Radical society-centred notions of civility, based on popular and indigenous reasoning, question and undermine the definition and imposition of statist notions of politics and civility. As Partha Chatterjee (2002: 70) notes in relation to India, the "squalor, ugliness and violence of popular life" cannot be imprisoned "within the sanitised fortress of civil society" as this fortress has been imagined, constructed and defended by the post-colonial state. In this regard, there would be serious doubts about the prospects of "civil solutions to neo-colonialism" (or to neo-Apartheid in South Africa) such that the "civil domain, by definition, cannot be broadened by civil society". Hence, "the onus lies on progressive uncivil politics" (Yeros 2002: 61,249) to re-define and widen the state-civil society consensus and, thereby, wedge open and deepen the spaces and potentialities for genuine social emancipation and revolution.

No doubt, any genuine project of emancipation must recognise the legitimacy, viability and significance of sites outside (or *without)* the state that involve popular-radical struggles that challenge (although not directly or explicitly) existing bases and forms of 'explicit power'. At the same time, the state – as a

key locus of power and force for oppression in capitalist society – also needs to be challenged *within*.[13] Combined, this means that emancipation does not simply entail taking power (or seizing/controlling the state) or merely liberating the realm of civil society, but requires transforming (and undercutting) various forms of power on a society-wide basis. However, this is not simply a question of combining state and civil society (or party and movement) in a crude additive or trans-historical fashion.

Historically, as Badiou shows, movement and party both played critical roles. The Paris Commune triumphed because of its movement-base but ultimately failed because of its inability to articulate a centralised direction. The party was a response to this failure, but in solving one problem it created a whole host of others (as both state-centred and society-centred theorists recognise in specific ways). Addressing this would entail "a new articulation" (Badiou 2006: 310) between popular movements and the party-state, or – in experimenting with new forms of politics – the abandonment of party and movement as traditionally articulated and practised (Badiou 2009). If party and movement are to be re-articulated, this presumably would entail valorising the autonomy of popular movements within 'politics'/civil society (but without spontaneism) and recognising the need for some organisational form within the realm of 'the political' for order, coordination and direction (but without coercion) (Heller 2001, 2009).

A few thoughts on South Africa

This section, which is largely impressionistic, provides some thoughts on emancipation and the state in post-Apartheid South Africa in the light of the preceding discussions. It is not intended to illustrate the key issues in any comprehensive fashion, nor is it a definitive and up-to-date overview in the sense of neatly capturing the state of emancipatory politics in contemporary South Africa. It is designed though to stimulate discussion on emancipation in South Africa in a way that does not simply take state-centric change as a given. It thus addresses the question of statism, as a pronounced trajectory in South African 'Left' politics, and suggests the need to critically appraise this trajectory outside of the logic of the state and in a way that highlights the significance of popular and autonomous sites of struggle.

The economic and political contradictions and crises in Apartheid South Africa during the late 1970s and into the 1980s raised the prospect of South African capital adapting itself to the de-racialisation of society and even pursuing this option as an ideological project. During the years of formal transition away from Apartheid (1989–1994), this was indeed vigorously pursued in a social partnership between business and the ANC (as well as the radical trade union movement), involving essentially a class compromise to stabilise post-Apartheid

[13] The possibilities of working *with* the state on tactical grounds, as contingencies determine and allow, should also not be ruled out.

economy and society. As these processes got underway, the mass-based organisations centred on the United Democratic Front (UDF) – which had been at the forefront of many of the urban struggles (and which had so effectively weakened Apartheid) – were all but de-mobilised, if not as a deliberate strategy then as a necessary consequence of the state-capital-union partnership of nation-building.

In fact, increasingly from the mid-1980s, the ANC-led Charterist movement (of which, broadly speaking, the UDF was part) sought to inhibit the formation of pluralistic political and organisational tendencies in order to consolidate and discipline 'the struggle' against Apartheid along the lines of *the* National Democratic Revolution (entailing a teleological statist-path of emancipation). In the end, as the liberation movement became the ruling party, 'the struggle' became absorbed into the state, leading effectively to the 'domestication' and containment of popular struggle. Ashwin Desai (2004: 386) for instance highlights that, consistent with traditional state-centred 'Left' politics, the distance between state and party was breached (presumably not unlike under Apartheid) in post-Apartheid South Africa: "Thabo Mbeki has broadened the reach of the state, blurred the state-party divide and has tied [sic] to use this process to absorb, break-up or neutralise any mobilisation outside the state-party ambit". Retrospectively, the domestication of struggle can be interpreted as implying an instrumentalist conception of movements, whereby movements are tools for becoming hegemonic – in the case of the UDF and its autonomous centres of localised power in urban Apartheid South Africa, these simply became means for destabilising and replacing the Apartheid government, rather than pre-figuring liberatory forms of social power in a genuinely transformed post-Apartheid society.

The post-Apartheid state has engaged simultaneously in both market-led restructuring and historical redress. The tension between these two trajectories is encapsulated in the distinction between 'growth through redistribution' as a (Keynesian-style) development programme embodied in the post-Apartheid government's initial Reconstruction and Development Programme, and 'redistribution through growth' as a more Neo-Liberal approach that became expressed in the government's Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy adopted in 1996. This ongoing tension is expressed in a range of governmental programmes, including with respect to land and labour relations. Generally speaking, this tension has animated South African state policies and programmes since 1994, such that to speak about a full-blown and unadulterated neo-Liberal state in South Africa – as regularly occurs – is highly problematic. For such reasons, Seekings and Nattrass (2005) talk about a post-Apartheid "distributional regime", without denying that re-distributional measures are regularly undermined by counter-measures including those of a neo-Liberal kind. The marked presence of Neo-Liberal macro-economic policies in post-Apartheid South Africa is not inconsistent though with the simultaneous existence of a pronounced statist trajectory (in fact, statist and market moments regularly complement each other in capitalist development processes).

Hence, numerous studies of post-Apartheid South Africa have noted the centralisation of state power: de Jager (2006: 104) for instance speaks of "centripetal tendencies" leading to "institutional centralisation" within the state apparatus. But the work of Heller (2001, 2009) in his comparative analyses of South Africa, Brazil and India, is particularly revealing. He identifies various trends within post-Apartheid restructuring, notably "concerted political centralisation, the expansion of technocratic and managerial authority, and a shift from democratic to market modes of accountability". State organs have notable "insulationist and oligarchical tendencies" such that planning processes serve "as vehicles for marketisation, rather than as institutional spaces for democratic participation" (Heller 2001: 133,134,144). Alongside – if not because of this – structured social unaccountability has been a 'rentier' trend involving for instance significant instances of personal corruption and self-enrichment by state functionaries.

Any developmental thrust by the ANC-controlled state tends to be highly centralised and devoid of significant civil society participation. The (former) ANC stalwart Raymond Suttner (2006: 23) suggests that this amounts to the instrumentalisation of popular struggle:

> At the level of the state and top echelons of the ANC … there is a definite desire to trim down the mass character of the ANC and channel mass action in general along lines that are statised and institutionalised. … [T]he masses are not intended to raise the issues independently as self-acting popular actors.

So far, it seems unlikely that the new Jacob Zuma presidency will entail a break with this trajectory. There do appear however to be some groupings within the ruling Tripartite Alliance (consisting of the ANC, South African Communist Party and Congress of South African Trade Unions) that question, if only tentatively and partially, the institutionalisation of politics and the undercutting of autonomous politics. This questioning though is a far cry from a shift away from the prevailing "instrumentalist understanding of state power" in South Africa in which the "capture of state power" becomes "uncritically equated with acquiring the means to transform society" (i.e. "planned emancipation") – in other words, a "technocratic ethos of state-led transformation in which process has been sacrificed to product" (Heller 2001: 134,151,157).

The extent to which there exists any questioning of planned emancipation within civil society in South Africa likewise is also currently unclear. The main trade union federation, the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), continues to occupy an uneasy in-between space, simultaneously defending the rights of its membership (often against state programmes) while being an acknowledged junior partner in the Tripartite Alliance. This has on many occasions significantly inhibited its autonomy and militancy (many of its key demands in fact have been excluded from state policies and programmes) (Buhlungu 2005). Besides the union movement, post-Apartheid society is marked by a broad range of social movements (and motions). These movements, at least in the early years, generally "operate[d] within the parameters of the new [post-Apartheid] status quo" (Ballard et al. 2005: 630) –

i.e. within the state/civil society consensus – and over the years they have had a fluctuating and uneven organisational and political presence. They have tackled issues such as land reform (e.g. The Landless Peoples' Movement), HIV/AIDS (e.g. Treatment Action Campaign), housing and the privatisation of electricity and water services (e.g. Anti-Privatisation Forum).

A vast array of tactics exist, from standard formal lobbying to 'un-civil' (some would say anarchist) activities such as land (and housing) occupations, blocking of highways, seizing of basic foodstuffs from stores by unemployed people, the unofficial connection of electricity (and the reconnection of power subsequently cut by municipalities). Also, at times, intense internal – and factional – debates take place. For instance, the question of forming alliances with COSATU (given the latter's alliance with the ANC) has been a contentious point (Naidoo and Veriava 2005, Xali 2006)[14]. Indeed, for various reasons, community-based struggles have often been ignored by COSATU and in certain cases union-movement tensions have arisen. Some movements have had (and still have) close links with the ANC, while others have sought to remain largely autonomous from party politics and have debated the merits of participation in the electoral process. Presently, there are initiatives from some quarters to form a national Left formation, but whether this is to be state-centric (including a Left party) or society-centric remains to be seen. A few movements (such as *Abahlali*, the Durban-based shack-dwellers movement) have autonomist tendencies, where the influence of anti-statist thinking and practice is clearly (but not necessarily consistently) discernable (Gibson 2006, Pithouse 2007).

At the same time, irrespective of a movement's relationship to 'the political' and the question of autonomy in this respect, there is often full or partial dependence of movements on NGOs. A considerable portion of civil society work in South Africa is in fact not driven by social movements; rather, there exists the "NGOisation of resistance" (Mngxitama 2006), as has happened notably in relation to rural movements, with some NGOs going so far as to almost masquerade as social movements. Not all NGOs (though located at the most 'civil' end of civil society) are mere servants of power (Ghimire 2001, Kanji et al. 2002, Borras Jr. 2008), and hence there is no necessary link between NGOs and political conservatism. Many indigenous NGOs in fact engage in radical forms of politics. For example, in the Eastern Cape Province, a few NGOs are organising farm workers into committee structures, given the failure of the trade union movement to have a significant rural reach. They also propose agricultural programmes that are fully consistent with the food sovereignty model of the global small-scale farmer organisation (*La Via Campesina*). Nevertheless, a relationship of dependence often emerges and this is difficult for rural communities to break free from.

There is a clear need within social movements in post-Apartheid South Africa to think through the question of autonomy, in relation to the party-state. Over

[14] See also the articles by Ashwin Desai and Oupa Lehulere in *Khanya: A Journal for Activists*, No.11, December 2005.

twenty years before 1994, Rick Turner (the Durban socialist academic assassinated by Apartheid security forces) foresaw the rise and consolidation of statism and posited the significance of autonomous sites of struggle in a future South Africa:

> The political party as mediator between the individual and government tends to take on the characteristics of the system itself, the 'party machine' dominates the membership and the rank and file become increasingly divorced from policy making. .... The political arena becomes polarised between an atomised mass and a number of small groups trying to manipulate the mass in order to get political jobs. The result of this is to move the source of power in society out of the political arena and into the control of functional power groups. ... [T]here must be other additional centres of power which can be used by the people to exert their control over the central body (Turner 1971: 81).

In addition, these disparate centres of power would need to insulate themselves from the conditioning and constraining effects of NGOs.

Conclusion

This article has not sought to offer any definitive statement on emancipatory politics, but rather identifies, explores and teases out some of the critical questions facing emancipatory activists and academics. My unwillingness to be definitive (or to take sides) is not a reflection of a post-modernist positioning. Post-modernist thought (broadly understood) has influenced contemporary thinking about emancipation, with the emergence for example of various post-Marxist and post-Anarchist schools of thought. The controversies outlined in this article though fall squarely within modernist thought and practice – certainly, post-modernist claims about discursive practices and un-sutured social totalities are animating these controversies, but these claims are incorporated within modernist ('pre-post') foundational logics. Authentic emancipatory movements remain movements against the logics of capital and state and they legitimately go by the name of communism.

Debates within social movements in contemporary South Africa in certain ways mirror or replicate these broader controversies around the politics of hegemony and the politics of affinity. Barchiesi (2004, 328; Barchiesi n.d.) suggests (I would say, prematurely) that we are witnessing the "decline of established [that is, state-centred] paradigms of the 'Left' in South Africa", and that this simultaneously opens up prospects for pursuing refreshing (and expressive) forms of radical popular autonomous politics that seek to recover control over local spaces and that are devoid of the influence of old-style Left vanguardist politics. Any society-centred politics in South Africa though that falls consistently outside the state-civil society consensus has been subject to state scrutiny and if need be to repression (as in the recent case of *Abahlali*). The same fate, although for different reasons, also befalls more 'spontaneous' localized struggles such as urban 'service delivery' protests and rural land 'invasions'. These struggles are narrowly labelled (by the logic of the state) as mere expressions of particularistic grievances (within a politics of demand) but

are simultaneously defined as falling outside the realm of legitimate state-centric politics (they are included discursively in order to be excluded politically). Like *Abahlali*, these struggles seemingly question and counter the South African party-state's over-riding concern with 'power-over'.

The significance of challenging power-over through a politics of counter-hegemony (and the importance of the state to social change) cannot be dismissed – but hegemony, though critical to structural transformation, may be of less significance to human (and humane) emancipation. In this regard, movements in South Africa which try to think and practice autonomous popular struggles (notably at a distance from the state) and that are animated by expressive politics become critical. Similar to Rick Turner, Michael Neocosmos (2006a: 65) argues, in relation to contemporary South Africa, that the "[t]he basis for a democratic politics must be the recovery of politics within society, that is, the creation of a fully active and politicised citizenry" (without the state dictating "whether popular organisations are democratic or not"). Hopefully, such a politics would not simply entail the battle for power, but would involve – using the language of *Colectivo Situaciones* – the creation of new values, experiences and worlds in a post-capitalist direction.

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