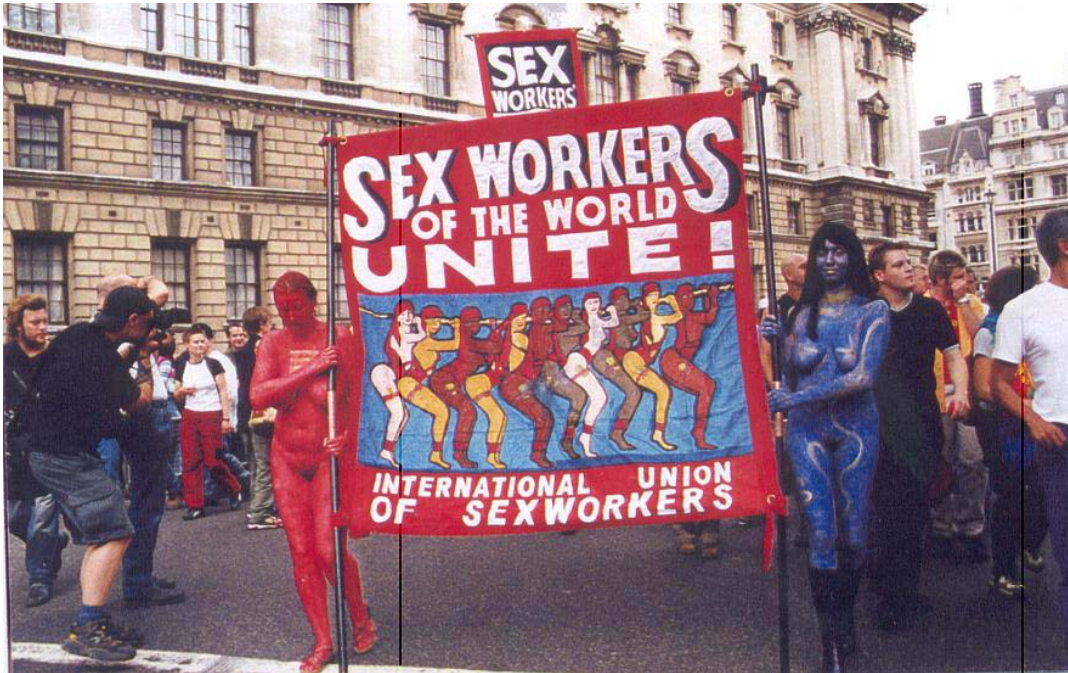


The Networked Internationalism of Labour's Others: A Suitable Case for Research¹

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How Do, Can or Should Sexworkers of the World Unite? The photo shows a demonstration of the UK-based International Union of Sexworkers, London. In March 2002, the IUSW became an affiliate of the General Municipal and Allied Workers Union, one of Britain's oldest. It should be noted that, although networked internationally, this is formally a trade union. And that it is actually a national or even local (London) union of international (various nationality) sexworkers. Therefore, like other such new kinds of collective worker self-expression, this is less a case for celebration, more one for investigation. (Photo: Fredderico D'Ammicci).

¹ Thanks to Dan Gallin of the Global Labour Institute for corrections and suggestions. He remains innocent of any remaining crimes or even misdemeanours. A new book by Andy Mathers (2007), on the Euromarches against unemployment and poverty in Western Europe, arrived too late to be fed into this paper. In so far as this new international movement took network form, it requires the attention I have given other 'relevant literature'.

Abstract

This is a proposal for research into the new and developing internationalisms of the 'peasants, artisans and others, enrolled amongst the sons of toil'. These internationalisms are so commonly articulated in network form (so difficult to understand outside network theory?) that it is difficult to discuss the one without the other.

In today's world, the 'damned of the earth' would seem to be those marginalised from, or marginalised within, the traditional working class, either un-unionised or beyond the reasonable reach of unions. We need to consider the internationalisms of such labouring or popular classes/categories/identities as the rural poor, the casualised, urban popular residential communities, migrant workers, poor women, indigenous peoples. Is there any evidence that classes, categories or identities *less* incorporated are demonstrating either *more* or *more-appropriate* internationalisms?

Whatever we here find, we will also need to examine the international relationships of each category with the others, with the unionised working class, with the cross-class, multi-issue, global justice movement. And to consider whether or not the *form* that might be taken by the international relations of these categories (customarily networks) might not be more appropriate to resistance and counter-assertion against a globalised-networked-computerised capitalism.

We would also need to consider the kind of relationships such new international movements establish with such international hegemons as the International Labour Organisation, with other inter-state institutions, and with capital, state, and other dominant instances/ideologies (gendered, racial, religious, party, etc) at all social levels and scales. We would need, finally, to consider what implications such evidence might have for *unionised* labour and for the development of a global justice movement that goes way beyond the poor.

After 1) the introduction, this paper will present 2) relevant literature, 3) theoretical resources, 4) the customary in-conclusions. The paper is completed with extensive bibliographical and internet resource lists, and four appendices: 1) on the conference concept that inspired the development of this paper, 2) a critical note on this conceptualisation, 3) some relevant cases for possible analysis, 4) summary notes on a new global social unionism and related matters.

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*We peasants, artisans, and others
Enrolled among the sons of toil
Let's claim the earth henceforth for brothers,
Drive the indolent from the soil!
On our flesh too long has fed the raven,
We've too long been the vulture's prey.
But now farewell the spirit craven,
The dawn brings in a brighter day!*

(Chorus, 2x)

*Then comrades come rally!
And the last fight let us face.
The Internationale
Unites the human race!*

From an English translation of Eugene Potier's
'L'Internationale'

1. Introduction: The Internationalism of Labour's Others

Although long-considered the anthem of the international union, labour, socialist and communist movements, Potier's words nowhere refer to any of these. It stands more in the tradition of Flora Tristán's 'Workers' Union' (Tristán 1843), in which the uprising and emancipation of labouring people (in France? anywhere? everywhere?) would lead to universal liberty, equality and solidarity. In Potier's French original there is a first verse reference to 'les damnés de la terre' (thus 'damned', and not, as in the English, 'wretched'). There was, therefore, added licence for Frantz Fanon to apply it to the poor of the Third World (Fanon 1986). But he thereby laid another *particular* claim on a *universal* appeal to internationalism on behalf of all the poor. With the end of state - and decline of party - communisms (and the often-compulsory singing of a song emptied of all emancipatory significance), Potier's words may speak to a new international movement. But, this time on behalf of all labouring people and in the name not of an ideology, nor a state (present or future) but of the principle of human solidarity. As suggested by the lines above, and as spelled out in the French original: the international is intended to *be* the human race.

The major international movement of our day is, of course, one that has many names - none of which refers to either the proletariat in particular or the people in general: 'Anti-Globalisation', 'Anti-Corporate', 'Anti-Capitalist', 'Global Justice and Solidarity'. I use the last of these, not because I am lacking in either anti-neoliberal spirit, nor anti-capitalist desire, but because it seems to me to better capture the present nature of this amorphous but many-splendoured and many-prickled thing. 'Global Justice and Solidarity' has other characteristics which may recommend itself as a name. One is an explicit reference to the global, another is an implicit reference to economic and socio-cultural rather than solely political rights, a third

is the *absence* of class-specificity – surely appropriate to the multi-class composition of the movement.

Yet there is good reason to return to the sons (not to speak of daughters) of toil. Indeed, there are several good reasons.

The first is that *The Internationale* was, for many decades and much of the world, *the* anthem of the international labour movement.

The second is because of the specific reference in the above verse to those enrolled amongst the toilers – the artisans, peasants and others. Given that the inter/national union movement has, with exceptions, forgotten the song and abandoned any *emancipatory* sense of internationalism (Waterman 2004), could it be that the notion of an emancipatory internationalism, if not the song itself, has migrated to other categories of the popular sectors, historically less-incorporated into 20th century capitalism? Could it be that these are the *new* bearers of the old internationalism, or the popular bearers of a *new* internationalism within the Global Justice and Solidarity Movement (henceforth GJ&SM)?

The third reason for addressing labour's others is that these are the (growing) majority of the working class, understood as a global phenomenon (Millar 2007).

A fourth is that, whilst the Thirdworldist Internationalisms of the 1960s-70s (Gerassi 1971) have passed into history, there is new theory suggesting a much broader and more complex notion of the working class (Hardt and Negri 2004: Ch. 2.1). This might not privilege the marginalised, in the way that some 'new theories of revolution' (Woddis 1972) did after 1968. But it certainly refers to, broadens and loosens the old narrow conceptualisation, image or assumption about this class.

There is, finally, a wave of new writing that does at least suggest that such 'marginal' sectors do have their own autonomous international relations and might have more affinity with or demonstrable contact with the GJ&SM than the unionised working class (for example, Chen, Jhabvala, Kanbur and Richards 2007, Conway 2007, Cumbers and Routledge 2005-7, Dietrich and Nayak 2006, Edelman 2003, Hale and Wills 2005,). This represents a significant step forward from the work of Eade and Leather (2005), that presented the matter in terms of relations between NGOs, unions and 'development' (Waterman 2006).

To what kinds of workers am I here referring? Broadly the same categories as those in an old piece of my own, exploiting the same words of the *Internationale* (Waterman 1981a, b). At that time I was talking about the inter-relationship of working classes only within 'peripheral capitalist societies'. What I actually said was 'workers, peasants, artisans and (m)others' - the latter to the distinct chagrin of one feminist just recruited to lead a 'Women and Development' Programme at my institute. Let me today suggest the following often overlapping categories: urban residential communities; child workers, rural labour/communities; indigenous peoples; im/migrant workers; petty-producers/traders/service-providers; the un/under-employed, the high- and low-tech 'precariat' and, obviously, the women housekeepers, rural labourers, homeworkers, sex workers, factory workers, domestic workers, amongst the above.

Given the exploratory nature of this paper, it will be largely dependent on the existing literature and internet resources. Unlike in the 1980s, such resources are increasingly to be

found on the internet (though with the caution suggested by León, Burch and Tamayo 2001a, b). The note will focus on materials in English and Spanish, the latter ensuring good coverage of at least one major part of the South.

The kind of questions that need exploration are such as the following:

- What international solidarity activities do such categories have?
- What historical or contemporary discourses do they employ?
- How do they relate to inter/state development agencies, the international union and/or World Social Forum/Global Justice and Solidarity Movement?
- What relations do they have with the poor/marginal labour they speak of or for, and their commonly middle-class supporters?
- What *form* does their international articulation take (union-type organisations? social-movement-type networks, NGO-type support or service centres?);
- Are they (more? less?) culturally/communicationally active than the unions?
- What are the implications of their common funding by state or inter-state agencies, by corporate foundations or agencies of 'development cooperation'?
- To what extent does the networked internationalism of labour's others reproduce the centre-to-periphery model, in other words a 'substitution' or 'vanguard' notion of solidarity;
- And, finally, are these plural and varied 'global solidarities' to be seen as contributory to, or exemplary for, an international union movement still largely locked into the *internationalism* of the last century?

Whilst initially dependent on print and internet resources, the extent of email use within such movements should make possible the use of email questionnaires. Given the customarily low response to such instruments, such use represents a challenge and may provide an indication of the development of 'communications internationalism' amongst them. The internet should therefore be seen not simply as a source of information, but as a place/space of the presence by such movements within this new – if still limited – international public arena. Given the presence of these categories, alongside the unionised, at the World Social Forum, its local or problem-specific events, one could also carry out surveys here (c.f. Reese, Ellen, Erika Gutierrez and Christopher Chase-Dunn. 2007), though awareness of the self-selecting character of the participants/respondents is obviously a requirement.

There is no need to *assume* a new privileged bearer of social emancipation and global emancipation - as might be suggested by the concept of the 'precariat'. No more is there a necessity to *assume* a privileged relational form for the expression of such – as might be suggested by some of the literature around networking. In the first case one would be reproducing the notion of such a privileged agent. In the second case one would be reducing 'networking' from a way of understanding human and social relationships to an empirical form (that might reproduce within itself characteristics of the hierarchical, bureaucratic institution, or of charismatic leadership).

It would be sufficient if such research recognised 1) the subversive effect of considering seriously the networking form – the variety of networking forms – taken by new worker movements, 2) the emancipatory effect of considering such relational forms not as temporary ('in the absence of'), nor transitional ('on the way to') traditional union forms, 3) that the customarily middle-class initiated or staffed labour network – local, national,

regional, global – is not necessarily less ‘working class’ than a traditional union that produces its ‘middle-class’ internally, out of its own institutional dynamics or as a result of external demands/attractions.

2. Relevant literature

There is not yet much literature on the ‘networked internationalism of labour’s others’. Three pieces come to mind, the first on peasants/farmers (Edelman 2003), the second on Fishworkers (Dietrich and Nayak 2006), the third on women garment workers (Hale and Wills 2005).

Via Campesina. The Edelman piece is long, wide, detailed and eminently well-documented. It centres on Via Campesina (Peasant Road? Peasant Way?), certainly the best known of the new ‘other labour’ networks created in response to the wave of neo-liberal capitalist globalisation. Via Campesina was born in Brussels (HQ of the European Union and its disastrous agricultural policies), 1993, following a long history of attempts to create peasant/farmer internationals,² at a time of a global farming crisis, of growing rural movements worldwide. It exists in tension with the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (dominated by big farming interests, close to the major inter-state institutions). There had been a wave of local, national and cross-border rural organising in Brazil (Landless Workers’ Movement, MST), Central America, North America, in Europe and in India. Amongst a profusion of such movements, of NGO activity and networks, Via Campesina is marked by its orientation toward the poor, the breadth of its concerns (land reform, environment, indigenous peoples, women, human rights, food security), its alliances (World Social Forum, Palestine). Inspired, no doubt, by Latin American tradition and Brazilian practice, it has also been highly visual, theatrical and media-savvy. It has also operated, it seems to me, more as a distributed network than a centralised organisation:

[H]igh profile participation in international protests and civil society gatherings continues to be a hallmark of Via Campesina activity. Its supporters played prominent roles at the World Social Forums in Porto Alegre, Brazil and at the 2002 ‘Rome + 5’ FAO World Food Summit. [...] Much of the Via Campesina’s organising is carried out by its constituent groups, often with the funds from European NGOs. The Via Campesina itself has a tiny staff: the executive secretary, a part-time bilingual ‘technical secretary’, and a regular secretary in the Operational Secretariat in Honduras; a part-time consultant in Nicaragua who works with the Via Campesina’s Global Agrarian Reform Campaign; and a multi-lingual technical assistant based in Europe, who handles the network’s internal communications and media relations. It relies on Yahoo listserves for distributing position papers and announcements, which circulate in English, Spanish, and occasionally in other languages. (Edelman 2003:206).

In little more than a decade, peasant/small-farmer networking and political action – which certainly go wider than Via Campesina - have had considerable success, stalling world trade talks, obtaining at least temporary bans on GM crops, shifting the nature of dialogue toward major life and ethical issues. Moreover:

² Edelman misses the Communist **Red Peasant International** or Krestintern, 1923-?, and the presumably anti-Communist **International Peasant Union**, 1948-?.

Participants in the peasant and farmer networks have also come to have a dynamic sense of themselves as political actors, empowered with new knowledge, conceptions of solidarity and tools of struggle, and surprisingly unlike the unsophisticated rustics that urban elites often imagine them to be. (214).

Problems remaining include: relations of the networks with NGOs (presumably Edelman means Northern funding agencies); representativity claims (of who speaks for whom in the rural community); of accountability to constituencies and funders; overwork amongst activists with rural occupations; tensions between national and international activism; 'verticalist' tendencies with exclusionary effects. As well, presumably, as problems with strategy toward state, regional and international agencies, towards hypothetical allies, etc.³

Fishworker internationalism. Dietrich and Nayak (2006) is actually about the dramatic development of fishworker movements in India in the era of globalization, and their involvement in international solidarity efforts. In so far this piece was contributed to a collection on labour internationalism, on which I was invited to make a commentary, I will draw from my comments (Waterman 2006:452-3), in the next three paragraphs, whilst reminding readers that the Dietrich and Nayak piece was originally written in the early 2000s.

The case reveals, in open and dramatic form, most of the problems that have been ignored, or concealed, or marginalised by the modern labor movement: the multiple identities of workers, women workers/working women, complex and conflicting notions of community, the search for work and production in harmony with nature, the increasing centrality of the international sphere, the necessity of simultaneously building up an *international* community of workers+communities and, on this base, and in function of their empowerment, negotiating with inter-state institutions. Particularly interesting is the manner in which, and the form within which, their internationalism is being created. Excluded, by traditional local/national unionism, from membership of the institutionalised union internationals, the fishworkers have found their internationalism with the support of an international/ist NGO, and in the form of a network.

Let us here avoid two possible misunderstandings that could follow. One is that we have discovered *the* way to emancipation, national and international, the other that we have discovered *the* vanguard thereof. These two errors, customarily combined, have been common to the left historically. And they reveal the continuing legacy of 1) ancient ideologies of human emancipation (that the last shall be the first, that there is a chosen people), 2) of the modern Marxist one (the most oppressed modern class as the bearer of international emancipation, the socialist intelligentsia as its guide and teacher). It is not *because* the fishworkers are the most oppressed (or the most marginalised, or that they represent the majority, or that they accumulate within their community the major forms of alienation under capitalism) that they suggest the future of labor emancipation and internationalism. It is rather that systematic reflection upon these matters, made possible by collaboration with critically-minded and socially-committed intellectuals, *can* lead to the surpassing of previously concealed truths or ingrained misunderstandings.

³ For more detail on Via Campesina, see Borrás 2004, a person who has not only been involved in the network at international level but also has experience as an activist in the Philippines.

There is, finally, no guarantee that such emancipatory visions, desires or capacities, would survive any of the following assaults: 1) increased repression on the part of the state, inter-state policies and practices; commercial aggression on the part of inter/national capital; 2) a sophisticated and extensive reform policy by the same powers; 3) a similarly sophisticated proposal of marriage by an otherwise un-emancipated trade union movement, national or international (i.e. one still insisting on the male superior position); 4) a substitutionist, instead of an empowering, role by the intellectuals/professionals supporting (or leading!) the movement, whether at local, national or international level.

The book on **women garment workers** (Hale and Wills 2005) is, regrettably, not *about Women Working Worldwide* (WWW). What it is about is an international participatory action research project coordinated by WWW. However, it is still possible to pick up from the Conclusion (234-9) some impressions of WWW thinking and action in relation to the workers they characterise as neither ‘informal’, nor ‘marginal’, not ‘atypical’ but – more political-economically – as being in the lower ranks of a long supply chain. Given common union absence, or incapacity to organize, such workers, and given frequent state unwillingness to act on their behalf, new types of organisation have emerged to support, organise and advocate on behalf of such workers:

Many have been set up specifically to support women workers and as such have developed creative forms of resistance, using spaces outside the workplace to reach workers through their communities, making explicit connections between home and work...[W]e argue that solidarity is best crafted by taking a lead from the workers producing the goods, by working with organisations...whether or not these are trade unions in the traditional sense. (236)

Hale and Wills argue, thus, that WWW is part of a new kind of political action, involving alliances between workers, unions, activists at different levels, and consumer-oriented bodies in the central markets of key buyers. They claim evidence of the success of international campaigns, not only in terms of winning better conditions but also the establishment of rights, and even of successful solidarity action running in the South-North direction. They nonetheless recognise that such successes are unlikely to occur at the bottom end of the subcontracting chain. Here they consider necessary the lobbying of national and inter-state authorities, including the ILO, demanding full legal rights for all workers. They also favour such ‘multi-stakeholder initiatives’ (237) as the UK’s Ethical Trading Initiative, which can encourage the more responsible or more vulnerable big-brand merchandisers and retailers to confront the conditions of workers at the end of their supply chains. Further, they consider that their findings

relevant to ...other economic sectors, as well as to...the wider global justice movement...The activities that we have developed as WWW involve international networks between local organisations...along with activist groups based in consuming nations. The composition of these networks varies depending on the issue...They involve trade unions working alongside more community-focused organisations; groups based on class identities...together with those mobilised around gender, religion, ethnicity and geography; those with traditional organisational hierarchies and those with none. (238)

Whilst, as I have said, this is not a book *about* WWW, Hale and Wills add elements to the previous cases. In particular, I think, do they emphasise pluralism in strategies, in organisational (I would say relational) form, and in demands. What we do not here have here is the kind of critical self-reflection on such matters offered by the two previous cases.

3. Theoretical resources

How are we to conceptualise and to research the kind of phenomena revealed in these three cases, or in the many other possible ones listed in **Appendix 3** below? Let me make some suggestions based on my own past work and recent reading. Here I would like to consider work on ‘social movement unionism’ or ‘the new social unionism’; on labour or social movement networking and on the emancipation of labour and global social emancipation.

Regarding *new forms of labour organising internationally*, one could identify a number of positions. The first, which I will here give no further attention, would be that which sees the new kinds of work and workers as either marginal, deviant or in some way threatening – to industrial relations, to unionism, to development or to social peace. This is work carried out within the institutional or ideological parameters of the International Labour Organisation and the traditional union internationals (for example, Labour Education 2002). Here the concern is either to include the work within the ‘normal’ economy, the workers under ‘normal’ state regulation and their movements within, or under the leadership/guidance of, ‘normal’ unions.

The second is the literature on *social movement unionism*, which is both growing and varied. I will refer to my own particular angle on this, summarised as ‘A New Social Unionism, Internationalism, Communication and Culture’ (**Appendix 4**). Based on a recognition of the revolution within capitalism represented by its globalised and networked form, this approach combines certain traditional Marxist and other socialist insights with those of the New Social Movement theory of the 1970s-80s. It assumes the necessity of surpassing the traditional understandings of work, the labour movement and internationalism. And then of recognising both the variety of work for capital, the consequently varied kinds of worker and labour protest, of workers as bearers of other significant identities, and of the labour movement as just one expression of a struggle against growing human alienation and for a new social emancipation.

The concept has been recently criticised by Anthony Ince (2007), who considers ‘social movement unionism’ to be an over-general and homogenising category. In a wide-ranging international review, he prefers to talk of ‘new wave labour organising’ and to consider, critically, the relevant types and sub-types. These include *New Union Organising* (Sub-types: Organising Unionism, Partnership and Bargaining to Organise), *Network Unionism* (Social and Community Organising Unionism, Radical Organising Unionism), *New Worker Organising* (Worker Centres, Solidarity Networks and ‘Cyber-Unionism’). Without going into each of his categories it would appear that the typology makes room for much, if not all, of what we have been earlier considering. Where it might not, it could be fine-tuned or extended. His general orientation or aspirations would anyway seem compatible with those of earlier-mentioned authors. He says:

The New Labour Organising strategies discussed here do not represent the full scope of possibilities for new (or rediscovered) forms of worker mobilisation,

and they do display some significant problems that need to be overcome. The next decade will be pivotal for the long-term future of the labour movement, since these new ideas have brought with them new challenges and difficulties that need to be addressed if they are to be successful and sustainable. What is imperative now is to consolidate the moderate gains that have been made, and build upon them positively without losing sight of the ultimate goal. This goal should be ambitious, not simply recruiting workers, nor empowering them, but the facilitation of our collective self-empowerment as a whole, accompanied by the recognition that every struggle is intimately connected to every other. A strong labour movement is built upon such connectivity, democracy and solidarity... (Ince 2007:48-9)

Three caveats.

One has to do with his attitude toward the international, where he says:

In an era of increasingly globalised labour and capital markets, it is important that strategic co-ordination should reflect this. As such, unions and organisations that believe in New Labour Organising strategies need to assert this on the world stage, lest they remain isolated from the majority. There is a significant amount of already-existing labour internationalism, but this must move beyond statements of solidarity towards a more concrete sense of mutualism and skill sharing. Bodies such as the ILO and ICFTU may hold the key to this.

I would myself consider the ILO-ICFTU nexus (since November 2006, actually that of the ILO with the merged International Trade Union Confederation) to be a major part of the problem, though not necessarily excluded from being one – or, preferably, two *separate* - parts of the solution.

The second caveat follows from this and it is a question of whether, in an otherwise admirable pluralism, Ince enables us to move from sensitive analysis to effective action. This, for me, requires some kind of policy proposal, with relevance, obviously, for the internationalism of labour's others.

The third caveat might therefore be that although Ince recognises the practical significance of networking, he does not seem to consider this as itself an emancipatory field or force. Which brings me to my second theoretical resource, the literature on *labour/social movement networking*:

...Networks have advantages on two fronts: in confronting modern flexible and decentralised management systems, and in mobilising the energy of new movements. In the past, corporations were able to crush networks. But the changing context has given networks a new life. They are potentially stronger than before, both because of growing understanding of how they work best, and because of technological advances that speed decentralised communication...The type of organisation and leadership needed to build and sustain networks and networks is in many ways the opposite of that needed for traditional mass action and large-scale hierarchies...The network approach...requires that labour think of itself as a coordinator rather than a

power, as a player in a complex force field rather than as the leader of the forces of social justice. It is in many ways an attitude of humility, but it may be now that in humility there is strength...in the world of new movements and networks, it is not always clear who is a member and who is not. The key question is not how many members you have, but who you can mobilise...The real problem for labor is to grow in *influence* — in the ability to unite groups outside its own boundaries. With influence, labor could help to bring together different and shifting communities around key campaigns. With influence, it could concentrate its efforts on the weak points of the relations among firms. Influence comes from vision and from the ability to listen without dominating. It comes from understanding how networks work — the logic of swarms and identities and campaigns — and being able to reflect the values of a large range of social justice groups. The pursuit of influence would put energy and resources into meetings with far flung groups, into building alliances, into structuring consistent communications systems across diverse organisations, and into Internet capability. It is a way of acting that is as different from industrial union organisation as industrial unions were different from crafts in the 1930s – and as continuous as both with the core mission of labor. (Heckscher 2006)

I find this a rather rich specification and as relevant to the global as to the national. It has been spelled out – or at least imagined - for migrant sex workers, by Laura Agustín (1999). She tells a tale in which the hero is a mobile phone! And imagines a future in which activists would provide sex workers with not simply tea and sympathy but access to an expanding range of audio-visual resources. The problem, she suggests, is not that labour's others cannot speak, but that they have not, so far, been heard. Imaginative and critical use of new technology enables this. It also, of course, puts into question the traditional need for the organization, with its hierarchy and its leader - bureaucratic, charismatic or both.

With respect to *Global Social Emancipation* we might first consider this statement by Boaventura de Sousa Santos:

The paradigm of social emancipation developed by western modernity is undergoing a deep and final crisis. Social emancipation must, therefore, be reinvented. It must be understood as a form of counter-hegemonic globalisation relying on local-global linkages and alliances among social groups around the world which go on resisting social exclusion, exploitation and oppression caused by hegemonic neoliberal globalisation. Such struggles result in the development of alternatives to the exclusionary and monolithic logic of global capitalism, that is to say, spaces of democratic participation, non-capitalistic production of goods and services, creation of emancipatory knowledges, post-colonial cultural exchanges, new international solidarities. <http://www.ces.uc.pt/emancipa/en/index.html>.

Appropriately enough, this comes out of a research project earlier referred to, which addressed itself both to 'alternative production' and to international labour solidarity (Sousa Santos 2006c).

None of the three cases I consider above really goes into alternative production, or what, within today's global justice movement, comes under the rubric of the 'solidarity

economy' (see RIPESS, **Appendix 3**). This is, however, allowed for, I think, in the reconceptualisation of 'work' by André Gorz (1999). Gorz has produced a challenging critique of the ideology of work that dominates the international trade-union movement as much as it does the capitalist (or statist) media. This ideology holds that 1) the more each works, the better off all will be; 2) that those who do little or no work are acting against the interests of the community; 3) that those who work hard achieve success and those who don't have only themselves to blame. He points out that today the connection between more and better has been broken and that the problem now is one of producing differently, producing other things, working less. Gorz distinguishes between work for economic ends (the definition of work under capitalism/statism), domestic labour, work for 'oneself' (primarily the additional task of women – for whom 'self' customarily means 'the family'), and autonomous activity (artistic, relational, educational, mutual-aid, etc). He argues, or at least allows for, a movement from the first type to the third, and for the second one to be increasingly articulated with the third rather than subordinated to the first. If the trade unions are not to be reduced to some kind of neo-corporatist mutual-protection agency for the skilled and privileged, they will, Gorz argues, have to struggle for liberation *from* work:

Such a project is able to give cohesion and a unifying perspective to the different elements that make up the social movement since 1) it is a logical extension of the experience and struggles of workers in the past; 2) it reaches beyond that experience and those struggles towards objectives which correspond to the interests of both workers and non-workers, and is thus able to cement bonds of solidarity and common political will between them; 3) it corresponds to the aspirations of the ever-growing proportion of men and women who wish to (re)gain control in and of their own lives.' (Gorz 1999:45)

In researching our particular subject matter, it would be necessary to synthesise such elements, or offer a better theoretical framework. But it does seem to me that we already have at least minimal theoretical resources.

4. The usual in-conclusions

This has turned out to be less of a conventional academic paper and more of a workbook or a set of resources. It is in any case a work in progress. I can only hope it turns out to be as educative to others to read as it has been for me to seek out and put together. I am aware of the need for a section on methodology, that would have drawn, again, but this time more substantially, on Hale and Wills (2006:Ch. 3) and on a work published as I completed this note, Mathers (2007).

I also have a feeling that the extra cases listed in **Appendix 3** lend themselves more spontaneously to the conceptualisation of Anthony Ince than to my own! But that is to say that I see our work as complementary rather than contradictory. These are matters that he and I will surely have to discuss, or that others will have to decide if the proposed research is to be carried out.

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**43rd Linz Conference, September 13-16th, 2007,
'Transnational Networks of Labour'**

http://www.ith.or.at/konf_e/43_konzept_e.htm

"Transnational networks" are currently an important topic of globalisation studies. They are analysed as a main vector of the globalisation of knowledge, norms, attitudes, cultural practices and lifestyles. Eventually, current global development in economy, society and politics bring this topic into the focus of research. Thus, analysts of those evolutions which we characterise as "globalisation" have brought fluctuating networks as form of organisation of a dynamic "space of flows" (Manuel Castells) into discussion.

Research on transnational networks is a necessarily transdisciplinary enterprise. A sociological and historical approach can be integrated with a perspective both from the viewpoint of economic and political science and from the viewpoint of globalisation studies.

Networks are more informal, more fluid, less consolidated than organisations. In times of expansion of a deregulated global economy, non-governmental organisations prosper. Transnational networks communicate with this world of non-governmental organisations, but they are not identical with them. Structured organisations may function as visible nodal points of informal networks. The examination of networks focuses our view on interactions between structures (organisations) and individuals under the condition of spatial distance. It is therefore not surprising that the concept of "networks" has become topical in the debates on "globalisation", where "de-spatialisation", transcending of borders and world-wide networking operate.

The concept "transnational", as distinguished from the notions "international", "multinational" or "cosmopolitan", aims to express a new quality of entanglement engendering global networks and organisations which transcend the space of the nation state. Such networks and organisations cannot usefully be analyzed in the framework of nation states, because they are situated beyond such borders.

There is an opportunity here to draw the attention to a Labour movement which has, in its international and global aspirations, developed trans-national forms of networks and organisations, even if many remain at an "inter-national" level based essentially on the nation state. This contribution of the Labour movement to the history of "globalisation" has been largely overlooked. The Labour movement is not often associated with qualities like "transnational" and with "network" forms of organisation because it is predominantly associated with the nation state, within the framework of which it rose to influence in Europe. The nation state, in its contemporary form of welfare state, contains Labour as well as Capital within its borders. Networks are flourishing in "civil society" that keep the influence of the state out, as much as possible, and where the role of the world of Labour is marginal. "Transnational networks" are situated beyond the aegis of the nation state. But this is just one side of the history of Labour. On the other side, as mentioned, we find its forms of co-operation transcending the nation state.

It is an aim of the conference to focus the attention on such forms of transnational networks

in the history of Labour, as actors in the history of "globalisation". Which forms of transnational networks emerged, and what was their contribution to the world-wide spread ("globalisation") of political attitudes, practices, lifestyles, forms of action and ways of thinking? Which epistemic networks emerged? On a micro level, the ITH itself may be analysed as an epistemic network uniting persons and institutes of similar thematic orientations. How did communication in those transnational networks function? Which forms of links between individuals and organisations? More generally, which distinctive marks of transnational networks of Labour can be observed?

Networks may be constituted by the circulation of people and networks may be constituted by the circulation of ideas, concepts, beliefs, attitudes, without the necessity that the people who make them circulate, move themselves in space. This simple distinction may serve to establish a basic structure of the conference. Networks that move people or, the other way round, come into being by the circulation of people, shall be distinguished from networks that move ideas, concepts, beliefs, attitudes, or come into being by the circulation of such ideas, concepts, beliefs and attitudes.

An alternative structuring could follow a differentiation of cultural spheres and of the distribution of power.

The concept "transnational" should not obscure the fact that that, in most cases, networks with such a claim can nevertheless be fixed to certain spaces. Transnational networks also have a centre and a periphery. The rapid increase of transnationally operating non-state networks and "non-governmental organisations" corresponds to the "globalisation" of an economy evading state regulation. The centres of those networks and organisations operating in a trans-national identity are situated in the centres of global power, in the centres of the world economy. Values, ideas and practices spread by them are in principle compatible with values, ideas and practices in those areas, though they may not (yet) be held by the majority. The analysts of "transnational" trends, many of them themselves endowed with a transnational identity, are equally situated there as well as their institutes and their sponsors. Thus, the history of networks which are radically "alternative" – because substantially different in culture – is usually written in a perspective from these centres of global power. The conference will try to include in its perspective such "radically alternative" networks whose centres are/were not identical with centres of global power. One example could be the Communist International and its successor organisations.

A third structuring effort could distinguish types of networks of Labour following their forms of organisation and of action:

- Networks connected with international organisations of the Labour movement, from loose associations like the 2nd International to efforts to steer a "World Party" like the Comintern.
- Migration networks of all sorts of temporary and permanent expatriates: from mobility networks of workers to trans-nationally circulating elites of the Labour movement. This can be an opportunity to focus on political migration as a form of network communicating political concepts and lifestyles.
- Advocacy networks emerging from trans-national lobby-groups as advocates of certain issues.
- Transnational epistemic networks as organisers of knowledge-transfer networks of researchers, endowments, foundations, think tanks.

- Consultancy networks – Political PR-consultants, spin doctors, consultants in International Development, experts in global norms and morality defining and certifying rules of correct conduct, corporate social responsibility, etc.
- Networks of transnationally conceived social movements like the "Anti"- or "Alter-Globalisation movement".

The conference program is being worked out by a Steering Committee and shall be published on this site in May 2007.

Coordinator of the committee:
Berthold Unfried (Vienna)

Members of the committee:
Marcel van der Linden (Amsterdam), Jürgen Mittag (Bochum), Michael Schneider (Bonn)

Conceptualising 'Transnational Networks of Labour':

Critical Notes

The very calling, in 2007, of a major international labour and social movement studies conference on 'Transnational Networks of Labour' suggests an admirable sensitivity to what is moving amongst social movements in our world today. However, the specification of the invitation to the ITH conference (**Appendix 1**) is also something of a conceptual provocation. Let me make a number of points in response to this:

1. I do not feel that we need to *justify* looking at labour internationalism in network terms. 'Networks' have been a topic in sociology/anthropology for rather longer than 'globalisation' (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_network). What we need to apologise for - or what I anyway need to *apologise* for - is the past reduction of labour internationalism to organisations and institutions!

2. Networks are not 'more' or 'less', nor specific to the world of NGOs. 'Networks' and 'Networking' are a way of looking at social 'articulation' (meaning both connection and expression), that both precedes and surpasses the assumptions and norms of modern, industrial capitalist society. 'Distance' is not the crucial issue: the early anthropological use of 'networking' was for the examination of relations within small-scale African rural communities. It is not globalisation that causes or stimulates networking, since the former can be traced back hundreds of years. It is the combination of globalisation with computerisation. I will return to this in Point 10 below.

3. I find the concept 'transnational' limited, particularly in relation to social-movement studies. It is indebted to the concept 'national'. It lacks the history and values – positive or negative – attached to 'internationalism'. It is likely to be a prisoner to the national (just as is 'internationalism'!). In so far as one recognises the necessity of *surpassing* 'a world of nation states', I would propose developing some such concept as 'global solidarity'.

4. I would have thought that the labour and socialist movement actually began with 'transnational networking' (consider Bantman 2007), which was then developed/reduced to a set of 'international institutions' and even the modes of 'interstate relations' during the long period of national-industrial-capitalist development in the 19th-20th centuries. The assumption of the contemporaneity of the welfare state is surely archaic. Labour may still define itself as 'contained' within the state-defined nation, but capitalism has done so only in particular periods, forms, and for particular ideological reasons.

5. We need a critical consideration of 'epistemic community', particularly if we are going to consider ourselves one of such:

In international anthropology and studies of global governance, epistemic communities are transnational networks of knowledge-based experts *who*

define for decision-makers what the problems they face are, and what they should do about them. [Emphasis added. PW]
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistemic_community.

6. The International Conference of Labour and Social History (ITH) is not really a network but a rather traditional international academic *organisation*, at least in form. I would have thought it more fruitful to consider the relationship between academics/intellectuals and inter/national social movements in terms *hegemony* and *counter-hegemony*. And today under a globalised and networked capitalism, in terms of the reinvention of global social emancipation (Sousa Santos 2006a, b). This would require one to adopt a critical and committed stance toward currently existing institutions of labour studies internationally.

7. It may be true that ‘alternative labour and social movement networks’ are frequently ‘alternative Northern labour and social movement networks’, with resultant particular(istic) limitations or biases. This is clearly a matter for investigation. If, however, the alternative to ‘centres of global power’ in international labour organisation is to be represented by the Comintern – with the latter considered as a network - then we are in serious trouble. The Comintern was, in its original conception, its 21 conditions of membership, and in its eventual functioning, a competing centre of global power! No doubt there were networks within it, but this is another matter.

8. As for the six types or aspects of international labour networks proposed for investigation in **Appendix 1**, I can well imagine useful work being done within such a rubric providing 1) researchers specify what they mean by ‘a network’ and ‘alternative’, 2) that distinctions be made between types of migrant and periods of migration, 3) that we critique the conventional liberal-democratic understanding of ‘advocacy’, ‘epistemic networks’, ‘consultants’ and, finally, consider the newest wave of global social movements not only in terms of being ‘anti’ or ‘alter’ but also, hypothetically, ‘beyond’.

9. I am not sure whether the ‘international labour support centre’ falls within the six categories. But, even before computerisation, this kind of NGO was not only indicating the movement of labour internationalism from organisation to communication, but also commonly relating to others in network form. Amongst early examples that come to mind would be the Amsterdam-based **Transnationals Information Exchange** (1978), the Hong Kong-based **Asia Monitor Resource Centre** (from the 1970s) and the Tokyo-based **Pacific Asia Resource Centre** (early-1980s?).

10. Finally, there is the crucial element missing from **Appendix 1** – one that is clearly present in the writings of not only Castells but most major theorists, right, left or centre. This is the role of computerisation, the web, cyberspace. We really need to contrast this with the railway age of capitalism (forward-backward, centripetal, national(ised), mechanical also in its international connections), . The (inter)national labour movement of the 19th-20th century was increasingly marked by the reproduction of that to which it was nominally opposed – national-industrial-(post-) colonial capitalism. It is precisely the revolution within capitalism – the development of a globalised-computerised-networked capitalism, that requires the movement’s self-transformation as both networked and alternative (to capital, state, patriarchy, racism, consumerism, environmentally destructive, militarist, etc). The implication is not simply that one has to have a (critical) understanding of both computer logic and the nature of cyberspace, but to investigate the particular bearer of networking within and around the union movement of the 1980s – ‘alternative international

communication by computer', including its increasing variety of audio-visual forms and services (see Eric Lee's **LabourStart** and his personal website, Steve Zeltzer's **LaborTech** website, Waterman 1992).

Possible cases for analysis

Going through the Resources listed, I have initially identified certain 'suitable cases for treatment'. I have tried to spread these in terms of geographic base, worker type and topic focus. I will try to avoid the temptation to over-evaluate even the ones I am familiar with. Putative researchers can follow them up through the Bibliography or Resources. Given the development of the web over the last 10-15 years, this is easier than ever. I am assuming that most of these – including union-based ones - are state-, inter-state-, corporate foundation- or development-agency (mostly themselves state-dependent) funded. And that they are in consequence open to the challenges raised by the US book *The Revolution Will Not be Funded* (INCITE (2007)). Where possible I will try to include some brief self-description that reveals orientation, in the sense both of discourse and of activity.

Asia Monitor Resource Centre. Founded by US, church-based activists in the 1970s, established in Hong Kong since the 1980s. Specialised on information and communication, with changing Asian coverage and activity profile range over the decades. 30th Anniversary event, August 2007. Early period of internet activity. Archives for 1990-2006 exist (Asia Monitor Resource Centre (Hong Kong) Archives). Addressed primarily but not solely to the unionised/unionisable. A recent publication,

Labour in Globalising Asian Corporations: A Portrait of Struggle examines how 'work' is being recomposed by mobile capital in Asia. It traces the interaction between multinational companies and local labour, drawing on the examples of the evolution of emerging multinational giant Samsung Electronics, the world's most profitable automaker Toyota, and the survival strategies of the Taiwanese national brand Tatung. We are shown how the world of labour and living has changed for workers as a result of these multinational companies' operation and expansion of capital in Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, India, and China. This book contributes to our understanding of how particular labour problems in Asian developing countries reflect the global transformation of social relations, in which growing capital mobility drives labour to become informal and purely capitalist.

The Southern Initiative on Globalisation and Trade Union Rights. An Australia-based network of national left or socialist unions (NGOs have had some kind of consultative status). Founded early 1990s. Close links with South Africa, the Philippines, India, Brazil, South Korea and other countries. Marginal presence in the WSF, little or no connection with the GJ&SM. Late and marginal web presence. Addressed solely to unionised.

At the 2005 Congress of SIGTUR in Bangkok, the President of the KCTU stated that the union movement must "enter a phase of experimentation. We need to fundamentally transform ourselves....If unions fail in this endeavor to re-organise then we have no future". SIGTUR is currently in a phase of experimentation – a search for new methods of organising, new methods of challenging the dominant power of global corporations and the weak response

of political parties across the political spectrum. From its inception in 1991, SIGTUR was a movement experiment that has brought together the democratic unions in the south in a search for new forms of empowerment. Throughout the 1990s global campaigns were initiated, some of which were successful...At present, SIGTUR is engaged in a process of constructing global unions... There are other union internationals that are struggling with these issues. SIGTUR is working closely with a number of these initiatives.

Mobilisation of/for Immigrant Workers, USA. Best-known because of Mayday 2006, biggest-ever Mayday demonstration in the USA. Connected with dramatic development of 'workers centres' in USA? Relation to 2006 recognition by AFL-CIO of day-labourers' networks? Any connection to cross-border solidarity? A developing contemporary case of 'internationalism in one country' (Cordillot 1988)? Addressed primarily to labour's others. One network within this movement describes itself as follows.

The **National Immigrant Solidarity Network** (NISN) is a coalition of immigrant rights, labor, human rights, religious, and student activist organisations from across the country. We work with leading immigrant rights, students and labor groups. In solidarity with their campaigns, and organise community immigrant rights education campaigns. From legislative letter-writing campaigns to speaker bureaus and educational materials, we organise critical immigrant-worker campaigns that are moving toward justice for all immigrants!

Labour at the World Social Forums (2001-7). Inter/national unions were present early, represented on its International Council, but mostly interested to set out their own tent. There has been varied presence in the WSF of radical national unions, particularly at regional, national emanations. Also international campesino, fishworker coordinations. 2007 saw the first presence of a WSF-oriented labour network, the Italian left-initiated **Labour and Globalisation** website) this being associated with **Networked Politics**, inspired by veteran British Socialist-Feminist, Hilary Wainright, based at the Transnational Institute in Amsterdam. Apart from my own occasional reflections on labour and the WSFs (for example Waterman 2007a), there is an attempt at some more systematic empirical research (Reese, Gutierrez and Chase-Dunn, 2007). Whilst the WSF is open to labour's others and to other labour problems, labour's presence at WSFs has been primarily of the unionised. On the other hand, the **Labour and Globalisation** website states:

Proposal for a Labour Network on and in the World Social Forum process. Neoliberal globalisation implies the most vicious attack on labour in living memory. Yet labour has so far had neither the necessary centrality, nor even visibility, within the WSF process. We propose for this purpose to build a labour network on and in the WSF process. This network will link different experiences, understandings of and skills engaged in every place and every aspect of work. We believe that such a network can help us to:

- give more centrality and visibility, in this crucial historical phase, to labour issues and workers' rights in the WSF process
- develop a permanent exchange of experiences, information and knowledge
- discuss a new and enlarged understanding of labour, considering not only productive but also reproductive work; not only formal, but also informal

- work
- strengthen the alliances between unions, movements, intellectual forces and citizens
- go beyond defensive, isolated and - for that matter - failing struggles and find a new transnational capacity for action
- find common global objectives for such action
- confront the question of the meaning of production (what to produce, how, for whom)
- map all the different labour actors so as to enlarge the network.

LaborTech is perhaps the oldest NGO dealing with electronic media and the international labour movement. Based in San Francisco and staffed by veteran independent Trotskyist, Steve Zeltzer, this has managed to organise a series of conferences since 1990, including those in Russia and South Korea. Primarily addressed to unionised/unionisable.

The purpose of LaborTech is to bring together labor video, computer and media activists in the US and from around the world to build and develop labor communication technology and media. The first conference was held in 1990 and they have been held throughout the United States as well as Canada and Russia. Labor Media conferences are also held in Seoul. We believe that a critical task for labor is building a labor communication media movement that can tell our stories and break the corporate information blockade in every corner of the world.

Global labour websites. The oldest and most prominent of these is Eric Lee's UK-based **LabourStart**, basically a news and solidarity-appeal site, but one which also promotes and reflects on computer networking and other digital media. More recently we see sites addressing themselves to international labour ideas or strategies (as well as information and solidarity activities), such as **Global Labor Strategies** in the US, **Union Ideas Network** in the UK and **New Unionism**, which is an English-language (and Anglo-Saxon-inspired?) network - but based near Geneva? Even where these projects are not themselves networks, they exist because of the web and often address themselves to networking. Curiously – given the late response to cyberspace by the international union organisations – these are commonly identified with the traditional international unions (exceptions: LaborTech and Global Labor Strategies). Mostly addressed to the unionised, though some may be open to labour's others.

LabourStart is an online news service maintained by a **global network of volunteers** which aims to serve the international trade union movement by collecting and disseminating information -- and by assisting unions in campaigning and other ways. Its features include daily labour news links in more than 20 languages and a **news syndication service** used by more than over 700 trade union websites. News is collected from mainstream, trade union, and alternative news sources by a network of over 500 volunteer correspondents based on every continent. LabourStart has been involved in online campaigning for several years but moved up a gear with the launch in July 2002 of the **ActNOW campaigning system**. Tens of thousands of trade unionists have participated in its various online campaigns and more than 50,000 are currently subscribed to its **mailing list**. They receive weekly mailings, usually on Thursdays...LabourStart grew out of the website created in 1996 to accompany the publication of Lee's book, *The Labour Movement*

and the Internet: The New Internationalism. By late 1997, it was running daily labour news from South Korea; in March 1998 that was expanded to include labour news from around the world, and the site was renamed LabourStart.

RIPESS (Intercontinental Network for the Promotion of a Social Solidarity Economy). Headquartered in Dakar, Senegal, this network comes out of a first conference, Lima, Peru, 1997. RIPESS appears to exist on the frontier between rural development projects and post-capitalist ones. It appears rather well funded and internationally coordinated. It also has WSF connections.

[T]he *Solidarity Economy* is a new economic vision of which the main aim is the satisfaction of social needs, seen as an approach for production, economic, social and political autonomy, incorporating such elements as: a) grassroots organisation as the main link of the economic process; b) participation of workers on a self-management basis; c) the environmental sustainability as a permanent process; and d) associability for common production as an empowerment strategy for the men and women of our region in take up the challenge of being actors of their own development.

Women Working Worldwide. UK-based, socialist-feminist inspiration, founded in the mid-1980s, specialised on textiles/garments and Asia but recently active on flowers in Africa? Carries out a range of support, education, communication and research (Hale and Wills 2005) activities. Explicitly addressed to labour's others.

Much work surrounding labour rights and decent work tends to focus on 'top down' measures such as corporate social responsibility codes. Whilst this focus is relevant it does not encompass the entire scope of work needed to effect change. Our central ethos is that it is women themselves who are calling for change in their working conditions and networks such as WWW can make sure that their voices are heard and not ignored.

International Collective in Support of Fishworkers. An evidently well-funded, rather professional information, communication, research centre with extensive third-world connections and an outstanding website. Intended, as the name suggests, to support rather than mobilise or organise?

ICSF's Vision. A future in which fishing communities and fishworkers lead a life of dignity, realising their right to life and livelihood, and organising to foster democracy, equity, sustainable development, and responsible use of natural resources. Within a global perspective, ICSF's work is focused on countries of the South. ICSF's mission is "to support fishing communities and fishworker organisations, and empower them to participate in fisheries from a perspective of decent work, equity, gender-justice, self-reliance and sustainability". As a support organisation, ICSF is committed to influence national, regional and international decision-making processes in fisheries so that the importance of small-scale fisheries, fishworkers and fishing communities is duly recognised. In this endeavour, ICSF works in collaboration with organisations of fishworkers and other like-minded groups...ICSF's offices are located in India and Belgium. The General Body

of ICSF Members takes all policy decisions, which are implemented by an elected Animation Team that steers the programmes. **ICSF's Mission.** To support fishing communities and fishworker organisations, and empower them to participate in fisheries from a perspective of decent work, equity, gender-justice, self-reliance and sustainability

Prol-Position. An anarchist/autonomist/shopfloor and internationalist website, possibly based in Germany(?), but providing analyses also from formerly-Communist Europe and other world areas. Founded early-2000s? Open to the precarious.

Today, many struggles have an international dimension. The people involved face a social and international context mediated by capital which is turned against them. Capital and workers themselves move faster than their struggles spread:

- Migrant agricultural workers are being replaced by other newer migrants,
- Workers in older core-industries are put under pressure by (threatened) relocation or closure,
- Workers in new factories and development areas are threatened by flexible work-rules and unemployment,
- The unemployed see themselves forced into more intense flexibility and into undermining work standards,
- Workers in many production units are being played off against each other by intensive transportation and new communication technologies...

If we want to understand these trends and support the struggles taking place under these circumstances, we have to acknowledge and analyse their international dimension - and organise an international debate about them.

Unions and other forms of workers' representation clearly remain an obstacle for further development of struggles. By narrowly focusing on the interests of single companies, professions, nationalities etc., unions can do nothing but widen the divisions within the class. They need to stick to forms of representation and delegation to negotiate, and therefore have to suppress tendencies towards self-organisation and autonomy within the struggles. They do this, for instance, by retaining and manipulating information or by releasing reports merely glorifying struggles (whether lost or won). There is also growing potential for links between the so-called social movements, the new forms of organising they develop and the direct action of proletarian struggles. Some of these trends we could see within the so-called antiglobalisation movement. We want to circulate reports about experiences of self-organisation within these conflicts, understand their material conditions, and acknowledge their potentials and difficulties.

International Dockworkers Council. A Spain-based and syndicalist-inspired network of waterfront unions, autonomous from the traditional inter/national transportworkers' unions. Goes back to informal conferences, joint protests and innovative communications in the 1980s (Waterman 1990). Addressed to the unionised/unionisable. This nameless network appears to have grown, consolidated – and named itself - since the Liverpool Dock Strike in the mid-1990s:

[T]he support given to the Liverpool cause by individual dockworker unions revealed the power of international solidarity. These unions quickly came to the conclusion that an organisation, similar to that which had co-operated internationally in supporting the Liverpool Dockers, needed to be constituted as soon as possible. The solution to the problem gradually became clearer to see. Unions which had taken part in supportive actions for Liverpool's dockers learned how close to each other they actually were and how potentially powerful their mutual co-operation could be. These unions took the natural step of forming an international organisation to continue co-operation along the same lines and with the same simple concept - international solidarity between dockworkers... <http://www.hamn.nu/internats/idc/idce.htm>

Whereas, at this time, the IDC and the International Transportworkers Federation, either ignored or were hostile to each other, it may be that they now operate in parallel, in complementary manner or at least in mutual tolerance.

China Labour Bulletin. An information and support centre for Chinese workers, based in Hong Kong. Given the rapid growth, immense extent, great variety of the Chinese wage labour force, even outside agriculture, this centre inevitably deals with both the formally unionised, with migrant/contract workers, with the state-approved union structure and with a wide range of forms of labour protest.

Founded in 1994 by labour activist Han Dongfang, **China Labour Bulletin** seeks to uphold and defend the rights of workers across China. We support the development of democratic trade unions, respect for and enforcement of the country's labour laws, and the full participation of workers in the creation of civil society. We also seek the official recognition in China of international standards and conventions providing for workers' freedom of association and the right to free collective bargaining[...] One of our main areas of focus is on the peaceful resolution of labour disputes, strikes and protests, all of which have increased rapidly in China in recent years [...] CLB's experienced research team has produced...reports on the labour rights situation in China, ranging from the country's appalling coal mine safety record, the silicosis epidemic among Guangdong's gemstone workers, and the abusive labour conditions endured by female migrant workers from the countryside.

Via Campesina: The International Peasants' Movement. Founded 1993 in Belgium, this body organises rural producers, including agricultural labourers and indigenous peoples, worldwide. Inspired by Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil? It takes up a wide range of rural issues, including landlessness, agricultural reform, the environment, food. Structured much like an international union organisation, a major participant in the World Social Forum and the GJ&SM. Evidently open to labour's others, and to other aspects of labour.

Who is La Via Campesina We are the international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, rural women, indigenous people, rural youth and agricultural workers. We defend the values and the basic interests of our members. We are an autonomous, pluralist and multicultural movement, independent of any political, economic, or other type of affiliation. Our members are from 56 countries from Asia, Africa, Europe,

and the Americas...

What is our main objective? The principal objective of La Via Campesina is to develop solidarity and unity among small farmer organisations in order to promote gender parity and social justice in fair economic relations; the preservation of land, water, seeds and other natural resources; food sovereignty; sustainable agricultural production based on small and medium-sized producers.

What do we defend? ...Peasant, family farm-based production...People's food sovereignty...Decentralised food production and supply chains...

Streetnet International was founded in Durban, South Africa, in 2002, and coordinates organisations of (mostly-female) hawkers, vendors and market traders. Close relations with some major national and international trade-union organisations. Inspired by union model? It has recognition from the International Labour Organisation. It is also active in the WSF. Clearly addressed to labour's others.

The aim of StreetNet is to promote the exchange of information and ideas on critical issues facing street vendors, market vendors and hawkers (i.e. mobile vendors) and on practical organising and advocacy strategies. Through StreetNet, member organisations should gain an understanding of the common problems of street vendors, develop new ideas for strengthening their organising and advocacy efforts, and join in international campaigns to promote policies and actions that can contribute to improving the lives of millions of street vendors, market vendors and hawkers around the world...A focal point of action has been the **Bellagio International Declaration of Street Vendors** which was drafted by the initial founders of StreetNet in 1995. This declaration sets forth a plan to create national policies to promote and protect the rights of street vendors. The Declaration also calls for action at four other levels: by individual traders, by traders' associations, by city governments, and by international organisations including the United Nations, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the World Bank.

No Border Network appears to have transmogrified from a European organisation or network of and for im/migrant workers into a website serving such. Possibly of autonomist inspiration, it takes up a broad range of issues concerning migrants, and is active in the WSF and GJ&SM. Founded early-2000s? Addressed to labour's others.

The no border network is a tool for all groups and grass root organisations who work on the questions of migrants and asylum seekers in order to struggle alongside with them for freedom of movement, for the freedom for all to stay in the place which they have chosen, against repression and and the many controls which multiply the borders everywhere in all countries. This network is different from lobbying groups and NGOs because it is based on groups of grass root activists and intends to stay so...The no border network is born of the convergence of campaigns in various European countries at the moment when undocumented foreigners had started to get self organised to get together and become visible to all (occupations, especially of churches, actions, demonstrations), to take their struggle in their own hands, in short to be autonomous. Freedom of movement, documents for all, abolish racist laws, no deportations were the main slogans of these sans-papiers.

Shack/Slum Dwellers International. South Africa-based network of slum community organisations. A 'non-worker' poor-people's movement with an expressed class and new social movement orientation. Addressed to other aspects of labour existence. Founded early-2000s? No obvious connection with either unions or the GJ&SM.

The 1960s and 70s marked the beginning of new forms of political activities and social movements, particularly the civil rights, the environmental, the women's movements, the peace and the human rights movements. In the post cold war period, there has been a spurt of non-state interventions by NGOs and grassroots movements, including the anti-globalisation movement. Social movements have taken on new institutional forms. While the old social movements were country-specific, the new social movements cut across national boundaries. These new transnational networks are part of what the scholarly literature refers to as a growing global civil society of transnational advocacy networks.

The nature of these movements is different from the workers' movements and the traditional movements of the political left. The issues of their concern extend to human rights and democracy. They are more concerned about equity than social equality and much more focused on the self-determination of the individual and society than on power politics and the state. These movements are dominated by a western, highly educated middle class and attract people from a similar class position in the developing countries. Because of this class bias, there is generally a lack of understanding and knowledge about the forms of social mobilisation and action undertaken by the disadvantaged and the poor. These people, who are vulnerable because of their limited formal access to power, are often invisible to national politics, national civil society and the established political system. In terms of the pursuit of basic needs at the level of the household, the poor women (and men) who float in and out of these social movements are basically pragmatic in nature. Their extraordinary capacity to survive under impossible conditions is - more often than not - based on their capacity to seek compromise and mediation. This pragmatic approach is compatible with the agendas of citywide and national movements of the urban poor, who now operate in an environment in which the role of the nation state has changed dramatically.

Networking of traditional social-reformist labour internationals. Originally hostile to or dismissive of international NGOs, the traditional Europe-based social-democratic union and/or party internationals are now heavily involved in or promoting NGOs and networking. These may overlap with projects of the Geneva-based International Labour Organisation. Examples include the Brussels-based **Solidar** and its offshoot (?) the **Global Network/Red Solidaridad**, the **Global Union Research Network** (for one activity of which see Hoffer 2006), a campaign around clothing for the Beijing Olympics, **Playfair**, the **Global Progressive Forum** (heavily promoting the ITUC/ILO project, **Decent Work/Decent Rights**), a human rights project, **Social Alert!**. Several of these may also overlap with the World Social Forum. Primarily addressed to the unionised/unionisable.

The **Global Progressive Forum** is the first ever global space for the creation of a global, progressive community of individuals, organisations and movements throughout the world for a fairer, more inclusive globalisation. It

was launched on 27-29 November 2003 in Brussels, bringing together more than 1,000 progressive policy-makers, NGOs, trade unions, academics, from all over the world, at an event organised by the Party of European Socialists, its Parliamentary Group in the European Parliament and the Socialist International. The Forum aims to play a positive role in changing the course of globalisation and in reforming global governance and globalisation policies by allowing progressive voices to discuss and articulate a new reform agenda...Our vision at the Global Progressive Forum is for a reform of globalisation that is progressive, inclusive and constructive. **Progressive**, based on the universal values of justice, peace, security, solidarity, freedom, democracy, and equality. **Inclusive**, involving and supported by a vast global community. **Constructive**, based on intelligent proposals for positive and long-lasting policy and governance reform....Reforming globalisation will take time, but it will only happen with massive popular and strong political momentum.

The **Open World Conference of Workers** is a French/US initiative of a particular international Trotskyist tendency which, despite its vanguardist nature, manages to hold large international conferences, and – exceptionally – takes a major interest in the International Labour Organisation. It shows no particular interest in the WSF or GJ&SM. Exceptionally, it is self-funded. Addressed to unionised/unionisable.

Global Unionism [is] "the only effective means to defeat Global Capitalism"...The Open World Conference method and objectives were spelled out clearly in its Final Declaration: "Our aim is to improve living and working conditions, and to defend the rights and guarantees written into collective-bargaining agreements, legal job status and Conventions of the International Labor Organisation (ILO). These are the conditions for genuine peace in the world. These are the conditions for real democracy in all countries, which can only be based upon the rights of peoples to self-determination and equality between races. These rights can only be won by the peoples themselves as they work to seek out and find the solutions to the problems which confront them."

A Global Dialogue for a Fair Globalisation (Waterman 2007c: Appendix 3). One of a number of international conferences involving traditional international unions, new international labour networks and various other bodies linked to the WSF or the GJ&SM. An example of international union networking that, whilst promoting social-reformism, reaches out beyond either the traditional unionised/isable - or social-democratic family?

[T]his three day seminar...will: Examine the current conditions of the global economy; Elaborate on the impact this has on workers and their communities; Examine the capacity of the labour movement to tackle these challenges; Develop a strategic vision for the [Global Network] in contributing to the global fight for social justice, in particular through extending the work done on the Decent Work agenda; Develop a plan for utilising the strengths and aptitudes of existing partners to create vibrant national and regional dialogue, produce research, act in solidarity, lobby and build campaigns; Improve coordination, communication, funding and planning mechanisms to allow for a fuller, more

strategic participation of partners and sustainability of the GN. There will be 60 participants drawn from around 30 countries.

Women's/Feminist networking related to the WSF/GJ&SM. Given the reputedly less-institutionalised/more-networked nature of the international women's movement, a comparison of labour/socialist with women's/feminist networking could throw interesting light on the former. This would have to consider 'non-labour-specific' networks and – for cutting edge? – those closely related to the WSF/GJ&SM. The matter is increasingly written about (ALAI 2002, Alvarez, Faria and Nobre 2006, Brenner 2004, Conway 2007, Eschle 2005, Vargas 2005). Examples for consideration could be the **World March of Women** and **Feminist Dialogues**. The names suggest the difference between a women's movement and a feminist initiative. The first originates in Canada, though now based in Brazil, the second with Latin American and Indian feminists. The first is primarily a campaigning body, which has produced a **World Women's Charter for Humanity**, which mentions labour issues, and developed independently of the WSF. The second developed in response to the (gender-blindness of the) WSF in 2003 and has been involved in cross-movement dialogue within, making passing reference to labour issues. Both have representatives on the WSF IC. This is **Feminist Dialogues** addressing the Nairobi WSF, 2007:

In our reflections on feminist organising and strategies in social justice movement spaces like the WSF, some questions to reflect on are: Feminist perspectives and women's presence have been marginalised within the Forum. In the cacophony of diverse visions and struggles for emancipation, how have feminist movements and issues been heard and re/presented? What strategies have we implemented to address the story line that - "the struggle against capitalism is still to be prioritised over and against others within the Forum"? What are the problems and successes in terms of building alliances to addressing issues of class, gender, caste, sexual orientation, age, dis/ability, etc? How is the transnational feminist movement addressing the leadership issues at the Forum - Are there gaps between political and social activities, women's and socialist groups, young and old? The Forum surfaces tensions between NGOs and radical movements. What is the role of the Forum's Organising Committee, the International Secretariat, their formation and their powers? Where exactly does the money come from, who gets it, and what does it pay for? Once counter-hegemonic globalisation is consolidated and the idea that another world is possible is credible, how do we sustain this idea and for it be fulfilled with the same level of radical democracy that helped formulate it?

This inevitably arbitrary and partial listing suggests several preliminary conclusions: 1) that networking has been a growing form of international labour solidarity activity worldwide since the 1980s; 2) that whilst it may be the common form adopted by new or marginal worker types, or for the expression of new demands, that it is not confined to such; 3) that such activities, even when carried out by Marxist/Leninist, Feminist or Anarchist/Autonomist groups (or under such inspiration) customarily have a low ideological profile; 4) that such bodies implicitly see themselves as either supplementary to the traditional union internationals, or as challenging them, but not necessarily as alternatives to such; 5) that we are talking about a variety of functions and forms (mobilising/organising, supporting/servicing, information/communication) having only in common their non- or post-union form; 6) that the international union institutions are themselves increasingly open to or

penetrated by networking; 7) the growth of such phenomena requires that they be analysed neither in terms of support to or subversion of the traditional union institution, but in network terms and in relation to global social emancipation.

Whilst we might further conclude that networking is the appropriate form for inter/national worker self-articulation under contemporary capitalist conditions, and that it is therefore the spontaneous, normal or easiest form for the articulation (joining, expression) of new worker types or new labour issues, this does not yet tell us about reach, effect or longevity. Nor does it tell us much about the values being carried or the meaning for those involved. Research would need to cover all such matters.

A New Social Unionism, Internationalism, Communication and Culture - in a Nutshell

[Adapted from Waterman 2004]

Introduction: New Capitalism + New Work and Workers = New Unionism?

This is an attempt to combine, in the most compact form, ideas about a new kind of unionism appropriate for our present world (dis)order. These are about three closely inter-related aspects of labour protest. I have been working on these aspects for some 15 or 20 years.

I do not here go into the now familiar scenario of capitalist globalisation and union crisis, except to say that the Chinese ideograph for 'crisis' combines those for 'danger' and 'opportunity'.

What I do want to remind people about is that the labour movement has dramatically changed form with successive transformations of capitalism: from the local Guild to the national Craft Union, from the national Craft to the international Industrial Union.

We seem to urgently need a new form of labour self-articulation – articulation meaning both joining and expression – appropriate for both effective defence and counter-assertion against a radically new kind of capitalism of a highly-aggressive and literally destructive nature.

It goes without saying, finally, that this whole argument is open to criticism, rejection, adaptation and surpassing – particularly by union activists and workers themselves.

A New Social Unionism

By a new social unionism is meant a labour movement surpassing existing models of 'economic', 'political' or 'political-economic' unionism, by addressing itself to all forms of work, by taking on socio-cultural forms, and addressing itself to civil society. Such a union model would be one which, amongst other characteristics, would be:

- Struggling within and around waged work, not simply for better wages and conditions but for increased worker and union control over the labour process, investments, new technology, relocation, subcontracting, training and education policies. Such strategies and struggles should be carried out in dialogue and common action with affected communities and interests so as to avoid conflicts (eg with environmentalists, with women) and to positively increase the appeal of the demands;
- Struggling against hierarchical, authoritarian and technocratic working methods and relations, for socially-useful and environmentally-friendly products, for a reduction in the hours of work, for the distribution of that which is available and necessary, for the sharing of domestic work, and for an increase in free time for cultural self-development and self-realisation;

- Intimately related with the movements of other non-unionised or non-unionisable working classes or categories (the precariat, petty-commodity sector, homeworkers, peasants, housewives, technicians and professionals);
- Intimately articulated with other non- or multi-class democratic movements (base movements of churches, women's, residents', ecological, human-rights and peace movements, etc) in the effort to create a powerful and diverse civil society;
- Intimately articulated with other (potential) allies as an autonomous, equal and democratic partner, neither claiming to be, nor subordinating itself to, a 'vanguard' or 'primary' organisation or power;
- Taking up the new social issues within society at large, as they arise for workers specifically and as they express themselves within the union itself (struggle against authoritarianism, majoritarianism, bureaucracy, sexism, racism, etc);
- Favouring shopfloor democracy and encouraging direct horizontal relations both between workers and between the workers and other popular/democratic social forces;
- Active on the terrain of education, culture and communication, stimulating worker and popular culture, supporting initiatives for democracy and pluralism both inside and outside the dominant institutions or media, locally, nationally, globally;
- Open to networking both within and between organisations, understanding the value of informal, horizontal, flexible coalitions, alliances and interest groups to stimulate organisational democracy, pluralism and innovation.

A New Labour Internationalism

In so far as a new labour internationalism addresses itself to the problems of a globalised networked capitalism (of which inter-state relations are but one part), this would have to see itself as part of a general global solidarity movement, from which it must learn and to which it must contribute. A new kind of labour internationalism implies, amongst other things:

- Moving from the international relations of union or other officials towards face-to-face relations of concerned labouring people at the shopfloor, community or grassroots level;
- Surpassing dependence on the centralised, bureaucratic and rigid model of the pyramidal international organisation by stimulating the self-empowering, decentralised, horizontal, democratic and flexible model of the international information network;
- Moving from an 'aid model' (one-way flows of money and material from the 'rich, powerful, free' unions, workers or others), to a 'solidarity model' (two-way or multi-directional flows of political support, information and ideas);
- Moving from verbal declarations, appeals and conferences to political activity, creative work, visits, or direct financial contributions (which will continue to be necessary) by the working people concerned;
- Basing international solidarity on the expressed daily needs, values and capacities of ordinary working people, not simply on those of their representatives;
- Recognising that whilst labour is not the privileged bearer of internationalism, it is essential to it, and therefore articulating itself with other democratic internationalisms, so as to reinforce wage-labour struggles and surpass a workerist internationalism;
- Overcoming ideological, political and financial dependency in international solidarity work by financing internationalist activities from worker or publicly-collected funds, and stimulating autonomous (independent of capital/state) research activities and policy formulation;

- Replacing the political/financial coercion, the private collusion and public silences of the traditional internationalisms, with a frank, friendly, constructive and public discourse of equals, made accessible to interested workers.
- Recognising that there is no single site or level of international struggle and that, whilst the shopfloor, grassroots and community may be the base, the traditional formal terrains can be used and can also be influenced;
- Recognising that the development of a new internationalism requires contributions from and discussion with labour movements in West, East and South, as well as within and between other socio-geographic regions.

Elements of such an understanding can be found within both international union pronouncements and practice. It is, I think, becoming the common sense amongst left labour internationalists, although some still seem to consider labour (or even union) internationalism as the one that leads, or ought to lead, the new wave of struggles against neo-liberal globalisation. Yet others are beginning to go beyond ideal types to spell out global labour/popular and democratic alternatives to 'globalisation-from-above' in both programmatic and relational terms.

Internationalism, Labour Internationalism, Union Internationalism

We need to distinguish between the concepts of 'internationalism', 'labour internationalism' and 'union internationalism'. Within social movement discourse, *internationalism* is customarily associated with 19th century labour, with socialism and Marxism. It *may* be projected backwards so as to include the ancient religious universalisms, or the liberal cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment. And it *should* be extended, in both the 19th and 20th century, so as to include women's/feminist, pacifist, anti-imperial and human rights forms. In so far as it is limited to these two centuries, and to a 'world of nation states', we need a new term for the era of globalisation. Some talk of 'global solidarity', in so far as it is addressed to globalisation, its discontents and alternatives. As for *labour internationalism* this refers to a wide range of past and present labour-related ideas, strategies and practices, including those of co-operatives, labour and socialist parties, socialist intellectuals, culture, the media and even sport. As for *union internationalism* this is restricted to the primary form of worker self-articulation during the national-industrial-colonial era. Trade union internationalism has so displaced or dominated labour internationalism during the later 20th century as to be commonly conflated with the latter. Yet it is precisely *union* internationalism that is most profoundly in crisis, and in question, under our globalised networked capitalism.

Networking, Communications, Culture

We really need an additional, even an alternative, principle of worker self-articulation (meaning both joining and expression) appropriate to our era. In other words, we need one that would continually and effectively undermine the reproduction of bureaucracy, hierarchy, and dogma that occurs also within 'radical' and 'revolutionary' unions.

This principle is the *network*, and the practice is *networking*. There is no need to fetishise the network or to demonise the organisation. 'Networking' is also a way of understanding human interrelations, and we can therefore see an organisation in network terms, just as we can look at a network in organisational ones. Nonetheless, it remains true that the movement from an inter/national-industrial to a globalised-networked political-economy is also one from an organised to a networked capitalism. It is from the international labour networks and

networking that the new initiatives, speed, creativity, and flexibility tend to come. An international unionism concerned with being radical-democratic and internationalist will learn this, or it will stagnate. International union networking itself will stagnate if it does not recognise itself as a part of a radical-democratic internationalist project that goes far beyond the unions, far beyond labour problems.

'Networking' relates to communication rather than institutions. International labour networking must be informed by and produce a radical-democratic style of communication and sense of culture...a 'global solidarity culture'.

Labour has a long and rich cultural history and has in the past innovated and even led popular, democratic, and even avant-garde cultural movements. Once again, international trade unionism has to either surpass its reductionist self-definition or remain invisible in the international media arena, which is increasingly challenging and even replacing the institutional terrain as the central site of democratic contestation and deliberation.