CONTESTING CORPORATE GLOBALISM : SOURCES OF POWER, CHANNELS OF RESISTANCE ?

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Globalisation rhetoric has its origins in corporate strategy and in many ways is inseparable from free market neo-liberal ideology. Assertions about the inevitability of liberal capitalism, and the impossibility of an alternative, express the hegemony of neo-liberal globalisation. The outcome is an all-pervasive consumer culture and a strait-jacketing of the national state. But socio-economic or corporate globalisation is no monolith. As nationalist ideologies, state structures and inter-state bodies are re-geared to transnational interests, they can become selfdestructive.

National units are fractured along new transnational faultlines, representation is disempowered, and nationalist national legitimation is disrupted. The resulting legitimacy deficits are exploited by emerging political movements. Debates about the politics of globalisation centre on conflicting interpretations of the dominant sources of power in globalising late-modern society. Macro-theoretical disputes between the intellectual traditions of liberal-internationalism, post-Marxism and neo-Marxism generate disputes over whether the key power-sources are institutional, cultural or material. These contrasting conceptions of globalised power generate diverging predictions about the likely sources of contestation and democratisation. The three predictions are characterised here as «globalist adaptation», «localist confrontation» and «transnational resistance». Each leads to a particular set of protest strategies, and are being actively exploited by social movements, but each has its inadequacies. Each are discussed and a concluding section debates the possibilities for conflict or concertation between them.

1.Globalist adaptation

Globalist adaptation sees movements take a broadly reformist approach, seeking to «turn around» globalising institutions and practices. The demand is invariably for greater institutional accountability and the formulation of goals that address popular priorities rather than elite interests. This often involves a focus on the weakly-legitimated intergovernmental political process, with social movements exploiting the emerging political opportunities to widen participation and reorient institutions. The approach is popularised most enthusiastically by relatively dominant international Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) based in the global «North». These integrate cosmopolitan values with a relatively privileged worldview to enable critical accommodation with dominant sources of institutional power.

By adopting this approach, movements and their international NGO representatives in effect take on a series of mediating roles. Critical engagement communicates policy failings to elites and engenders policy adaptation, but it also legitimises institutional power and normalises neo-liberal discourses. A series of intra-movement conflicts emerge as confrontation between globalising elites and subordinated peoples is displaced into conflicts between relatively «coopted» and relatively «autonomous» NGOs.

Arguments that «global governance» can and should be democratised reflect a broadly cosmopolitan set of assumptions, and have their origins in the liberal-internationalist tradition of international relations. Liberal internationalists argue that greater inter-societal interdependence, whether economic, cultural or environmental, requires the creation of inter-state and supra-state institutions to manage interdependency (Rosenau, 1980). As state power is increasingly embedded in, and patterned by, the power of inter-state institutions, it is to be expected that new global democratic agendas will emerge, carried by new global social movements, leading to the emergence of a «global civil society» (Walzer 1999; Falk 1995; Markoff 1996).

The perspective is also echoed in internationalised versions of the «political process» strand of social movement theory. Here the

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assumption is that the primary purpose of social movements is to extend participation in public affairs. To this end, movements are seen as mobilising political resources and exploiting political opportunities (Kreisi 1995; McCarthy & Zald 1995). From this perspective the formal political process shapes social movements and if that process changes so will social movements (Tarrow 1994). As political structures and sources of institutional power shift beyond the state, new cross-national political opportunities begin to open up and new transnational mobilising resources begin to become available (McCarthy 1998; Keck & Sikkink, 1998). Like their counterparts in the early days of state-formation, social movements exploit these opportunities and resources to contest institutional power. In the process they open up new realms for democratisation and for widened participation, and themselves are transformed from national to transnational movements (Smith, Chatfield & Pagnucco, 1998).

For both liberal internationalists and «political process» theorists, movements are seen as encouraging the emergence of accountable and «transparent» institutions in the inter-state context. The assumption is that mobilisation is invariably programmatic, a social means to a political end. The purpose of social movements is to broaden political participation. Hence under globalisation the primary modes of contestation are politically-centred and orientated to globalist or cosmopolitan aspirations. Political institutions play the central role, and this is reflected in dilemmas over whether to critique or to advise agents of globalisation, such as transnational corporations and intergovernmental organisations. These are defined as tactical rather than strategic dilemmas, and are paralleled at the national level by questions over how far to act against state authorities rather than in partnership with them.

Instead of placing limits on the power of inter-governmental agencies, international NGOs attempt to change the way it is exercised. Institutional elites are encouraged to become more accountable and to develop policies that serve popular rather than dominant interests (O'Brien & al. 2000). At the very least this involves persuading negotiators to incorporate some compensatory «side agreements» into the policy framework. An example is the campaign by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions for minimum labour rights to be incorporated into the international

trading regime overseen by the World Trade Organisation (ICFTU 1998). This draws on an earlier initiative by North American trade unions for the inclusion of a labour clause - a labour side agreement - in the North American Free Trade Agreement. The campaign was successful, but the clause has proved signally ineffective (Cohen 1997).

Rather than arguing that the institutions are irredemably antidemocratic, NGO representatives generally call for meaningful consultative structures and lobby for greater «transparency». Institutional elites often respond to criticism by adapting their structures in order to legitimise their policies.

Early examples include the «social partnership» structures created by the European Commission in the 1980s. These engaged environmentalists, womens organisations and trade unions in the policy process, and were explicitly geared to generating enthusiasm for the 'Single European Market' and the wider project of European integration (Goodman 1997).

More recent examples include the consultative arrangements created by the World Bank which were established soon after the 'Fifty Years is Enough' campaign directed at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in 1996. These structures have allowed International Development NGOs to participate in in monitoring, evaluating and advising World Bank officials in policy development (O'Brien & al. 2000; Solomon 2001).

Likewise, transnational corporate executives are encouraged to listen to their non-financial «stakeholders», to act «responsibly» and promote concepts of «corporate citizenship». There are many examples of International NGOs that have lobbied for corporate 'Codes of Conduct', for instance on human rights, the environment, and on labour rights. Very often, NGOs have become involved in monitoring and endorsing these corporate codes, thus using their reputational capital to influence corporations (Philips 2001). Campaigns geared to the reform of existing corporations are often combined with efforts at constucting new forms of conscientious consumption. International NGOs - mostly development NGOs actively seek to reform trading relations through «Fair Exchange» initiatives that connect Northern consumers with Southern producers.

Northern purchasing power is harnessed to improve livelihoods in Southern contexts, thus reforming consumerism. Like corporate codes of conduct, these initiatives may be seen as legitimising global divides, rather than overcoming them (Johnston 2001) At the same time, international NGOs are engaged in constructing and institutionalising global norms, for instance, in relation to the regulation of the environment, the workplace, the status of women or the administration of justice. Prevailing norms are contested as inadequate and alternatives are presented in order to reframe existing practices: the emphasis is on reforming transnational practices by articulating universal norms as a necessary foundation for globalisation. A good example is the involvement of the international womens movement in the UN conference on women. held in Beijing in 1995. Non-government organisations are widely credited with shaping the agenda for the conference and ensuring the successful ratification of the Beijing 'Platform for Action' (Dickenson 1996). The twelve point Platform has established an agenda for government actionon gender. Implementation has been monitored by national womens organisations, and followedup at the international level, for instance through the Beijing-Plus-5 conference in 2001.

As they reach beyond the limits of nationally-centred political parties, to politicise transnational practices, NGOs become, in effect, extensions of the political process. NGO representatives take on the (heavy) responsibility of constituting globalised public spheres in a newly emerging «global civil society». In this way they can fill a vacuum and become vehicles for «peoples power» in the global age (Sakamoto 1996). It may be questioned, though, whether international NGOs have the institutional capacity to perform this role (Van Der Pijl 1998); it may also be asked whether they can garner the required legitimacy and political leverage.

By arguing for an adaptation of corporate practices, intergovernmental institutions and global norms, international NGOs seek a deepened globalism. Cosmopolitan affiliations are asserted over nationalism or localism, civil society is legitimised against state power, and inter-state governance is privileged over state government. As this ideological logic of adaptive globalism is increasingly normalised and institutionalised other political options are marginalised or forced off the agenda, and international NGOs can be characterised as elitist and as agents of globalist domination rather than as vehicles for emancipation from it. Not surprisingly, mainstream versions of the model are often complicit with neoliberal globalisation, or are directly in its service, as the rhetoric of global governance - as against national government - legitimises institutions and their neo-liberal policies in the face of NGO challenges.

2. Confrontational localism

In contrast with international NGOs, many movements react to the emergence of transnational power sources by marking-out and constructing communal, local or national autonomies. These movements do not engage with or accommodate themselves to neo-liberal globalist rhetoric - they reject it. The approach, indeed, may be explicitly defined against international NGOs and engage in a critique of «ngoism» and elite cosmopolitanism (Petras 1997). This assertion of local legitimacy is especially prevalent in the Global South where corporate globalism compounds pre-existing subordination under neo-colonialism, and where movements for selfdetermination have a strong recent history. In these regions, especially, globalist regulation is permanently confronted and disrupted by a multiplicity of localist political projects. Linkages with «the alobal» are severed and alternative foundations for political legitimacy, mobilisation and participation are asserted. Forms of autonomy, including self-determination and self-government, are defined as ends in themselves, not as means to broader goals. Economic autonomy is asserted against transnationalised corporate power; political structures are created and defended against interstate «governance»; cultural practices are asserted against globalised media and consumerist norms.

Such strategies may reflect the overarching dynamic of cultural mobilisation under neo-liberal globalism. Structures of global governance may pattern the political process of globalisation, but they, in turn, express more fundamental developments that prefigure and define the boundaries of political contestation. These frameworks of globalised cultural domination, for instance as manifested in the liberal state and possessive individualism, establish

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the foundations for neo-liberal hegemony. The only cosmopolitanism that exists here is the elite cosmopolitanism of dominant state elites, a form of ideology that suffocates locally-based alternatives. Here, global norms are not seen as expressing a widening cosmopolitanism, but rather as embodying cultural imperialism.

This approach echoes the *«realist»* tradition of international relations theory. For «realists», the states system resolves the problem of global cultural difference by enabling the expression of distinct identifications through the system of «nation-states» (Walker 1994). The underlying rationale is the Hobbesian assertion that the existence of society depends upon the existence of the state (Buzan 1996). This emphasis on the consequences of weakened of state power meshes with a second strand in the theory of social movements that stresses the role of culture and identity in the logic of collective action. This «new social movements» approach is most clearly articulated by post-Marxist sociologists who claim that capitalist industrial society and its class-driven dynamic is passing into history (Touraine 1977, Cohen 1985). The new social cleavages are expressed in cultural conflicts over informational resources and over the power to program and process social practices (Melucci 1996). Instead of class domination fought out in conflicts over distribution, there is information domination fought out in conflicts over autonomy and recognition. Instead of being social means to a political end, movements become ends in themselves.

From this perspective, the success of social movements primarily measured by the degree to which they are able to construct cultural categories and secure some degree of autonomy from the existing social system. Increasingly it is argued these movements for autonomy are becoming the primary foundations for resistance in globalised information society (Castells 1997; Bauman 1998). Globalised information networks - and their elites - create new forms of subordination and are increasingly confronted by communities of resistance, in which localised collective action and locallyconstructed identities are marshalled in the name of autonomy. Here the dystopias constructed by realists to underpin their advocacy of the states system are invoked as the necessary consequence of globalising forces that strengthen the power of informational elites. The hollowing-out of state power, the weakening of state structures of representation, and the declining cultural legitimacy of the national unit, all contribute to a growing vulnerability to globalised informational power.

Autonomy is often defined against globalist adaptation and against concepts of «global civil society». In contrast with those seeking to adapt global structures, whose legitimacy rests on cosmopolitan claims, movements for localist resistance base their legitimacy on local claims against globalist domination. This should come as no surprise: meaningful participation in «global civil society» may be available to some representatives of elite NGO opinion, but for large sections of the population, globalisation is experienced as a threat, not as an opportunity. The resulting social movements are aimed at securing a radical break with dominant ideologies, with liberalism as well as with neo-liberalism.

Transnational corporate power is often confronted by these campaigns for local self-determination. Rather than lobbying corporations to change their practices, these movements assert the right of veto over the exercise of corporate power. Such movements may refuse to permit the opening of facilities, such a mines or hydroelectric dams (Connell & al. 1996).

Examples include the Bougainville Revolutionary Army, which fought a successful war to close what was at the time the world»s largest copper mine, and to then continue asserting rights to self determination against the government of Papua New Guinea and its regional allies; another example is the Ogoni people's campaign for self-determination against the Nigerian Government and the oil company, Shell (Havini & Johns 2001, Obi 1997, Gedicks 1993).

Likewise, rather than persuading inter-governmental institutions to adapt themselves to broader public pressures, movements for local confrontation argue the institutions should be dismantled. Attempts at increasing the transparency and accountability of institutions, or to reform their policy agendas, are discarded. Instead, movements assert the right of local control or sovereignty against inter-state decision-making, with communal, local or national frameworks for autonomy asserted as the foundation for collective action. An example here is the Philippine «People's Power» movement, «Bayan» or «New Patriotic Alliance», which in 1996 organised a «Peoples Conference Against Imperialist Globalisation» targeted at the Manila meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Community (APEC). Bayan has become a central element in a global anti-imperialist alliance, which in the Philippine context is focused on realising genuine national popular sovereignty, as reflected in Bayan's first guiding principle, that «True national sovereignty lies in asserting our nation» independence from imperialist domination» (Bayan 1996).

Rather than adapting global norms, the emphasis is on mobilising local values and cultural practices against transnationalised consumer ideology. An impulse to de-link from globalised consumerism is combined with the assertion of self-reliance in relatively self-contained communities that then become carriers for counter-culture. This process of creating what Castells calls the «communal heaven», can be seen across the globe, and very often taps a reactionary impulse (Castells 1997). It is expressed most vividly in the form of ethno-nationalist revivalism, religious fundamentalism and other forms of radical communalism, all of which are defined against the dominant cultural motifes of corporate globalisation.

These resistance identities are likely to be highly defensive and reactive, although it is conceivable that they may develop more proactive «proiect identities» geared to broader social transformation (Castells 1997). An historical example might be the interaction between anticolonial nationalism (a resistance identity) and anti-imperialism (a project identity) in the emergence of postcolonial states. But this faith in the emergence of project identities raises difficult questions of how to articulate movements that have as their guiding rationale the defense of autonomy. If the assertion of autonomy is the foundation stone of the movement, then any cross-cultural agendas and alliances geared to broader aspirations cannot be allowed to impinge on that autonomy.

Indeed, even this limited room for manoevre may be non-existent localist movements can be nostalgic and divisive, founded on myths of the past, of a lost golden age, that valorises local authenticity as a mark of community membership and mobilises this against inauthentic «outsiders».

At best, any common ground that emerges will inevitably be contingent, and always subject to renegotiation. This contrasts, of course, with the relatively unified common purpose of the power

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elites that drive globalised networks. The relatively strong network of dominant groups is confronted by a range of groups whose priority is to maximise their autonomy, and hence whose power is necessarily fragmented. The result could be a process of endless skirmishing on the fringes of globalised power.

3. Transnational Resistance

Many social movements have found localist reactions to be both defensive and disempowering. These groups may attempt to articulate demands for autonomy with universal norms, pursuing these demands through transnational channels as well through the defence of local autonomy. A wide range of movements - including environmental, womens and indigenous peoples movements, that are often described as fitting the «new social movement» model have created and exploited sources of transnational political leverage and have constructed powerful transnational affiliations and loyalties. At the same time they have remained focused on local and national mobilisation, and on state power, especially as neo-liberal integration has defined new more authoritarian roles for the national state.

For these movements there has been no retreat into national or local enclaves, neither has there been a leap into cosmopolitan globalism; instead, they have sought to construct forms of national transnational resistance that bridge the versus cosmopolitan divide. Here, autonomy and transnationalism are not seen as contradictory, but as potentially complementary. This may reflect the particular logic of mobilisation; it also may reflect a broader structural transformation as globalising pressures strengthen the common foundations for action, encouraging the emergence of shared aspirations and guiding principles. Some may then draw on these common threads to construct a politics of transnational resistance, bridging «levels» of solidarity and contestation, in a range of balancing acts across the «domestic»-«foreign» divide.

Movements of this sort are focused on the difficult task of bringing together relatively-autonomous constituencies into coalitions of the dispossessed, in order to mount an effective challenge to neo-liberal globalism.

The politics of transnational resistance is emphasised by neo-Marxist theorists. In contrast with «new» social movement theorists, neo-Marxists assert there is a common underlying class dynamic that drives resistance.

Here, in contrast with post-Marxist perspectives, the emphasis is on material power and how it is accumulated. While there may have been a transition into a new mode or epoch of capital accumulation, in which information becomes a centrally important commodity, the logic of class domination remains in place (Arrighi, 1994). While liberal-internationalists emphasise the shift away from inter-state society to global society and «realists» argue that societies are necessarily contained by states, neo-Marxists - especially World System theorists - show how state power and social power combine to stabilise global capitalism (Wallerstein 1980).

Changes from one world order to the next are driven by the conflicts created by particular modes of accumulation, with specific forms of resistance shaping the capacity to accumulate and the direction of change. This dialectical reading sees the world capitalist system locked into a constant battle with a range of anti-systemic movements, manifested in ideological conflicts between hegemonies and counter-hegemonies (Arrighi & al, 1989; Cox 1987). The neo-Marxist perspective thus emphasises the possibility for crossnational coalitions of counter-hegemonic forces. Clearly, there can be major differences in the structural context and in the forms of resistance. The logic of resisting «original» accumulation, for instance, where local practices are defended against commodification, contrasts with the logic of resisting «industrial» accumulation, where conflicts centre on the distribution of the economic surplus. Likewise, the «productivism» of industrial resistance dramatically contrasts with «survival-centred» conflicts under more intense modes of accumulation, which directly erode the social and environmental «substratum» (Van Der Pijl 1998). Despite these tensions, it can be argued there is a common logic of contesting accumulation. This offers an underlying foundation for strategy and action, and may offer significant leverage.

As transnational class power crystalises in the form of global corporations, institutions and norms, a range of common targets for movements may begin to emerge. Common disempowerment may create the foundations for common consciousness and common action.

Frameworks for action may increasingly be defined in social rather than spatial terms, with many «Third Worlds» within the «First», and vice versa (Hoogvelt 1997; Hettne 1995). In the process, movements may become more closely articulated, to constitute a counterhegemonic bloc capable of heralding a «paradigmatic transition» into a new global order (Sklair 1995; Sousa-Santos 1995; Arrighi & al.1989).

Yet, even if it is accepted that the structural conditions are in place, there are still powerful pressures against the emergence of transnational counter-hegemonies. The logic of corporate globalisation may integrate societies and lead to the emergence of cross-national norms and institutions, carried by emerging transnational classes, but its impact is felt in the form of sharpened divides between localities and peoples.

Transnational social divides may be emerging, but these overlay and reproduce diverging modes of accumulation, and have the effect of sharpening pre-existing spatial divides between geographic cores and geographic peripheries (Chossudovsky 1998). Global capitalist unity may be strengthening, but this does not necessarily generate a global anticapitalist response. On the contrary, as in other phases of the development of the World System, divisions between core and periphery provide manifold opportunities for «divide and rule» strategies both within as well as between national borders.

Hopes that are simply vested in the emergence of anti-capitalist cosmopolitanism will surely be dashed, as they have been in the past (Waterman 1998). Clearly a more grounded response is required, one which expresses the spatial as well as the social logic of transnational class formation. Local mobilisation must be interwoven with transnational concertation. Local confrontation to defend and extend autonomy is very often an objective necessity, a precondition for survival. But, as noted, movements for autonomy are necessarily impoverished in the face of globalising power sources. They must in some way be correlated and articulated to politicise and contest transnational forces beyond the ambit of the local - and this may be where the concept of transnational resistance comes into play. From these perspectives transnational strategy means exploiting transnational channels for mobilisation, but also engaging with local and national contexts, and with questions of state power and nationalism.

There is some evidence that movements have coalesced across national divides - and more importantly, across First World-Third World divides - to confront corporate power. Corporate exposure and vulnerability to shifts of perception in globalised finance and product markets is consciously being exploited by transnational coalitions, forcing corporations to become more accountable for their operations. Examples include the anti-sweatshop campaigns in the garment industry which link consumers and producers across global development divides (Diller 1999). In the case of the Nike campaign, for instance, new linkages are created between sweatshop workers and trade unions in Indonesia, and consumers and NGOs in Australia and other Northern contexts (Community Aid Abroad 1996).

In a similar vein, a wide range movements have coalesced to confront inter-governmental institutions. A particularly effective strategy has been to construct alternative fora that doggedly shadow inter-governmental institutions. These fora have been particularly important in politicising neoliberal policies, and also in articulating movement objectives. They highlight the lack of accountability in the inter-governmental context, and critique the neo-liberal models that are pursued. For example, a series of «People's Assemblies» were mounted against the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings of state leaders, first in Okinawa in 1995, then Manila 1996, Vancouver 1997, Kuala Lumpur 1998 and Auckland 1999. These played a key role in developing Asia-Pacific cooperation between social movements, and assisted in the more effective promotion of alternatives to neo-liberal alobalism.

In recent years there has been a shift beyond these contingent and

relatively loose forms of opposition into much denser forms of transnational alliance-building, for instance focused on the World Trade Organisation, the Asian Development Bank, and the Europe-Asia meetings between ASEAN and EU member states. Also, in confronting globalised consumerism and neo-liberal «norms», some movements have constructed powerful linkages between alternative global norms and local claims, for instance, to selfdetermination or to sovereignty. An example here is the crossnational campaign for East Timorese selfdetermination, which coordinated actions across East and South-East Asia in the 1990s (Goodman 2000).

Whether it is corporations, inter-state institutions or global norms that are targeted, the key issue is the ability to articulate contending movement objectives across the local-global axis. This difficult process of managing potentially conflicting perspectives may be rendered less problematic by the logic of transnational class formation, creating common experiences and targets for discontent. The limitations of this perspective stem largely from the problems of translating these presumed structural conditions into effective social movement strategy. One or other of the twin magnetic poles of elite cosmopolitanism and defensive localism may prove too strong to resist. Despite the emergence of common power sources and the experience of common subordination, cross-movement divisions may prove too strong to overcome. Similarly, despite the need to confront sources of power, the option of adaptation in the context of apparently monolithic neo-liberal ideology may prove to be the much more attractive and apparently realistic strategy. Nonetheless, this approach at least has the potential to open up more possibilities than it closes down especially in terms of redefining the boundaries of the possible, both in local and global contexts.

4. Beyond the carnival : prospects for concerted protest

The three perspectives outlined here are founded on contrasting interpretations of the primary source of power under globalisation. As highlighted below, in Figure 1, these contrasting interpretations then drive diverging predictions about the likely levels, modes and vehicles of contestation. This may lead to conflict between the three approaches, and a weakening of the prospects for contestation as power-elites face contradictory demands and are able to play one off against the other.

The resulting carnival of protest may generate impressive media images and significant advances, but these will necessarily be contingent and short-lived - flashes in the pan incapable of securing broader structural transformation. How, then, to reach beyond an eclectic, and ultimately self-defeating pluralism?

	Sources o Power	f	Levels of contestation	Modes of contestation	Vehicles/Tools
Globalist Adaptation	Institutional		Global	Critical Accomodation	International NGOs
Localist Adaptation	Info-cultural		Local/national Confrontation	Reactive Grassroots	Autonomous Veto
Transnational Resistance	Material		Transnational	Proactive Resistance	Transnational Coalitions

Fig. Social movements under globalisation : three models

It may be that one perspective can and should be privileged over the other two. One source of power - be it institutional, info-cultural or material - may play a constitutive role in global politics. The task here would be to identify the logic of resistance, define the «correct» model, and defend it against the alternatives. In practice, though, each perspective responds to a particular dimension of power under globalisation, and there is ample evidence that all three forms of contestation have a role to play in reshaping global politics. Moreover, each approach has its own built-in limitations, and it may be that these can only be overcome if all three channels for contestation are exploited to the full. A key factor in challenging corporate globalisation may be this ability to concertise contestation. Awareness of mutual differences of interpretation may be a key factor in this - in order to maximise collective strength and minimise conflicts and recriminations. Democratising pressures may then become mutually reinforcing rather than mutually exclusive.

An important task then, would be to explore some of the debates and dilemmas that emerge from this concertation process. Is there a pressure towards one model - or to a new alternative altogether? The emergence of globalised power sources creates new foundations for collective action. The question is how these foundations are exploited, and how this can transform the logic of corporate globalism.

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