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## *The Millennial Turns and the New Period: An Introduction*

*Ben Manski, Hillary Lazar and Suren Moodliar*

Twenty years ago a movement of movements came together in the streets of the largest city of the U.S. Pacific Northwest and defeated the World Trade Organization (WTO), the central state building project of global capitalism. The “Battle in Seattle” was an exclamation punctuating a larger period of struggle. What is the relevance of that last period to the current one? What produced it, and what in turn have the movements of that period left for us today?

We argue that in the 1990s popular movements in the United States made a series of cultural turns that, by the turn of the millennium, made possible not only the Seattle WTO uprising but also the promise of another world to come. These “movement turns” – anarchist, democratic, and global – were closely linked reorientations of popular movements around paradigms of autonomy, participation, and globality. Together, they produced movements with significantly different goals, practices, and trajectories than the movements of the preceding period. Activism, organizing, and struggle in the first millennial years felt and looked different: Confident, assertive, and visionary.

With this study we analyze the period of struggle of 1994–2014 in the U.S. The Seattle WTO uprising was a transformative event in this period. We briefly address what happened in Seattle, where the Seattle moment came from, and how what happened in Seattle related to the movements of the period. We answer these questions not only to document a vital recent history but also to systematically bring knowledge about the last period into engagement with the movements of today. We also address what is different about the current period: a socialist turn on the U.S. left contending with a nationalist turn on the U.S. right.

What happened in Seattle? Over the week of November 28th to December 3, 1999, the streets of Seattle were filled with marchers whose banners flew the colors of every hue of the social movements of the 1990s. At that historical moment, that unity in diversity was remarkable, especially where it revealed new alliances between labor unions and environmental groups, urban organizers and rural farmers, and people of the Global North and the Global South. More remarkable still was that these alliances succeeded in their ambitious goal of shutting down the WTO meeting. Led by thousands of young activists trained in the nonviolent wilderness defense campaigns of the Pacific Northwest and Cascadian region, on November 30, 1999, the Seattle protesters effectively blocked the entrances to the Washington State Convention and Trade Center.

In response police cracked skulls, broke arms, attacked the protesters with pepper spray, plastic projectiles, tear gas, and stun grenades, and instituted martial law in much of the city. By the next day, tens of thousands of Seattleites, angered by the police violence, had joined the protests. Next, scores of WTO delegates walked out in a show of support for the uprising, sounding the beginning of the end for the WTO meeting. Supporters of the Seattle uprising rallied in hundreds of communities around the world. By the end of the week, labor unions and community groups had called a one-day regional general strike, the first such mass work stoppage widely observed in the area in nearly a century.<sup>1</sup>

Seattle was an exclamation that punctuated the times. Describing the uprising as an exclamation is appropriate because, from the revolutionary ecological movement Earth First! to the social justice service sector union UNITE HERE!, the exclamation point was the punctuation mark most idiosyncratic of the popular movements of the 1990s. Just as Chicago '68 took on a particular set of meanings for U.S. movements in later years, Seattle '99 became a signifier for a repertoire of collective action and of a "Seattle Moment" in world history (Wood 2012). It became the object of academic studies (Butko 2006; Cockburn and St. Clair 2000; Juris 2008;), activist retrospectives (Boyd 2002; Notes from Nowhere 2003; Guilloud 2009; Dossani 2019; Starr 2019), documentaries (Friedberg and Rowley 2000), and even big budget film thrillers (Townsend 2008). Many of these came at anniversaries or in the years immediately following the uprising. But missing until now has

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1. This and the previous paragraph are reproduced from Manski's "Seattle WTO Uprising Still a Force in World Events, 15 Years Later," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, December 2014.

been a disciplined attempt to bring social movement scholarship into engagement with activist experience in providing a systematic analysis not only of what happened in the streets of Seattle, and what occurred in the Seattle Moment, but of the larger period of struggle.

What was the relationship between that moment and the larger period? For popular movements in North America, events elsewhere were what set the larger millennial period in motion. Movements from below took down edifices of the Cold War from the Berlin Wall to apartheid Soweto. A movement from above imposed new regimes of governance through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) process, General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATT), World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The single most influential event that opened this period in the U.S. was something that happened almost a thousand miles south of the border in Jovel, Chiapas, México on January 1, 1994 – the Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle by the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN). For many activists within the U.S., the audacity of the Zapatistas in declaring “*Ya Basta!*” and making war on colonialism, empire, racism, and neoliberal capitalism deeply resonated. The coalition that had resisted NAFTA was strong and growing. Support for the LA Uprising of 1993 – the mass protests against police brutality that followed the beating of Rodney King – was widespread and led to demands for prison and police abolition. A new anti-corporate politics was taking hold in the resistance campaigns against the austerity, deregulation, privatization, and corporatization policies of the Clinton era. And an upsurge of immigrant rights organizing responded to President Clinton’s implementation of new anti-immigrant laws.

The trajectory of popular movements of this period shared several tendencies. One was a cognitive and emotional shift from an activist pose of “doing what one can” and building for an as-yet not visible future in which, as a popular bumper sticker of the 1980s declared, “The U.S. Left Will Rise Again,” and toward a more assertive posture expressed in the chant, “Ain’t No Power Like the Power of the People” and then later that, “Another World is Possible,” and “Another U.S. is Necessary,” and finally, by the 2010s, that “We Are Unstoppable, Another World is Possible.”

Another tendency of movements in this period is shown in the shift from single issue politics in the early 1980s, to multi-issue politics by the early 1990s, to intersectional, synthetic, and eventually, systemic politics by the early 2000s. This shift is illustrated by the change from so-called “corporate campaigns” targeting individual corporate bad

actors such as Exxon or Dow in the 1980s, to campaigns seeking wholesale reform of corporate law in the 1990s, to the emergence of a popular anti-capitalist politics by the early 2000s.<sup>2</sup> Another example of this change can be found in the late 1990s articulation of a politics of prison and police abolition as a response to anti-police brutality and community police reform campaigns of earlier years.

Our contributions to the study of Seattle 1999 and the Seattle Moment come in our situating Seattle as a transformative event in a transformative period for the movements of the U.S. Thus, we address the millennial period, the movements particularly relevant to what happened in Seattle. And we focus on the U.S. Seattle resonated globally, with solidarity actions organized around the world, and Seattle was part of a global process. But Seattle was also significant for the U.S. in that it both represented a qualitative leap in the participation of U.S. movements in global struggles to levels unseen since the beginning of the Cold War and also in that it involved processes quite particular to the U.S.'s domestic politics of corporate power, austerity, and resource extraction.

In the next pages we provide an orchestral score introducing the works collected here, showing how they speak to each other in sounding a larger understanding of our times. We elaborate a way to conceptualize the dimensions and trajectories of the movements of the millennial period. We introduce and analyze the three millennial turns - anarchist, democratic, and global - most relevant to Seattle and much of what followed from it. We describe the contemporary socialist turn and explore how that is related and yet different from what the movements of the previous period produced. And we conclude with our observations about the prospects for socialism and democracy after the millennial turns.

### **This collection**

This collection begins by exploring the Seattle moment with studies and essays that consider the tactics, dynamics, and actors at play during those catalytic days of protest. Lesley Wood sets the context by providing a framework for identifying the tactical and organizational influences that the mass protests at the turn of the

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2. In the words of a frequently repeated expression of Richard Grossman of the Program on Corporations, Law, and Democracy, this shift initially entailed a change of focus "from what corporations *do* is the problem to what corporations *are* is the problem."

millennium had on subsequent mobilizations. As she points out, although much of the repertoires and frameworks employed during the WTO protests were not wholly unique or new, it was this moment that solidified what she calls the “Seattle Model” – characterized by decentralized networks, blockades and black bloc techniques, and prefigurative practice – as the dominant organizational form for the better part of the next two decades.

Like Wood, Seattle participants John Peck and Dominic Wetzel also touch on links between Seattle and past struggles, while foregrounding its significance as a turning point for activism. In their narrative retrospectives they show the critical role of pre-existing movement networks and decades of cross-movement organizing from labor to food sovereignty and radical queer subcultures that made Seattle possible. Seattle was not a pop-up street party that arose out of thin air, but rather was in some respects what Peck describes as “an activist reunion” that brought players from across fronts of struggle to convergence around the shared goal of pushing for real democracy and challenging neoliberal corporate rule. This resulted in an explosive confluence of energy and vision at a particular moment in time, which solidified these turns and new directions in mobilizing. As Peck comments, “if we’re to think of movements as waves of protest that amplify and interact with one another, the Battle of Seattle ought to be considered “a veritable movement tsunami.”

What also becomes readily evident in these works is the resounding impact Seattle has had not only on subsequent movements, but on activists who were there. For Wetzel, it was the moment that inspired him “to see the world as a place filled with possibility for radical action, thought and imagination.” As AK Thompson makes clear in his exploration of what it means for us to “win,” the transformational experience of Seattle has become a piece of our collective movement memory and mythology. Thompson notes that, “sometimes the writing is on the wall, and in Seattle the writing said ‘we are winning.’ Although I was not present to see it firsthand, I learned about what had transpired from a snapshot posted online ... it made me feel like I was part of it too. Reading the writing on the wall felt like awakening from a dream ...”.

To be sure there were limitations to Seattle. Wood and Peck both emphasize its failure to adequately address white supremacy and racist dynamics within movement dynamics, which in part accounts for some of the model’s decline. Furthermore, there is ready acknowledgement that tactics such as summit-hopping and targeting international financial institutions have long since been replaced with

other approaches such as reclamation of public space. No doubt this also reflects the new and ever-shifting global historical context. Over the course of these decades much has changed.

Yet as these contributions also make clear, as with other movement histories there is a messiness and complexity to Seattle that future generations of movement builders learn from. Even after a period of struggle ends, elements produced in that period carry forward. As Wood and others observe, many elements constructed in the 1990s have manifested in the horizontal organizing, direct democracy, and spokescouncils practiced in later mobilizations.

Drawing on a wealth of ethnographic data, Jackie Smith shows Seattle's role ushering in a global turn in the politics of the U.S. left. As she explains, Seattle created space necessary to launch "a movement-building process that gave birth to the World Social Forums, which in turn advanced new movement relationships and organizing that continue today." For Smith, not only did this help to "focus energy and inspire hope for a different kind of globalization," but it provided space for mobilizations such as right to the city, peasant, and Indigenous movements to find commonality across terrains of struggle and strategically embrace "human rights as a mobilizing framework and as a tool for amplifying their power using international law and institutions." Similarly, Chris Hardnack explores elements of the global turn in his study of how the Global Justice Movement (GJM) challenged globalization through counter-hegemonic framing that undermined neoliberal claims that free trade benefits all, or that "there is no alternative" to neoliberal policies.

Marina Sitrin then brings elements of the three millennial turns together in her reflections on "a new form of movement" and the "DNA" or common characteristics of movements since Seattle, particularly Occupy and the Movement of the Squares. Echoing others here, she draws into relief the global, democratic, and anarchist turns:

Occupy Wall Street and the assembly-based prefigurative movements were born of rupture with past ways of organizing that began in the 1990s, was made most visible by the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico in 1994, and then took off during the Global Justice Movement (GJM) following Seattle in 1999. This rupture most visibly took the form of horizontal over hierarchical organizing models; looking to power from below, not institutions of power; focusing on prefigurative social relationships; while eschewing "ends-justify-the-means" sorts of politics.

In her interview with Hillary Lazar, Lisa Fithian points to many of these same elements. A veteran organizer and direct action trainer,

Fithian looks at movement lineages, beginning with Seattle and tracing through Hurricane Katrina disaster relief to Occupy to recent climate justice mobilizing. Along with other aspects of these turns, above all, Fithian underscores the importance of non-cooperation, direct action as well as the prefigurative anarchist dimensions to these movements. She comments: "I often say that the most radical, and rapidly transformative strategy is this type of non-cooperation and direct action. Direct action is when we, individually and collectively, hold the greatest power ... which we saw a lot of in Seattle."

Other contributors help to illuminate how particular terrains of struggle mattered to what manifested – and failed to manifest – in the Seattle moment and through the movements of the larger period. Journalist and leading media activist Norman Stockwell provides a personal account of the critical role of new forms of communication technology and media democracy. In his interview with Ben Manski, Stockwell explains that Indymedia and other projects engaged with and transformed the internet, the world wide web, and new digital media helped, "to push a message of people's globalization." These tools were built by media activists to allow, "people to combine audio, video, text and distribute it over the internet in ways that had not really been done before."

In another interview, labor historian and organizer Jeremy Brecher speaks with Suren Moodliar about the role of unions and internationalism in the GJM. Brecher explains that it was the convergence of actors such as the AFL-CIO, Citizens Trade Campaign, and the Direct Action Network around a common desire to see globalization from below that led Seattle to become such a catalytic moment.

Another distinguished left intellectual and organizer, Bill Fletcher, notes that not all movements of the time had the same relationship or close connection to Seattle. In speaking with Manski, Fletcher emphasizes the centrality of the union reform movement to what happened in Seattle. "What's important to understand about Seattle and the years leading up to it," he comments, "was an increasing awareness of globalization, which was starting to affect more and more of the Left and progressive forces." That awareness was present not only in the buildup to Seattle, but also in the construction of the type of inside-outside electoral politics Fletcher practiced and in his efforts to build the Black left through the Black Radical Congress and related projects.

Revolutionary scholar-activists Walda Katz-Fishman and Jerome Scott, in their discussions with Lazar, echo Fletcher in exploring the multiple racial and class terrains navigated in the revolutionary



processes that accompanied alter-globalization. For them, it was not Seattle that led to their involvement with the World Social Forum or engagement with transnational organizing. Instead, much in line with Fletcher's observation, it was through their work on Project South and the Out of Poverty network that put them on a different "track that led from NAFTA and runaway shops and trying to figure out what was happening with the industrial base that was being wiped out in the South."

Similarly, Marcel Paret and Shannon Gleeson with their study articulate the relevance of the contemporary immigrants' rights movement to what we define here as the global turn. As they argue, there is a complicated yet profound anti-capitalist and anti-neoliberal current within the immigrant rights movement. Yet, "immigration issues did not figure prominently" in Seattle, marking a missed opportunity for "labor, immigrant rights groups, and anti-globalization efforts ... [to] have converged around an anti-capitalist agenda in this political moment."

Ultimately, through this combination of ethnographic studies, essays, personal reflections, and interviews, we reveal much of the origins and substantial effects of the anarchist, democratic, and global turns of the millennium. In so doing, we make the case for the materiality of those turns, and we demonstrate the utility of bringing the concept of the cultural turn into the field of social movement studies. The identification of movement turns and of the movement building processes that produce them can be useful in explaining changes in movement trajectories, constituents, and practices. We also provide an empirical framework grounded in activist knowledge for historicizing contemporary social movements in the U.S. Perhaps most importantly, we do all of this in order to systematically bring knowledge about the last period of struggle into engagement with the movements of today.

### **The dimensions and trajectories of movements**

How can we learn from a history of struggle? Social interaction at the level of society are so complex that drawing lessons about regularities in social struggle, never mind forming predictions about movement trajectories, is considered very difficult (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Krinsky and Mische 2013). In convening this collective study of the movements of the 1990s–2000s period as they related to Seattle, we emphasize the explanatory power of activist praxis. Such an emphasis recognizes that self-identified change-makers – activists

- are the primary builders of movements (Flacks 1988). Activists analyze histories, current conditions, and possible futures, and the understandings they create significantly determine their goals and actions (Eyerman and Jamison 1991). Thus, these understandings provide data critical to explaining the trajectories of social movements. In this section we describe five analytical concepts useful in such study; four of these - movement elements, movement building, periods of struggle and terrains of struggle - are drawn from earlier work (Manski 2019); the fifth concept - the movement turn - we introduce here.

Movement *elements* include all the various types of resources, continuity structures, cultural repertoires, and leadership properties believed by social movement scholars to matter to what movements do. The elements of movements include material resources in the form of capital, labor, and organizational resources (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Ganz 2000; Han 2014); structures, networks, and communities that reinforce collective identity and support movement continuity (Rupp and Taylor 1987; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Hunt and Benford 2007; Flesher Fominaya 2010); cultural repertoires that include tactics, frames, and strategies for collective action (Tilly 1977; Swidley 1986; Snow, Tan and Owens 2013); and activists themselves and the leadership they provide (Whalen and Flacks 1989; McAdam 1989; Barker and Krinsky 2016). Table 1, below, provides a simple matrix for identifying the elements that movements use and produce.<sup>3</sup>

*Movement building* is what Rosa Luxemburg referred to when she wrote of the, "the great underground work of the revolution [which is] in reality being carried on without cessation, day by day and hour by hour, in the very heart of the empire" (2008: 133). We accept Manski's definition of movement building as "the purposive production of social movement elements for use in future struggle." The movement building process is purposive in that it involves the conscious action of activists. The process produces movement elements to the extent that it builds resources, continuity structures, culture, and leadership. The process is praxiological in that it is produced in relationship to activist consciousness of past and future struggle, as well as to the social conditions activists believe they face.

Thus, activists construct and operate in relation to temporal and sociospatial dimensions that frame their struggles. The former of

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3. Modified from Manski, *Methodological Approaches to Movement Waves and the Making of History* (2019). Some of the text in this section is drawn from that chapter, sometimes in part, and occasionally in whole.

**Table 1.** Matrix of social movement elements for identification and analysis.

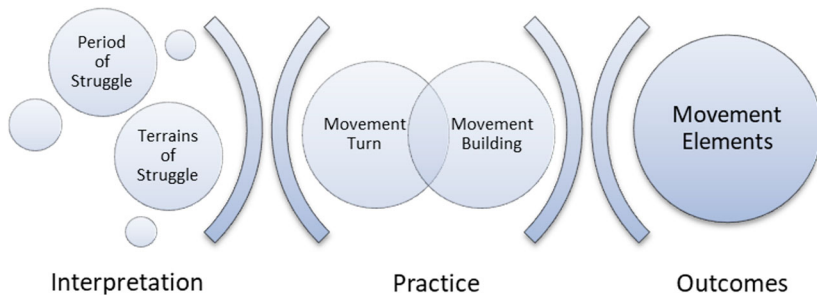
Object Type	Movement Element	Analytical Question
Resources	Material resources	<i>What material resources are produced/reduced?</i>
	Organization	<i>What organizational capacity is produced?</i>
	Strategic capacity	<i>What resources are identified, created, deployable?</i>
Continuity	Submerged networks	<i>What informal networks are created/persist?</i>
	Continuity structures, communities, movement scenes	<i>What collective identities are maintained or built in particular places and communities?</i>
	Frames	<i>What frames have been produced through which activists, adherents, publics, and opponents interpret contention?</i>
Culture	Repertoires, Toolkits, Packages	<i>What tactics, postures and other cultural artifacts have been produced?</i>
	Spillover and Diffusion	<i>What cultural artifacts have been adopted or passed on between movements?</i>
	Institutional Schemas	<i>What cultural artifacts are embedded in the structures of institutions?</i>
	Cultures of Resistance and Transformation	<i>What are the cultural idioms and ideological frameworks activists have developed in their strategies of action?</i>
Leadership	Development	<i>What are the ways in which activists learned, and what did they learn?</i>
	Biography	<i>Who are the people involved, what are their histories, and what do they bring to their movement work?</i>
	Cohorts	<i>What are the collective experiences generated in past waves of contention?</i>

these Luxemburg referred to as a *period of struggle*; the latter, Antonio Gramsci called a *terrain of struggle*. Activists often go to great effort to declare the times and the scope of the struggles in which they are engaged. Almost every movement declaration – whether issued in Seneca Falls in 1848, Port Huron in 1963, or Chiapas’ Lacandon Jungle in 1994, to invoke a few famous documents from American histories – involves a clear statement explaining and framing the period,

the terrain, the actors, and the stakes. Across the Atlantic, “The Manifesto of the Communist Party” of February of 1848 was such a statement. But even in the absence of such world historic declarations, activists commonly work to develop collective understandings of the dimensions of struggle in which they operate. These emergent dimensions in turn frame and indirectly shape the trajectories of movements and history.

A more direct shaping of movement trajectories comes about via what we define as a *movement turn* – a reorientation and reconfiguration of a broad social movement tradition of the left or right around a central organizing principle, otherwise known as a paradigm (Kuhn 1962). In recent years, the use of the word “turn” has entered social movement studies, spilling over from social theory where the structural, postmodern, cultural, relational, and material turns, among others, have had profound effects. We have yet to run across a common definition of what such a “turn” is, so here we define it as a broad cultural reorientation around a paradigm, accompanied by ideological reconfiguration on the basis of that paradigm.

A turn, therefore, does not only involve those involved in making it; a turn affects and alters the priorities of many other members of a much larger whole. The rise of jazz was not a matter only for jazz musicians; it influenced the entirety of American music, dress, language, politics, and more. Similarly, the turn towards anarchism in the U.S. Left of the 1990s had implications not just for anarchists, but for mass media, electoral politics, and everyday life. Turns in a social movement tradition are not the only processes that shape movement trajectories, of course; other forces such as repression come into play. But movement turns are powerful because they shape what activists attempt to do.



**Figure 1.** The Cognitive Praxis of Social Movements.

The relationship between these five concepts can be described as follows. Based on their understandings of emergent conditions, past histories, and long-term goals, activists articulate the dimensions of their struggles. They work to reorient their movements around paradigms necessitated by the logics of those struggles. They engage in movement building activities consistent with such turns and in the process they produce the elements available to future movements (See [Figure 1](#), above).

Mass uprisings such as those that occurred in Seattle in 1999 and throughout the last several decades are often described by outside commentators as “spontaneous.” In social movement studies of Spain’s M15 Indignados, the Arab Spring, Wisconsin Uprising, among others, such descriptions are increasingly referred to as articulations of “the myth of the spontaneous uprising” (Fominaya Flesher 2015; Said 2015; Manski 2016; Charrad and Reith 2019). Uprisings and other movement events may have logics of their own (Shultziner and Goldberg 2018). But they do not emerge out of thin air. Seattle was a production of history, and history is a cognitive praxis.<sup>4</sup>

### **The three turns of the Millennial Left**

The broad movement tradition of the U.S. left turned toward anarchism, radical democracy, and global justice beginning in the early 1990s. These anarchist, democratic, and global turns, sped early mobilizations such as Redwood Summer, the LA Uprising, the Zapatista Uprising, as well as by a more generalized anti-corporate politics among labor, student, and community activists, set the pattern for much of the early twenty-first century activism that followed. These millennial turns passed on common practices, slogans, resources, networks, and other critical elements of the 2001–2008 anti-war movement, the 2006 Day Without an Immigrant, the 2011 Wisconsin Uprising and #Occupy movement, and later, common framings of Black Lives Matter and the climate justice movement as struggles against global capitalism.

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4. In the immortal words of Inigo Montoya (a character in the 1973 novel “The Princess Bride,” played in the and 1987 Gen X cult film of the same name by the actor and activist Mandy Patinkin), “You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.” It turns out that the myth of the spontaneous uprising is a kind of double myth, for the word “spontaneous” actually means, “occurring without external stimulus ... of one’s own accord.” This is nearly the opposite meaning intended by most of those who speak of spontaneous uprisings as if they were invoked by unpredictable external circumstances. See: <https://www.etymonline.com/word/spontaneous>

The millennial turns were the products of multiple generations of activists that came of age politically throughout the twentieth century. Thus, while many Gen X'ers and Millennials played important roles in what happened in the millennial period, they were hardly its sole authors. Indeed, the period *authored* the collective biographies of these activists. Just as the 1960s generation was in part produced by the work of activists and artists in the 1940s and 1950s, so too was much of what has been ascribed to the activism of the 2010s a carry-over from the earlier period, and much of what occurred in that earlier millennial period a product (and a reaction to) the 1970s and 1980s.

The anarchist, democratic, and global turns that we describe below, and which are explored in other ways throughout this collective work, were of course not the only important turns in the broad left movement tradition of the U.S. during the 1990s–2010s. The case can and should be made for others – for instance, a queer turn in the 1990s – and an abolitionist turn and a socialist turn taking hold in the mid-2010s. But the three millennial turns described here are those clearly mattered most to what happened in Seattle in 1999 and which most shaped the period defined by Seattle.

Note also that absences may matter as much as presences. The absence of other turns in *overall* movement orientation – particularly in centering anti-racism – is a part of this history too. And activist reckonings with that absence were, in part, what produced the movements of later years.

In introducing this study of Seattle and movements at the millennium, we draw both on the contributions assembled here and on data drawn from semi-structured interviews we conducted with 104 people active in the movements of the 1990s–2010s.<sup>5</sup>

### *The Anarchist Turn*

As a number of scholars have observed, there has been a distinct and notable “anarchist turn” in recent decades (Epstein 2001; Graeber 2002; Cornell 2011; Rousselle and Evren 2011; Blumenfeld, Bottici and Critchley 2013; Wigger 2016). As Simon Critchley comments in the introduction to *The Anarchist Turn*, an edited volume from a conference held at the New School in 2011:

For a long time, the word anarchist has been used as an insult . . . In the last decade, maybe longer, this caricature anarchy and anarchism has begun to

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5. It is our intention to eventually make many of these interviews accessible via a public archive.

crack. What we little too easily called “globalization” and the social movements it spawned seem to have proven what anarchists have been advocating; an anarchical order is not just desirable, but also feasible, practical, and enactable. This has led to revitalized interest in the subterranean anarchist tradition and the understanding of anarchy as a collective self-organization without centralized authority (Critchley, cited in Blumenfeld et al. 2013: 3).

If Critchley, and others who share this perspective, are correct, this necessarily begs the questions, what prompted this shift? Why recently? Why anarchism? In setting out to answer these questions, it may be helpful to first consider what anarchism is, so as to better understand why it became so attractive to the activists of the millennial period.

In so many words, classical anarchism—with its origins largely in Western philosophical traditions coupled with insurrectionary action and revolutionary labor unionism—emerged through the concurrent rise of industrial capitalism and the the Enlightenment. Informed by the concern for individual liberty and freedom, early 19<sup>th</sup> century anarchist thinkers such as Mikhail Bakunin, Joseph Pierre Proudhon and Max Stirner among others, sought to make sense of the rapidly changed social landscape in the wake of industrialization. Specifically, they sought to resolve how to respond to new forms of inequalities and coercion that now derived less from feudal or manorial rule and more from an increasingly centralized state established to maintain exploitive labor conditions under capitalism (Marshall 2010; Runkle 2012; Woodcock 1962; Graham 2012). For anarchists, the goal was to ensure freedom from all forms of domination.

Anarchists being constitutionally anti-doctrinaire, they have articulated various visions for what such freedom might look like in practice or of what steps may be necessary for achieving a liberated society. Peter Marshall describes anarchism as, “a broad river” within which, “it is possible to discern a number of distinct currents” (2010: 6). In the most general terms, for anarchists the primary concerns are with ensuring freedom against top-down coercion of any kind and the ability of all beings to flourish in every way possible. For many anarchists, this implies that all are freely able to participate in the decisions that shape their lives, while enjoying access to the resources necessary to do so.

Among contemporary anarchists there is also a fairly universal emphasis on principles of voluntary association (and the ability to choose with whom and how we choose to associate); mutual aid (cooperation and reciprocity fueled by a shared sense of struggle); anti-authoritarianism (with the state as the highest, though not only, expression of top-down authority); decentralization (so as to diffuse

centralization of power); autonomy (and by extension self-governance); and direct action (as a necessary method for achieving liberation). Although some contemporary anarchists eschew these principles in favor of total autonomy, there is the idea of a commitment to creation of a deeply participatory and/or directly democratic society (Gordon 2004; Hammond 2015).

Another major element to consider is the prefigurative politics of contemporary anarchism. As explained by Marianne Maeckelbergh, prefiguration is a practice which “means removing the temporal distinction between the struggle in the present and a goal in the future; instead, the struggle and the goal, the real and the ideal, become one in the present” (2012: 4). In other words, rather than waiting for the “big R” revolution as with other radical Left schools of thought, as explained in the Preamble to the IWW constitution, prefiguration means “building the new world in the shell of the old.” This suggests that activists engaged in prefigurative politics would aim to create in the here and now the kinds of relationships they perceive to having revolutionary potentiality. As Luke Yates further explains:

The notion of ‘prefigurative politics’ ... refers to scenarios where protesters express the political ‘ends’ of their actions through their ‘means’, or where they create experimental or ‘alternative’ social arrangements or institutions. Both meanings share the idea that prefiguration anticipates or partially actualizes goals sought by movements. (2015: 1)

Perhaps one the most clearly identifiable examples of prefigurative politics is in the adherence to practices of mutual aid, often in reference to ideas from anarchist Peter Kropotkin’s work *Mutual Aid* (2005). Although mutual aid is not exclusively the purview of anarchists, contemporary activists draw on Kropotkin’s argument that contra-distinct to Darwinian competition the natural world is based in cooperation. Hence, transformative social relationships ought to be modeled along cooperative lines, thereby challenging the competition, inequalities, and alienation encouraged by capitalist competition (Sitrin 2012; Williams 2012; Benski et al 2013; Schneider 2013; Bray 2013; Hammond 2015).

What then gave rise to the anarchist turn of the millennium and wide scale adoption of these types of ethical practices? Although anarchism was certainly not the only organizing logic in the most recent mobilizations, as Critchley and others have suggested since the GJM anarchism’s importance and its corresponding principles and techniques have grown, and possibly eclipsed, other revolutionary sensibilities. In short, this shift must be understood as integral with the



emergence of a new period of struggle in the late twentieth century. Namely, as the deleterious effects of neoliberalism and expansion of global capitalism began to be felt by communities throughout the world, activists found the range of traditional alternatives wanting – to many younger activists in particular, national governments appeared to be dominated by corporations; the United Nations was politically impotent; Communism appeared to be a failure; and the social welfare state was under attack by neoliberal austerity.

Consequently, anarchism's emphasis on direct democracy and prefigurative modeling of socially just alternatives made it an attractive alternative for many new activists. For this reason, in 1994, when the Zapatista's demonstrated that it was possible to push back against the forces of global capitalism and effectively put forth a new form of anarchist theory and praxis directly challenging neoliberalism, it reignited a sense of political possibility among the Left – tipping the scales towards anarchism – effectively, ushering in the birth of the GJM and laying the groundwork for many of the most recent mobilizations (Cornell 2011; Marshall 2010; Epstein 2001; Kingsnorth 2003; Martinez and Garcia 2004; Prokosch and Raymond 2002; Rousselle and Evren 2011; Solnit 2004).

In examining the anarchist turn, it is important to acknowledge that the notion that anarchism suddenly reappeared out of the blue is somewhat misleading. A movement turn is art, not magic. Anarchism was present among Left alternatives throughout the twentieth century. Long before the Zapatista uprising in 1994 and the 1999 uprising in Seattle, there were rumblings of anarchism's eventual resurgence as early as the 1960s. Many of the tactics and practices of the GJM are directly attributable to the participation of anarchists and anti-authoritarian socialists in the anti-nuclear movement of the 1970s and 1980s, including non-violent direct action, tactical use of disruptive theatrics, consensus decision-making, horizontally-networked affinity groups, mass convergences, and a general commitment to "prefigurative" politics (Epstein 1991).

The anarchist tradition carried on, but what began to change with the Zapatista uprising in 1994 was the significance and reach of that tradition. It was shortly after midnight, on New Year Day when 3000 indigenous peoples from the mountainous areas outside of San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas, Mexico retaliated against the impending NAFTA, aimed at establishing free access to markets for U.S. and multinational corporations. The uprising sent a shockwave throughout the world as it ignited the political imaginations of the Left and cemented the nascent anarchist-leanings. Facilitated by new digital technologies,

what had to this point only been burgeoning connections and understanding of shared sense of struggle suddenly coalesced as the Zapatista movement became a cause célèbre overnight and embodiment not only of the anti-globalization efforts, but of a new form of anarchism in action – *Zapatismo* (Reitan 2002; Kingsnorth 2003; Callahan 2004).

Certainly, although not all Zapatistas explicitly referred to themselves anarchists, in both principle and practice there were definite resonances with anarchism – most obvious being their “withdrawing [of] consent to be governed and experimenting with self-organization and collective rule” and establishment of more than thirty autonomous zones governed through directly democratic processes and rotation of leadership (Kingsnorth 2003: 196). They also coordinated decision-making across the communities through “*encuentros*,” large horizontally networked convenings that would serve as a model for the GJM. For the Zapatistas the goal was not “to take power, but rather to contribute to a vast movement that would return power to civil society” and represented “communal people’s power ... grassroots autonomy” and ensure equality for all (Martinez and Garcia 2004: 215).

Moreover, reflecting the anarchist principle of avoiding imposition of prescriptive solutions on others, the Zapatistas framed their political stance as one of “posing questions” – as they said, “walking we ask” – rather than proffering a new party line or rigid ideology. These processes, they believed, would usher in “revolution to make revolution possible.” Many believed they were on the road to achieving that goal; “*Ya Basta!*” – “enough already” – had become the new battle cry of the now-global Left and represented a way to make a collective stand against neoliberalism and global capitalism.

This anarchist current and principles of *Zapatismo* carried over to the broader alter-globalization or GJM that evolved out of the transnational Zapatista solidarity efforts. The GJM is generally considered to have lasted through the first years of the early 2000s when the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003 and the movement shifted to become anti-war in focus. During the heyday of the GJM, there were numerous mass transnational demonstrations (much like the Zapatista *encuentros* and the mass convergences of the 1970s environmental movement) centered around protesting global governing bodies such as the World Trade Organization, World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the summits of the wealthiest nations known as the G8 (now the G20). Described as a “movement of movements” the GJM reflected the confluence of numerous transnational movements – from environmental justice to women’s rights – that contested the impact of

neoliberalism on peoples around the world, and particularly the Global South (Moghadam 2012).

Given the number of activists, organizations, and movements involved, it may seem surprising that there were such clearly definable shared characteristics across them. Yet while variation existed, there were elements common to most of them often produced according to principles of *Zapatismo* and other anarchist models. Along with its decentralized, horizontal structure, the GJM, like other anarchist-oriented movements of the time, was also committed to undoing existing hierarchies of all kinds. This speaks to the movement's origins in prefigurative politics. As Naomi Klein explains in the introduction to *The Global Activists Manual: Local Ways to Change the World*:

This movement has declared that it has “no followers, only leaders . . . Rather than handing down manifestos from on high, the task has become a process of identifying the key ideological threads – the shared principles – that bind together this web of activism. Self-determination is clearly one. Democracy another. So is freedom, more specifically, the right plan and manage our own communities based on human needs as part of a larger global community: globalism and localism in balance.” (2002: 7)

For many, Seattle 1999 marked a watershed moment in the struggle against global capitalism and fueled the movement's fire. It also radicalized a new generation of activists who cut their political teeth within a largely anarchist-informed social protest. And, although it was the “black bloc” anarchist contingent that garnered the most media attention for their militancy and property destruction, as most scholars acknowledge, in general, the “Battle of Seattle” may be considered an anarchist-influenced mobilization. So, too, were the many convergences in the years that followed as protestors engaged in “summit hopping” (della Porta and Tarrow 2005). As Mark Lance, a philosophy professor at Georgetown University and anarchist, commented in an interview with the *Washington Post*, “Seattle was a large coming-out party for anarchists. . . . Anarchism has certainly become much more visible through the global justice movement” (Foster 2003).

Not everyone involved in these networks or doing the core organizing were self-identified anarchists. Reflecting on the relationship between anarchism and the young people attracted to the anti-globalization summits, Barbara Epstein calls into question just how “anarchist” these new converts are. According to her, “[u]nlike the Marxist radicals of the sixties, who devoured the writings of Lenin and Mao, today's anarchist activists are unlikely to pore over the works of Bakunin” (Epstein 2001). Consequently, for her, if anything, the

young anti-globalization activists “might be better described as an anarchist sensibility than as anarchism per se” (2001). Perhaps her argument is overstated (as anarchist reading groups were central to the growth of anarchism’s influence in this period, and anarchist info-shops were filled with writings by both classical and contemporary anarchist theorists), but Epstein does acknowledge the definitively anarchist ideological underpinnings and organizational practices of the movement, observing that:

For contemporary young radical activists, anarchism means a decentralized organizational structure, based on affinity groups that work together on an ad hoc basis, and decision-making by consensus. It also means egalitarianism; opposition to all hierarchies; suspicion of authority, especially that of the state; and commitment to living according to one’s values. Young radical activists, who regard themselves as anarchists, are likely to be hostile not only to corporations but to capitalism. Many envision a stateless society based on small, egalitarian communities. For some, however, the society of the future remains an open question. For them, anarchism is important only as an organizational structure and as a commitment to egalitarianism. It is a form of politics that revolves around the exposure of the truth rather than strategy. It is a politics decidedly in the moment. (Epstein 2001)

After the turn of the millennium, anarchism gained further potency as a Left alternative (Grubracic and Lynd 2008; Graeber 2002; Maeckelbergh 2012; Dixon 2014). Although much of the anarchist sensibility of the GJM diffused after the start of the Iraq War in 2003, it did not dissipate altogether. Anarchist-influenced mobilizations remained connected through informal and formalized networks, reappearing in various forms, from the May 1 Day Without an Immigrant general strike of 2006, to the general strike movement of the Wisconsin Uprising of 2011. This helped to create the latent corps of the Occupy mobilizations in 2011-2012 (Benski et al. 2013). As explained by Uri Gordon in his article on “Anarchists Against the Wall”:

The past ten years have seen the full-blown revival of a global anarchist movement, possessing a coherent core political practice, on a scale and scope of activity unseen since the 1930s. From anticapitalist social centers and eco-feminist communities to raucous street parties and blockades of international summits, anarchist forms of resistance and organizing have effectively replaced Marxism as the chief point of reference for radical politics in advanced capitalist countries. (2010: 414).

As Gordon sees it, anarchism is best understood as “primarily a political culture shared across a decentralized global network of affinity groups and collectives” (Gordon 2010: 415). And within this culture there are certain identifiable characteristics such as a particular

repertoire of direct action, anti-hierarchical and voluntary modes of organizing and a language rooted in traditional anarchism.

To be sure, the relevancy of anarchism for contemporary social movements and activists is most obvious in the Occupy Movement, Spanish and Greek anti-austerity movements, the Arab Spring and the many other revolutions and instances of collective action that swept the globe in 2011 (Feixa 2012; Castañeda 2012; Juris 2012; Pickerill and Krinsky 2012; Milkman, Luce and Lewis 2012; Howard and Pratt-Broyden 2013; Karyotis and Rüdig 2013; van de Sande 2013; Abbas and Yigit 2015). In fact, in many ways, these movements directly mirror the principles and practices of the GJM and its anarchist historical antecedents. Given the anti-capitalist thrust to these uprisings coupled with widespread disillusionment over systems of governance or what can be considered a systemic “crisis of legitimacy,” it comes as no surprise then that there was an “anarchist DNA” to these mobilizations (Markoff 2015; Williams 2012; Bamyeh 2013).

No doubt adding to this was the direct participation and mentorship by countless veteran anarchists who were radicalized during the Zapatista *encuentros*, in Seattle, and earlier in New Left activism. Consequently, there was an anarchist impulse imbued throughout these movements, evident in the shared commitment to horizontality, more inclusive participatory politics and “directly democratic” practices, and “prefigurative” communities based along principles of mutual aid (Sitrin 2012; Williams 2012; Benski et al 2013; Bray 2013; Hammond 2015).

The salience of anarchism grew further in the years immediately following 2011, as anarchist ethics and praxis were brought into other mobilizations and movement spaces—ranging the emergence of smaller movement networks such as Mutual Aid Disaster Relief to other large-scale uprisings like the Gezi Park takeover in Turkey and the Bookchin-influenced, democratic confederalism in the Rojava Revolution (Abbas and Yigit 2015; Leverink 2015; Spade 2020).

One of the clearest examples of this is in antifascist resistance efforts. Post-2016 in the era of Trump, with the rise of fascism and the intensified normalization of organized white supremacist forces, much of the more militant antifascist resistance and community self-defense organizing, has come out of anarchist and anarchist-leaning organizing efforts, akin to the black bloc dimensions to the alter-globalization days. For instance, the Resist This J20 mobilizations against Trump’s inauguration employed horizontally-networked models to coordinate the efforts (Loadenthal 2020). This, of course, has allowed Trump to reintroduce the vilified trope of anarchists as violent

terrorists, eliciting not only severe repression, but also, once again, solidifying anarchists' role as the political bogeyman du jour.

During the early phases of the Black Lives Matter movement in 2014, organizers employed action councils (Milkman 2017). And more recently during the wave of protests in the summer of 2020, police abolition – previously largely a concept only embraced by anarchists and radical anti-authoritarians – has become a widely held perspective among liberal progressives and even mainstream Democrats. The youth-led Extinction Rebellion movement is very much predicated in direct mass action (Fithian 2019). There has been an uptick in horizontal, worker cooperatives. Community self-defense projects and immigrant solidarity efforts exemplify mutual aid in practice, as have the explosion of mutual aid projects in the midst of the global COVID-19 pandemic (Sitrin 2020).

To be sure, there has also been a resurgence of interest in socialism and party politics, clearly evident in the explosive growth of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) inspired by Sanders, which skyrocketed from 6000 to 50,000 members in a matter of months. In the lead up to the 2016 election and, again, during the 2020 presidential race, there has been a definitive move away from refusal to engage in electoral politics and a sense of urgency and pragmatic necessity to do so. There has also been a greater degree of acknowledgement among anarchists of the value to Marxist analysis of capitalism. And, for some, a willingness to engage in big tent or umbrella groups. Ironically, perhaps for this reason, anarchism has even found its way into theoretically non-anarchist spaces such as the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). The Libertarian Socialist Caucus, for instance, is explicitly comprised of “syndicalists, council communists, anarchists, cooperativists, and municipalists, among many others” and, specifically, puts forth a remarkably anarchist-resonant platform based on self-determination, freedom from hierarchy, domination, and coercion, an understanding of shared struggle, and solidarity based in mutual aid (DSA Libertarian Socialist Caucus 2017). The Democratic Socialists of America-affiliated congressional representative, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez even co-convened a national conference call on the importance of mutual aid for pandemic response.

Beyond the formally political, anarchist logics have influenced mainstream culture and society more broadly – and not just in Hollywood films. Anarchist principles are commonly invoked by coders and other technologists in describing their design choices. Anarchism has become a critical topic for scholars and academics, and these in turn are sometimes invited to share their research in major media.

And in what could be described as an example of the “hot topification” – a form of commodification – of anarchist culture and aesthetics, the “sharing economy,” draws on the language of mutual aid and resource pooling in seeking to legitimate an image of a more compassionate capitalism. Thus, even as we move into the 2020s and through the Trump administration, anarchism has been restored as the terror of law and order, it may also be said that we are all anarchists now.

### *The Democratic Turn*

"I have no interest in Beltway politics. I don't plan to return to Washington D.C. unless at the head of a conquering army or to visit the cherry blossoms in the spring."

~ Richard L. Grossman, frequent quip

Richard Grossman spent many years in Washington. He worked with unions and progressive thinktanks, organized Environmentalists for Full Employment in the 1970s, and was briefly the executive director of Greenpeace USA. But by the late 1980s, Grossman had concluded that most everything popular movements were doing was no longer working. For every registered lobbyist on behalf of the public interest there were 100 working for a major corporation on the other side of the issue. For every dollar spent by an ordinary citizen in support of candidates for office, there were 1000 invested by that same corporation. Media consolidation meant that fewer and fewer corporations controlled what people saw and heard. The repertoire of movement tactics – of writing letters, organizing consumer boycotts, holding protests – was becoming less effective. Yes, a strike or a direct action campaign might win a particular battle. But overall, working people were losing the war.

Grossman decided it was time for popular movements to step back and put their energies into rethinking not just their strategies and tactics, but also their understanding of history, of who they were, and of what they were trying to accomplish. Together with Ward Morehouse of the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB), and then joined by Mary Zepernick and Virginia Rasmussen of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), he founded the Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy (POCLAD). They had no pretensions or intensions that this new group would become a big budget mass membership organization. The purpose of POCLAD was to instigate a radical shift in the ways activists and ordinary people thought about accomplishing the task of self-governance. Thus, there were newsletters, books,

speaking tours, and eventually, films, all following from an initial pamphlet, *Taking Care of Business: Citizenship and the Articles of Incorporations*:

We are out of the habit of contesting the legitimacy of the corporation, or challenging concocted legal doctrines, or denying courts the final say over our economic lives. ... What passes for political debate today is not about control, sovereignty, or the economic democracy which many American revolutionaries thought they were fighting to secure. Too many organizing campaigns accept the corporation's rules, and wrangle on corporate turf. We lobby congress for limited laws. We have no faith in regulatory agencies, but turn to them for relief. We plead with corporations to be socially responsible, then show them how to increase profits by being a bit less harmful. How much more strength, time, and hope will we invest in such dead ends? (Grossman and Adams 1993)

The most important thing POCLAD did was to convene scores of weekend meetings called "Rethinks," short for, "Rethinking the Corporation, Rethinking Democracy." These were structured democratic discussions, each bringing together 25-50 activists from nearly every sector of the popular movements of the day. By the end of the 1990s, thousands of well-connected activists had taken part in Rethinks, and millions of Americans had at least read something POCLAD produced. A second circle of organizations founded by some of those activists eventually reached tens of millions more.

It is important to neither overstate nor understate the influence of those initiatives. It is certainly true - and our research shows - that by the late 1980s there were many varied veterans taking lessons from their experiences, regrouping, and thinking seriously about strategy. For instance, Medea Benjamin, Kevin Danaher, Kirsten Moller, and Kathie Klarreich formed Global Exchange in an effort to build transnational people-to-people networks in responding to corporate globalization. Global Exchange's version of rethinking and reorienting made significant contributions to the Global Turn of U.S. movements, addressed in the next section. What was notable about these kinds of efforts - and particularly about the POCLAD "Rethinks" - was that they were designed to lay the conditions for what we have defined here as a movement turn. In the case of POCLAD, the idea was to, as Grossman often put it, "take Highlander on the road," by which he meant taking the democratic strategic function that the Highlander Folk School had played for the 1930s-1940s southern labor movement and the 1950s-1960s civil rights movement and bringing it to people across the country.



The paradigmatic idea in the democratic turn of the 1990s was that the people must govern themselves. This was not a new idea. But what made it a movement turn, as opposed to a revival of principle or tradition, was that many activists oriented their energies toward achieving genuine democracy. They took on not just corporations, but the existence of the corporation. They challenged not just policies, but the entire apparatus of government. They responded to corporate globalization with a vision of a global democratization. They insisted that democracy was not something done for or to us, but something we do for and with each other. Deeply symbolic of this turn is the chant created on the streets of Seattle in 1999 that so came to define the left politics of the millennial period that it became cliché: “This is what democracy looks like!”

The democratic tradition is one of the deepest traditions of the left. Some have argued that democracy is, understood critically, what it has long meant to be on the left (Flacks 1988). In the U.S., the most significant upsurge in which the language of democracy was significantly present was that of the 1960s, when the Port Huron Statement’s call for “participatory democracy,” was read and heeded by tens of millions around the world (Flacks 2015). That rhetoric and a short yet intense period of organizing teach-ins, popular schools and universities, and alternative institutions was deeply formative, especially at “the grassroots,” and it resonates to this day. But it never came together in a national or global fight for democracy. The democratic turn had roots in the 1960s, but it did not begin at that time.

Why did it emerge 30 years later? The answer that emerges from our research is that the many people who were regularly engaged in progressive activism in the U.S. of the early 1990s were, like Grossman and other movement veterans, thinking critically about the times they were living in and the trajectory of their society. Relatively few had the personal qualities and biographies that Grossman and other contemporary democracy activists had. But they were open to reorienting their work around the problem of the corporation and democracy.

In part this strategic openness stemmed from the cultural contexts in which they did their work. The valuing and practice of participatory democracy had been challenged and deepened by the feminist movement (and broader feminist turn) of the 1970s and was a daily norm for many activists. Also still resonating out of the 1960s was the critique of “corporate liberalism” – that the liberal regulatory state served to legitimate corporate capitalism and protect it from its own dysfunctions (Sklar 1988). Finally, the international solidarity movements of the 1980s meant that extensive personal ties many U.S. activists had

to liberation and democracy struggles in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and west and southeast Asia, provided a sense of accountability for “fixing the problem here in the U.S.,” as well as a sense of possibility that “if they can end Apartheid in South Africa, maybe we can do the same thing here in the United States” (Cobb 2016).

The strategic openness to a democratic turn was matched by a decisive sense of strategic necessity. Most significant was a widespread understanding that the people of the U.S. were being subjected to a program of domestic structural adjustment related to the polices imposed on other countries through the Reagan administration’s neoliberal Washington Consensus agenda of the 1980s (Manski and Peck 2006). This meant the end of general assistance and the corporatization of welfare, education, corrections, and other public services. It also meant the decimation of union jobs and power. It also drove a general trend toward the corporatization of everyday life, including social movement organizations themselves. Alongside was an emerging realization of the scale of an emerging triple global ecological crisis involving global ozone depletion, loss of biodiversity, and climate change. Major corporations were visibly at the center of these concerns; it was easy to see that the power of corporations was itself a problem that had to be dealt with.

That the years 1986–1994 were a time of particularly great global upheaval also contributed significantly to the openness and determination of older activist to rethink and the eagerness of younger activists to try something new. Democratic uprisings swept much of the globe in those years, from the Philippines’ People Power Revolution to the Haitian struggle for democracy. The dismantling of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the regimes of the Warsaw Pact countries, together with the brutal crushing of the Tiananmen Square democracy movement, sent the signal to many that if there were to be an alternative to corporate capitalism, it would not come from Moscow or Beijing but instead from popular movements around the world – including in the U.S. Finally, the ratification of NAFTA by the U.S. Congress in 1993, followed by the Zapatista uprising of 1994, made deep impressions on *every single* activist we interviewed. There was a collective sense that they were entering a new period of struggle, with new terrains and new logics, and that new strategies and movement building practices were needed.

One terrain of struggle for those “working to build a democracy movement” in the words of the campus-based 180/Movement for Democracy and Education was the fight over trade and the global economy. Shared with the proto-GJM – characterized in domestic

media at the time as the “anti-globalization movement” and by movement activists as the “anti-corporate globalization movement” – the terrain of global trade meant something a bit different for democracy activists than it did for international NGOs. The title of David Korten’s widely circulated and photocopied 1995 book, *When Corporations Rule the World*, says it all. For the radical democrats of the 1990s in the U.S. the struggle was about global popular sovereignty versus corporate rule. It must be added that this collective action frame operated not just in the U.S. but also in the popular struggles against the GATT, MAI, and World Trade Organization in countries all over the world. In the words of the 1997 Port Elgin Declaration, issued by many leading activists of the Global South and North, “The ultimate goal must be to give the world’s peoples the sovereign right to govern themselves as they wish and deserve to be governed” (Clarke 1997).

A second terrain of struggle was that of elections and government, the very institutions historically described as pillars of American democracy. By the early 1990s, the long fight for campaign finance reform that had begun in the 1970s seemed to be losing ground to a flood of corporate money so alarming that politicians ranging from Jerry Brown and Ross Perot to Russ Feingold and Paul Wellstone were winning votes with populist messaging. For democrats, the rise in corporate financing and of the Democratic Leadership Council under Bill Clinton and Al Gore meant that the Democratic Party was regarded as an unreliable vehicle for reform, at best. The best known and perhaps most well regarded living activist in the U.S. at the time was Ralph Nader, known not only as a leading consumer advocate but also as the father of public interest research, law, and lobbying. By the mid-1990s, Nader had reached conclusions similar to Grossman: The entire apparatus “Nader and his raiders” had set up in Washington DC was not working. This was the beginning not only Nader’s runs for the presidency, but also of a major upsurge in independent politics that produced three national progressive parties – the New Party, the Labor Party, and the Green Party (Manski 2015). Thus, one product of the democratic turn was the rise of independent politics and of new forms of independent movement-party organizations.

Another set of practices that emerged on the electoral terrain involved voting rights and election integrity. Many of those who went through the national fight over the Florida 2000 presidential recount had also been in Seattle in 1999 and saw the two events as part of a larger struggle. They took lessons from those experiences and joined with longstanding civil rights and election reform

organizations like Rainbow PUSH, NAACP, Public Campaign and the Center for Voting and Democracy (now FairVote), in convening meetings, conferences, and summits to build what they called a “New Voting Rights Movement.” Democracy Summer, the first of these gatherings, took place in the summer of 2001 in Tallahassee, Florida. The participants drafted a Voter Bill of Rights, which activists still refer to today as a framework guiding their actions. An immediate result of this movement building process was the No Stolen Elections! campaign of 2004 and the Ohio presidential recount. Over the longer term, the tactical repertoire of this new movement came to include independent recount efforts, election integrity audits, and election reforms such as rank choice voting (RCV).

A third terrain of struggle critical in the 1990–2010s was that over corporatization and austerity. Given how intense it was, it is remarkable this terrain has been largely forgotten today. Yet movement elements produced on this terrain still resonate still in contemporary politics. A meme popular in the 1990s – distributed not on yet-to-be-born social media but in the form of stickers and T-shirts – was an image of a road sign with the words “Resistance May Be Expected.” The resistance to structural adjustment policies imposed on working people in the U.S. was commonly articulated as “anti-corporate.” The generally non-violent ferocity of welfare families, Indigenous activists and radical environmentalists, student anti-corporate campaigners, community activists, and unionists in resisting what seemed to them to be an onslaught of corporate takeovers set in motion forms of resistance and movement building practices that prefigured the Wisconsin Uprising of 2011 and the Occupy movement that followed (Manski 2019).

It also made for a ready audience for POCLAD and its associated networks. One such network was organized through the Democracy Teach-Ins (DTIs), a coordinated set of mass participatory educational events on hundreds of college campuses across North America. The DTIs posed a single question: “Can we pursue democracy and social justice when corporations are allowed to control so much power and wealth?” Out of this process and others like it, a discourse around “corporate personhood” and “corporate rule” emerged and came to define much of the youth politics of the late 1990s. While anti-corporate politics are no longer as prominent in the discourse of the U.S. left, they have become consensus positions embedded in mainstream organizations and carried forward in the popular campaign for a We the People Amendment.

It was this last campaign that, together with the post-Florida pushes for ratification of a Right to Vote Amendment and a Popular Vote Amendment, opened up constitutionalism as a new terrain of struggle for the left of the 2000s–2010s. Supreme Court decisions like *Timmons v. Twin Cities Area New Party* (1997), *Bush v. Gore* (2000), and *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010), which respectively struck blows against independent political parties, the right to vote, and popular sovereignty over corporations, each added to the sense that it was strategically necessary for democracy activists to take on the project of constitutional reform.

They did this in particularly democratic ways. For instance, the mobilization to overturn *Citizens United* began nearly a year before that decision was rendered. When the Court issued its ruling that corporations were members of a “protected class” guaranteed a standard of review of strict scrutiny under the First Amendment, activists were ready to go with a MovetoAmend.org website and a mobilization plan that moved from the bottom up. They began with municipal and country ballot measures that put support for a “We the People Amendment” before the voters. Wherever possible, these referenda were initiated through citizen petitioning, the idea begin to build a groundswell of support that would either compel congressional action or allow for the convening of an alternative constitutional process. As described in Chapter III, in the 10 years since *Citizens United*, at least 673 communities and seven states have adopted We the People Amendment resolutions, of which at least 320, including those in major cities like Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and Milwaukee as well at the state level in Colorado, Montana, and Washington, won adoption by a popular vote (Move to Amend 2020).

Altogether, the democratic turn was more influential than one might expect from the relatively small and poorly funded network of pro-democracy activists and organizations that worked to produce it. There was a reorientation of the left around the idea of fighting for democracy and demanding democratic reforms. The frames of corporate power, corporatization, corporate personhood, and “This is What Democracy Looks Like!” became mainstream. The practice of independent politics, election integrity audits and recounts, and popular constitutionalism are now regular features of American political life. And there are several cohorts of activists and networks of organizations that emerged out of the democratic turn who remain engaged in the history making taking place today.

### *The Global Turn*

Commenting on the Green New Deal in 2019, Jeremy Brecher notes that:

. . . it's very, very internationalist, rooted primarily in a recognition that the problems of climate change are global problems, and can only be addressed globally, but also rooted in a set of values and norms that are totally at odds with an economic nationalist approach to solving problems. That's another way in which it is a legitimate offspring of the Battle of Seattle. The Green New Deal represents a complete break with the idea that we have to let markets decide these things, but it's not a nationalist response to it. It's an internationalist, a common people's response. (Brecher and Moodliar 2020)

Brecher's observation is consistent with his advocacy, 20 years earlier, for a "globalization-from-below," in which social movements and organizations would not merely collaborate with each other internationally (i.e. rooted in particular nation-states), but their mobilizations, targets, frames, repertoires would be global, i.e. across borders or transnational in scope (see Brecher, Costello and Smith 2000). This understanding of social movement activities matches the globalization of capital wherein corporate ownership, control, production, and distribution activities are no longer multinational, domiciled in a single country while operating in several countries, but are instead transnational and domiciled in many countries with shareholders, boards, officers, and employees accordingly dispersed. These social movement understandings of globalization existed as a parallel frame to the corporatist globalization envisioned by the tripartite (national governments, private sector, and labor unions) International Labor Organization (ILO) (2008) under the rubric of a "fair globalization."

Operating with a similar frame, Chris Hardnack (2020) traces the emergence of the global justice frame to neoliberal globalization and the social movement responses from below, particularly to the World Bank and IMF. Particular mobilizations by the emerging GJM proved pivotal. Central to this narrative are the counter-summits of social movements particularly the "Earth Summit" (Peck 2020) and the transnational gatherings leading to the formation of La Via Campesina.

Evidence of the global turn after Seattle and the portability of its repertoires abound particularly as one notices similarities between the Seattle mobilizations and those in cities like Barcelona (Juris 2008) and at summits in Genoa, Gothenburg, Quebec City. More positively, global civil society mobilizations became routinized for over a decade following Seattle with the creation and launch of the World Social Forum (Sen 2009). In this collection, Jackie Smith (2020) explores

the impact of the World Social Forum process and notes its influence on social movements within the U.S. It is valuable then to pause and note the direction – rather than *national* social movements elevating their claims to a global platform, Smith provides evidence in which the global influences the national. Her poignant example at the heart of Empire, i.e. the U.S. is the U.S. Social Forum process which emerged from U.S.-based activists becoming involved in the WSF prior to initiating a parallel U.S. process.<sup>6</sup>

For many activists, the appearance of the globalized movements was consistent with early periods of social movement activity. In fact, Moghadam (2018) locates these developments in a broader revolutionary context (thus rejecting the separation of the study of social movements from those of revolutionary movements).

Ironically, as much as these movements can now be understood as globalized, further insights may be gained by comparing these movements with those that have appeared at earlier stages. For example, the World Festival of Youth and Student Movement gatherings in the former Soviet Union that drew tens of thousands of people and impact the global peace movement as well as later anti-nuclear mobilizations. Still earlier movements, apart from the official party-based internationals of the socialist movement, include the international Pan African congresses, and the global abolitionist movement of the nineteenth century. In contrast with the global turn, however, these earlier international movements appealed to *national governments* and were operating in relatively stable systems of nation states. Going further back, however, to the formative years of the international state system and protean capitalist world order, one finds social movements that had a truly global character involving actors fleeing or resisting the authority of rising nation states that sought to exploit their labor and territories (Linebaugh and Rediker 2003). Social movements have inherited much from this period including, significantly, the word “strike” that can be traced back to the acts of sailors who would “strike sail” in order to prevent a ship from delivering its cargo in that mercantile era. Nonetheless, the economic and political terrains upon which the they acted differ radically from the globalized production chains and international regimes of investment, trade and consumption that characterize the platforms for social movements of the post-1990s era of globalization. Further exploration of the internalized norms and strategies

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6. None of this minimizes or contradicts claims by these activists to having rooted their forum process in *prior* movement building efforts in the U.S.

that characterize the global turn are provided in this issue by Hardnack, Peck, and Smith, and the interview with Jeremy Brecher.

### **The millennial turns and the new period**

The three turns of the millennium that manifested most dramatically in Seattle 20 years ago were not, it must again be stated directly, the only significant turns on the U.S. left of that period. Just as there is evidence that a feminist turn and an ecological turn in the 1970s reached much further than the networks of activists that produced them, and evidence of a queer turn and a media turn in the 1990s, there have been other profound transformations that matter today. On the right we clearly have seen a nationalist turn, and on the left we are likely experiencing an abolitionist turn – both rooted in earlier processes and with their own narratives of struggle.

The anarchist, democratic, and global turns of the 1990s–2000s period had particular import for what happened at The Millennium Round ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organization. They also have much to do with the way in which a new and much talked about turn of the U.S. left – a socialist turn – has taken place.

#### *After the millennial Turns: a Socialist Turn*

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, socialist thinking and theorizing – especially those identified with Marxism – in much of the world was colored by a sense of defeat and despair. If third-world revolutions together with youth, black and other people-of-color insurgencies, and other so-called “new social movement” projects once fed revolutionary hopes, these too had receded. Notwithstanding early to mid-1990s promise of a U.S. Labor Party supported by a major industrial union (Dudzic and Isaac 2012) and the Teamsters-led UPS strike of 1997, the aspirational core of socialist projects, the labor movement appeared both weak and without hope of resuscitation. Indeed, it became commonplace to recognize the “new geography of work” (Ross 2008) and attendant fracturing and precarity of the working class. No wonder, then, that the leading intellectual of the post-1960s new left would signal a retreat from socialism in *New Left Review*. Perry Anderson’s (2000) “Renewal” appealed to thinkers and political traditions outside the socialist and Marxist lineages he so eruditely and precisely chronicled. Indeed, as recently noticed by George Souvlis (2020) and notwithstanding Anderson’s historical materialism, his thinking about social change and the prospects for revolution are



tied closely to a realist reading of the state and inter-state relations and less so to any class-based projects. Although his journal (and its book publishing arm, Verso) would remain centered in left politics and pay close attention to the new movements emerging (Mertes 2002; Graeber 2002; Shepard and Hayduk 2002), its publications in the early 2000s do not reveal any coherent socialist project. At least none beyond those of the Latin American Pink Tide which it embraced tentatively and which were closely tied to the state (Wilpert 2007).

In the same period, bridging the 1990s and the aughts, strands of ecosocialist thinking and activism were beginning to appear. Within Marxist theory, the notion of the “metabolic rift” between capitalist relations of production were regaining circulation, building from Marx’s original conception, the work of Barry Commoner (1971), and then with John Bellamy Foster and Paul Burkett in the early 1990s (see Marx Memorial Library 2020). Cumulatively, these works provide the intellectual roots for an ecosocialist strand that would find greater expression within the broader socialist turn. In practical terms, ones that often merged models of economic conversion of military industry, anti-toxics work, projects like Winona LaDuke’s White Earth Land Recovery Project, Earth First!’s collaboration with the Industrial Workers of World, or the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union president, Tony Mazzocchi’s collaboration with academics on both regional economic planning and occupational safety matters prefigure latter-day ecosocial and liberal and socialist variants of the Green New Deal that emphasizes a “just transition” for workers (Leopold 2007; Manski and Cobb 2019). By the mid-2000s, these ideas find political expression in Green parties globally and later in the explicitly ecosocialist program of the Stein/Honkala candidacy in 2012. By the second decade of the current century, alongside the Arab Spring, Occupy and Black Lives Matter movements, a distinct socialist turn may be discerned. A polemic by Bhaskar Sunkara (2011), “Why We Loved the Zapatistas,” signaled a break with the GJM that seems to capture the *affect* of the socialist turn:

We loved the Zapatistas, because they were brave enough to make history after the end of History. We loved the Zapatistas, because we were afraid of political power and political decisions. We loved the Zapatistas, because we thought we could do without a century and a half of baggage. But we could have done far more for the Zapatistas if we mounted a better challenge to the system that shackles us all – neoliberalism. I mean capitalism.

The romance and elan of revolutionary Zapatismo are taken here as signs of political immaturity and even a dereliction of duty. At this juncture,

literally days into the explosive #Occupy movement's birth, Sunkara demanded both a political turn and an engagement with "a century and half of baggage," i.e. the real worlds of socialism as expressed in the communist and social democratic experiences since 1848.

His call parallels a socialist re-emergence after decades of relative obscurity, often submerged within other movements. Indeed, one of the earliest signs of the turn was the relatively warm reception of John Nichols's (2015) *The S-Word*, originally published in 2013 which chronicled the nineteenth century/early twentieth century *domestic* roots of American socialism and municipalism. More dramatically, however, was the election to city council that same year of a socialist, one campaigning as such, in a city-wide election in Seattle (Johnson 2013). Kshama Sawant would go on to repeat her successful campaign two more times, in each case defeating liberal Democratic Party rivals while defending her class-struggle politics. Although the beneficiary of the city-wide coalition effort involving a wide range of left-wing political forces including left-liberal and anarchist currents, Sawant closely identifies with a socialist organization, Socialist Alternative. Rather than hiding her affiliations, she successfully traded on these to appeal to voters. Although her campaigns have embraced critical single issues—\$15/hour minimum wage, rent control, mass incarceration, taxing Amazon, etc. – all of these have been framed in the context of a broad class struggle challenging not only capitalists, but capitalism itself (Gupta 2015).

The breakthrough election of Sawant to the city council of a command city in the global capitalist economy would not be replicated elsewhere by her political tendency, although they ran competitive races elsewhere, especially in Minneapolis (Mullen 2017).<sup>7</sup> However, elsewhere in the U.S., socialists would find success in numerous state assembly and local races running with the support of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). (In Texas, for example, four DSA-backed candidates won county, judicial, and college trusteeship elections in 2018, see Blain 2018.) Of course, the 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns of Bernie Sanders placed socialists and socialism at the center of public debate. Although precise definitions of Sanders' socialism would prove elusive, certain programmatic elements stand out.<sup>8</sup>

7. By underscoring these pre-2016 initiatives which indexed a rising socialist consciousness in the public, we dissent from John B. Judis (2020) who traces the "socialist awakening" to the 2020 Bernie Sanders' campaign.

8. We do *not* intend to develop a definition of socialism and especially not one that characterizing positions or thinkers relative to any abstract or doctrinal definition. Instead, we are identifying as socialist those currents that have declared themselves

These include a strong commitment *by the state* to the provision of public goods especially those that impact the working class' quality of life (affordable housing, healthcare access, free education, secure retirement, and a safe environment, see Day and Uetrict 2020). Departing from traditional liberalism, Sanders framed such benefits not only as human rights, but also as goods *denied to the working class* by "the billionaire class." As such, the struggle for these public goods is a class struggle. In asserting that these public goods are human rights attainable through a class struggle expressed in both naming-and-shaming campaigns and through referenda, and in electoral campaigns, Sanders also created the space for socialism to enter the public conversation at a national level, something that Sawant had achieved at the municipal level. Moreover, in calling for a political revolution, one to be waged collectively, Sanders signaled a challenge to establishment politics, making it clear that his run within the Democratic Party primaries was a matter of political convenience rather than loyalty or philosophical commitment.

Of course, one person does not a social movement make, however the Sanders campaign, together with other dramatic insurgencies at the congressional level, including the campaigns of the now legendary Alexandria Ocasio Cortez, have involved millions of people with thousands engaged in voluntary campaign work, grassroots donors raising millions of dollars, and a network of non-party campaigning organizations and get-out-the-vote operations. More than "detoxifying" the socialist appellation (Day and Uetrict 2020), these campaigns suggest a sea-change in American politics and the prospect that social movement activity may find a corresponding and responsive electoral movement. The scale of the new wave relative to established power should not be over-estimated however. As John Lawrence (2020) notes, there are some 500,000 elected offices in the U.S., but

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to be socialist and ascribed certain positions that they hold to be emblematic of their socialism. It bears mentioning that we do not address earlier socialist currents. For example the new communist movement (described by Elbaum 2002) was clearly socialist, contributed, long after their heyday to social movement turns including the anarchist, democratic, global, and present one, but is not addressed by this introduction. Their successor organizations, including several that have re-embraced the party form of the New Communist Movement such as those affiliated with the Marxist Center (see <https://regenerationmag.org/marxist-center-affiliate-organizations/>) certainly embody the current socialist turn as much as their higher profile counterparts. Since these do not appear to be defining the present course and dynamics within the current socialist turn, we do not explore them further.

three major progressive and socialist groups (Our Revolution, DSA, and Justice Democrats) endorsed just under 440 candidates in 2018.

To the degree that Sanders, Ocasio Cortez and their cohort of politicians signal a novel socialist turn, observers would be well advised to notice that the core issues that they have bundled into a single *socialist* package have always been part of the public conversation albeit as discrete *issues*. Movement organizations including many unions, community-based organizations, and campaigns have long championed single-payer health systems, raising the minimum wage, student debt forgiveness, robust social safety nets, prison abolition, immigrants' rights, etc. Moreover, several large national networks represent "poor people's" networks and predate the turn. However, it is also worthwhile noticing that many of these organizations, often bound by their corporate form or legal identities, were nonetheless often home to socialist organizers and movement-building projects from earlier generations. One example is particularly instructive in this regard. It is the political and organizer training that the founders of the Black Lives Matter movement received through their interactions with Los Angeles's Labor Community Strategy Center, itself anchored in revolutionary socialist politics going back decades (Ball 2015). Recognition of the submerged networks and abeyance structures however does not obscure the phoenix-like rebirth of socialist organizations.

For context, DSA's growth represents a leap over previous centralized national organizations. In the 1980s, Van Gosse (1994) estimated that membership of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES) to approach 2,000. In that era of mostly small left wing organizations, CISPES represented, 'the only explicitly "left" current that operated consistently all across the country (in all 50 states, not just a few big cities), with a practical commitment to revolutionary change...' By the end of the 1990s, various socialist cadre organizations could claim memberships ranging from 400-500 to a few thousand, in the case of the International Socialist Organization (ISO).

Outside the electoral terrain, socialist activists and more broadly, progressive activists (understood here as people with economic justice goals and socially progressive racial, gender, sexual orientation, labor, and environmental sensibilities) have more broadly advanced labor and employment struggles. These are especially evident in the service and education sectors in the building of broad and inclusively campaigns for raising the minimum wage and for defending workplace rights. Spectacular strikes in "red" and right-to-work states,

celebrated in Eric Blanc's (2019) *Red State Revolt* seem to indicate that the socialist turn – in this case the pursuit of the public good (education) – is closely tied to a working class agent (organized/organizing teachers). The optimistic labor writings of Jane McAlevey (2012, 2016) are consistent with this turn, expressing confidence in the capacity of service sector and immigrant workers to overcome historical obstacles to their organization into militant unions. Critical to the campaigns that she describes are union organizing tactics that extend well beyond the shop floor and adopt corporate campaign tactics – corresponding to a strategy that involves workers *and their communities*: “When unions ... understand the basis of the relationship between the workers and their own community – they can defeat not only a bad employer but ... they can change not only their workplace but also society” (McAlevey 2016: 204).

Corresponding to and alongside the labor and socialist organizing, a number of platforms for socialist thinking and debate have been built by a new generation of socialist activists. The adjective “new” is merited by the fact that these activists are generally not associated with the traditional socialist formations, or where they may be affiliated with older socialist formations, e.g. DSA or the former International Socialist Organization, they represent a new cohort of leaders, ones not closely tied to the previous and often moribund leadership. In addition to quasi-party or party-like entities (Socialist Alternative, Party of Socialism and Liberation, and Democratic Socialists of America), journals and publishing houses, once stagnant, now form a vital new arena of debate and propagandizing with ancillary social media expressions. The flagship and unparalleled publication of the socialist left is *Jacobin* an online and print publication with 60,000 paid subscribers and a web readership of two million monthly in 2020 (*Jacobin Magazine* n.d.). Another publishing house, Haymarket Books, founded in 2001 and initially closely tied to the International Socialist Organization, has seen its reach expand enormously. *Publishers Weekly* (Milliot and Kirch 2018) included it, along with Seven Sisters Press, as among the fastest-growing independent publishing houses – a fact that it attributes to the public reaction to the Trump Administration. Strong social media platforms, some independent spinoffs of the political projects that inspired them (e.g. post-Howard Dean campaign), including the Young Turks, whose videos received over a billion views on YouTube (Uygur 2013), and *Chapo Trap House*, a podcast founded in 2016, has over 200,000 weekly listeners and a budget of several hundred thousand dollars based on crowdfunding (Koshy 2019). Their irreverent *The Chapo Guide to Revolution: A*

*Manifesto against Logic, Facts, and Reason* (Biederman et al. 2019) debuted at number six on the *New York Times* non-fiction bestseller list. Together, these platforms have an extraordinary reach when compared to previous generations of socialists.

If, as the foregoing suggests, evidence for a socialist turn abounds, how are we to understand the concepts and framing that it has propagated across social movements? Further, if this is indeed a novel turn among social movements, what innovations should we expect in regard to issues that have traditionally bedeviled movements of the broad left in previous eras? Three propositions seem to define the socialist turn: First, that politics and political organizations matter; second, that state power is a worthy target; and third, that class struggle is the route to power and way to address social ills. Underlying all three concepts is the model of capitalism as the source of these ills – including racism, environmental destruction, and extreme inequality.

The electoral orientation exemplified by the Sanders campaign and insurgencies at the city, state, and congressional levels of government may also be viewed as a decisive break with past socialist and social movement practice which emphasized building community power and horizontal forms of organization. The socialist turn is also an embrace of organization and, despite its voluntarist dimensions, organizing even on the terrain of consolidated corporate power: socialists now frequently compete with liberal Democrats *within* the Democratic Party and establish socialist caucuses and alliances across interest groups within the institution that most socialists had theretofore abandoned. Inside and outside the Democratic Party, the goal of the socialists is the building of a “mass party of the working class” (Schwartz and Sunkara 2017). Outside the Democratic Party other socialist currents have continued to develop albeit on a smaller scale. Correspondingly, new publications on the left have reacted against the perceived inadequacies of grassroots and network style organizations that characterized the GJM and its successors like #Occupy (Dean 2016; Gosse 2020; Sunkara 2019).

The technological infrastructure choices of the socialist movement also contrast with previous generations. For Jeff Juris (2012), the email lists of the GJM gave way to the more decentralized forms of social media (with Twitter being the most emblematic of the technologies) of the #Occupy Movement. The internal operations of DSA and a number of related projects however are strongly tied to a much more structured technology, Slack, which offers an integrated suite of communications and project management apps. That this is more centrally managed and propriety technology also reflects a shift from the anti-

corporate, free-and-open-source commitments of the GJM and Indy-Media era. (For a very representative exchange on DSA and its use of Slack, see Anonymous [2020].)

To fully appreciate the nature of the socialist turn's organizational choices and its remoteness from earlier anarchist and democratic turns, one only need look at the approach to funding and fundraising adopted by the organizations identified with the turn. A recent article by a leading DSA figure, David Duhalde (2020), parses the difference between PAC and SuperPAC funding sources. While developing a critique of the latter and the opacity of its funding sources, Duhalde affirms the idea that socialists ought to be open to taking such funding even if we reject the legitimacy of such financial aggregators on principle. This is in sharp contrast to the self-funding, direct volunteer labor, and in-kind donations models that characterize earlier turns. The differences here are both in the scale and the organizational infrastructure required to achieve such scale.

Concomitant with the socialist turn's electoralism is an optimistic reading of the power of the state to achieve socialist-oriented goals including especially those that expand the social safety net e.g. Medicare for All. This again is in sharp contrast, but not necessarily in contradiction with the localist and solidarity-economy approaches that characterize the GJM. Christian Parenti (2014) contrasts the traditional Jeffersonian, small-farmer approach of the left (celebrated, for example, by *Michael Hardt Presents the Declaration of Independence* [Jefferson and Hardt 2007]) and with his reading of "Hamilton beyond Hamilton," on state-led industrialization in the context of climate breakdown and decarbonizing the economy. The most ambitious and unambiguous embrace of the central state comes from *Jacobin* founder and publisher, Bhaskar Sunkara (2019) whose *The Socialist Manifesto* recapitulates the history of social democracy, one centered on the Western European experience albeit informed also with cautionary accounts of the Eastern European and Third World embrace of socialism.<sup>9</sup> For Sunkara, the state offers an escape from zero-sum conflicts within the working class and an opportunity to build coalitions for structural reforms that challenge the logic of capitalist accumulation. Parenti's (2020) more recent contextual re-reading of the U.S. constitution finds

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9. This is not the place for a full review of Sunkara's account of social democracy however, it bears mentioning that his is not an uncritical account of the Western European experience. Indeed, he appropriates an anti-communist screed, *The God That Failed*, and repurposes it as the title for his chapter on European social democracy.

a state that Sunkara would appreciate, that is, one with powers that are “numerous, sweeping, and economically transformative” (Parenti 2020: 136). Their statism is echoed in DSA’s embrace of the Green New Deal (Democratic Socialists of America 2019) which contrasts with liberal approaches to the project that subsidize an anticipated capitalist-led transition to a decarbonized economy. Instead, the state is an active creator of public goods and institutions necessary for an aimed rapid (albeit late) decarbonization of the economy by 2030.

The road to state power in the socialist turn, as exemplified by Sunkara’s (2019) work and others registered above (McAlevy 2016; Blanc 2019), is defined by a bold re-assertion of the *class struggle* based on the working class. However, and one might wonder how it could otherwise, this is not the working class of anyone’s grandparents. Instead, their class struggle building of socialist power acknowledges structural transformations of the working class – expanding out from its industrial core and focusing on strategic new sectors including (especially for McAlevy 2016) logistics and the new working classes of the service sector (which closely tie workplace processes with community needs and clients). Sunkara’s (2019) plain-spoken chapter “How We Win,” similarly explores how the working class can be won to party programs that emphasize the universalistic and structural reforms that at once address immediate needs and leave the class-as-a-whole better positioned for further reforms.

How then are the traditional challenges that have bedeviled class base projects, particularly those in the U.S.? Following the Sanders campaign of 2016, Sunkara’s emphasis on universalistic, economic justice programs is cast as a win-win proposition – at once raising the living standards of the more exploited and oppressed parts of the working class, namely people of color, without alienating more privileged layers of the working class. The pages of *Jacobin* are consistent with this approach extending beyond healthcare to matters of criminal justice, housing, education, and transit. The GJM’s emphasis on the commons is here transformed into public goods won through the class struggle. Several leading black and socialist thinkers especially Cedric Johnson and Adolph Reed have similarly approached these struggles although, especially in the case of Reed, this long precedes the current socialist turn.

The collective approach to race-class questions is of course not without controversy - see Powell (2020) for a recent account. However, there are several indicators that the current debates over race and class are taking place on a qualitatively new organizational and political terrain than earlier ones on recognition and representation



that characterized the GJM (Martinez 2000). Rather than opposed camps, advocates of a more race-aware politics and they allege to be a “class reductionists” are routinely engaging one another in shared publications and other fora – often within the same organization. For example, DSA has an organized Afrosocialist Working Group which gives voice to and an organized platform for Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color organizers. During the current rebellion challenging black oppression, both the Working Group and its parent organization have come out in active, on-the-ground support of the Movement for Black Lives. Another political development – encompassing a much wider range of socialist perspectives – indicates a new level of organizational sophistication and complexity to the race-class question. In contrast with his 2016 presidential campaign, Bernie Sanders 2020 campaign gained the active support of a large number of people of color organizations and during the 2020 primary season which helped Sanders win large majorities of the Latinx and younger African American vote. His campaign’s framing of race-class questions also shifted, this time round Sanders embraced explicit racial justice frames earning the endorsement of a number of leading African American activist intellectuals including founders of the Combahee River Collective who first theorized intersectionality in the 1970s (Smith 2020). None of the foregoing indicates a resolution of the debates over race and class.

On the contrary, the political, conceptual, and historiographic discourse over race and class continues to be an arena for serious debate, controversy, and even rancor. However, with the socialist turn, advocates at the poles of these debates seem to have found common projects – in electoral politics, in organization building, and on the streets. To underscore this point, these debates are occurring *within* organizations as opposed to mere snipping across organizational lines.

If the current socialist turn-identified here with an emphasis on building a mass party, organizing under rubric of the class struggle, and hoping to wield state power – appears to be the dominant form of socialism accessible to the broad public, it does not exhaust the socialist spectrum. Party-building cadre projects continue to attract adherents (see, for example, Socialist Alternative and the Party of Socialism and Liberation). Another socialist current, one that derives directly from the Black Liberation movement, the GJM and solidarity economy movements, and an African American Marxism-Anarchism, may be discerned in the Cooperation Jackson movement (Akuno and Nangwaya 2017). It relates to the socialist turn and appears to be developing denser base-building relationships with locally- and

regionally-defined communities and spurred close to a dozen other projects attempting to reproduce the model elsewhere in the U.S. (Akuno 2019). While the model is connected to the socialist turn, its frames place greater emphasis on racial justice and extends its model of the class struggle beyond workplaces and the working class itself to include proletarianized populations whose consumption power is exploited long after their exclusion from formal capitalist workplaces.

*Prospects for socialism and democracy after the Millennial Turns*

If, as Chantal Mouffe (2009), Alain Touraine (1997), Herbert Marcuse (1979), Richard Flacks (1988) and others have asserted, democracy is the broad historical tradition of the left, the trajectory of the U.S. left should tell us something about the future of democracy in this country. The reorientation of the left around anarchist, democratic, and global paradigms in the 1990s–2010s period resulted in a mix of tactics, frames, strategies, network, and resources quite unlike that of earlier periods.

The anarchist turn changed the way in which activists in general, anarchist or not, did their work. Horizontalism, direct democracy, mutual aid, and mass direct action became things practiced by non-anarchists. The democratic turn joined demands for democracy with cries for justice, inspiring campaigns to democratize elections, government, media, the workplace, and much else. It also dramatically stepped up the practice of movement constitutionalism and brought ideas about corporate personhood and popular sovereignty far beyond the confines of the left. The global turn set the stage for the climate movement of the twenty-first century, making again possible the idea that not only is another world possible, but that it would be up to a transnational movement to constitute a new global order capable of transitioning beyond the carbon economy.

By 2016, the millennial turns had run their course and new openings and threats appeared on the left's horizons. The emergence of a socialist turn on the left swept together most of the remaining energies from the millennial turns, uniting them, for the moment, with some veterans of socialist and communist cadre organizations, the progressive wing of the Democratic Party, and millions of new activists in their teens and twenties who identify with socialism, and increasingly, with different forms of communism. Put another way, the socialist turn may be in the process of reproducing the left as the Left.

If so, *this* Left is filled with contradictions. Anarchism may have grown quite pragmatic, and many anarchists no longer identify as

such even if they maintain opposition to domination and the state. Yet many of the newer “socialists” range from Marxist social democrats engaged in state-centered mobilizations to communists organizing openly not as cadre but instead around community base-building for dual power using horizontal organizing models.

There is a liquidity to the left politics of the moment, one that is sure to firm up once the question of the state is posed inescapably. In this mix there remain, coming out of the democratic turn, ongoing mobilizations for constitutional change supported to a greater or lesser extent by nearly all involved. The specter of disintegration is present, but so too is the possibility of revolutionary constitutionalism allowing the left to transcend one of its historic obstacles – the ideological debate on the state – through a practical program of participatory deliberation and mass organizing.

Beyond this, the global climate crisis and the response to it provide a strategic imperative for exactly that. A slogan popular among socialists these days is “no one is going to save us but ourselves.” A fusion of the millennial turns, the socialist turn, and the global climate justice movement is expressed in the policies of the global Green New Deal. But that mix also suggests something that goes further and deeper: A global movement engaged in a constitutional struggle to institute a democratic, sustainable, and equitable global order.

Our work – both this introduction and the collection as a whole – is intended to serve as a reflection on U.S. activism and mobilizations immediately preceding and since the turn of the millennium. Although our current struggles still require direct confrontations to corporate power and global capitalism, many activists today are more focused on directly combating overt fascists and white supremacy. And while it even seems arguable that since Trump’s election we are now living in a different phase of activist mobilizing altogether, Seattle remains relevant to our movement building. As AK Thompson reflects, “By returning to Seattle, where intoxication and dead reckoning came together in a declaration of victory, we might recall what ‘winning’ once was.” In so doing, we might glean what we need to do to win once again.

Above all, it is our hope that with this kind of reflection we are able to assemble lessons about what today’s movements are made of to identify both the elements they carry with them from past struggles as well the elements they have put aside. This way, as we look forward to the tasks of the coming years, we can better equip ourselves with tools and knowledge for how to best mobilize our collective strength and knowledge to confront and overcome the daunting challenges of organized fascism, democratic erosion, climate collapse, and

the persistence of global capitalism. At the very least, we hope it can serve as a reminder that another world is not only necessary, but still possible.

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