THE FETISH OF BEING: AFFINITY, ONTOLOGY, AND THE PLURIVERSE

ALEX KHASNABISH
MOUNT SAINT VINCENT UNIVERSITY

The pluriverse is not a place. This much is, perhaps, obvious. It cannot be a place since that would both imply singularity and fixedness, characteristics that its radical multiplicity, dynamism, and heterogeneity would seem to reject. But if the pluriverse is not a place then, as the Triphasic Collective suggest, it nevertheless emerges out of a wide array of places and those inhabiting them. Counter-posed to the hegemonic and universalizing assemblage of "Euro-modernity", the pluriverse is a space that coalesces only when one attends to all those forms of being, knowing, and relating that cannot be simply subsumed within the dominant discourse of modernity. In this sense, the pluriverse isn't even really a space, it is a relation not unified beneath a single overarching logic. Or is it? In what follows, I take up the pluriverse, ontological multiplicity, and translation as the conceptual keys to the provocation offered by the Triphasic Collective. This is not at attempt to debunk the pluriverse, nor is it an effort aimed at unfolding yet another critique-for-critique's-sake; rather, I'm struggling here to feel out the edges of the pluriverse in order to figure out what it might mean for radical socio-political possibility today.

Navigating the Pluriverse

What is the pluriverse and how can we know it? The vignettes posed by the Triphasic Collective to start their provocation offer some examples of events that would supposedly appear as "anomalies" from the perspective of an "unmitigated Euro-modern standpoint" and yet while there is undoubtedly truth to this contention there seems to me to be a problem unfolding at the very heart of this exploration of the pluriverse. First and foremost, it resides in the processes of erasure, occlusion, and homogenization that tend to be perpetuated rather than challenged in this discourse of critical juxtaposition. Interestingly – and problematically – the language and conceptual touchstones used to

preliminarily illuminate parts of the pluriverse replicate the monolithic constructions, reductions, universalizations, and binaries of modern scientific discourse itself. On the one hand we have "Euro-modernity" grounded in "Western ontologies" while on the other we have the pluriversalistic epistemologies and ontologies of the subalterns:

> …the motto of the World Social Forum (WSF) 'Another world is possible' was meant to contest 'la pensée unique,' the mantra that gained dominance from the end of the Cold War that there was no other *realistic* social ordering for a globalizing world than capitalist modernity in its neoliberal version. Central to such contestation was to produce 'another knowledge' that would illuminate alternatives. Of course these alternatives came from a diverse pool of experiences and forms of knowledge. Initially, mainly from various strands of the modern left bringing along its universalist claims but increasingly with more input from subaltern groups such as Indigenous peoples, peasants and women who brought along their place-based and situated epistemologies. 'Place,' understood as both location and sense of self, is central for these subaltern groups as the grounding nexus where ecological, cultural and epistemological differences cohere into particular ontologies that refuse to be rolled over or subsumed under capitalist modernity and its main apparatuses (e.g., state and the market). The defence of the particularities of places against the universalizing tendencies of Euro-modernity's agents and institutions, as well as the search for non-colonizing and symmetrical ways to relate across differences, has lead various analysts to conceive the present moment as one that go beyond capitalism/anti-capitalism to involve a particular place-based politics …which in some cases also incarnates a pluriversal political proposal. (4)

This passage suggests several things that I think bear unpacking: first, that the "modern left" can be intelligibly juxtaposed to "subaltern groups" such as "Indigenous peoples, peasants and women"; second, that the knowledge borne by these subaltern groups is placed-based and situated while "Euro-modernity" is not; third and finally, that "place-based politics" goes "beyond capitalism/anti-capitalism" and is capable of "incarnate[ing] a pluriversal political proposal". Let me take up each of these premises in turn.

It's become a familiar and fashionable move to counter-pose "new" social movements – particularly those that have risen to prominence in the wake of the Zapatista uprising and as part of the alter-globalization movement – as radically new and different to the "old left" movements such as the labour movement and the Communist Internationals. This assertion of the novelty of these new movements is part of a trajectory established by social movement scholars working particularly in

Western Europe and Latin America in the 1970s and after who asserted that while "old" social movements were primarily interested in questions of material and economic redistribution, "new" movements were more concerned with questions relating to identity, social logics, and meaning. While these analysts certainly pointed to important transformations in social change movements and helped to highlight some of the most significant characteristics of New Left movements, they also regularly overstate the disjuncture between "new" and "old" by privileging – often arbitrarily, often by relying on convenient movement examples – disjuncture over the equally important continuities uniting them. It is easy to reject continuity and complexity when the examples chosen are, on the one hand, mainstream North American business unionism with all of its conservative and reactionary tendencies and, on the other, the spectacular radicality of militant students resisting war and imperialism. But what if instead of mainstream business unionism we draw on an example of radical labour organizing like the Industrial Workers of the World? Wobblies took aim at capitalism and the alienated, exploited world it helped create but they also sought to end other forms of oppression, actively contesting racism, sexism, and hierarchy. Or we could draw an example from even further back in this history and examine the radical socio-political significance of piracy in the making of the modern Atlantic world (see Rediker 2004). The work of radical historians examining diverse acts of resistance and alternative-building in the midst of worlds being violently remade compellingly illuminates not only the simultaneous existence of other epistemologies and ontologies, it also reveals this rebellious multitude's presence within as well as outside of geopolitical centres of colonial, imperial, and capitalist power. My point here is not to suggest that there is nothing new about this current historical conjuncture or the movements that have helped to define it – in fact, I see my own work as deeply enmeshed, albeit ambivalently, in this very perspective. Rather, it is to suggest that the arrangements of this pluriversalistic provocation as they stand do not go far enough in taking seriously the radical plurality of ontological difference within as well as between social spaces, nor are these terms currently sufficient to effectively address the

architectures of violence that structurally give shape to injustice. While it may seem counterintuitive to say, is it possible that in foregrounding the ontological so forcefully we lose sight of the political?

So what of the second premise here that situates placed-based knowledge versus Euro-modernity and which sees in the manifestation of processes like the WSF the promise of the pluriverse? While the importance of place-based knowledges to some of the most vigorous challenges to the supposed global ascendancy of neoliberal capitalism and the trappings of liberal democracy is indisputable the formulation of this assertion is problematic too. On the one hand is the universalizing project of Euro-modernity with its "agents and institutions" while on the other there is the "subalterns", resisting and seeking paths beyond this totalizing system, and positioned externally to this destructive, rapacious, and ever-expanding assemblage. While such an analysis is persuasive on its own terms, it negates the complex history and ongoing processes of oppression and exploitation, resistance and alternative-building that are also internal to the 'Global North/West' itself. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue in *Commonwealth* (2009):

> Modernity is always two. Before we cast it in terms of reason, Enlightenment, the break with tradition, secularism, and so forth, modernity must be understood as a power relation: domination and resistance, sovereignty and struggles for liberation. This view runs counter to the standard narrative that modernity emerged from Europe to confront in the colonies the premodern, whether that be conceived as barbaric, religious, or primitive….It is constitutive insofar as it marks the hierarchy at modernity's heart. Modernity, then, resides not solely in Europe or in the colonies but in the power relation that straddles the two. And therefore forces of antimodernity, such as resistances to colonial domination, are not outside modernity but rather entirely internal to it, that is, within the power relation. (67)

 If modernity is a power relation marked fundamentally by hierarchy, what does this mean historically and concretely? As radical historians (Linebaugh 2003; Linebaugh and Rediker 2000; Federici 2003; Rediker 2004; Wilson 2003) have so compellingly pointed out, capitalism, the state, and modernity as a biopolitical project emerge not out of some monolithic Euro-American assemblage, rather, they emerge as projects driven by very specific sets of elite interests and mobilized against wide swaths of human and non-human life within as well as outside of the sites from which they resonate.

From the witch hunts to the elaboration of theories of genocide, the knowledge and techniques gleaned from the war of social transformation waged against domestic populations is exported to people and places elsewhere. It is the same logic, the same technique steeped in a violence that is ontological and epistemological as well as physical and it is deployed across great geographic distance but, perhaps most importantly, this makes it absolutely no less place-based for so being. As Linebaugh and Rediker (2000) uncover so provocatively in their sweeping history of the making of the modern Atlantic world, while Western European elites view themselves as a modern Hercules constructing a new world, they see those arrayed against them in all their radical diversity as nothing less than a "many-headed hydra", a multitude all the more monstrous in its diversity. It is their powerful social location that allows these elites to enact a project of exploitation and domination but it is the inherently cultural terms in which their vision is cast that reveals the fundamentally situated position from which this knowledge emerges. Radical feminist historian and social analyst Silvia Federici (2003) traces the making of the modern world order and the birth of capitalism through the structural processes of enclosure, expropriation, criminalization, slavery, insecurity and dependency, and war. Particularly attentive to the ways that the emerging state and capitalist order deployed large-scale, coordinated forms of violence against those who sought to resist the destruction of their lifeworlds both within and outside of Europe, Federici provides a radical, gendered understanding of the dynamics of primitive accumulation and the way that regimes of profound violence and exploitation on a global scale were and continue to be unified by deep logics tied to the ontology of capitalism itself. Not only this, through this critical work historians-from-below have crucially laid bare the fact that the emergence of capitalism and, subsequently, modernity were only made possible by elites first waging a biopolitical – and fundamentally ontological – war against the very people who would become the first "hewers of wood and drawers of water" for this nascent world order. These examples are only illustrations of the importance of attending with greater nuance and criticality to the elaboration of assemblages like modernity. While modernity as a project

may have pretentions to universality, we achieve no transformative critical insight by setting it up as a false universal when in fact it is a value-invested, profoundly situated ontological and epistemological discourse. This investment and location need to be exposed, not obscured.

The last premise underwriting the vision of the pluriverse articulated by the Triphasic Committee that I want to take up here is the assertion that "place-based politics" goes beyond "capitalism/anti-capitalism" and can sere as the basis for a "pluriversal political proposal". Some of the most powerful and inspiring social change movements today are so because of what the Committee points to here: their connection to and grounding in a politics that is explicitly and self-consciously place-based. The Zapatistas are one example of this but so too are a host of other Indigenous projects aimed at resurgence, self-determination, and sovereignty. So too are movements of people involved in anti-eviction campaigns, collective and radical attempts to build local solutions to the eco-social crisis of climate change, struggles of women and their allies against patriarchy, and a host of other attempts to address a diversity of issues through a radical rather than reformist lens. What I am less comfortable with is the notion that a place-based politics is enough to take us to a space "beyond" capitalism/anti-capitalism. Whatever we might invest in the pluriverse and the ontological multiplicity it points to, as autonomist Marxists have gone to great lengths to point out (see Dyer-Witheford 1999), while other oppressions and violences are not merely subsumable within capitalism, it is only capitalism that has succeeded in knitting the world together through elaborate processes of exploitation while seeking to map both human and non-human existence onto its coordinates of value. There is no retreat to some privileged "place-based" politics that will allow us to confront this reality effectively. Indeed, the most durable and impressive examples of resistance and alternative-building that have emerged out of the alter-globalization movement are those that are grounded in the space they inhabit, have attempted to build resilient and networked connections with others in struggle elsewhere, and have sought to articulate in concert with these others a shared set of hallmarks that set broad parameters for a

common struggle against the multiplying crises we collectively face. Inspired by the Zapatista example, Peoples' Global Action was one such attempt to elaborate a non-hierarchical, non-organizational network of communication and coordination that was both transnational and avowedly anti-capitalist. While PGA is now dormant – or potentially defunct – it nevertheless was the conduit that made possible the Global Days of Action against the agents and institutions of global neoliberalism such as the one that successfully participated in shutting down the WTO meetings in Seattle in 1999. Alter-globalization movement slogans that resistance needed to be as "transnational as capital" also spoke to a growing realization amongst diverse groups in struggle that it is no longer enough to be "place-based" and that identifying common enemies while articulating a diverse and expansive set of alternatives to the status quo – what some have called a politics of "one no, many yeses" (see Esteva interviewed in Kingsnorth 2003, 44) – is necessary if people's movements are to find paths beyond deepening crisis. My point here is not to posit some kind of dogmatic anti-capitalism as the starting point for movements invested in radical social justice struggles but it is to suggest that without critically and explicitly recognizing the structures of violence and exploitation which give form and substance to the lived experience of these phenomena we risk mystifying structural relationships which need to be explicitly and critically foregrounded. Again, there are lessons from movements of the past to be learned here. When movements began to agitate in the 1970s and '80s around issues of identity, recognition, respectful inclusion, and dignified representation, such struggles were largely enthusiastically met – and ultimately coopted – by liberal discourse and a capitalist system more than happy to sell these representations back to formerly marginalized and excluded groups. This is not to suggest that struggles around identity are not important, nor is it to conflate a focus on a multiplicity of ontologies with identity politics but it is to suggest that a danger of a politics of the pluriverse actually charts a course away from the structural realities of actually existing systems of power – with capitalism one of the chief among them. In this sense, I would reply to the Triphasic Committee by agreeing that anti-capitalism is not enough but

surely a place-based politics, while necessary, is most certainly not sufficient to respond to the increasingly transnationalized systems of violence and exploitation.

The Ontology of Affinity

Despite – or perhaps because of – the points I offer above I think the pluriverse as a concept points in a vitally important direction: namely, that reality is multiple, not singular. The challenge for those socialized and situated in such a way so as to feel entitled to wield power over the world and those in it is to try to understand this provocation at the level of the lived rather than only at the level of interpretation and abstraction. A well-known story from the history of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation prior to its January 1 uprising can serve to illustrate the significance of the difference between these positions. As Zapatista spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos and others (Harvey 1998) have since recounted, the original encounter between the nascent EZLN and the Indigenous communities of the far southeast of Mexico was far from a success. In the early 1980s, fleeing repression in the cities and seeking a promising new front for revolutionary action, cadres of the Forces of National Liberation, an urban guerrilla organization, arrived in the jungles of Chiapas to begin the work of revolutionizing the peasantry in preparation for armed insurrection. Ideologically Marxist and strategically Guevarist in their orientation toward insurrection, these revolutionaries came to realize that their established frameworks couldn't allow them to make sense to or of the Indigenous realities they encountered. Their interpretation of history, their understanding of significant events, social conflict and transformation, and even their conceptions of time were radically different from one another. This realization in itself implies only epistemological difference. It is only through what Subcomandante Marcos himself has described as the "defeat" of their ideological constructs at the hands the Indigenous realities they are confronted by that it becomes possible for these revolutionaries to become a part of the social fabric itself and the Zapatista movement begins to take root. This is the moment where difference moves from

epistemology to ontology – or does it? While Marcos and other founding members of the EZLN would later narrate the importance of the process of acknowledging the defeat of their Marxist ideological analysis and the long process of learning about and from the Indigenous communities, there is no moment of transmutation here where something or someone made of one kind of stuff inhabiting one world is refashioned into someone or something of an entirely different kind. Marcos and the other *mestizo* Zapatistas do not become Indigenous because they become a part of a given social reality but they are transformed by the encounter and are thus able to take part in the clandestine organizing of a movement that will function as catalyst and inspiration for a powerful wave of alter-globalization activism.

The history of the EZLN is itself instructive with respect to the possibilities at work within and shape of the pluriverse. While casual observers have often assumed that the EZLN is some kind of "authentic" outgrowth of Indigenous traditions and struggle in Mexico's southeast it is, in fact, much more accurately understood as an entity produced out of a confluence of factors, forces, and actors. Into the matrix of new, non-traditional communities in the jungle and canyons of Chiapas formed by young Indigenous migrants seeking land and an escape from the stifling political conditions at work in the highlands a diversity of vectors intersected: Mexican revolutionary history; Indigenous, peasant, and leftist organizing; urban guerrilla struggles; Liberation Theology; pressures exerted by capitalist development and its globalizing implications; and the experiments in direct and participatory democracy being practiced in these new communities. This mixed socio-political and cultural soil would provide the rich seedbed for the growth of a new kind of radical political practice that would resonate transnationally.

I think that the birth of Zapatismo can tell us much about the dynamics at work within the pluriverse and under what conditions these dynamics can produce explosive and unexpected

opportunities for social transformation. It is also worth considering what such living examples of encounters within the pluriverse tell us about what this space cannot do. For example, it is significant to note that in calling themselves "Zapatista", the insurgents of the EZLN and the civilian base that comprises the bulk of the movement have adopted the name of one of the greatest Mexican revolutionary heroes, but also one who was neither active nor particularly well known in Chiapas until relatively recently (Collier and Quaratiello 1999, 158). In fact, the source of the image and ideology of Zapata in Chiapas can be traced primarily to urban revolutionaries who went out into the countryside in the aftermath of 1968 to work with the rural population (Stephen 2002, 150). In the statutes of the Forces of National Liberation – the guerrilla organization whose cadres would help found the EZLN - written fourteen years before the Zapatista rebellion, the choice of Emiliano Zapata as the icon for the revolution is attributed to the fact that "Emiliano Zapata is the hero who best symbolizes the traditions of revolutionary struggle of the Mexican people" (Fuerzas de Liberación Nacional 1980, cited in Womack, Jr. 199, 196). By invoking the man, his image, and his legacy, the Zapatistas engaged in a process not only of reaffirming the "Mexicanness" of their movement (an ontological as well as political claim itself), but also of asserting its legitimacy while laying claim to the authentic and uncompromised legacy of the Mexican Revolution.

Subcomandante Marcos has described the history of the EZLN up to the initiation of the Zapatista rebellion on January 1, 1994 as comprised of seven stages (Muñoz Ramírez 2008, 20). The first stage, in the early 1980s, involved the selection of those urban guerrillas of the FLN who would become part of the EZLN (ibid., 20). The second Marcos refers to as "implantation" – the actual founding of the EZLN by six insurgents in a camp in Chiapas in 1983 (ibid., 20-22). The third stage, beginning in 1984, was characterized by the insurgents of the EZLN learning to survive in the jungles of Chiapas and to prepare themselves for armed insurrection and it is during this period that Marcos says he arrived in Chiapas (ibid., 22-27). The fourth stage of the EZLN's genesis prior to the January 1 uprising, taking place during

the latter half of the decade, involved the first contact between EZLN insurgents and members of local indigenous communities as the Zapatistas began the process of recruitment and expansion – a stage Marcos identifies as particularly significant as he asserts that "[b]y then we had been defeated by the indigenous communities, and as a product of that defeat, the EZLN started to grow exponentially and to become 'very otherly'" (ibid., 27-28). The fifth stage is described by Marcos as one of "explosive expansion" as political and economic conditions in Chiapas drove more and more indigenous toward the EZLN (ibid., 28). The sixth stage involved the base communities of the EZLN voting on and preparing for war (ibid., 28). By the time the sixth stage of the EZLN's development had been reached, the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee had been formally created and all ties to the EZLN's urban guerrilla parent organization, the FLN, had been severed (Womack, Jr. 1999, 192). Perhaps most importantly, this sixth stage marks the democratic decision taken by the communities themselves rather than the leadership – indigenous or not – of the EZLN to rise up in arms, the last resort of a people pushed to the brink by elite-driven political and economic projects determined to negate their very being. The seventh and final stage Marcos narrates is in the last days of 1993, immediately before the uprising, as final combat preparations were made by the EZLN for its war against oblivion (Muñoz Ramírez 2008, 29-31).

The significance of these stages in terms of understanding Zapatismo as a rebel political philosophy and practice is that they highlight the dynamic and organic manner in which the Zapatista struggle emerged out of the social, cultural, and political soil of Chiapas. Neither the EZLN nor Zapatismo are products either of a pure revolutionary or Indigenous trajectory. Indeed, this is what has made both of them so robust, powerful, and significant both within the Mexican context and outside of it. Out of the confluence of urban guerrillas seeking favourable ground for revolutionary organizing, migrant indigenous communities practicing a new kind of politics, and a socio-economic and political context marked by extreme violence, exploitation, and repression, the EZLN and Zapatismo emerged as rebellious articulations of hope that the world could be remade into a more just, democratic, and free

place. While the arrival of cadres from the FLN in the jungles of Chiapas could be said to mark the beginning of this radical trajectory, it is in the defeat of the ideology of these urban guerrillas by the indigenous realities they came face-to-face with in the far southeast of Mexico where the true origins of Zapatismo are to be found. Taking the best lessons from the urban revolutionary legacy embodied by the cadres of the FLN, and perhaps most importantly by Subcomandante Marcos, the EZLN and Zapatismo only truly developed into powerful rebel challenges to the status quo once they were deeply grounded in the social fabric of the communities that came to constitute them. Tellingly, it was only once the ideological dogmatism of the urban revolutionaries had been defeated and replaced by an organic radical analysis born of the encounter of different worlds, the hierarchical links to the FLN severed, and the base communities established as the highest authority - formalized through the creation of the Indigenous Revolutionary Clandestine Committee – that the EZLN and Zapatismo expanded exponentially. This novel approach to radical struggle and its promise of building a different world animate the national and transnational resonance of Zapatismo in the years following the uprising.

The pluriverse is at work here but while the presence of distinct ontologies is indisputable, the work and possibility of translation allows for affinities to be built across them. Affinity, like translation, is a relational, non-hierarchical concept and as a non-dominating formation, it does not presume the grounds upon which relationships can be built. A politics of affinity – a politics, in other words, of autonomy and accompaniment – was often celebrated by movement participants and sympathetic observers as a hallmark of the alter-globalization movement at its height (refs.?). In my previous work (Khasnabish 2008), I explored the transnational resonance of Zapatismo as a radical political imagination amongst diverse groups of North American activists and organizers engaged in action broadly identified with alter-globalization/radical social justice struggles. Through this research I critically explored the reasons for and consequences of the transnational resonance of Zapatismo with an eye to

understanding how and why the political imagination of Zapatismo mattered to others engaged in struggle far beyond the borders of Chiapas, Mexico. What I came to understand through working with these activists and organizers is that, in large part, Zapatismo matters not only because of the concrete example it offers as a model of resistance and alternative-building but because it was, in the words of one of my research partners, a "tear in the fabric of the present", a crack through which new possibilities could be glimpsed in the midst of the self-proclaimed global ascendancy of neoliberalism and the apparent decimation of "actually existing socialism". At its core, this seems to me to be a pluriversalistic political proposition at work but the force of this ontological rupture does not come from the site of ontology per se, rather, it emerges from the collective socio-political subjectivities, their attendant radical imaginations, and the actual work of social transformation that are born out of the mutual recognition of radical difference across which communication is still possible.

Does this mean that the only consensus that we might begin from is a negative one – that capitalism is not the only way the world could be organized and that modernity is not a necessary and inevitable power relation? Further, does it also mean that the act of translation can only begin from this place? Finally, does it mean that the pluriverse is politically powerful for social change struggles themselves? To these questions I would offer a qualified 'no'. First, it is a convenient stance to suggest a negativity can be the starting point for the elaboration of a larger dialogue and of course it can. But if the presumption is that this blanket and rather empty negativity (something akin to 'we can do other than liberalism or capitalism') can lead to projects of collective radical socio-political transformation then the fate of the alter-globalization movement ought to caution us otherwise. While 'one no, many yeses' is a powerful rhetorical statement what it has *not* allowed for is the consolidation of powerful movements capable of making social change on their own terms. This has happened in many parts of the Global South but in these instances it is much more than an amorphous 'no' that has provoked the building of such movements. Furthermore, while the World Social Forum's proclamation that "another

world is possible" has certainly attracted the attention of social change actors from around the world, it is also a statement so utterly banal that it is almost devoid of meaning. The Zapatistas' own call for the building of a world capable of holding many worlds is also a beautiful and inspiring slogan that generated important political resonances (the formation of Peoples' Global Action and the Encuentros for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism amongst them) but, ultimately, the victories won by the Zapatistas have occurred in their own territory in rebellion through the arduous work of building actual relations of autonomy. This is not to suggest that what is needed is a platform, a party, a vanguard, or a singular ontological position from which to begin but I do think it illuminates that a recognition and even celebration of a multitude of ways of being is not equivalent to a politics capable of confronting the architecture of power responsible for the eco-social crisis we face globally. This is not an either/or position but it is a reminder that we cannot afford to retreat from the risky, uncertain, and arduous work of building affinities across radical difference into a nebulous space where explorations of and reflections upon being in all its multiplicity becomes a primary point of focus. Explorations of Ontological plurality – even in their most radical form - are not in and of themselves nearly enough to provide the capacity necessary to produce the transformative collective movements that are, ultimately, the only way people have ever managed to counter the force of elite projects aiming to destroy their worlds and deny their existence. Exploring the pluriverse can undoubtedly play an absolutely vital role in the generation of radical and even revolutionary movements capable of moving beyond the failures of past revolutionary movements (such as the fetish of the state, the obsession with the seizure of power, the unquestioning investment in modern categories of 'progress' and 'development', the privileging of certain actors and struggles over others) but it is a point of departure for such efforts, not a destination. Particularly at this conjuncture, we must be wary of the danger in losing sight of the necessary political work of affinity-building across undeniable alterity in favour of a focus on this radical difference as an end in itself.