

*10 • Laurence Cox<sup>1</sup>*

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News from nowhere:  
the movement of movements in Ireland

IN 1999, 60,000 protestors shut down the World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting in Seattle (Charlton 2000; Cockburn et al. 2000), a shock to the ruling institutions of the New World Order, which is often seen as the start of the movement against capitalist globalisation. These events barely registered on the awareness of a supposedly global Ireland, caught up in celebrating its new status as the 'Celtic Tiger'. Even Irish activists remained on the margins, with no organised involvement.

Just five years later, a new 'movement of movements' had come out of the shadows to shake this complacency. On 15 February 2003, opposition to war on Iraq involved over 100,000 people in the largest demonstration for two decades. That July, the World Economic Forum (WEF) was forced to cancel its planned regional meeting in Dublin in the face of planned protests. On Mayday 2004, 5,000 protestors faced down riot police defending the EU Summit from the largest libertarian event the country had ever seen. The next month, George Bush's visit was so unpopular that it had to be protected by tanks, nearly 4,000 Gardaí, 2,000 Irish military and 700 US Secret Service agents (Sheridan 2004). Where Clinton's visit ten years back had seen him surrounded by 250,000 supporters in Dublin, now Bertie Ahern was reduced to pleading with people not to protest against Bush.

The movement appeared in Ireland so suddenly that it caught most commentators, journalists and academics on the hop: ill informed, and so unprepared that they could barely identify who to speak to on the subject.<sup>2</sup> To such elites, it seemed to come out of nowhere. It sidestepped issues of parties and tribunals, which usually occupy the public sphere to propose alternative means of organising politics; 'reclaimed the streets' in an era when SUVs had become status symbols for Ireland's nouveaux riches; and raised the slogan 'No Borders, No Nations' in the same month when 80 per cent of the electorate voted for race as a criterion for citizenship.

Yet seen from below, the movement of movements was building on an unofficial reality of social movements and campaigns which long preceded it but

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which rarely attract much attention, and developing long-standing countercultural critiques of the Irish mainstream. Thus it took the issue of tolerance for diversity beyond liberal demands for legal change into the direct action of squats and street parties; it went beyond conventional calls for public debate and top-down theories of 'educating people for citizenship' to building alternative institutions of bottom-up information and discussion such as Indymedia and social forums; and it challenged the rhetoric of neutrality with direct action against the US military's use of Shannon for its Third World wars.

In the twilight years of the Celtic Tiger (Coulter and Coleman 2003), this new movement against capitalist globalisation became a significant force in Irish politics and society. But the 'business as usual' perspective of professional commentators seeking to force it into their traditional frameworks – whether tabloid hysteria, official blandness or 'radical' worthiness – offers little in terms of actual understanding. How did the movement develop so rapidly, coming from near-invisibility to push EU summits and US wars out of first place in the news and forcing the State to militarise Shannon Airport and the Phoenix Park? Why should it have developed at that point, rather than 5 years earlier or 10 years later? And where is the movement heading?

#### Studying the movement of movements

Essays often start with definitions, appealing to authority to define what a word or phrase *really* means. Social – and linguistic – reality, however, work in the opposite direction: people create new words, and give new meanings to old ones, in everyday usage (Williams 1983). Dictionaries and researchers then struggle to catch up with the changes.

In the case of the movement of movements, the meanings are themselves a site of struggle. There is no one authority deciding what is and is not part of the movement. The many different names given to the movement are ways in which different political actors try to draw boundaries around it that include those groups, issues and strategies which they want to highlight and exclude others.

#### What's in a name?

The 'anti-globalisation movement' is used by journalists (e.g. Sansonetti 2002) to imply that the movement is mainly opposed to opening borders. Yet the highly international movement typically contrasts a demand for the free movement of people and ideas to the freedom for capital and trade promoted by neo-liberal institutions.

- The 'anti-capitalist movement', a tag often used by socialists (e.g. Bircham and Charlton 2001; Dee 2004), embodies a wish that the movement *should*

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become so, because the aims of the movement – to bring about social justice and end a purely exploitative form of globalisation – cannot be met within capitalism. However, not all participants share this analysis.

- The ‘anti-corporate movement’, by contrast, is used by some US writers (e.g. Klein 1999) to narrow the movement to opposing large-scale corporate capitalism (the world of Nike, Coca-Cola and Esso), implying support for local, national or family capitalism. Yet this approach is a minority one within the Irish movement and globally.
- The ‘global justice movement’ is how some development NGOs and Catholic activist groups describe the movement, side-stepping political strategy to focus on desired results. Social justice, though, is only one theme within a movement that also includes opposition to war, challenges to state power and ecological alternatives.
- The ‘movements against capitalist globalisation’ is a phrase used to stress both that the movement opposes a particular phase of capitalism, and that it favours an alternative globalisation based on human need rather than profit and power. However, capitalist globalisation provokes multiple forms of resistance and opposition, not all of which belong to the same movement. For this reason, this chapter uses the phrase in the plural.
- The ‘movement of movements’ (Mertes 2004) is used in this chapter to highlight the structure of the movement as a coming together of different groups, campaigns and individuals which have realised that their different areas of concern – racism and war, economic exploitation and environmental destruction, patriarchy and state power – are interlinked. This way of seeing things fits with the definition of a social movement as a network of interactions between multiple groups engaged in a political or cultural conflict and sharing a collective identity (Diani 1992).

These last two phrases – ‘movements against capitalist globalisation’ – and ‘movement of movements’ – highlight different aspects of the movement: the ‘top–down’ processes of global neo-liberalism to which it responds and the ‘bottom–up’ processes of movement networking and identity-building which constitute the movement as a movement. As this chapter suggests, an understanding of both elements is crucial to understanding the movement.

#### **Movements against capitalist globalisation and the movement of movements**

Arguably, capitalism has been global since its birth in the Renaissance (Arrighi 1994). It continually remakes societies in its own image, destroying older ways of life and creating new forms of poverty and wealth (Marx and Engels 1998). Unsurprisingly, this continually provokes resistance on the part of the dispos-

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sessed (Linebaugh and Rediker 2000). In this sense, Ireland, as one of Europe's first internal colonies and a key site of capitalist experimentation, has seen movements against capitalist globalisation from Elizabethan times. Here as elsewhere, these movements combined elements of particularism (defending the status of a single group under threat) and solidarity (building links with other dispossessed groups).

In a narrower sense, capitalism entered a new period from the 1970s onwards (Harvey 1989) in which, firstly, welfare states in the West were dismantled under the hegemony of neo-liberal economics and, secondly, starting from the late 1980s, the model was generalised to the rest of the world as *globalisation*.<sup>3</sup> Following the defeat of earlier movements of opposition to capitalism (Cox 1999a), the movements against capitalist globalisation have come into being as resistance to the effects of globalising neo-liberalism has itself become global (Cox 2001). Since the 1990s, a new wave of 'anti-systemic movements' (Arrighi et al. 1989) has been developing around the world. This movement wave brings together various strands.

Firstly, opposition within the majority world to neo-liberal economics, starting from the 1980s' 'IMF riots' in Africa and Latin America against the International Monetary Fund's imposition of cuts on state provision for basic needs (Alexander 2001). In the 1990s and early 2000s, the Zapatistas and other groups in Latin America offered large-scale organised challenges to governments implementing neo-liberal economic agendas (Marcos 2001). And across the global South, from India to Brazil, social movements of the dispossessed, the poor peasants and indigenous peoples under threat from capitalist agriculture, have been organising and taking direct action against forms of development which destroy their means of existence (Polet and CETRI 2004).

Subsequently, the summit meetings where the institutions of neo-liberal globalisation take decisions directing world economics have become foci for activists from around the world, objecting both to the decisions taken and to the undemocratic nature of these institutions. Meetings of the Group of 8 wealthiest nations (G8), the WTO, the WEF, the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS), the EU, the IMF–World Bank (WB), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and other such bodies have been challenged directly by activists from the global South, Northern trade unionists, environmental activists, and others affected by neo-liberalism. Protests have aimed both to outline alternatives and to shut down these bodies (Anon. 2001a; Starhawk 2002).

Since 7/11 the US-led 'war on terror', intended in part to demobilise and criminalise the movement as 'terrorist', has led instead to its development and radicalisation, including the protests of 15 February 2003 – probably the single largest worldwide event ever organised by ordinary people rather than governmental, commercial or media bodies.

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Thus the development of the movement has two aspects. On the one hand are the top-down processes of capitalist globalisation (the expansion of neo-liberalism, the development of a New World Order and its militarisation against all opposition). On the other hand is the growth of opposition to these processes: direct resistance, developing connections between activists and an increasing ability to coordinate and communicate.

This movement naturally attracts comparison with other movement 'waves' or 'world-revolutionary moments' (Katsiaficas 1987) such as 1989–90 in the Soviet bloc, 1968 globally, or the European Resistance of 1922–45. At the same time, it is unusual in that such a scale of opposition to the status quo has neither been repressed nor developed into full-blown revolutions (outside Latin America). Although communication is much faster and coordination much deeper than ever before, the length of time during which the movement has faced off directly against the state is remarkable for the post-war period, showing a degree of interconnectedness, rootedness in local struggles and breadth of vision which marks it out as bearing comparison with those previous periods.

#### **A Marxist perspective on the movement of movements**

This chapter develops a Marxist perspective on the movement. Although Marxism developed out of the experience of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century democratic and socialist movements, it is often misunderstood as providing an abstract 'theory of society'. An alternative reading, which this chapter draws on,<sup>4</sup> is that Marxism is a theory of socially situated collective action which treats overall social structure (such as capitalist globalisation) both as the result of past social movements and as the object over which present movements struggle.

Conventional social science, by contrast, takes the structure of the social world for granted and organises itself accordingly, with separate disciplines (political science, economics, sociology, etc.), and within those separate, institutionally defined sub-fields (the sociology of the family, the study of political parties, social movement studies, etc). In this context, 'social movements' are understood as a particular type of institution, operating within an essentially given social structure (despite the fact that many activists are setting out to change or transform that structure).

Marxism as a theory of social movements sees the social world in terms of socially situated human action as liable to develop as collective behaviour. It also famously sees the social world as contradictory, and so expects conflict as a normal part of social interaction. From a Marxist point of view, therefore, social movements (in the sense of collective action in conflict) are the norm rather than the exception, and operate not only in semi-informal ways but equally

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within the shell of institutional forms (trade unions, political parties, churches, etc.), which are themselves the product of past social movement struggles. In other words, Marxism as social movements theory is not a *sub-theory* related to a specific kind of social institution; it is a theory of how society as a whole works, in whatever forms.

This collective action comes from above as well as from below, and a moment's reflection will make it clear that collective action from above is normally more powerful than that from below, and can be expected to be more consistent, better institutionalised and to look like *normality* and *routine*. Marxist approaches to social movements, then, involve a reflection on the power relations built into institutional structures, how they have been constructed and how they can be deconstructed, rather than taking movements from above for granted.

Marxism is interested in the relationships between different forms of social movements: not only in the conflict between movements from above and from below, but also in interaction between different movements from above or different movements from below, and in the differing *levels* of social movement action, from localised muttering and go-slow in a single workplace to occasional moments of worldwide revolutionary upsurge – both of which fall outside the range of most social movement studies.

Marxism does not involve believing (as is sometimes thought) that all social movements are movements of a single class. Classes do not start as coherent historical actors (Thompson 1966). Rather, the process of social movement (sometimes) has the result that people form themselves into a *class-for-itself*. Equally importantly, social movements are often spaces of contention between different classes, as in the French Revolution. What *is* characteristic of Marxism as a theory of social movements is its expectation that people's needs and perspectives will be socially situated, so that class, gender, ethnicity, etc., are always present in the process of movement formation.

Marxist theory is geared towards the practical needs of movement activists, derived in large part from the reflections of past generations of social movement participants. This *unity of theory and practice* gives it its characteristic shape, in which propositional statements are linked to proposals for action (Barker and Cox 2002; Nilsen 2004a).

Finally, as a result of the above, Marxist writing on social movements rarely consists of *applying* a theory from outside to a particular *case*, and refuses the separation between *theory* (as a list of Great Texts) and *empirical data* – as if the latter could be seen independently of our informal theorising about the nature of the social world (starting with our assumptions about what a social movement looks like). Instead, the goal of Marxist writing is to achieve a dialogue between what we think and what we see, which results in a more integrated approach to writing.

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Most of the systematic thinking about the movement of movements, in fact, has come from outside conventional social movement studies, from activist or activist–academic writers and researchers (see e.g. Brecher et al. 2000; Hardt and Negri 2000, 2004; Abramsky 2001; Marcos 2001; Pianta 2001; Solnit 2004).

Conventional social movement theory, by contrast, has had little to say about the movement. Thus there are very few monographs within anything like a conventional social movement perspective (exceptions are Starr 2000 and Della Porta 2003). There has, however, been a sudden flurry of collected articles under headings such as ‘transnational movement networks’ or ‘global movements’ (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Della Porta et al. 1999; Cohen and Rai 2000; Guidry et al. 2000; Hamel et al. 2001), belatedly discovering that social movements operate outside and across national boundaries (the first socialist International was founded in 1864)

One reason for this silence is that social movement studies have fetishised *civil society*, privileging movements that do not challenge the power of states or the capitalist economy they protect. Since the most obvious fact about the movement of movements is that it does just that, it has been hard to fit the movement within existing frameworks. As I have suggested elsewhere (Cox 1999b), another way of putting this is that social movement studies are defined by the defeat of the movements of 1968. Having assumed a basic institutional continuity, they find it hard to respond to movements that involve counter-institutional actors operating outside the system and mobilising some of the poorest people on the planet.

From a Marxist perspective, social movements from below bring together people who experience their needs as being threatened or constrained by movements from above, such as capitalist globalisation. Starting from local campaigns around specific issues (such as bin charges, opposition to incineration, solidarity work with immigrants or resistance to the US military use of Shannon), they come to recognise each other as responding to crises caused by the same drives within the system and start to reach out to other activists and movements at home and elsewhere. In so doing, they articulate visions of alternative social possibilities and create alternative institutions: political forums, independent media, countercultural networks and economic alternatives to the dominant system.

The discussion in this chapter rests above all on my own participatory action research in this movement and on involvement in the process of activist theorising (Barker and Cox 2002) developed within that movement. In other words, it is a distilled form of the ideas, experiences and struggles of activists within Ireland as they attempt to ‘build another world’.

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### **The movement of movements in Ireland**

Opposition to capitalist globalisation in Ireland has existed for as long as the process itself. In Ireland, the worldwide rise of neo-liberalism and its new phase as globalisation overlaps with a specific local history of opening up to investment by foreign multinationals from 1958 onwards, the politics of recession in the later 1970s and the early 1980s, the process of partnership geared towards *international competitiveness* from the late 1980s onwards and the development of the 'Celtic Tiger' in the latter half of the 1990s.

This process had losers as well as winners: jobs were lost, farms were no longer able to support farmers, businesses went under, poor people were excluded from the new worlds being created for the privileged, other and older ways of life were being destroyed, and working-class communities felt all the negative impacts of *development*.

Thus there has been a long-standing community-based opposition to multinational industries (Allen and Jones 1990; Allen 2004). The socialist left has fought both the specific and the general subordination of workers' interests to multinational agendas. Working-class communities have organised to resist their own marginalisation in the 'brave new world' of consumer capitalism (Powell and Geoghegan 2004). And a complex counterculture has resisted the McDonaldisation of Irish ways of life and proposed alternatives (Cox 1997).

The recent Irish movement of movements grows out of a long process of attempts at networking and building links within and around these different movements and campaigns, reaching back at least to the Mustard Seed gathering of 1976 and the Carnsore Point protests of 1979, if not before. Activist festivals and gatherings, an extensive alternative press, attempts at party-building, the creation of 'free spaces', and more than anything else involvement in shared campaigns and projects combined to develop what was rightly called an 'alternative Ireland' (Alternative Ireland Directory Collective 1982), now three decades' old.

When speaking of the Irish movement of movements, then, it is important to be clear that it represents a small, albeit important, part of these broader and more diffuse movements and campaigns. Much of its strength lies in its ability to draw on these existing traditions and connections. Against this wider background, its specific characteristics are its character as a network of (some of) these diverse movements, its explicit self-positioning in opposition to neo-liberalism as such and its connection to the broader global movement of movements.

### **Explaining Irish developments**

Probably the first substantial appearance of the Irish movement of movements was participation in opposition to the IMF-WB meeting in Prague in September

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2000, and in simultaneous Dublin events highlighting issues raised by the Prague Counter-Summit. However, this was still a very small-scale participation and largely limited to existing left groups and development NGOs. How did the movement grow from this point – a few dozen individuals meeting in the Temple Bar Music Centre – to the point where it could challenge the State at Shannon and on the streets of Dublin in 2003 and 2004?

The short answer has to do with the increasing incapacity of the Irish State to maintain social consensus in the context of neo-liberalism. Symbolically, while opposition grew at home, the great peacemaker Ahern's attention was focused on the EU Presidency and issues around accession, the new Constitution and appointing a Commission President.

The Irish State has traditionally been able to maintain its legitimacy and isolate dissent by its ability to distribute sectoral rewards, the fruits of office or the benefits of growth (Breen et al. 1990; Allen 1997). It therefore faces a specific kind of difficulty as it enters into neo-liberal arrangements under which the State is increasingly prevented from subsidising the popular classes. Put another way, once it is committed under the Nice Treaty to privatising transport, health and other public services, and has to operate within EU budgetary constraints, Fianna Fáil has fewer of the spoils of office to distribute. Neo-liberalism, then, tends to undermine the political arrangements on which its power resides.

#### **The anti-capitalist movement and the anti-war movement**

A longer answer has to highlight more specific aspects of the conditions under which Irish people have moved into participation in the movement of movements. Growth in popular participation has been primarily linked to opposition to the US-led 'war on terror' and to Ireland's de facto support for that war. Although there was significant Irish participation in the Genoa protests of July 2001, it was not until the war on Afghanistan that this translated into major protests in Ireland.

Patriotism, according to Dr Johnson, is the last refuge of the scoundrel, and 7/11 was a great boost for the Bush administration as well as a blow for the US movement against capitalist globalisation. Yet while the US administration and EU summits developed strategies after 7/11 to criminalise already existing protest movements under new *anti-terrorist* legislation, in Ireland popular support for neutrality made the use of Shannon by the US military a political liability for the Irish Government.

This was highlighted by the development of non-violent direct action protests at Shannon by Mary Kelly, the Catholic Workers' and the Grassroots Network Against War– the last of which led to the bizarre spectacle of the Irish Army being deployed to protect the US military from 300 non-violent activists – and of course by the massive protests of 15 February 2003, co-organised by the

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Irish Anti-War Movement, the NGO Peace Alliance and the Peace and Neutrality Alliance.

Opposition to the Bush visit of June 2004 was similarly organised primarily around themes of opposition to the 'war on terror', the torture of prisoners and Israeli occupation policies. In supporting the military face of the New World Order, the Irish Government managed to place itself at odds with the large majority of the population. In Ireland, therefore, anti-war themes have been central to the development of the movement of movements. Put another way, the Irish State's collusion with the more unpalatable aspects of the New World Order has been one key reason for the growth in dissent.

#### **Policing the crisis or producing the crisis?**

If neo-liberalism has undermined the State's ability to secure consent, its turn to coercive solutions has further distanced it from many citizens. In theory, states have the alternative of governing through coercion or consent. In practice, consent is sought where support cannot be coerced; and when legitimacy breaks down force is used (Gramsci 1977). The movement of movements, this chapter argues, is made possible by the decreasing ability to secure consent. The Irish State has accordingly resorted to force in its response to the movement, thus further weakening its legitimacy for many people.<sup>5</sup>

The policing of Shannon has already been mentioned. The most significant example, however, is the police riot at the Reclaim the Streets protest on 6 May 2002. This event, in which policemen baton-charged a peaceful crowd, including bystanders, and hospitalised over a dozen people, was highly visible, leading to the remarkable spectacle of tabloid newspapers defending protestors against police. It also marked a stepping-stone in the criminalisation of the movement. Traditionally the policing of protest – other than republican protest – has been low-key in Ireland, for reasons that have to do with the conflict in the North. From the police attacks on protestors at the 'public-private partnership' summit at the Burlington in October 2001, however, the movement of movements has increasingly been perceived as threatening by the police.

In all probability, this derives less from the Irish situation (Garda 'intelligence assessments' were shown to be woefully inadequate on May Day 2004) and more from the previously mentioned European context, in which protest groups are (as in the 1970s) seen as falling within the same bracket as terrorism and subjected to the same kind of surveillance.

The high point to date of this militarisation of policing was around the May Day weekend and the Bush visit, both in 2004. For the May Day weekend, 5000 Gardaí and 500 soldiers were used, with the deployment of armed detectives, riot squads, 'non-lethal weaponry' and water cannons. Dublin was in effect placed under martial law, with the effective banning of Dublin Grassroots

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Network's planned march to the EU Summit in Farmleigh House (Dublin Grassroots Network 2004).

In the event, the ban almost certainly boosted the numbers of those protesting in defence of civil liberties, and the march came within a mile of the summit despite a supposed 4-mile exclusion zone. This ineffectiveness was coupled with a massive scare campaign about a threat of violence which failed to materialise – from initial claims of '20,000 anarchists' supposedly travelling from the UK, the final comment in the *Garda Review* spoke of '20 activists ... intent on trouble' (Caldwell 2004). In fact, the majority of those arrested (all on very minor charges) were young Irish people, many of them students. It is difficult not to conclude that the purpose of the policing was less to respond to real threats and more to impress European partners.

The militarisation of policing has led to the use of the mainstream media as PR auxiliaries, given the inability of the Garda Press Office to do so after May Day 2002. The run up to May Day 2004 saw, as Harry Brown wrote, 'some of the most atrocious journalism in living memory' (2004b), with claims of secret armies, arms dumps, gas attacks (respectively Conlon 2004, Anon. 2004 and Jolly 2004) – and supposed infiltration of secret meetings which turned out to be publicly advertised and open to all (Boyle 2004). It should be noted, however, that only some sections of the media – typically those most dependent on Garda sources for news – were willing to adopt the police line in full.

Another result is the development of more antagonistic protest strategies – the refusal to give Gardaí advance notice of protests, the use of deliberate disruption and direct-action techniques, and the development of masking and 'black bloc' tactics (Anon. 2001b). Undoubtedly some activists would have supported these in any case, but the shift away from the tradition of mild policing of protest massively accelerated this trend. Here, as more generally, the State's turn towards coercion has resulted in a radicalisation of the movement.

#### **The decline of state-centred organising strategies**

Another key development has been the decline in state-centred ways of organising. The fifth Grassroots Gathering (GG), held in Dublin in June 2003, in the run up to the planned WEF meeting, was said by one experienced observer to be the largest libertarian gathering in Ireland since the 1970s. Libertarian, in this context, means strategies that are not geared towards taking state power, whether by electoral or revolutionary means; movements organised on a bottom-up or non-hierarchical basis; and a preference for direct action over tactics (such as petitions and demonstrations to the Dáil) geared towards lobbying the powerful.

In the event, the planned opposition by the Irish Social Forum and GG was apparently enough to cause the cancellation of the WEF meeting. The summer's

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mobilisation was not wasted, however, in that the movement's ability to organise a full-scale summit protest in May 2004 – and the 5,000 people who participated in the different events of that weekend – undoubtedly drew on those previous activities.

Anti-authoritarian organising is not new to Ireland, but (with the important exception of community activism) it has always been a minority trend within a political scene dominated by authoritarian, state-oriented traditions. As the movement of movements has developed in Ireland, however, the initiative has increasingly moved away from conventional protest to direct action; from top-down committee politics to bottom-up DIY organising; and from the left political parties and the NGOs to the anarchists, the counter-culture and the radical ecologists.

Among activists, the gradual disappearance of external points of reference for a top-down left solution – whether of a social-democratic or a Soviet nature – plays a role in this shift, as does the rising significance of the Internet, which makes it easier for small groups to organise effectively without controlling a printing press or a newspaper (Graeber 2002).

On a wider scale, the change reflects various trends. The increasing political power of neoliberalism restricts the effectiveness of left parties within the Dáil and local government; the constraints of EU membership and subordination to American foreign policy mean that NGO lobbying produces fewer and fewer returns; and the integration of Ireland into wider economic and political contexts makes the mirage of a liberal (let alone radical) alternative in government seem less and less plausible.

#### **Partnership and its discontents**

In effect, then, the growth of the new movement and the rise of anti-authoritarianism within it are both responses to the same process of capitalist globalisation, which produces simultaneously a declining ability of the Irish state to maintain popular consent and a declining credibility of political strategies which aim to work within 'the system' or to capture that system intact. The margins of manoeuvre, both for the state and for its traditional opponents, are getting narrower.

In this sense, the rise of the movement of movements is part of the same story as the rising social inequality brought about by the 'Celtic Tiger', and more specifically of the discontents of Ireland's remarkable system of social partnership. In a period when most European states were dismantling neo-corporatist arrangements of centralised political and economic decision-making involving employers, unions and the state (Lash and Urry 1987), Ireland was developing its own model for consensus, bringing first employers, unions and farmers and subsequently community and voluntary groups 'into the fold' – both for the

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distribution of the fruits of economic growth and for *participation* in the decision-making process (Community Workers' Cooperative 1996).

However, the results of these arrangements have been to restrain wage demands while employers have seen profits rise massively, with a consequent redistribution in favour of the wealthiest in Irish society and a growing social inequality seen in housing, health and education (Allen 2000). As a result, while the Irish Congress of Trade Unions has itself remained committed to partnership, its member unions and even more their own members have been increasingly restive, with a growth in wildcat strikes and opposition to partnership (Irish Socialist Network 2003). This has been equally true among community groups, which despite their dependence on state funding have been more and more sceptical of the process of partnership (Powell and Geoghegan 2004).

As the institutionalised consensus mechanisms of Irish politics come under strain in the context of capitalist globalisation, it is hardly surprising to see the growth of a new movement against neo-liberalism and operating not just outside but also against those institutions and that consensus. In so doing, the movement is highlighting the needs of those sectors of society that lose out even in periods of neo-liberal growth, but also the costs of neo-liberalism to the environment and in its wars abroad.

#### **Understanding the movement of movements: the goals of the movement**

What are these global actors, in Ireland or elsewhere, seeking to achieve? One primary focus is opposition to capitalism's tendency to commodification, to turn the resources and activities needed to meet human needs into sources of profit (Offe 1984); and to its tendency to externalisation, to turn the costs of production (unemployment as factories are moved, pollution and waste production) into costs for states or individuals rather than for producers.

On a micro scale, this opposition can be seen in challenges to the privatisation of water in Cochabamba in Colombia (Notes from Nowhere 2003), or the introduction of bin charges in Dublin and elsewhere in Ireland (Workers' Solidarity Movement 2005); and equally in opposition to incinerators in Ringaskiddy or to road-building through archaeological monuments. On a medium (meso) scale, it manifests itself in challenges to multinationals the operations of which depend on extreme exploitation and violence against trade unionists in majority world countries (Klein 1999).

On the macro scale, it develops into full-scale resistance to the summits where world economic and political leaders shape the policies and institutions which structure and support this process, whether in Dublin in 2003 and 2004 or in Seattle, Genoa or Prague. It also entails opposition to the military and police face of this New World Order, the increased use of coercion – whether the

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tens of thousands of deaths in the Middle East or the slow erosion of civil liberties in Ireland (Dublin Grassroots Network 2004).

#### **'Another world is under construction!'**

At the same time, the movement represents the construction of an alternative kind of social order, even if only in fragmentary ways and on a relatively small scale. In its most general terms, it means large numbers of ordinary people building institutions geared to prioritising human and environmental needs over profit, and which operate on a voluntary and communicative basis (Habermas 1987) rather than being structured around the logics of the market or the state.

This alternative social order is not simply a 'temporary autonomous zone' (Bey 1991): it is a direct challenge to the existing social order in various ways. Public confrontations such as summit protests and counter-summits, where alternative models to dominant social and political policies are discussed, set out directly to challenge the legitimacy of the summits at which, in a globalised world, the policies which affect us all are agreed on (Yuen et al. 2001; Klein 2002; Castellina 2003).

This has proved perhaps the biggest success of the movement, in that the democratic legitimacy of the key summits and international organisations is highly questionable. Even the EU, one of the least undemocratic, is far removed from direct popular control, with the European Parliament being the weakest of its core institutions and the Nice Treaty having been rejected on its first outing in Ireland. Other institutions – G8, WTO, GATS, WEF – can claim even less of a popular mandate.

Much like the French monarchy's retreat from Paris to Versailles, the movement of movements has forced political and economic elites to meet not just behind closed doors but behind barbed wire, 10-foot fences, sealed-off city centres and massive deployments of security forces – in the face of large and noisy popular opposition. Increasingly, then, the movement is making visible the new legitimisation crisis at the core of neo-liberal politics.

Along with these, the development of counter-summits, activist networks and forums such as the World and European Social Forums, represent the beginnings of alternative political structures. Together with their ability to mount massive protests, shut down summits and prevent world leaders from 'bathing in the crowd', activists are debating alternative policies, creating new techniques and theories of cooperation, and contesting the direction of the movement. These are not yet 'dual-power institutions', but they are considerably more significant than simple meetings of specialist NGOs (De Sousa Santos 2003).

Lastly, the movement is connecting with new socio-cultural milieu (McKay

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1996), which challenge the routines that have moulded everyday life in Fordist societies (Lichterman 1996). Whether the issue be cycling rather than driving, vegetarianism rather than meat-eating, Indymedia rather than Sky News, or – even more powerfully – political participation rather than a passive withdrawal, acting for public good rather than private gain (Jasper 1997; Szerszynski 1997), social movements create alternative ways of living (Melucci 1989). In an Ireland the traditional routines of which (from Mass attendance to the Gaelic Athletic Association) were themselves moulded by earlier social movements, this is of particular relevance.

#### **Conclusion: what future for the movement of movements?**

By definition, social movements seek to *move* beyond the present and beyond the status quo (Touraine 1981). In conclusion, then, it is appropriate to ask about the possible futures for the movement of movements, in Ireland and beyond, while being aware that movement practice is creative and liable to make such comments outdated sooner rather than later.

This chapter has argued that capitalist globalisation has a constant tendency to generate opposition that neo-liberalism undermines the consent on which it is based, and that repression has so far been counterproductive. It is very likely, then, that movements against capitalist globalisation, in Ireland and elsewhere, will continue to appear in the near to medium-term future. In isolation, however, no single movement has the capacity to seriously upset the process.

The key question is thus the relationship between movements against capitalist globalisation in general and the movement of movements, in other words the extent to which new and existing movements are likely to find allies in each other, develop networks of cooperation and a sense of shared identity. How far can the current movement of movements develop alliances and strategies beyond its existing reach? At the time of writing, for example, the Irish movement is trying to move beyond the core participant movements of the left and the counterculture to connect with other social forces such as the women's movement, community activism and ethnic minorities.<sup>6</sup>

The central difficulty here is the much greater involvement of these latter movements with the State (Mullan and Cox 2000). The more a movement is reliant on the state for finance and access to political power the less likely it is to threaten that position (Piven and Cloward 1977). Much the same is true within movements, in that trade union officials, environmental NGOs or development organisations are much less likely to participate in the movement than shopfloor union activists, the direct-action wing of the ecology movement or Third World solidarity groups.

In these contexts, the problem is structural. Elites in state-centred organisations exist in a symbiotic relationship with state power and cannot easily restructure

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their organisations, even when state funding is declining and offers of *consultation* and *participation* in decision-making turn out to have little substance in reality (Community Action Programme 2000; Murray 2004). It is therefore more likely that neo-liberal policy will undermine the grip of these elites over their own movements and open up possibilities for activists privileging mass mobilisation, confrontation and radical demands than that these elites will be able to execute a radical shift in policy and bring their organisations along with them.

In this sense, movements, organisations and activists are currently making decisions (not always consciously) about the significance or otherwise of the movement of movements. Some are in effect betting on the status quo and investing in the continuation of links with the State (Anon. 1998). Others are in effect betting on the movement of movements and investing in the development of links with other activists. These are often highly conscious processes, and activists generate a substantial amount of formal and informal theory in making these decisions (Barker and Cox 2002).

Much depends on these theories and decisions. Social movements – organised human agency – have the capacity to remake the world, and at times do so. At present, capitalist globalisation – a highly organised movement from above – is engaged in the process of reshaping the planet in its own image. The question of whether it will be successful, or whether the movement of movements will succeed in constructing its ‘other world’, remains an open one.

#### Online resources

The best primary sources for the Irish movement are online; the following are useful starting points:

*bluegreenearth* magazine: [www.bluegreenearth.com](http://www.bluegreenearth.com)

The Dublin Grassroots Network site: [www.geocities.com/eufortress](http://www.geocities.com/eufortress)

The Grassroots Gathering site: <http://flag.blackened.net/infocenter/grassrootsgathering>

Irish Indymedia, at [www.indymedia.ie](http://www.indymedia.ie)

The Struggle site: <http://struggle.ws>

My own pages on the movement: [www.iol.ie/~mazzoldi/toolsforchange/revolution.html](http://www.iol.ie/~mazzoldi/toolsforchange/revolution.html)

#### Notes

- 1 Thanks to Robert Allen, Chekov Feeney, and other activists for comments on an earlier draft.
- 2 See Raftery (2004) and Brown (2004a) for critiques of some of the misinformation in the mainstream media.
- 3 This chapter takes neo-liberalism to be the guiding economic *theory* enshrined in the policies of institutions such as the IMF, WB, WEF, WTO, GATS, etc. The social *practice* of extending and imposing neo-liberal rules globally, and the resulting regime of accumulation, is capitalist globalisation (Sklair 2002). Finally, the *military* and international relations structures within which this occurs can be described as a ‘New World Order’.

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- 4 This project, outlined in Cox (1999b), is currently being developed with Alf Nilsen (2004a, 2004b); see Nilsen and Cox (2005) for a fuller statement.
- 5 There is little published research on the recent change in policing in Ireland, although, when published, James Porter's work should remedy this. A number of authors have studied the policing of protest, most usefully Della Porta (1995) and Waddington (1996); see also Della Porta and Reiter (1998). Academic analysis of the policing of the movement of movements has been limited; Oskarsson and Petersson (2001), however, produced a paper designed to help the Swedish police after they shot three activists at Göteborg.
- 6 See, for example, the programmes for the 5th (June 2003) and 9th (April 2005) Grassroots Gatherings, available online: <http://grassrootsgathering.freesevers.com/fifth.htm> and [www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story\\_id=68675](http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?story_id=68675) respectively.

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