

## INTRODUCTION

### Expanding the Economic Canon and Searching for Alternatives to Neoliberal Globalization

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#### INTRODUCTION

At the height of the neoliberal economic reforms in Argentina in the mid-1990s, a piece of graffiti on a Buenos Aires wall famously proclaimed: “the future is not what it used to be.” At the time, the grip of the discourse of neoliberal inevitability—epitomized by Margaret Thatcher’s TINA (“There Is No Alternative”) slogan—and the pervasiveness of market-friendly policies around the world were such that the grim forecast of the witty graffiti artist seemed warranted. With the social and economic expectations of the working and middle classes collapsing and the construction of the institutional framework of neoliberal globalization moving forward apace, the myriad proposals and movements for an alternative economic and social agenda were on the defensive.

However, only a few years later the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the bursting of the Argentine economic bubble in late 2001 revealed the unsustainable nature of “the self-regulated market utopia” that Polanyi (1957) had warned us against and that neoliberal reformers have, nevertheless, sought to establish. Concomitantly, a global movement for social justice has emerged that directly confronts the neoliberal project. Paradigmatically represented by the World Social Forum, it includes organizations and movements from the global South and North working on a wide range of issues. Its rapid growth—from the protests against the WTO in Seattle (1999) to those against the same organization in Cancún and the FTAA in Miami (2003), and those against the IMF and the World Bank in Washington (2004)—has created the germ for the type of transnational political mobilization necessary for advancing an alternative economic agenda. The first signs of such an agenda were already visible by the middle of the first decade of the new century, in the form of a countervailing economic bloc formed by the major countries of the South (Brazil, China, India, and South Africa) within the WTO, as well

as increasing experimentation with social programs in such regions as Latin America where progressive parties and movements have risen to power. Thus, although the future may still not be what it used to be and neoliberalism is still alive and well, the seeds of an alternative future are being sown.

This volume seeks to contribute to the collective task of nurturing those seeds. It does so by engaging, on the basis of theoretically informed case studies of alternative economic practices and transnational solidarity in the global South, the expanding literature and discussions on two interrelated topics. First, it speaks to the literature, political debates and institutional experiments on economic alternatives to neoliberal capitalism. It thus addresses the question that is invariably asked of critics of globalization: what is your alternative? This is a question that must be taken seriously and that, until recently, activists and students of the global economy had left in relative neglect in focusing on the criticism of the dominant model. Today, however, increasing interest in alternative institutional designs has given rise to a vibrant debate on a wide range of economic and social programs. As we explain below and the case studies in this volume illustrate, alternative economic initiatives and visions are extremely diverse. They range from ambitious proposals for neo-Keynesian, progressive macro-economic policies—e.g., selective protection of key national industries, novel forms of capital controls, revamped systems of progressive taxation and spending, and expansion of social programs (Baker, Epstein, and Pollin, 1998; MacEwan, 1999; Van Parijs, 2005)—to micro-initiatives undertaken by marginalized sectors in the global South seeking to gain control of their lives and livelihoods by organizing into cooperatives of informal workers (Rodríguez-Garavito, in this volume). The scale of these initiatives is as varied as the initiatives themselves. The alternatives range from small local production units in rural areas (Klug, in this volume) to proposals for national and international economic and legal coordination designed to guarantee respect for basic labor and environmental standards worldwide (Fung, 2003), as well as attempts to build regional economies based on the principles of cooperation and solidarity (Faux, 2003).

The second line of research and practice to which the case studies in this volume seek to contribute pertains to the issue of transnational political mobilization. As several commentators have noted (MacEwan, 1999; Waterman, 2004), the considerable political leverage needed to replace neoliberal institutions with democratic egalitarian ones at the national and international levels can come only from the transnational mobilization of social movement organizations and the increasingly large masses of people that are excluded from the benefits of social citizenship. Workers in exploitative or unstable labor arrangements; the unemployed; women, racial and ethnic minorities that are discriminated against in the economic sphere; the large, informal proletariat; small farmers forced out of their lands by the

advance of agribusiness: these are all potential members—together with activists, ethical consumers, and social movement organizations—of counter-hegemonic political coalitions for a democratic-egalitarian economic agenda. Given that neoliberal capitalism operates at the local, national and global scales, the requisite counter-hegemonic political agency needs to confront it also at every scale. Thus the recent explosion of experiments and studies on transnational advocacy networks and coalitions (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Khagram, Riker and Sikkink, 2002; Tarrow, 1998) that articulate the efforts of activists, NGOs, and communities in the North and South around issues with key economic effects such as the resistance of indigenous rights to the exploitation of their ancestral lands (Brysk, 1998), the protection of the environment (Douthwaite, 1999), fair trade (Levi and Lipton, 2003), and international labor standards (Rodríguez-Garavito, forthcoming).

Experiments and analyses on alternative economic agendas and transnational activism have multiplied at such a fast pace that no research project can possibly aim to engage with all the topics and proposals that compose this vibrant line of analysis and practice. The ambitious research project that underlies this volume—which, as explained in the Preface to this book, involved more than fifty researchers from different regions of the global South—is no exception. Hence, the chapters in this volume focus on a particular area of economic practices embodying alternatives to neoliberal capitalism—i.e., forms of *production*<sup>1</sup> based on principles of democracy, solidarity, equity and environmental sustainability—and on a specific realm of transnational activism—i.e., new forms of labor internationalism. In line with the focus of the broader project on *Reinventing Social Emancipation* of which they make part, the case studies in this volume concentrate on experiences of economic organization and labor internationalism originating in the South, namely in Brazil, Colombia, India, Mozambique and South Africa.

The links between alternative production and labor internationalism are multiple, as will be evident in several of the case studies. For instance, the struggle of the fishworkers movement in India analyzed in the chapter by Gabriele Dietrich and Nalini Nayak entails both an effort to organize fishing in such a way as to protect the lifestyles of coastal communities and the environment, and to construct broader networks of national and international unions fighting against intensive aquaculture. In the same vein, the chapters by Singer and Navarro document the articulation of the Brazilian Landless Peasants Movement (MST)—one of whose core initiatives has been to establish worker cooperatives in its settlements—with national and international unions and labor support organizations. In several other cases—for instance, the struggle of Indian workers to take control of failing factories and turn them into worker cooperatives, as documented by Bhowmik in his chapter—similar patterns of articulation between cooperatives and national and international labor are at work. Such connections between alternative forms of economic

organization and labor internationalism have a long history. Suffice it to remember that the cooperative movement, as Waterman explains, emerged in the nineteenth century as a "class option" of the industrial proletariat, "with cooperatives linked organically to the rest of the labor movement" (1998: 54).

With these thematic foci in mind, we divide the remainder of this introductory chapter into four parts. In the first section, we further clarify the connections between the types of alternative production and labor internationalism analyzed in the case studies. To this end, we highlight their common values and strategies to advance "non-reformist reforms" that, as suggested by the title of this volume, may open up spaces beyond the capitalist economic canon. We then concentrate, in the second part, on one of the two topics of this volume, i.e., alternative forms of production. (Given the inclusion of a chapter by Hermes Costa and an extended commentary by Peter Waterman, both of which deal systematically with the literature on international unionism, in this section we refer to this literature only insofar as it illuminates the connection between labor internationalism and alternative production systems. For a detailed treatment of labor internationalism we refer the reader to Costa's and Waterman's chapters.) We thus offer a non-exhaustive map of theories and practices of alternative production aimed at serving as a background for the discussion of the case studies analyzed in the following chapters. We highlight three strands of economic thought and experimentation that are particularly influential in the global South: cooperativism, alternative development, and ecological alternatives to development. Finally, in the third part we relate the background map with the case studies by first presenting an outline of the chapters in order to then conclude by offering some theses encompassing common issues and dilemmas encountered within the cases. Given our interest in stimulating debate on alternative economic agendas, these theses are offered as brief formulas for discussion, summarizing our own reading of the chapters of this book, and our vision of the challenges faced by such agendas in the context of contemporary globalization.

#### ALTERNATIVES TO WHAT? NON-REFORMIST ECONOMIC REFORMS TO GLOBAL CAPITALISM

The case studies of alternative production and labor internationalism included in this volume share two key traits. First, rather than embodying comprehensive blueprints or system-wide alternative economic agendas, they entail efforts by local communities and workers, oftentimes in articulation with transnational advocacy networks and coalitions, to carve out niches of solidary production and political mobilization within the context of global capitalism. The fact that they are based on a realistic assessment of the constraints imposed by global capitalism, however, does not take away their

emancipatory potential. Indeed, in operating within the conditions of global capitalist markets, the experiments in alternative production and labor internationalism studied in this book seek to open up spaces for further transformations of capitalist values and socioeconomic arrangements. In this sense, they share the spirit of what Gorz (1964) calls "non-reformist reforms." For instance, while the chapters on cooperatives of informal workers by Singer (Brazil), Bhowmik (India), Cruz e Silva (Mozambique), and Rodríguez-Garavito (Colombia) show that the cooperatives' survival depends on competing successfully in local and global markets, they also show that the origins, ownership arrangements, management and social achievements of the cooperatives embody forms of production and sociability that go beyond capitalist values and institutions. Thus the allusion in the title of this volume to the possibilities of "another production" that is "beyond the capitalist canon." This becomes clearer if we consider the second trait shared by the cases studies, that is, their broad notion of the economy and development, which goes beyond economic growth to include such key goals as democratic participation; environmental sustainability; social, gender, racial and ethnic equity; and transnational solidarity. Let us look in turn into each of these two common features of the case studies.

#### Alternative economic agendas: within and beyond global capitalism

In contrast to a common perception within some sectors of the left in the past two centuries, today it is generally agreed that centralized socialist economies are neither feasible nor desirable as alternative systems to capitalism in the new millennium. The political authoritarianism and the economic unviability of centralized economic systems were dramatically revealed by their collapse in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Hodgson, 1999). For those of us to whom centralized socialist systems offered no emancipatory alternative to capitalism, the downfall of these systems has brought an opportunity to recover old, or invent new, economic alternatives and forms of labor solidarity. As we will see later, these alternatives are not nearly as grandiose as centralized socialism or the worldwide revolt of a homogeneous proletariat envisaged by the "old" labor internationalism. Also, their underlying theories are less ambitious than the firm, classic Marxist belief in the historical inevitability of socialism and the triumph of international unionism. In fact, the very feasibility of these alternatives, at least in the short and medium term, depends to a great extent on their ability to survive in a capitalist context. Our aim, then, is to focus equal attention on the feasibility and the emancipatory potential of the many alternatives now being formulated and put into practice around the world, alternatives that represent forms of economic organization and labor internationalism based on the principles of democracy, equity, solidarity, and environmental sustainability.

The emphasis placed on the viability of the alternatives in today's world does not, however, imply the acceptance of what actually exists. Critical thinking is predicated on the idea that reality is not reducible to what exists. Rather, it is a field of possibilities that includes previously marginalized alternatives, and others that have yet to be tried (Santos, 2000: 23). In this sense, the role of critical thought and practice is to broaden the spectrum of possibilities, through experimentation in and reflection on alternatives for building a more just society. By suggesting possibilities beyond what actually exists, these forms of thought and practice question the separation between reality and utopia and formulate alternatives that are utopian enough to challenge the status quo and real enough to avoid being easily discarded as unviable (Wright, 1998).

Any such analysis that seeks to underscore and evaluate the emancipatory potential of economic proposals and experiments taking place worldwide must take into account the fact that, because of their anti-systemic nature, these proposals and experiments are fragile and incipient. For this reason, here we analyze the alternatives suggested by the case studies in this volume from the standpoint of what might be called a "hermeneutics of emergence" (Santos, 2002). What this means is that we use a comprehensive approach in our interpretation of the ways in which organizations, movements, and communities resist global capitalism and pursue economic initiatives and forms of labor solidarity that embody alternative social arrangements and values. The emancipatory features of these alternatives are thus underscored to give them greater visibility and credibility. This does not mean, however, that this hermeneutics fails to rigorously and critically analyze the alternatives studied. It simply means that the aim of our analysis and criticism is to strengthen, rather than weaken, their potential.

The relationships that the experiments in solidary production and new labor internationalism documented in this volume maintain with the global capitalist system are diverse. While some (e.g., cooperatives) are compatible with a market system and even with the prevalence of capitalist firms, others (e.g., anti-development ecological proposals) imply a radical transformation or even the elimination of capitalist production. Nevertheless, upon studying these initiatives, we feel there are two good reasons to resist the widespread temptation to accept or reject them based on a simplistic criterion that only takes into account whether they provide radical alternatives to capitalism. First, this simplistic criterion constitutes a form of fundamentalism that can close doors to proposals that might gradually bring changes that create pockets of solidarity within the heart of capitalism. As Gorz (1964) has claimed, rather than sticking to the old reform/revolution dichotomy, the idea is to apply "non-reformist reforms" and undertake initiatives that do arise within the capitalist system, but that facilitate the acceptance of and lend greater credibility to alternative forms of economic organization and

labor solidarity. Second, such a restrictive approach to alternatives eventually leads to a hermeneutics of cynicism (rather than a hermeneutics of emergence) that ends up rejecting every type of social experimentation deemed to be contaminated by the dominant system.

Given that none of the viable proposals represents a systemic alternative to capitalism (that is, an alternative that presents an overall micro- and macro-economic organization based exclusively on democracy, solidarity, equality, and environmental sustainability), the alternatives available to us are either directly or indirectly related to local, national, and even international markets. To use Cohen's apt formula, since "we know how to make an economic system work on the basis of self-interest [but] do not know how to make it work on the basis of generosity" (1994: 10), these initiatives do not represent systemic forms of alternative production or labor solidarity. Nevertheless, this makes them no less relevant, nor does it limit their emancipatory potential. By embodying organizational values and forms that are opposed to those of global capitalism, the economic alternatives and new forms of labor internationalism generate two highly emancipatory effects. First, individually, they frequently make fundamental changes in the living conditions of the persons involved, as seen in Dietrich and Nayak's study on Indian fishworkers and in Bhowmik's and Rodríguez-Garavito's respective studies on the Indian and Colombian garbage pickers. Second, at the social level, the dissemination of successful experiments implies the expansion of the social fields in which alternative values and organizational forms prevail. In cases such as that of the Mondragón cooperative complex in Spain outlined below, they can even influence an entire region (Whyte and Whyte, 1988), and the scope of the initiatives can profoundly transform the patterns of social interaction and economic results. Seen from the standpoint of the hermeneutics of emergence, such initiatives promise enormous progress towards alternative forms of social interaction and economic organization.

#### Expanding the economic canon: the principles of alternative production and new labor internationalism

Despite their great diversity with regards to scale, social base, geographic origin, and achievements, the experiences of economic organization analyzed in this book share a set of values and principles that point towards an understanding of the economy and development that is much broader than that of dominant economic policies and discourses. The expanded notion of the economy and the polity is also evident in the cases studies on new forms of labor internationalism from the South, which illustrate the break between the "new" and the "old" labor internationalism recently theorized by students of labor solidarity in the global economy (Munck, 2002; Waterman, 2004, 1998; Moody, 1997). In our view, the key principles animating the

experiences portrayed in the case studies are participatory democracy, equity (along social, gender, racial and ethnic lines), environmental sustainability, and transnational solidarity.

*Participatory democracy* in the management of the organizations involved—be they cooperatives of landless peasants in Brazil (see the chapters by Singer and Navarro) or Southern unions attempting to create an international worker alliance (see the chapter by Lambert and Webster)—is a fundamental aspect of virtually all the case studies. The argument for direct democracy, made explicitly in some of the chapters, is that the active participation of workers in firms and unions holds out the promise not only of improving the performance of these organizations but also of gradually democratizing the economic sphere. In contrast with proposals for “lean production” and recent theories of “pragmatist governance,” which envisage worker involvement in peripheral issues of firms and unions and do not address power differentials that thwart meaningful participation (Moody, 1997; Santos and Rodríguez-Garavito, forthcoming), the case studies illustrate the economic and political potential of direct participation in such core issues as cooperatives’ investment decisions and unions’ decisions about membership, bargaining, and strategies of local and global contention. In doing so, the chapters contribute to the growing literature on the benefits of participatory democracy in firms (more on this below) and in economic affairs at large (MacEwan, 1999), which questions the sharp divide within capitalist societies between democracy in the political sphere, on the one hand, and authoritarianism in the management of firms and the economy, on the other. They also contribute to recent debates on the emergence of a “new labor internationalism.” As several observers and practitioners have noted, this new breed of “global social movement unionism” (Lambert and Chan, 1999; Moody, 1997) is crucially characterized by its insistence on union democracy and its rejection of the type of hierarchical structure that created a rift between international and national union bureaucracies, on the one hand, and the rank and file, on the other.

The case studies also illustrate efforts to make *equity* a central economic goal. Criticisms against the narrow understanding of the economy and development in terms of economic growth—to the detriment of consideration of the consequences of capitalist markets on the skewed distribution of resources and power—have been at the center of alternative economic agendas both old and new. Marxist criticism centers on inequalities among social classes: the same conditions that make capitalist markets possible generate deep inequalities among social classes within each country, as well as inequalities among countries in the world economy. Feminism focuses its criticism on how class differences reinforce gender differences and, therefore, how capitalism helps reproduce a patriarchal society. Similarly, critical race theories underscore how racial and ethnic oppression and economic

exploitation feed upon one another. The case studies in this book draw on these and other lines of thought and practice in order to explore the potential of the experiences they analyze to counter the way in which global capitalism currently reinforces these forms of domination. For instance, the chapters by Cruz e Silva on women’s cooperatives in Maputo, Mozambique, and by Dietrich and Nayak on fishworkers’ cooperatives and unions in Kerala, India, illustrate the potential of women’s economic self-organization for countering the effects of patriarchy and economic marginalization. Similarly, the chapters by Oliveira and Vêras on the Brazilian labor movement, as well as those by Martins and Lopes on the MST, respectively document the struggle of industrial workers and peasants to create the conditions for a more equitable distribution of profits and land.

There is also a concern in virtually all the experiences with *environmental sustainability*. As ecological theories and movements have compellingly argued, the levels and types of production and consumption that global capitalism requires are simply not sustainable (Daly, 1996; Douthwaite, 1999; O’Connor, 1988). Given the prospect of environmental destruction, ecological movements have proposed a wide variety of alternatives, ranging from limiting capitalist development to rejecting the very idea of economic development, and to adopting anti-development strategies based on economies of subsistence and a respect for nature and for traditional production (Dietrich, 1996). These and other strands of ecological thought and action are evident in several of the case studies. For instance, the Colombian cooperatives of scavengers studied by Rodríguez-Garavito have embraced environmental discourses and practices that further enhance the cooperatives’ contribution to the recycling of waste in that country. Likewise, Lopes’s chapter on the construction of a “new city” by the MST in Brazil exemplifies the movement’s preoccupation with environmental sustainability, while the international alliance of unions, fishworker communities, and other social organizations examined by Dietrich and Nayak seeks to stop the massive environmental degradation caused by large-scale commercial fishing. In general, as Costa and Waterman point out in their chapters, the new social movement unionism is characterized by precisely this type of solidarity and synergy between workers’ organizations and social movements advancing such causes as the protection of the environment, global equity, women’s rights, and the expansion of social programs for workers and non-workers alike.

Finally, the case studies demonstrate the importance of *transnational solidarity* for the advancement of local and national experiments in economic democracy and worker empowerment. The chapters on cooperatives, for instance, discuss the degree to which the latter are connected through commercial or political links with other cooperatives or sympathetic consumer organizations in the North, and the degree to which such links may help cooperatives in the global South to survive in the adverse context of global

markets. In doing so, the case studies add to the growing literature on fair trade and alternative forms of commercial engagement between the North and the South (Levi and Lipton, 2003). The relevance of transnational solidarity for the survival of alternative economic agendas comes across even more clearly in the case studies on new labor internationalism. In contrast with the dominance of Northern unions and political agendas that marked the old labor internationalism (Waterman, 1998: 72), global labor unionism as illustrated by the case studies not only originates in the South, but also seeks to change the balance of power between the North and the South within international unions and transnational labor coalitions. This is accomplished through South–South alliances—exemplified by the interregional SIGTUR network analyzed by Lambert and Webster, and the network of unions from the MERCOSUR countries studied by Vêras—as well as by South–North coalitions that include not only unions but also faith-based organizations, NGOs, student organizations and human rights advocacy networks (Kidder, 2002).

Having offered a general overview of the threads that weave together the chapters, we now move to lay out the theoretical background of the cases on alternative production, which constitute the first part of the book. As noted above, we will not offer an equivalent treatment of the literature on labor internationalism here, as this task is taken up by Costa in the opening chapter of the second part of the volume and by Waterman in his commentary. However, in line with the goals of this introductory chapter, we will go back to the articulation between alternative production and labor internationalism in the final part of the text, where we outline some general theses for discussion based on our reading of all the case studies.

## MAPPING ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTION

### Cooperative forms of production

#### *The cooperative tradition*

The search for alternatives through theories and experiments based on the economic association among equals and collective property is not a new endeavor. The philosophy and practice behind cooperative organization is as old as industrial capitalism. In fact, the earliest cooperatives emerged in England around 1826 as a reaction to the increasing poverty caused by the massive conversion of peasants and small-scale producers into workers in the earliest capitalist industrial factories. England was also the birthplace of what would later become the model for contemporary cooperatives. The purpose of the Rochdale consumers' cooperatives, established in 1844, was to counteract the poverty caused by low salaries and inhuman working conditions,

by collectively purchasing high-quality, low-cost consumer goods for later sale to workers. The earliest worker co-ops were established around 1833 in France by workers who, after organizing a series of protests against inhuman factory conditions, decided to collectively establish and manage their own factories (Birchall, 1997: 21). Such early cooperative experiments arose in tandem with the pioneering associationalist theories. In England, the work of Robert Owen, who played an active role in the founding of the first co-operative communities, became the cornerstone for the tradition of cooperativist thought. Associationalist ideas in England continued to develop in the early twentieth century, particularly due to the contributions of Laski, Tawney, and Cole (Macfarlane, 1998: 7). In France, the associationalist theories of Charles Fourier and Pierre Proudhon led to the establishment of the first worker co-ops.

From their inception in the nineteenth century, associational theory and cooperative practice were developed as alternatives to both liberal individualism and centralized socialism. As a social theory, associationalism is founded on two postulates: 1) the defense of a market economy based on the non-capitalist principles of cooperation and mutuality, and 2) the critique of the centralized state and the preference for pluralist and federalist forms of political organization assigning civil society a leading role (Hirst, 1994: 15). As an economic practice, cooperativism is inspired by the values of autonomy, participatory democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity (Birchall, 1997: 65). From the days when they were set forth in their initial version, proposed by the Rochdale pioneers, these values have developed into the seven guiding principles for cooperative management around the world:

1. Membership is voluntary and open (cooperatives are always open to new members).
2. Democratic control by the membership (members vote on all important decisions according to the principle of "one member, one vote," regardless of the capital contribution made by each member, or of his or her role in the cooperative).
3. Economic participation by members, both as solidary owners of the cooperative and as participants in decision-making concerning profit distribution.
4. Autonomy and independence in relation to the state and other organizations.
5. A commitment to educating cooperative members to help them participate more effectively.
6. Cooperation among cooperatives through local, national, and worldwide organizations.
7. Contribution to the development of the community in which the cooperative is located (Birchall, 1997).

While the number of cooperatives increased rapidly, leading to an international cooperative movement, and social movements and theories occasionally used associationalism, neither cooperative practice nor the underlying associational theory managed to become dominant. "Associationalism never congealed to form a coherent ideology" capable of holding off attacks from theories of centralized socialism and individualist liberalism (Hirst, 1994: 17). Cooperativism has led to exemplary experiments in solidary economies, such as the Mondragón Cooperative Complex (Spain), which we will describe later. Even so, it has not managed to become a major alternative to the capitalist sector of national and worldwide economies. In fact, the prevailing opinion among social scientists since the late nineteenth century (Webb and Webb, 1897) has been that cooperatives are intrinsically unstable because they are trapped in a structural dilemma. According to this view, on the one hand, they are prone to failure because their democratic structure slows down decision-making processes, unlike what happens with capitalist companies, and because the principle of "one member, one vote" keeps them from achieving the level of capitalization required to expand. This is so because investors, whether co-op members or outsiders, want their decision-making influence to be proportional to their individual contributions. On the other hand, still according to the same view, even if they do manage to grow, co-ops eventually fail and fold, since growth is only achieved at the cost of foregoing the direct participation of co-op members, and requires large injections of capital, available only through outside investors, whose influence adulterates the spirit of the cooperative enterprise (Birchall, 1997; Ferguson, 1991).

Even so, in recent years, the renewed interest in cooperative theory and practice has defied pessimistic forecasts as to the economic feasibility of cooperatives, and has led to a recovery of the core elements of associationalism. Given the failure of centralized economies and the rise of neoliberalism, academics, activists, and progressive governments throughout the world have increasingly resorted to the nineteenth-century tradition of cooperative thought and economic organization as a way of rethinking old and creating new economic alternatives. This turnabout is clearly seen in the increasing volume of literature on this issue, both in core countries—now brimming with theoretical analyses on associational democracy and cooperativism (Cohen and Rogers, 1995; Hirst, 1994; Bowles and Gintis, 1998; Elster and Moene, 1989), and case studies on successful (Pencavel, 2002; Whyte and Whyte, 1988; Rothschild and Whitt, 1986) or failed worker cooperatives (Russell, 1985)—and in peripheral countries, where it is addressed within discussions about proposals for alternative development. As we will later explain, these proposals present associations and cooperatives as capable vehicles for popular economic initiatives (Friedmann, 1992). In Latin America, the renewed interest in cooperatives is seen in proposals to reactivate the

so-called "solidary economy," meaning the economic sector composed of different forms of associative production, especially cooperatives and mutual societies (Singer and Souza, 2000).

Why this renewed interest in solidary production forms in general, and worker cooperatives in particular? In our opinion, there are four fundamental reasons, all having to do with contemporary economic and political conditions, that make the study and promotion of worker co-ops a promising way to create emancipatory production alternatives. First, while cooperatives are founded on non-capitalist values and principles (i.e., opposed to the separation between capital and labor, with the latter subordinated to the former), they have always been conceived and have operated as productive, market-competitive units. According to cooperative thought, the market promotes one of cooperativism's core values—the autonomy of collective initiatives—while also supporting the goals of decentralization and economic efficiency that centralized economic systems ignore. Given the proven unviability and undesirability of centralized economies, cooperatives are emerging as viable and plausible production alternatives, from a progressive viewpoint, because they are organized in keeping with non-capitalist principles and structures, but continue to operate in a market economy. Second, worker cooperatives have the potential to efficiently respond to today's global market conditions for two reasons. On the one hand, as shown by Bowles and Gintis (1998), worker cooperatives tend to be more productive than capitalist companies because their worker-owners have a greater economic and moral incentive to devote more time and effort to the job; since workers benefit directly when the cooperative prospers, the level and cost of management supervision can be cut drastically. Conversely, capitalist companies must pay a high price in order to constantly monitor workers' performance and enforce compliance with company goals. On the other hand, worker cooperatives appear to be especially well suited to compete in a fragmented and volatile market such as that of contemporary capitalism. According to the great volume of work that has been written about the structural transformations that the economy has undergone since the 1970s—starting with the pioneering work done by Piore and Sabel (1984) on "flexible specialization"—the companies best prepared to compete in today's highly segmented and changing market are those capable of flexibly adjusting to changing demand, of motivating workers to take an active role in the production process, and of joining economic cooperative networks comprised of other small flexible companies, backed by cultural, educational, and political institutions (i.e., a cooperative economy). Since worker cooperatives facilitate (and, in fact, require) the active participation of their worker-owners and are usually small and well suited to join up with other local cooperatives and community institutions, they could, in fact, be "prototypes of Piore and Sabel's flexible specialization" (Ferguson, 1991: 127).<sup>2</sup>

Third, one essential trait of worker cooperatives is that they are worker-owned. This means that any growth in the number of cooperatives has a direct egalitarian effect on the distribution of property within a given economy. As pointed out by Birdsall and Londoño (1997) in the case of Latin America, asset redistribution is crucial for stimulating economic growth and reducing inequality.

Finally, worker cooperatives generate non-economic benefits for their members and the community in general, which are essential to counteract the unequal effects of markets. Worker cooperatives extend participatory democracy into the economic sphere, and thus extend the principle of citizenship into the governance of firms. And broadening democracy has clear emancipatory effects, since it keeps to the promise of eliminating the current separation between political democracy and economic despotism.

*An exemplary case: the Mondragón Cooperative Complex (Spain)*

Given the numerous failed cooperatives, the main question addressed by studies on this type of economic organization is the following: what conditions are required for cooperatives to take root and stay afloat? In answering this question, the lessons learned from what is now considered the worldwide economic cooperative model, the Mondragón Economic Complex, are extremely helpful. Established in 1956 in northern Spain, near the Basque city of the same name, the Complex has 109 factories, a chain of supermarkets, a bank and a polytechnic, all the property of its 30,000 workers.<sup>3</sup>

What is the secret of Mondragón's success? What lessons can be learned from Mondragón to help promote and evaluate cooperatives in other contexts? The main reasons behind the Mondragón cooperative group's success have to do with its cooperative support networks and the ongoing efforts made to ensure each co-op's competitiveness on the global market. Mondragón is truly a regional cooperative economy, because the cooperatives working in production, consumer products, financing, and education within the Complex are closely linked by many different ties of mutual dependence. For example, the Group's cooperative bank (Caja Laboral Popular) not only grants low interest loans to co-ops, but also serves as a coordinating, supervisory, and advisory body for them and for the group as a whole. The bank constantly monitors the performance of each co-op, and, as one of the conditions for granting loans, recommends and helps implement the changes required to keep them competitive in the marketplace. Similarly, the polytechnic (Escuela Politécnica Profesional) not only educates future cooperative workers and administrative personnel, but also retrains them to ensure that their skills and knowledge are constantly updated. In this way, the school guarantees a constant flow and exchange of information and knowledge on production, finance, and marketing systems within the cooperative group.

In addition to these educational and financial institutions (that are themselves co-ops), one of the main mutual help mechanisms among the individual cooperatives is the cooperatives' membership in larger, vertically integrated, economic groups. Mondragón Group cooperatives are usually part of subgroups comprised of companies working in complementary activities, and function as a coordinated supply and demand chain, mutually producing and purchasing one another's goods and services. For example, Mondragón's largest group, FAGOR, has fifteen vertically integrated cooperative factories that manufacture consumer goods (refrigerators, stoves, heaters, and washing machines, among others), industrial components (components for domestic appliances, iron sheeting, electronic parts), and industrial machinery and advisory services (tools, auditing services) (Whyte and Whyte, 1988: 167).

The different cooperatives accept the decisions taken by the group's overall participatory decision-making bodies. It is these bodies that determine the financing and administrative parameters of each individual co-op, thus ensuring mutual coordination and support. The group, in turn, has several mechanisms in place to support the co-ops. One of these is the distribution of part of the profits of the most successful co-ops to others undergoing temporary difficulties, and also the rotation of expert personnel (e.g., managers) among cooperatives according to their needs.<sup>4</sup>

In brief, Mondragón has been successful because it has managed to become a truly regional cooperative with support networks that have helped its co-ops survive and grow. These networks have also benefited from cooperation between the state (specifically the Basque Government) and the Mondragón groups in matters as diverse as technological research projects, employment incentive programs, and periodical studies on regional economic development. Also, particularly in the last twenty years, the Mondragón Cooperative Complex has adopted business strategies that, while posing no threat to its cooperative structure,<sup>5</sup> have helped it prosper in the intensely volatile and competitive global market. Under these conditions, Mondragón has proved that the limitations imposed by the observance of cooperative principles—for instance, the commitment to maintain workers' jobs and for capital investments to be made by the members themselves (not outside investors)—can in fact function as "beneficial constraints" (Streeck, 1997) that force cooperative enterprises to be flexible and innovative. For example, given that one of Mondragón's main goals is to save its members' jobs—in cases of temporary unemployment it pays a generous and lengthy unemployment insurance—the complex is under constant pressure to create new cooperatives and new jobs, which means it must constantly innovate and improve productivity levels. One additional factor that leads it to constantly create new small and innovative cooperative enterprises is Mondragón's policy of keeping its cooperatives from getting too big. When a successful cooperative begins to expand, Mondragón seeks to create new cooperatives to take

over some of its activities, in such a way that it guarantees the continuity of the structure of the Complex—based on relatively small, flexible and highly integrated groups of cooperatives—and the generation of new employment and types of innovation.

Two other factors have allowed Mondragón to respond successfully to pressures to innovate. On the one hand, the cooperative groups have achieved the high levels of capitalization required to modernize production processes without having to resort to outside financing, thanks to the additional capital supplied by its members with the support of their bank. On the other hand, the Mondragón cooperative groups have established a great many alliances with conventional co-ops and companies in different parts of the world, allowing them to take advantage of global market conditions. In this sense, the Mondragón experiment provides not only an ideal counter-example to prevailing claims that cooperatives are not viable, but also tools with which to evaluate other cooperative experiments.

While the Mondragón complex is the best developed and most stable, it is not the only successful cooperative experiment. Many successful cooperative economies (on a diversity of scales) have been established the world over. One noteworthy example on the semiperiphery of the world system is the group of cooperatives located in the state of Kerala (India), which has gained international visibility in recent years. The economic cooperative mechanisms that have sustained these co-ops since their inception in the late 1960s are analogous to those used by Mondragón. As shown in the detailed case study conducted by Isaac, Franke, and Raghavan (1998) of a cigarette manufacturing cooperative, the essential factors for surviving in a context of capitalist competition are knowing how to implement a combination of decentralization and collaboration among cooperative networks while remaining true to the principle of democratic member participation within the co-op structure. The Kerala cooperatives also illustrate another aspect that is less evident in the case of Mondragón but very important in the case studies on cooperatives included in this book: the fact that the Kerala cooperatives were founded as a result of a democratic regional peasant movement seeking effective application of the 1969 Law on Agrarian Reform. The process of building up the movement, as well as its subsequent success, created a happy combination of “education, activism, optimism, and democracy” that led not only to the founding of the cooperatives, but also to the establishment of a group of democratic and progressive political institutions—a complex later known as the “Kerala model” (Isaac, Franke, and Raghavan, 1998: 202). This meant that the co-ops were part of a broader social movement that also benefited from the co-ops’ success. Thus, there is a continuum between the participatory democracy that prevails in the political sphere in Kerala and the participatory democracy observed in the cooperatives (Isaac, Franke, and Raghavan, 1998: 198).

A similar, albeit less developed, experience is the recent proliferation of producer co-ops in Argentina, where workers responded to the economic crisis that exploded in 2001 by taking over failing factories and turning them into co-ops that are loosely articulated with popular movements—e.g., the *piquetero* movement of the chronically unemployed—and progressive local governments (Fagin, 2004). As Hirschman (1984) claims in his fascinating survey of Latin American cooperatives, the transformation of emancipatory energy that begins with social movements and later changes into solidary economic initiatives (and vice versa) is a common trait of the most resilient cooperative experiments. As shown in the chapters of this book, this is fundamental to understanding the relative success of some of the cooperatives studied.

### Popular economies and alternative development in the global South

#### *Proposals for alternative development*

The second field of theory and practice on economic alternatives that we wish to highlight pertains to the issue of development. For more than fifty years, development has been the dominant theme of debates and economic policies concerning the global South (Escobar, 1995; McMichael, 1996). Since the earliest days of the WWII reconstruction effort, the stated objective of the national economic programs of Southern countries, as well as of international aid programs undertaken by Northern countries and international financial institutions, has been to speed up the economic growth of underdeveloped countries as a means of “closing the gap” between these and developed nations (Cypher and Dietz, 1997). The history of the idea of development programs—aptly described by McMichael (1996) as the “development project”—lies outside the scope of this introduction. However, in order to discuss the theory of alternative development, the normal justification and modus operandi of development programs should be explained, since the theory was formulated as a reaction to the latter. Generally speaking, economic development projects were conceived and implemented from the top down, based on policies drawn up and implemented by national and international technocratic agencies, without consulting the communities affected by those policies. In addition, development plans were traditionally focused on speeding up economic growth, especially in the industrial sector (Cypher and Dietz, 1997). This marked emphasis on macroeconomic results gave short shrift to social, economic, and political goals such as democratic decision-making processes, the equitable distribution of the fruits of development, and the protection of the environment.

The theory of alternative development is comprised of numerous analyses and proposals formulated by the critics of the tenets and results of conventional development programs. The theory originated in the early 1970s, an

era in which critical intellectuals, activists, and experts in economic planning all over the world began to reflect upon the situation and to organize events to channel the general discontent with the traditional approach to development. Some of the earliest meetings were the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment (1972), thanks to which the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) came into being, and the seminar on "Patterns of Resource Use, Environment and Development Strategies," held in Cocoyoc (Mexico) in 1974, organized by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The idea of alternative development received a decisive push from the Swedish Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (1975) in the mid-1970s, leading to the creation of the International Foundation for Development Alternatives (IFDA) (1976), whose members included many of the participants in previous events, and whose publications summarized the basic tenets of the theory. The debate on alternative development continued into the 1980s and 1990s, and is today one of the main sources of energy and ideas behind the critique of neoliberal globalization.

While the theoretical analyses and empirical research that adopt the alternative development approach are extremely diverse,<sup>6</sup> all share a set of premises and proposals that constitute the backbone of the theory. First, alternative development is based on a profound critique of the narrowly focused economic rationale underlying the dominant policies and schools of thought on development. In response to the idea that the economy is an independent sphere of social life requiring the sacrifice of non-economic goods and values—be they social (e.g., equality), political (e.g., democratic participation), cultural (e.g., ethnic diversity), or natural (e.g., the environment)—alternative development stresses the need to treat the economy as an integral part of society that is dependent upon society, and to subordinate economic goals to the protection of such goods and values. Alternative development is particularly opposed to development programs' exclusive emphasis on speeding up economic growth rates, and proposes the pursuit of other objectives.

Development is conceived as a way of improving the standard of living of the population in general, and of marginalized groups in particular. "If social and economic development means anything at all, it must mean a clear improvement in the conditions of life and livelihood of ordinary people" (Friedmann, 1992: 9). In this sense, alternative development is founded on the values of equality and citizenship, i.e., on the full inclusion of the currently marginalized sectors of society in production, as well as in the enjoyment of the results of development. However, unlike the critical approaches that we will explain in the following section, which advocate not alternative development, but alternatives *to* development, the former line of thought and action does not reject the idea of economic growth. Instead, it proposes that limits be set and that such growth be subordinated to non-economic imperatives.

Second, it proposes bottom-up instead of top-down development. This means that initiatives and decision-making power on development should belong to and emanate from civil society, and not be the exclusive domain of the state and of economic elites. Given the unequal and exclusionary nature of the conventional development model, it should be the marginalized communities themselves who seek alternatives, communities who in the past have been the object—rather than the subjects—of development programs. In this sense, the theory proposes that the main actors in development be collective subjects, i.e., organized communities. This collective character of bottom-up development helps build a community power that can create the potential for popular economic initiatives to expand into the political sphere and thus generate a virtuous circle that can counteract the structural causes of marginalization.

Third, alternative development gives priority to the local scale, both as an object of reflection and of social action. For this reason, the work done in this direction has been based on the ethnographic study of marginalized communities, and its proposals tend to suggest that counter-hegemonic social action should focus on local issues.

Fourth, alternative development is as wary of an economy based on capitalist production as of a centralized economic regime under state control. In lieu of these types of economic organization, it proposes alternatives based on collective initiatives. These generally take the form of group-owned and managed companies and organizations, based on the principles of solidarity, which attempt to counteract both the separation of capital and labor and the need to resort to state aid. Proposals for alternative development also emphasize non-capitalist modes of production and exchange. For example, Quijano (1998) and Friedmann (1992) underscore the importance of bartering within marginalized Latin American communities. These activities (e.g., the collective cultivation of subsistence crops and food preparation) reinforce the mechanisms of reciprocity in the communities and provide their members with access to goods and services that they could not otherwise buy on the open market. Finally, in keeping with its critique of state paternalism, alternative development favors autonomous economic strategies. This means promoting initiatives based on the self-management of group-owned companies, as well as empowering communities.

As can be easily discerned, a broad range of economic initiatives fits this description of alternative development. For the purpose of this introduction, it is sufficient to indicate the main lines of thought and action being used to promote alternative development within production. We highlight six fundamental lines of thought and action that have been proposed and put into practice in the South and the North.

First, social movements, NGOs, communities, and government sectors in the South continue to promote associative forms of production (i.e.,

neighborhood associations, worker cooperatives, etc.) that seek to ensure access to basic goods and services for the poorer social classes. Second, since the late 1980s, the "sustainable development" proposals made by the ecological movement have stimulated alternative development. Since 1987, when the concept of sustainable development was first formulated by the United Nations Commission on Environment and Development (known as the Bruntland Commission), which defined it as the type of development "that meets the human needs of the current generation without endangering the ability of future generations to meet their needs," imposing environmental limits on economic growth has become a key issue in the field of alternative development (Rao, 2000). While neither the Bruntland Commission's report nor the 1992 Rio Summit challenged the idea of development as economic growth, both documents gave a decisive boost to the debate about the need to impose limits on or to change production in order to safeguard the environment (McMichael, 1996: 220). Despite the deep academic and political divisions the issue has caused (for instance, between Northern and Southern countries, and among political coalitions within countries), the high visibility it now enjoys has made it more difficult to perpetuate traditional capitalist development in the periphery (Douthwaite, 1999). Third, activism within feminist movements has turned women's exclusion from traditional development programs into a major issue. Since the mid-1970s, networking and international meetings have led to the consolidation of the Women in Development (WID) movement, an organization founded during the 1975 Mexico City UN Women's Conference (McMichael, 1996: 227). The objectives of the movement are to gain recognition for women's contributions to economic development and to get women involved in development processes through policies designed to alleviate the double burden of housework and paid work that women must assume as they join the labor force (Beneria, 2003).<sup>7</sup>

Fourth, a growing number of economic support programs for the marginalized classes in the South have begun providing small-scale financial services, particularly microcredits. The goal of these programs is to give poor households access to the small amounts of capital they need to undertake or maintain productive economic activities (Wright, 2000). Microcredit programs have been used especially in Southeast Asia, particularly in Bangladesh and India, and have even become one of the World Bank's banners in the fight against poverty.<sup>8</sup> From the point of view of alternative development, the proliferation of microcredit programs is a two-edged sword. On the one hand, in many cases, they provide indispensable means of survival that have a direct positive effect on the standard of living of their recipients and are frequently accompanied by community educational and development programs. On the other hand, some defenders of microcredit and some organizations implementing this type of program (Wright, 2000) see it as an

end in and of itself and emphatically reject any attempt to link financial services to the poor with community empowerment projects. They insist that the poor are only interested in receiving the money, not in being indoctrinated or organized. It is easy to see that the problem with this narrow, utilitarian view of microcredit is that it sees marginal, individual, and precarious incorporation into capitalism as the only alternative for poor economic actors, and so adopts the neoliberal attitudes and policies on marginalization and informal economies (De Soto, 1989: 2003).

Fifth, popular social movements, be they rural or urban, have called for direct action (legal or illegal) to promote the access of subaltern classes to resources like land and housing that will allow them to undertake alternative production activities. Currently, the best-known illustration of this strategy may be that of the Landless Workers' Movement (MST) in Brazil. Navarro, Lopes, Martins, and Singer analyze this movement in detail, from different perspectives, in four of the studies included in this book. The MST has been fighting for effective agrarian reform and seeking to promote alternative production by squatting on unused land in Brazil, in much the same way that, at present, many organizations and groups in different parts of the world advocate that the homeless squat in unused housing (Corr, 1999).

Finally, in response to the perverse effects of neoliberal globalization on communities the world over, one major strand of the anti-globalization movement has proposed different tactics of "return to the local" or "relocalization" (Mander and Goldsmith, 1996). These strategies include establishing community banks, organizing publicity campaigns asking consumers to buy only locally produced products, developing specific agricultural production only for local markets, and the exchange of services among community members based on alternative systems for measuring the value of labor (different from money value) that are founded on the principle of reciprocity (Norberg-Hodge, 1996).

#### *The gaps in alternative development approaches*

The numerous proposals for alternative development have had a major impact on policies and ways of thinking about peripheral economies. As shown in the brief survey in the previous section, they are now a part of the strategies and arguments against neoliberal globalization both in the periphery and the core. Besides having played a direct role in thousands of economic community projects, proposals of this type have had a marked influence on how many NGOs and governments view development. They have even managed to help introduce (albeit very gradually) changes in traditional development programs undertaken by international agencies. One example of this is the World Bank's declared concern for community development and microcredit programs in the 1990s. The vision offered by alternative development

proposals has also led to the inclusion, in international treaties and fora, of major issues that had been long ignored by traditional approaches. These include the protection of the environment, respect for cultural diversity, and the impact of conventional economic development on men and women of poor nations.

However, we believe that these proposals contain one major limitation with regard to the construction of emancipatory economic alternatives: an over-emphasis on the local scale. While it is true that this emphasis has helped alternative development proponents raise awareness as to the concrete effects of development programs and advocate a transfer of power to local actors, it has also led to a reification of the local, divorced from regional, national, and global economic phenomena and social movements. This focus on the local is based on a conception of the community as a closed, homogeneous group, whose isolation guarantees the alternative nature of its economic initiatives. In keeping with this view, the marginalization of the poor sectors of society creates conditions for the existence (and desirability) of alternative economic communities disconnected from the economy. This is particularly evident in writings on the informal economy, which is frequently presented as a set of activities undertaken exclusively by and for the poorer sectors of the population, outside the formal economy of the middle and upper classes. This dualistic vision of the economy is not only factually incorrect—since, as shown in numerous studies, strong ties and a high level of mutual dependence do exist among formal and informal economic activities (Portes, Castells, and Benton, 1989; Cross, 1998)—but also counterproductive from a practical standpoint, because it limits the scope of alternative modes of production, consumption, and distribution of goods and services to marginal social sectors and economic activities. One recent example of this tendency can be seen in Burbach's (1997) contribution to the debate on popular economies:

In the parts of the world that capitalism discards, a new mode of production is taking hold, which is comprised of what can be called "popular economies," or what we have elsewhere called "postmodern economies" [Burbach, Núñez, and Kagarlitsky, 1997]. These economies do not and cannot compete head to head with transnational capital in the globalization process. Rather they lurk on the sidelines, seizing those activities that the transnational world decides to dispose of. This historic process resembles the transition from feudalism to capitalism. Capitalism first took hold in feudalism's nooks and crannies, slowly gathering momentum until it became the dominant mode of production. (Burbach, 1997: 18-19)

As clearly seen in the case studies on the cooperatives in India, Mozambique, and Colombia included in this book, the problem with this focus is that popular economic organizations do frequently need to "compete head to

head with transnational capital in the globalization process" if they are to survive and promote their emancipatory goals. The Colombian garbage pickers' cooperatives studied by Rodríguez-Garavito are a case in point. Their informal economic area of activity is being taken over by large companies, which shows that the processes taking place in the South are frequently the opposite of those described by Burbach. In other words, global capitalism is colonizing economic activities in geographical areas it had previously ignored. In such cases, only the interconnection of local action and alternative strategies of incorporation or resistance at a regional, national or global scale can save local initiatives faced with capitalist competition.

Thus, one of the urgent tasks to be addressed by the different approaches that we have mentioned is to devise actions and theories for alternative development that are ambitious in terms of scale and capable of thinking and acting at local, regional, national, and even global levels, depending on the needs of the specific initiatives. This requires changing the idea of the community as a closed and static group (fortress-community) to that of the community as a living, dynamic entity open to contact and solidarity with other communities at any of these levels, and determined to defend the counter-hegemonic alternatives devised by them (amoeba-communities) (Santos, 1995: 485). Opting for local strategies across the board as a response to globalization (Mander and Goldsmith, 1996) may not only be unviable, since today local and global interests are very much interrelated, but also undesirable, because the solidarity generated within the community is not extended to members of other communities. Solidarity among local alternatives is fundamental, not only for their own survival, but to ensure the gradual consolidation of a cosmopolitan globalization. The fragility of the existing alternatives in the production sector makes it necessary for them to establish ties among themselves. They must also reach out to the state and the capitalist sector of the economy, carefully negotiating the conditions to ensure the independence and survival of the alternatives. Learning to establish such ties in different types of economies on different scales (local, regional, etc.) that remain true to the spirit of democratic and egalitarian alternatives is the main challenge currently faced by all movements and organizations seeking to advance alternative development.

#### The search for alternatives to development

This third line of reflection and action has much in common with the one discussed in the previous section. Indeed, many of the proposals made by the advocates of alternatives to development partially coincide with those who defend alternative development (e.g., emphasis on local efforts, promotion of community autonomy, etc.). The difference lies in the fact that alternative development proposes changes in the type and scope of growth, but does

not challenge the concept of economic growth *per se*, while alternatives to development are extremely critical of the notion of growth, and therefore explore "post-development" alternatives. In discussing these two traits and their sources, Escobar explains that "since the middle and late 1980s [...] a relatively coherent body of work has emerged which highlights the role of grassroots movements, local knowledge, and popular power in transforming development. The authors representing this trend state that they are interested not in development alternatives but in alternatives to development, that is, the rejection of the entire paradigm altogether" (1995: 215).

Given that the above section explains the community, popular, and local components, here we will deal only with specific arguments for alternatives to development as well as the implications of rejecting the economic development paradigm. Perhaps the best way to understand the specifics of alternatives to development is by contrasting this movement's ecological and feminist arguments with those of their counterparts in the alternative development movement.

The former are radically critical of the idea of sustainable development. As Daly bluntly affirms, "sustainable development is impossible" (Daly, 1996: 192). In current usage, "sustainable development" is the equivalent of "sustainable growth," which, according to Daly, is contradictory. Economic growth cannot continue without destroying the conditions necessary for life on earth; therefore, the concept of development must change. The only type of sustainable development is "development without growth—qualitative improvement of the physical economic base that is maintained in a steady state [...] within the regenerative and assimilative capacities of the ecosystem" (Daly, 1996: 193). Development, understood as a means of realizing potential, as a transition to a different and better situation, is far removed from the idea of development as growth. In this sense, economic activities can develop without growing.

Feminists within this movement are against women joining the development effort. These feminist activists and authors choose not to fight for recognition of women's role in development for purposes of growth or incite women to take part in this battle (Women in Development—WID); rather, they propose abandoning the Eurocentric, hierarchical, and patriarchal model it represents. From this perspective, known as ecofeminism (Women, Environment, and Alternative Development—WED), "the task is not simply to add women into the known equation but to establish a new development paradigm" (Harcourt, 1994: 5). This means changing our ideas about development and returning to ways of understanding the world that have been pushed aside by the dominant paradigm, ways in which economic activities are only one subordinate chapter in an overall "package" of cultural practices (McMichael, 1996). As described by two well-known ecofeminist authors (Mies and Shiva, 1993), ecofeminism means moving from the

"development equals growth" paradigm to one that prioritizes strategies to ensure the basic means of subsistence for women and children.

The reference to alternative types of knowledge takes us to another core element of alternatives to development: the defense of cultural diversity, of different modes of production, and of different understandings of production still in use all over the world, despite the expansion of the capitalist economy and modern science. The perverse social and environmental effects of capitalist production and of the materialistic and instrumental culture that makes it possible have been amply proven. Alternatives to such development are to be found in hybrid and minority cultures out of which "might emerge other ways of building economies, of dealing with basic needs, of coming together into social groups" (Escobar, 1995: 225). These cultures, from this point of view, are capable of undermining the hegemony of modern capitalism and knowledge.

The new ideas advocating change in the current development paradigm are among the most dynamic and promising sources of alternatives to non-capitalist production. A broad range of organizations and movements worldwide are working towards this end, waging battles on many different fronts. Examples include indigenous groups like the Colombian U'wa, who are facing down the powerful Occidental Petroleum and its repeated attempts to drill for oil on their ancestral homeland. Similarly, the Chipko people's movement has called for the halt of commercial logging and the construction of a dam on the Narmada river in India. These are only two of the many struggles currently being undertaken against the myriad economic development projects that threaten local cultures, the environment, and the very survival of indigenous peoples. Anti-development efforts are underway all over the world, relying on local activism with the support of global activism networks. Their purpose is to conserve cultural heritage and protect the environment.

Although these and other movements clearly show the benefits that national and international networks can bring for local movements seeking alternatives to global capital development, most of the bibliography and post-development programs focus almost exclusively on local, community efforts. This leaves post-development proposals exposed to risks similar to those faced by alternative development: the reification of the community and of local culture and the abandonment of any aspiration for solidarity beyond the local sphere. This is a particularly evident (and actually celebrated) aspect of some post-development proposals based on a hyper-deconstructionist post-modernism that denies the possibility of intercultural dialogue or of extending action and thought beyond the local sphere (Esteva and Prakash, 1998). Such radical localism arises out of the construction of dichotomies that admit no middle ground or proposals for interconnecting the terms in opposition. Instead, their focus is "our people" vs. "others," traditional vs. modern, civil

society vs. the state, the community vs. society, local vs. global, and popular wisdom vs. modern knowledge. The result is a complete rejection of any form of global thinking or action, even those that seek to establish solidarity ties among local struggles. The celebration of local diversity is opposed to the “fantasy of global thinking” (Esteve and Prakash, 1998: 20).

Although alternatives to development rely to a large extent on the defense of local alternatives and of the anti-capitalist lifestyles and knowledge they represent, we believe that post-development thought and action stand to gain a great deal (as shown by the successful struggles that have taken advantage of local, national and global activism) if, instead of concentrating solely on local diversity, they make an effort to develop proposals that work on all these levels, depending on the needs of each individual struggle. The cultural diversity that can lead to alternatives to development should be conceived “not as a static but as a transformed and transformative force” (Escobar, 1995: 226). From a post-developmental standpoint, what is needed to fight the capitalist paradigm is a cosmopolitan eco-socialist paradigm in which the privileged *topoi* are democracy, ecological socialism, anti-productivism, and cultural diversity (Santos, 1995: 484). The idea is to fight for a pluralistic “cosmopolitan localism,” to use McMichael’s apt expression (1996), in which anti-development, alternative development, cooperative and associational strategies are used, among others, to open up non-capitalist spaces and thus to gradually transform production and achieve more democratic, egalitarian, solidary, and sustainable forms of economic organization.

### THE CASE STUDIES

In the following pages we briefly outline the case studies against the background of the theoretical discussion offered in the previous sections. The remainder of this introduction is divided into two sections. The first contains a brief description of each of the case studies. The second offers a conclusion based on these studies and formulates a set of theses on what we believe are the central problems presented in the different chapters of this book.

The book is divided into four parts. In the first, Paul Singer (Brazil), César Rodríguez-Garavito (Colombia), Sharit Bhowmik (India), and Teresa Cruz e Silva (Mozambique) present case studies on worker cooperatives. In the second, Heinz Klug (South Africa), Zander Navarro (Brazil), Horácio Martins de Carvalho (Brazil), and João Marcos de Almeida Lopes (Brazil) discuss alternatives for access to land and rural economic production. In the third, Rob Lambert and Edward Webster (South Africa), Francisco Oliveira (Brazil), Roberto Vêras (Brazil), and Gabriele Dietrich and Naliny Nayak (India) discuss new forms of labor internationalism from the South. This section is preceded by a general discussion of the core issues of contemporary cross-border labor solidarity by Hermes Costa. In the fourth part, Aníbal

Quijano and Peter Waterman, two well-known critical scholars and activists who were invited to reflect upon the results of the research project that underpins this volume, present their comments and offer general reflections on the issues of alternative production and labor internationalism. What follows is our synthesis of the case studies comprising the first three sections.

The chapter by Singer begins by offering a general description of the solidary economy as a production mode based on the cooperative model. To illustrate how the solidary economy works in Brazil, Singer provides a detailed analysis of four cooperative experiments: 1) the transformation of a São Paulo shoe factory on the verge of bankruptcy into a worker cooperative in the early 1990s, which led to the creation of a national association of cooperative workers; 2) the creation of a national association of cooperatives by the national metalworkers union in 1999; 3) the collective economic self-management in the settlements of the Landless Workers’ Movement (MST); and 4) a series of initiatives undertaken in the 1990s by the Catholic Church, NGOs, and universities to promote the creation of all types of cooperatives among the poorer sectors of society, particularly through assistance and advisory services provided by the so-called “cooperative incubators.” After comparing the different case studies, Singer concludes that the organization of mutually supportive cooperative networks, combined with outside support from unions, progressive organizations, and social movements, can help foster the development of the solidary economy in Brazil. In this way, the economy can move beyond its principal mission to date, which has been to help alleviate Brazil’s high levels of unemployment caused by neoliberal globalization.

The chapter by Rodríguez-Garavito deals with a specific case study on the cooperativism of scavengers, one of the most marginalized sectors of Colombian society. For nearly twenty years, with the support of private and state organizations, a minority of the nearly 300,000 informal garbage pickers in Colombia have organized close to 100 worker cooperatives as well as regional and national cooperative networks in an effort to change the exploitative conditions of the recycling market and improve the pickers’ quality of life. This study analyzes the origins, achievements, and difficulties encountered by the cooperatives with the aim of responding to more general questions about the conditions for the emergence of economic organizations that, like worker cooperatives, can defy the division between capital and labor and survive in an increasingly global market. The author shows that the garbage pickers’ cooperatives have generated substantial economic and social benefits for their members, even while failing to transform the market structure of the recycling business, which continues to benefit the large companies. Throughout the study, the author emphasizes the need for all cooperatives, but particularly recycling co-ops, to join national and international support networks with other cooperatives, state institutions, and, under certain circumstances, with capitalist companies. This

local-global link can help cooperatives survive and realize their economic and social potential.

Bhowmik also addresses cooperative experiments among marginalized working-class sectors. After an introduction on the cooperative movement and social emancipation, four case studies of experiments in Ahmedabad and Calcutta (India) follow, offering an analysis of their differences, along with conclusions as to why some succeeded while others failed. The Ahmedabad study deals with female garbage recyclers who formed cooperatives with the help of a women's labor union. The three Calcutta-based studies refer to factories that went bankrupt and were bought by workers who decided to form a cooperative to run them collectively. In his comparison of the four case studies, Bhowmik underscores the key role unions can play in promoting successful cooperative experiments. The author also notes that internal democratic structures and the State's attitude towards co-ops are determining factors in their success or failure.

Cruz e Silva's chapter continues along the same lines, discussing the emancipatory potential of and difficulties faced by cooperatives comprised of workers from the most marginalized classes of society. The Cruz e Silva case study refers to women's cooperatives located on the outskirts of Maputo, Mozambique, which emerged in the mid-1970s as a result of post-independence socialist policies. The cooperatives, coordinated by the General Cooperative Union, work mostly in the food sector, selling to the Maputo market. The author describes the strategies the Union cooperatives used to ensure their survival while also teaching co-op worker-owners how to meet their basic needs through solidary social practices. However, the study also shows the precariousness of the co-ops, struggling to survive in Mozambique's new economic context, now open to foreign competition. The author warns of the risks they run, and discusses strategies to ensure their viability in an open market.

Opening the second part of the book, on alternative rural production and the land question, the chapter by Klug discusses an institution created by the South African government in 1996 whose purpose was to give marginalized rural communities access to land and to collective production as part of an agrarian reform program. Known as Community Property Associations, their rules stipulate that the communities can own land allocated to them by the government provided that they form associations adhering to a series of self-governing regulations and abiding by minimum constitutional principles for democratic participation and equal rights for all members, with special emphasis on gender equality. The author analyzes the associations founded by South African communities within this program, pointing out how the internal rules of the associations interact—and sometimes conflict—with the traditional hierarchy of certain South African peoples. Klug also notes the important role land access plays in social

emancipation and reflects upon the transforming potential of the associations included in the study.

Navarro's chapter begins by offering a description of the origins of the Landless Workers Movement, taking stock of its achievements during its twenty-year history. He underscores how the movement, through unceasing activism and successful squatting tactics, has revitalized the struggle for agrarian reform while achieving basic victories for landless peasants in one of the most inequitable societies in the world. Navarro also notes how the growing number of MST settlements has brought about democratic practices in Brazilian municipalities, thanks to the movement's ability to confront the political machinery that had traditionally captured the peasant vote. Nevertheless, according to the author, the MST has an internal hierarchical structure that effectively limits peasant dissent and participation. For Navarro, the social control and authoritarian practices exercised by this internal structure raises doubts as to the emancipatory possibilities of the movement. He concludes that in order to develop its emancipatory potential, the MST must become democratic and adjust its strategies to Brazil's new political circumstances, and, specifically, should begin taking advantage of promising opportunities available through collaboration with the state.

Martins offers a different view of the MST. Like Navarro, he recognizes the MST's achievements, as reflected in the number of settlements founded, the number of families helped through the redistribution of occupied land and the agrarian reform programs that have grown to include new regions of the country. Martins feels that these victories were possible because the thousands of members of this movement came to share common values, thus facilitating the massive mobilization required for direct action (i.e., land occupation). Unlike Navarro, Martins claims that the movement does not have a hierarchical organization, but rather is similar to a network society that does not use conventional electoral means to choose the members of its governing bodies. Furthermore, the author asserts that a great many types of management and coexistence models are used in the different MST settlements. Since for Martins social emancipation is an ongoing process, MST mobilizations and transformations are part of a "work in progress," whose end purpose is to transform the patterns of land ownership and of the economy.

The case study by Lopes also discusses the MST, providing a detailed description of how the nearly 15,000 MST members who occupied a large latifundium in southern Brazil in 1996 built an alternative city in the territory they settled. After a state agency for the promotion of agrarian reform gave them title to the occupied land, the settlers discussed, with the support of NGOs and state organizations, the type of city they wanted to build. They decided to use the ruins of an old camp town built decades earlier to house the workers of a dam construction project. The author analyzes the way the

landless people's conception of a city, as a hybrid between rural and urban, conflicted with the conventional conception of the state officials and NGO architects working with them. Out of this conflict involving forms of knowledge and lifestyles, however, emerged alternative methods for organizing space and production that are still working today.

As illustrated in this brief presentation of the studies by Navarro, Martins, and Lopes—which are related to one of Singer's case studies on landless people's cooperatives—this book contains a wealth of information on the MST. We take no sides in this debate, but merely note the central points discussed, to which we will return when presenting our final theses. However, we do feel that such debate is an important and necessary part of the analysis of the MST's original emancipatory goals.

After a chapter by Hermes Augusto Costa that surveys the core issues of the new labor internationalism, which opens the third section of the volume, Rob Lambert and Eddie Webster describe an innovative experiment in labor internationalism: the Southern Initiative on Globalization and Trade Union Rights (SIGTUR). It involves a network of democratic trade unions of the South in a number of different countries (Australia, South Africa, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Korea, Brazil). This network exemplifies in practice what the authors understand as the *new labor internationalism*—"the capacity to reassert social as against individual emancipation, and social being in contrast to an instrumental economic being." Lambert and Webster believe that the SIGTUR network permits the building of new opportunities and resistance strategies for the labor movement, despite the adverse conditions imposed by neoliberal globalization and the "crisis of future vision" experienced by the contemporary labor movement. In their opinion, in the era of globalization, social emancipation has to be directed not only at the men and women included in the sphere of work relations but also at citizens who are completely excluded from the possibility of having any kind of paid work. Based on new cyberspace technologies and combining traditional trade union organization with the network communication characteristic of the "information age," SIGTUR also shows how "the new labor internationalism is a network organization that has a mobilization orientation." In the second half of the article, Lambert and Webster describe the socio-economic profile of the participants of the Fifth Regional Meeting of SIGTUR (South Africa, October 1999) and give a detailed account of three global campaigns—one for building a common May Day, another against the anti-union stance of the Rio Tinto Corporation, and the third for building a global unionism—that, since then, have mobilized the delegates of SIGTUR. Finally, the authors describe some of the challenges that SIGTUR currently faces.

The chapter by Francisco de Oliveira begins by analyzing historically the position of Brazilian trade unionism (in particular, the federation CUT) in

the trajectory from "the war of the movements" (the period of opposition to the dictatorship) to the "war of positions" (which followed the promulgation of the Constitution in 1988 and is therefore related to a process of consolidation of trade unionism). The author gives an account of the counter-hegemonic experiment in the establishment of sectorial chambers (tripartite organs of negotiation composed of representatives of trade unions, employers and governments) that appeared in the early 1990s, focusing on the most successful example, that of the automotive sector. Despite the dismantling of the sectorial chambers by the government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and the confirmation of a scenario of "totalitarian-neoliberal slippage," Oliveira asks if it is still possible to "sing once again *L'Internationale à la São Bernardo*" (one of the main regions where a combative trade unionism emerged and where the experiment in sectorial chambers was successful). At this point, the author discusses the insertion of the Brazilian trade union movement into labor internationalism, identifying the main phases of this insertion. Oliveira believes that, at present, labor action in the ambit of TNCs and anti-globalization demonstrations are possible routes for labor internationalism to follow, although it is not always possible to see them translated into "concrete protocols for struggles and pacts to improve Brazilian labor relations."

Roberto Vêras focuses on a theme that is also developed by Francisco Oliveira in the final part of his article, namely, the emancipatory struggle of the metalworkers unions of the two main Brazilian union federations for a national collective contract in the sector. After an initial contextualization of the automobile industry in Brazil that describes its establishment in the country in the 1950s (particularly in the State of São Paulo, in the region of the ABC—Santo André, São Bernardo and São Caetano), Vêras goes on to describe the new scenario for union action that emerged at the end of the 1970s (known as the "new unionism"), which was behind the opposition to the official union structure and which led to the creation of the largest union federation in the country, CUT. But it is the phenomenon of the strike as a form of action available to the labor movement, reinforcing its vocation for mobilization, that occupies the central part of the text. The objective of the "strike festival" was the adoption of a national collective contract for the metalworking sector that would preclude differences in wages and working conditions between states and the loss of employment in the regions where the automobile industry had traditionally been concentrated. The struggle for the national collective contract involved an "attitude of resistance" that was essentially national in character and that provided unprecedented opportunities for union collaboration and for stimulating other sectors to mobilize in a similar way. However, Vêras also points out that, even though this contract has not yet been formally signed, it did lead to "international interactions," exemplified by the support of the

International Metalworkers Federation and the signing of the first collective contract in the MERCOSUR.

The study undertaken by Gabriele Dietrich and Nalini Nayak in the last case study provides a view of the possibilities of the counter-hegemonic globalization of the fishworkers movement in India (started in Kerala, in the south of the country), which has been seeking to strengthen its global links. The authors provide a socio-historical analysis of the way in which the fishworkers movement emerged over the last three decades as a result of technology-oriented growth processes that led to increased industrialization in the sector and threatened the survival of artisanal fishing. In describing how the Kerala fishworkers movement is seeking to reverse this trend, the authors emphasize the importance of class, gender, religion and caste to the understanding of the organizational dynamics of the movement. While the fishworkers are organized "primarily as a class or a subsector within the vast informal sector of Indian labor (which comprises 92% of the Indian working class)," women play a central role in what concerns both environmental sustainability and the protection of the lifestyles of the coastal communities. For Dietrich and Nayak, "women fishworkers and women activists and supporters have been in the forefront of the struggle for alternative development," despite the fact that their struggle has been weakened by the assertion of religious and caste identities. The authors also describe the outlines of the internationalization of the fishworkers' struggle as well as union internationalization (from which emerged the struggle against joint ventures and against intensive aquaculture). They argue for the emancipatory virtues of a social movement unionism, capable of making connections between different social movements at local, national and international levels. An example of this is the National Alliance of People's Movements, which "has brought together environmental movements, workers in the informal sector, peasants, dalits, women, and adivasis."

#### CONCLUSION: EIGHT THESES ON ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTION AND LABOR INTERNATIONALISM

In closing this introduction, we formulate a series of brief theses on the common issues found in the case studies included in this volume. Based on our own reading of the texts, and in line with the spirit of the project *Reinventing Social Emancipation*, of which this volume is the second part, the theses are our contribution to the political and academic debate outlined in the first section of this introduction.

1. *Production alternatives are not only economic: their emancipatory potential and their possibilities for success depend to a great extent on the integration of economic transformation processes and cultural, social, and political processes.* As the case studies

on urban and rural cooperatives show, alternative production initiatives are generally only one part of an overall community organization project. While production is an essential part of the initiatives, because it provides actors with economic incentives, the decision to undertake an alternative production project and maintain the daily determination to continue with it depend upon the dynamics of non-economic (cultural, social, affective, and political) factors associated with production. In this sense, the alternatives are holistic, and their success or failure partially depends on how the economic and non-economic processes involved sustain one another.

The case studies on worker cooperatives presented by Singer, Bhowmik, Rodríguez-Garavito, and Cruz e Silva show that the difficult transition from capitalist production to cooperative production must include other activities such as education and social integration in order to maintain the participants' enthusiasm and create the necessary conditions for their meaningful contribution to the decision-making processes within their group-owned businesses.

As Singer shows in his comparison of Brazilian cooperatives of different sectors, it is difficult for workers to move from a worker/owner relationship to one of cooperative efforts among equals. The new situation and status must be accompanied by a learning process to help the worker understand both his/her new role as well as the opportunities and responsibilities involved in owning a business. This is particularly difficult in the case of individuals who have formerly experienced situations of extreme social exclusion, such as the garbage recyclers. As seen in the Rodríguez-Garavito case study, the small supportive communities formed among the recyclers have been crucial to the continuity of the cooperatives in a context in which the co-ops must face a multitude of problems. For co-op members, the cultural, social, and recreational activities organized by the cooperatives are just as important as their daily recycling work and, in many cases, are the main reasons they continue. The holistic nature of production initiatives is also seen in the alternative city founded by the landless, as analyzed by Lopes. This alternative city includes production, housing, recreation, and land cultivation and thus blurs the conventional boundaries between the rural and the urban and between places of production and places for living and for public sociability.

Production alternatives are then hybrid initiatives. They are a complex mixture of a wide variety of activities, as seen in these cases and in many others studied worldwide (Hirschman, 1984; Wasserstrom, 1985). Economic activities provide the material incentive, while the feeling of belonging and the educational and social integration efforts they generate help to keep up the energy and enthusiasm required to ensure continuity and success, without losing sight of original principles and goals.

2. *Collaboration and mutual support networks of cooperatives, unions, NGOs, state agencies and social movement organizations are key to the success of production alternatives.* Given their counter-hegemonic nature and the fact that experiments in alternative production are often undertaken by marginalized groups, the initiatives are frequently fragile and precarious. This makes them highly susceptible not only to economic failure, but also to adulteration or co-optation. As the case studies also show, the best way to counteract this fragility is through their participation in networks with similar initiatives (e.g., co-operatives) and other types of organizations.

One of the most important factors in the creation, survival, and growth of production alternatives is the existence of a broader social movement that helps create them and preserve their integrity. The MST is a case in point. The studies by Martins, Singer, Navarro, and Lopes point out how the many initiatives undertaken by the inhabitants of MST settlements, ranging from food production to the building of alternative cities, were only possible thanks to the solidity of this movement. Other examples include the political energy generated by the national liberation struggle in Mozambique, which provided the thrust needed for the founding of the cooperatives studied by Cruz e Silva. The triumph of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa led to the political regime that established an agrarian reform system organized around the community peasant associations studied by Klug. These experiences confirm the conclusions of other, similar case studies, such as the success of the Kerala cooperatives in India, which, thanks to their participation in a broader movement for social transformation, gave rise to the so-called "Kerala model" (Isaac, Franke, and Raghavan, 1998).

The support networks, in particular, are composed of three types of organizations: unions, NGOs and foundations, and other alternative economic organizations. The unions play a fundamental role in the creation and promotion of many successful experiments, particularly those of worker cooperatives. This is seen in the Bhowmik and Singer cases, in which union initiatives and support were decisive in enabling employees to buy out and turn into cooperatives numerous bankrupt companies. In the case studied by Singer, the Brazilian unions also helped set up special organizations to promote and support worker cooperatives. We see the evidence provided by these and other cases (like the Kerala initiative) as a manifestation of one of the most interesting challenges faced by the labor movement in the new millennium: defining their role in what concerns the promotion of economic alternatives that go beyond labor-management negotiations. The case studies also show that the support of foundations and NGOs in promoting community development is crucial, particularly in the early stages when initiatives are launched and consolidated. External support by churches, private social development organizations, and all kinds of "social animateurs" (Hirschman, 1984) is an important presence in the founding of large movements like the

MST as well as in smaller ones, such as the garbage recyclers' cooperatives. The dilemma faced by several of the initiatives studied is precisely that of how to survive autonomously after outside support ceases. Finally, there is the positive influence of support among alternative economic organizations (specifically among cooperatives) that occasionally, as in the cases of Mozambique, Brazil, and Colombia, have led to the creation of second-tier associations dedicated solely to promoting the cooperatives.

As seen in the exemplary case of Mondragón described earlier, cooperatives and other non-capitalist organizations are extremely vulnerable when forced to compete with the capitalist sector and deal with unfavorable political conditions single-handedly. This is why support networks are essential to their success. The natural components of these networks are organizations of all types committed to an agenda of social transformation. Nevertheless, as shown in several of the case studies (i.e., Mozambique and Colombia), cooperatives often need to form alliances with capitalist companies in the context of open economies. This is one of the most difficult aspects of the recent developments in production alternatives the world over, due to the inherent risk of co-optation or adulteration of their initial objectives and principles. Nevertheless, cooperative relationships with capitalist companies should not be discarded and can indeed be indispensable in some cases. To avoid the risks cited above, co-ops must carefully negotiate the conditions of this relationship and of market insertion.

3. *Struggles for alternative production and new forms of labor solidarity should be promoted both inside and outside the state.* The relationships between alternative production and labor solidarity initiatives, on the one hand, and the state, on the other, deserve separate mention. Traditionally, progressive currents pursuing economic alternatives (including cooperatives, proponents of alternative development and of alternatives to development) have been wary of the state, and have powerful reasons for being so. These include the risk of state co-optation of their alternative programs, the state's indifference to the problems of marginalized sectors of society, and the danger of the initiatives becoming dependent upon state aid. The risks of dependence on and co-optation by the state are evident in the problematic links between Northern unions and their national states, which thwarted the democratization and independence of the "old labor internationalism" (Waterman, 1998).

However, as evidenced in the case studies, the relations between alternative production units, unions, and the state are complex and ambiguous. Sometimes the state acts as a catalyst and even helps create new alternatives and forms of solidarity. This is the case of the South African community property associations analyzed by Klug. But in other cases, the state takes contradictory stances (first supporting, then abandoning the initiatives), exerting a highly negative influence that can endanger the survival of these

organizations. This is the case of several cooperatives cited in the Bhowmik study that initially received state support, only to find themselves on the edge of extinction when it was unjustifiably cut off. The relation between the MST and the Brazilian state, described in detail by Navarro, illustrates a third type of ambiguous and tense relationship between movements or organizations and the state, which includes collaboration and financial support, but also antagonistic relations and political confrontation.

All of the above leads us to believe that alternative movements cannot afford to choose between fighting inside or outside the state. They must fight on both fronts. They must work within the state to avoid losing political ground to the economic elites, and mobilize state resources to improve the lot of the marginalized classes, while continuing to work outside the sphere of the state to safeguard their own integrity, avoid dependence on political cycles, and continue to defend alternatives to the status quo.

4. *Initiatives on alternative economic organization and labor solidarity have to operate simultaneously at different scales.* This point has already been brought out in our criticism of the over-emphasis some economic alternative proposals place on local initiatives. Rather than fervent localism, we favor alternatives that are capable of acting on local, regional, national, and global levels. While community initiatives and specific political action "in situ" is essential, this does not mean that the solidarity and support networks should not be extended to larger scales. The scale (or combination of scales) of thought and action must be selected according to the specific nature and requirements of a given initiative at a given point in time—that is, it should not be predetermined and fixed.

This point is illustrated by Singer, who provides descriptions of how some Brazilian cooperative associations have benefited from the support of similar experiments in France and Italy. Another example of the need to work on different scales is provided in the Cruz e Silva and Rodríguez-Garavito studies. They describe the problems encountered by the Mozambican and Colombian cooperatives in their efforts to develop viable ways to compete with global capital within the context of their countries' economic liberalization.

By its very nature, international labor solidarity also operates across scales. The growing literature on transnational advocacy networks and coalitions organized around labor issues, which Costa surveys in his chapter, documents the increasingly effective articulation among unions, faith-based organizations, NGOs, social movement organizations and other actors that, albeit located in different areas of the world, have come together in campaigns against sweatshops and other forms of degradation of labor (Kidder, 2002). However, the struggles with the highest international profile (like those associated with the global campaigns organized by SIGTUR or the global interactions set in motion by the fishworkers movement in India) are not

necessarily more important to the labor movement than struggles for a national collective contract, such as the one undertaken by the Brazilian metalworkers through the "strike festival." The reinforcement of transnational interactions, more evident in the international struggles, has certainly given them more notoriety, which can also affect the support they receive. However, the case studies in this book that tend to give relevance to local and national situations also show that the interconnections between these scales and the transnational scales, whether regional or global, are important for the new labor internationalism. All in all, we can conclude from this that the new labor internationalism should entail both the local dissemination of its global initiatives (essentially transnational), as well as the global dissemination of its local ones (locally based initiatives that are less well-known but that contain just as much emancipatory potential).

5. *The deepening of participatory democracy and the advance of economic democracy are two sides of the same coin.* One of the emancipatory facets of alternative production arrangements is their potential to replace the autocracy that characterizes capitalist production (i.e., the vertical power structure in which authority emanates from the "boss" or manager) with participatory democracy within production units. In other words, the goal is to expand the field of action of democracy from the political to the economic field, and thus eliminate the artificial barrier erected by capitalism and liberal economics between politics and the economy. This naturally requires more than a quantitative change. The expansion of the democratic principle leads essentially to the creation of new possibilities for qualitative democratic changes, leading to participatory democracy.

The issue of democracy runs through all the case studies on alternative production. Internal democracy was required by the law that established the peasant production associations described by Klug. This is a case of the state fostering the link between economic and political democracy, which frequently conflicts with the hierarchy and ancestral traditions of the communities. In the analyses of the cooperatives in Brazil, Mozambique, India, and Colombia, the familiar issue of the division between the cooperative leaders and the rest of the co-op workers is described. This has been one of the ongoing dilemmas for co-ops since the movement began in the early nineteenth century: how to avoid the resurgence of hierarchies and apathy in organizations whose success depends on the direct participation and commitment of the workers? This is indeed a difficult question, for which none of the studies provides a full answer. Singer suggests that the solution might be educational processes that would accompany cooperative activities in order to mitigate the division between "bosses" and "employees." In any case, as Bhowmik's comparative study confirms, production units with democratic internal structures are much more likely to sustain their original levels

of enthusiasm and energy and are better equipped to adapt to adverse conditions, because workers that are involved in decision-making are more committed to cooperation.

The studies on the MST pose a series of questions about the relationship between economic alternatives and internal democracy. In this sense, this book opens a debate that may be helpful to the future development of this movement, whose achievements are widely recognized by the authors included here, by other movements, and by organizations the world over. The debate has to do with whether or not the MST's achievements have been accompanied by the establishment of an internal, open democratic structure. While Navarro sustains that the MST's internal structure is extremely hierarchical, Martins asserts that it is constituted by horizontal networks. The Singer and Lopes studies provide observations that can be useful in this debate.

Similarly, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, the issue of union democracy is central to the case studies on international labor solidarity. In particular, Webster and Lambert inquire into the composition and representativeness of SIGTUR, while Dietrich and Nayak offer a vivid picture of the process of grassroots participation by women and fishworkers in the struggle against intensive aquaculture. Indeed, as Waterman points out in his commentary, union democratization is a key tenet of the type of global movement unionism whose emergence is illustrated by the case studies.

6. *There is a strong connection between new struggles for alternative production and labor solidarity and struggles against patriarchy.* As seen in the analysis of alternative development and alternatives to development as well as in the chapters on new labor internationalism, the contribution of feminist movements and theories to the debates on alternative economies has been decisive. In fact, a good part of the recent dynamism of these debates is due to the hybridization of critical currents of thought and action, such as the ecofeminist movement. The decisive role played by women and feminist thought is far from coincidental since fighting for forms of production based on non-capitalist values is part and parcel of the struggle against every form of oppression—be it patriarchy, exploitation, or racism. Economic battles do not take priority over gender and race struggles, or over other movements for emancipation. The priorities established depend on the specific circumstances of a given time and place. For this reason, alternative production and labor solidarity initiatives feed off of, and contribute to, the struggles against patriarchal society (Waterman, 2004).

In fact, as the case studies illustrate, many of the alternative economic initiatives and efforts to democratize unions have been launched by groups of women. This is the case of the Calcutta garbage recyclers examined by Bhowmik, and of the fishworkers movement analyzed by Dietrich and

Nayak. Another is the large network of cooperatives associated with the General Union of Cooperatives in Mozambique, studied by Cruz e Silva, whose members are primarily poor women. Similarly, as Klug notes, in South Africa, being female, black, or living in a rural area almost inevitably means living in poverty, and gender discrimination is one of the main reasons for the conflicts that arose with the founding of the peasant production associations. The egalitarian constitutional principles established by the law regulating these associations are diametrically opposed to the traditional South African gender hierarchy, and thus it has been one of the most difficult problems to resolve during their formation.

7. *The success or failure of economic alternatives and transnational labor solidarity should be judged using gradualist and inclusive criteria.* Given the endurance of neoliberal capitalism, it is easy to take desperate or cynical stances regarding any alternative. For impatient minds such pessimism comes easily, and the absence of any radical break with the status quo generates skepticism about any gradually implemented or local alternative. If the success of alternatives is only judged by their ability to quickly achieve radical transformations and completely replace extant economic and political arrangements, then none of the alternatives herein discussed is worthwhile.

The alternatives available to us imply gradual changes that lead to the creation of spaces of solidarity within or on the fringes of global capitalism. Such alternatives make fundamental changes in the living conditions of the individuals involved. For South African or Brazilian peasants, gaining access to land implied a crucial change from their past experiences with an exclusionary latifundium system that existed until a few years ago. In the case of the poorest workers in the Mozambique, India, and Colombia cooperatives and unions, enjoying the basic rights of citizenship, such as access to medical care or paid vacations, is a milestone in their lives. As Mies and Shiva (1993) and Dietrich (1996) have claimed, survival itself can be a kind of emancipation for people living in extreme poverty and can lead to a re-evaluation of the production-consumption paradigm. Furthermore, in many cases, gradual changes and small-scale alternatives open doors for gradual structural transformations. The seeds of large-scale emancipation can be sown in these small fields of opportunity.

As we have argued above, it is crucial that the holistic nature of alternative economic initiatives not be forgotten when evaluating their success or failure. Any evaluation must consider achievements and failures in the achievement of both economic and non-economic goals. Hirschman (1984) made an eloquent appeal for this type of inclusive evaluation of cooperative efforts:

With their financial health being often precarious and with their ability to coexist in individualistic market society with purely profit-oriented firms

being frequently in doubt, cooperatives tend to be judged by their financial record alone. But just as the social and political effects of capitalism must be considered in any overall evaluation of that mode of production, so do we need to know something about the non-monetary costs and benefits of co-ops for any comprehensive appraisal of their role. It turns out, moreover, that these non-monetary or intangible effects are frequently crucial to the understanding of their performance in the market place. (Hirschman, 1984: 58)

8. *Production alternatives and new forms of cross-border labor mobilization should seek synergy-based relationships with alternatives in other spheres of the economy.* Production alternatives and labor solidarity are emphasized throughout this introduction and the following chapters. However, a great many highly diverse alternatives are, in fact, being implemented by progressive organizations and governments throughout the world in numerous areas, including commerce (e.g., fair trade initiatives), investment (e.g., respect for ethical standards by foreign investors in Southern countries), immigration (e.g., open border policies), taxation (e.g., the Tobin tax), the minimum income (e.g., the proposal for a universal basic income), the coordination of the global economy (e.g., the democratization of the World Bank and the IMF), etc.

Given that a good portion of the initiatives have recently taken shape in the global movement for social justice in places like World Social Forum, today conditions are ripe for promoting the articulation of production alternatives with other types of economic alternatives. In our opinion, synergy among the proposed economic alternatives is fundamental to the survival and expansion of production alternatives and cross-border labor solidarity. One example can be found in the dilemmas of the Mozambique and Colombia cooperatives in the face of competition from transnational capital. If these co-ops had access to alternative markets such as those proposed by the fair trade initiatives, in which fair prices were paid for co-op products in domestic and international markets, the demise of co-ops or their takeover by capitalist companies might be avoided. This type of association is being successfully established in alternative markets such as that of organic coffee (Levi and Lipton, 2003). Different kinds of complementary relationships among the initiatives mentioned here, as well as many others, are keeping the promise to forcefully promote the potential of new forms of alternative production and labor solidarity.

The challenges and problems summarized in the preceding theses are formidable, and the probabilities of success uncertain. One common feature of all the case studies is the open-ended nature of their conclusions, due precisely to the uncertain future of the experiments analyzed. But the women and men of many different races and nationalities who have decided to go against the tide by participating in such experiments demonstrate that it is possible to conceive and implement alternatives to the prevailing economic

model. In these and similar initiatives around the world, new forms of production and labor solidarity are emerging, and with them, a new promise for social emancipation.

# Notes

- 1 Given this focus on production, neither this introduction nor the case studies in this volume address equally important economic alternatives in commerce and consumption (e.g., fair trade) or the redistribution of income (e.g., the creation of a universal basic income, progressive social programs, etc.). Beyond pragmatic reasons of manageability, this choice is justified by the fact that while there is a budding literature on alternative macroeconomic policies, fair trade and ethical consumerism, there is still very little research on alternative forms of organizing economic production under the conditions of globalization, especially in the South. Nevertheless, as we argue below, it is important to bear in mind that one of the essential factors for the development of production alternatives is the interconnection of the latter with economic alternatives related to the distribution, consumption, and redistribution of resources, to immigration policies, and to the protection of workers' and environmental rights.
- 2 For this very reason, as Ferguson notes, it is surprising that Piore and Sabel only focus on capitalist companies and "don't consider alternative forms of ownership and control that would meet the requirements of flexible specialization. Because [Piore and Sabel] don't problematize those dimensions of capitalist production, they don't pay any attention to the despotic character of most forms of 'flexible specialization' or to the possible ascendancy of worker cooperatives" (Ferguson, 1991: 127).
- 3 On its fiftieth anniversary, the UN selected Mondragón as one of the fifty best social projects in the world. A full description of the Mondragón experiment can be found in Whyte and Whyte (1988).
- 4 The economic results of the mutual support among the Mondragón Complex group cooperatives have been outstanding. Between 1956 and 1983, only three of the 103 cooperatives formed up to that time failed and had to be liquidated.
- 5 Mondragón statutes do not allow cooperatives and groups to make structural changes that go against cooperative principles. For instance, members are represented in all decision-making bodies, and the number of external workers (i.e., those that do not have the status of worker-owners) is statutorily restricted to 10 percent of the staff of each co-op.
- 6 For a presentation of the main lines of thought on alternative development see Friedmann (1992) and McMichael (1996). The work done from this perspective generally consists of a presentation and analysis of case

studies based on ethnographic research, but does not seek to explicitly formulate a general alternative theory on the economy or development. One exception is the work of Friedmann, which we use in this section, whose purpose is to "to provide for alternative development what has so far been missing from the literature: an explicit theoretical framework outside the well-known neoclassical and Keynesian doctrines and thus a common point of departure for practice" (1992: 8). Nevertheless, the effort to underscore the basic theoretical components of alternative development should not make us lose sight of the fact that, from this perspective, theory, on the one hand, and practice and empirical analysis, on the other, are closely linked.

- 7 One of the most interesting effects of the struggle to achieve recognition for women's work (particularly housework, which is "invisible" in the public sphere, and thus not included in conventional economic calculations such as the GDP) has been the questioning of the very concept of economic activity and the criteria for measuring what counts as production. In this sense, as Benería (1992) explains in her attempt to measure the economic impact of the work women do in the home, broadening the concept of production (and of the economy in general) to include non-paid work is essential to the formulation of economic conceptions and policies that eliminate discrimination against women practiced by conventional economic programs. Generally speaking, alternative development proposals have convincingly shown that the conventional concept and methods for measuring production are inadequate. As Mander and Goldsmith (1996) sustain, based on the work of Halstead and Cobb (1996), the GDP and GNP are inadequate for this task, because, according to such measurements, "such negative events as, say, the depletion of natural resources, the construction of more prisons, and the manufacture of bombs are all measures of 'health' by current economic theories. Meanwhile, incomparably more desirable activities, such as unpaid household work, child care, community service, or the production of food to be eaten and artifacts to be used rather than sold via the formal economy are, absurdly, not registered in the statistics at all" (Mander and Goldsmith, 1996: 15).
- 8 In fact, one program, based in Yemen, was selected by the World Bank as one of four model cases presented to the Ministers of Finance and Development during the April 2000 IMF and World Bank world assembly held in Washington ([www.worldbank.org/news/pressrelease](http://www.worldbank.org/news/pressrelease)).

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