

Preface

This book is the third in a series of five volumes that present the main results of an international research project that I have conducted under the title *Reinventing Social Emancipation: Towards New Manifestos*. The project's core idea is that the action and thought that sustained and gave credibility to the modern ideals of social emancipation are being profoundly questioned by a phenomenon that, although not new, has reached in the past decades such an intensity that it has effected a redefinition of the contexts, objectives, means, and subjectivities of social and political struggles. This phenomenon is commonly designated as globalization. As a matter of fact, what we usually call globalization is just one of the forms of globalization, namely neoliberal globalization, undoubtedly the dominant and hegemonic form of globalization. Neoliberal globalization corresponds to a new system of capital accumulation, a more intensely globalized system than previous systems. It aims, on the one hand, to desocialize capital, freeing it from the social and political bonds that in the past guaranteed some social distribution; on the other hand, it works to subject society as a whole to the market law of value, under the presupposition that all social activity is better organized when organized under the aegis of the market. The main consequence of this double change is the extremely unequal distribution of the costs and opportunities brought about by neoliberal globalization inside the world system. Herein resides the reason for the exponential increase of the social inequalities between rich and poor countries, as well as between the rich and the poor inside the same country.

The project's assumption is that this form of globalization, though hegemonic, is not the only form and that, in fact, it has been increasingly confronted with another form of globalization. This other form, an alternative, counter-hegemonic form of globalization, is constituted by a series of initiatives, movements, and organizations that combat neoliberal globaliza-

tion through local/global linkages, networks, and alliances. Their motivation is the aspiration to a better, fairer, and more peaceful world, which they deem possible, and to which they believe they are entitled. This form of globalization is as yet still emerging. Its most dramatic manifestation occurs annually with the World Social Forum of Porto Alegre, six of which have already taken place (Porto Alegre, 2001, 2002, 2003; Mumbai, 2004; Porto Alegre, 2005; and the polycentric World Social Forum of 2006, which took place simultaneously on three continents, in Caracas, Bamako, and Karachi.

To my mind, this alternative globalization, in its confrontation with neoliberal globalization, is paving a new path towards social emancipation. Such a confrontation, which may be metaphorically characterized as a confrontation between the Global North and the Global South, tends to be particularly intense in countries of intermediate development, or, in other words, semi-peripheral countries. It is, therefore, in these countries that the potentialities and limits of the reinvention of social emancipation manifest themselves more clearly. This is the reason why four of the five countries in which the project was conducted are countries of intermediate development in different continents. The five countries in question are: Brazil, Colombia, India, Mozambique, and South Africa.

The new conflicts between the Global North and the Global South occur in the most diverse domains of social, economic, political, and cultural activity. In some of these domains, however, the alternatives created by counter-hegemonic globalization are more visible and consistent, not only because the conflicts in them are more intense, but also because the initiatives, movements, and progressive organizations there have reached higher levels of consolidation and organizational density. I selected the following five domains or themes to be analyzed in each of the five countries included in the project: participatory democratic practices; alternative production systems; emancipatory interculturality and cultural and cognitive justice and citizenship; the protection of biodiversity and the recognition of rival knowledges against neoliberal intellectual property rights; and new labor internationalism. To learn about the choice of countries and themes, as well as the assumptions underlying the project and the challenges it aims to face, the reader should see the general introduction in the first volume of this collection.¹

The series is constituted of five volumes.² The first three volumes deal with the above-mentioned five themes. To be sure, the themes are not watertight; there is intertextuality, now implicit, now explicit, among the different books.

This volume, the third in the collection, tackles the struggles and politics of recognition of difference that in the past three decades have been confronting imperial identities, false universalisms, the coloniality of power,

and imperial epistemology, all of which are as germane to historical capitalism as the exploitation of wage labor. The struggles and movements pursuing alternative conceptions of human rights, collective rights, cultural rights, as well as the rights to local self-determination are analyzed. New forms of racism and of reactionary multiculturalism are confronted with an emancipatory politics of cultural difference.

In light of both the global mercantilization of modern technical and scientific knowledge under way and the more and more unequal access to information and knowledge it causes, the confrontation among rival knowledges acquires special relevance. Such a confrontation derives also from the latest advances in biology, biotechnology and microelectronics, which have transformed the wealth of biodiversity into one of the most precious and sought after "natural resources." Since most of this biodiversity is located in countries of the South and is sustained by popular, peasant, or indigenous knowledges, the issue (and the conflict) consist in deciding how to protect such biodiversity and such knowledges from the voracity with which scientific, technological, and industrial knowledge transforms them into patentable knowledge objects. The struggles and movements for the recognition of popular knowledges concerning biodiversity, medicine, environmental impact, and natural calamities are analyzed through a variety of case studies.

The introduction to this volume, penned by myself, João Arriscado Nunes, and Maria Paula Meneses, provides the theoretical and analytical framework for the topics dealt with in the book. The main debates on multiculturalism, cultural citizenship, and on the relations between science and alternative knowledges, are reviewed, and an argument in favor of the emancipatory recognition of both cultural differences and the epistemological diversity of the world is put forward.

The book is divided into five parts. In the first part, entitled *Multicultural Citizenship and Human Rights*, five case studies highlight, from different perspectives, the tension between individualistic liberal conceptions of law, rights, and grassroots, collective and intercultural conceptions of human dignity that are susceptible of being translated into the language and practice of emancipatory human rights. They investigate such questions as human rights and their reconstruction beyond the Eurocentric matrix, the new forms of legal pluralism associated with globalization, the relationship of globalization to redefinitions of sovereignty, the right to self-determination as fought for by indigenous peoples, and the creation of spaces for new transnational solidarity around them.

In Chapter 1, I examine the increasing importance of the discourse on human rights as the new emancipatory vocabulary of progressive politics. I explore the conditions under which human rights, one of the creations of

Western modernity, could be appropriated by a politics of emancipation that takes both the recognition of cultural diversity and the common affirmation of human dignity into account. This process is illustrated through an investigation of a possible dialogue between three conceptions of human dignity, the first based on human rights in Western culture, the second on *dharma* in Hindu culture, and the third on *umma* in Islamic culture. I then present the concept of *ur-rights* as a possible foundation for a radical intercultural politics of rights.

In Chapter 2, Shalini Randeria deals with the role played by international institutions, NGOs, and social movements in their complex interactions with the state and the emergence of new forms of legal pluralism associated with the “fractured sovereignty” of peripheral and semiperipheral states within the context of globalization. Base the argument on the case of India, the author examines the ways in which the state participates, in a contradictory manner, both in the constitution of the neoliberal order and in (covert or overt) resistance to it. Social movements, in their turn, either oppose the state as an agent of neoliberal globalization and seek the support of international organizations against state policies, or mobilize sectors of the state—such as judicial power—to oppose neoliberal policies.

In Chapter 3, Carlos Frederico Marés de Souza Filho draws upon the author’s professional experience during the time when he was responsible for the affairs of indigenous populations for the Brazilian state and reflects upon this practice. Through an analysis of several struggles for the recognition of the collective rights of indigenous peoples and for their institutional visibility, Souza Filho shows how the emancipatory cause of recognizing the right of indigenous populations to a collective existence has involved different forms of confrontation with the state, all of which had varying degrees of success and which were, to a large extent, rooted in the past history of the processes of colonization and the occupation of territory. Territoriality is, without a doubt, a fundamental element in the affirmation of these collective rights, and one that conflicts with liberal conceptions of ownership.

In Chapter 4, by Lino João de Oliveira Neves, this topic of territoriality is further developed in light of indigenous peoples’ struggles for land demarcation in Brazil, specifically in the Amazon region, where the largest indigenous population is concentrated. Neves analyzes the differences between the emancipatory practices of “self-demarcation” and the practices of integrating indigenous peoples into processes of “participatory demarcation,” which are subordinated to the logic of the state and its agents. There is an emphasis on the confrontation between the symbolic universes, epistemological systems, and rival knowledges that these initiatives express and through which both indigenous practices and the practices of the actors and institutions of the larger society are articulated.

In Chapter 5, Luís Carlos Arenas also presents a situation in which the affirmation of collective rights is inseparable from that of territorial roots. Arenas traces the struggle that, since 1993, has set the U’wa, a small indigenous community in northeast Colombia, against the designs of an American petroleum company, the Occidental Petroleum Corporation (OPC). The struggle of the U’wa gained national prominence and gradually generated movements and initiatives of international solidarity. Throughout the struggle, legal challenges relating to the rights of indigenous peoples had a decisive influence on the process. This study aims to respond to a set of questions that have a much wider scope than the specific case under investigation: how can a forgotten, isolated and barely visible community become the object of worldwide attention? Why were activists and the media so attracted to the case? What lessons can be learned from a local process that became global?

Part II, entitled *The World’s Local Knowledges*, focuses on two of the central epistemological debates of our time: the internal plurality of modern scientific knowledge (different ways of conceiving and practicing science); and the interconnections and conflicts between scientific knowledge and other knowledges. These topics are further detailed in Parts III and IV.

In Chapter 6, Laymert Garcia dos Santos analyzes the “cybernetic turn” that, in his opinion, has sealed the alliance between capital and science and technology and transformed technoscience into a powerful motor of accumulation converting the entire world into raw material at the disposal of technoscientific work. The centrality of the concept of information has blurred the distinction between nature and culture, as illustrated by the informational transformation of the access to genetic patrimony. With a specific reference to the Brazilian case, this transformation is critically analyzed by Santos in so far as it dominates the conflict that, throughout the 1990s, unfolded between the different conceptions regarding the access to and the use of biodiversity and the traditional knowledges associated with it.

Chapter 7 is authored by Shiv Visvanathan. It deals with the debate between tradition and modernity in India, focusing on the field of science and technology in both colonial and post-colonial times. For a long time, the state-promoted ideology of modern science and technology as the sole source of progress has been confronted by grassroots movements that seek to defend the epistemological wealth of the country, a conflict that has become most intense in recent times with regards to the issue of genetic diversity. Visvanathan illustrates the different possibilities of dealing with this conflict in the work of the Indian chemist C. V. Seshadri. He discusses the innovative ways in which Seshadri drew on both modern science and traditional knowledge while refusing to give an exclusive privilege to either of them.

For Seshadri, India needed neither a rigid theory of the modern nor an ossification, an orientaling, or a “museumification” of tradition.

In Chapter 8, João Paulo Borges Coelho discusses the tensions between scientific knowledge and traditional peasant knowledges in the case of “natural calamities”—extreme climatic events such as droughts, torrential rains and floods, and tropical cyclones—to which Mozambique has been severely subjected in the last thirty years. According to Coelho, the Mozambican case shows clearly how state policies (based on scientific and technological hypotheses) adopted in response to emergency situations (as well as to prevent such situations) are far from being merely technical operations. For the author, an efficacious response actually capable of minimizing the destructive effects of natural calamities must be based on a plural network of knowledges in which scientific knowledge and peasant popular knowledges cooperate.

The third part, entitled *From Biodiversity to Rival Knowledges*, is devoted to the question of biodiversity and the new conflicts between scientific knowledge and other (popular, indigenous, peasant) knowledges that it has sparked in recent years in the wake of the biotechnological revolution. The intensity of these conflicts derives from the new fusion between knowledge and capital accumulation brought about by both the life-sciences industry and the concentration in gigantic transnational corporations of the production of bio-industrial products related to agriculture, foodstuffs, and health.

Chapter 9, written by Margarita Flórez Alonso, deals with the complex question of how to protect the traditional knowledges that relate to biological diversity in the context of an aggressive globalization of North-centric conceptions of intellectual property rights that have been geared to defend the interests of biotechnological companies. She asserts that traditional peoples and communities have protected their knowledge to a greater or lesser extent, depending on their internal norms and mores. These should prevail over any legal construct of the Western world. According to Alonso, we should reject this type of protection because it does not arise from any of the real needs of traditional peoples and communities, but rather from Western society’s desire to frame these social and cultural systems in different formats of property rights and thus to define “owners” with whom they may sign contracts or make deals.

In Chapter 10, Vandana Shiva claims that, while biodiversity and indigenous systems of knowledge meet the needs of millions of people, new systems of patents and intellectual property rights (IPRs) are threatening to appropriate these vital resources and knowledge systems from the Third World, as well as to convert them into the monopoly of Northern corporate interests. As an example, she describes how multinational corporations that have promoted the use of chemicals in agriculture are now looking for

biological options. In the search for new markets and for control over the biodiversity base for the production of biopesticides and chemicals, these corporations are claiming IPRs on *neem*-based biopesticides. According to Shiva, the past decade’s movements and struggles against biopiracy have now begun to have an impact. These movements are about both the rights of communities to be the producers of knowledge, food, and medicine and the rights of citizens to have access to basic needs. They are, by their very nature, pluralistic in content and form.

In Chapter 11, Arturo Escobar and Mauricio Pardo analyze the struggles by indigenous and Afro-descendent peoples in the Pacific region of Colombia to secure control over their historical territories by organizing resistance against the rapid advancement of powerful global economic agents that have the support of the state. Black and indigenous organizations have challenged the government in order to obtain legal recognition of their lands and authority and to counter the actions of the timber, mining, and palm oil industries as well as government projects that aim to build roads, hydro-electric plants and ports in the region. The positions of these organizations regarding nature and biodiversity are to be understood in the broader scheme of their political objectives. Indigenous peoples’ control of their lands constitutes the focus of their struggle, which also includes respect for their cultural specificities, the autonomy to decide their future, and the protection of their traditional knowledge.

Part IV, entitled *The Resistance of the Subaltern: The Case of Medicine*, is devoted to another social field of conflicts, tensions, and interconnections among rival knowledges that has gained international prominence in the last two decades: the relations between modern and traditional medical knowledges and practices.

Chapter 12, by Thokozani Xaba, deals with the socio-cultural impact of the marginalization of traditional medical practices in South Africa both in terms of the cultural loss of the holistic approach and of the egalitarian nature of indigenous medicines and in terms of the incapacity of modern medicine to satisfy the health care needs of African populations. Political institutions represented by the state, religious institutions represented by missionaries, and medical and pharmaceutical institutions representing “scientific” medicine have all converged to eliminate any competition emanating from traditional practices. Xaba analyzes the ups and downs of the limited recognition granted to traditional medicine in the post-apartheid period and argues that traditional medicine must be recognized on its own terms as complementary to modern biomedicine.

In Chapter 13, Maria Paula Meneses analyzes the complex relations between modern biomedicine and traditional African medicine on the basis of empirical research conducted in Maputo (Mozambique). According to

her, the two paradigms of medical knowledge have different conceptions of health and illness, of the relationship between cure and prevention, and of the interconnection between an individual's health problem and his/her community, both past and present. For Meneses, traditional medicine is not a remnant of the past; rather, it is being reinvented as an alternative modernity. This explains why traditional medicine continues to attract not only patients from rural areas but also patients from urban areas who, with their modern problems and expectations, seek treatment, protection, and success. Whenever possible, people resort to both traditional and modern medicine. To account for this, Meneses proposes the concept of "intermedicine."

As with all of the other volumes of the collection *Reinventing Social Emancipation*, this volume ends with commentaries (Part V), one by Yash Ghai and another by Tewolde Berhan Gebre Egziabher.

In Chapter 14, Ghai's engaging commentary focuses on the first five chapters, which deal with the complex and tense relationship between universal human rights and the recognition of cultural and ethnic differences. Drawing on his vast international experience in constitution-making, and without ruling out the emancipatory possibilities of interculturality in the field of human rights, Ghai cautions against the possible dangers of relativism and of abuses by authoritarian political leaders eager to invoke cultural specificity in order to legitimate gross violations of basic human rights.

In Chapter 15, Egziabher's equally eloquent commentary focuses on the last eight chapters. It traces the historical roots of the epistemological conflicts between the North and the South, concentrating on the most recent concerning biodiversity and intellectual property rights. Drawing on his vast experience as an expert representing the African positions on these issues and cautioning against the introduction of genetically modified plants, Egziabher defends the creation of a global regime of community rights as a form of resistance against the global imposition of a North-centric legal monoculture of intellectual property rights.

As I have already mentioned, this volume is the third in a series of five volumes. A brief reference to the remaining volumes is therefore in order.

The first volume, entitled *Democratizing Democracy: Beyond the Liberal Democratic Canon* (Verso, 2005), is concerned with high-intensity forms of participatory democracy emerging in the global South. The main thesis of this book is that the hegemonic model of democracy (liberal, representative democracy), while prevailing on a global scale, guarantees no more than low-intensity democracy, based on the privatization of public welfare by more or less restricted elites, on the increasing distance between representatives and the represented, and on an abstract political inclusion made of concrete social exclusion. Parallel to this hegemonic model of democracy, other models have always existed, however marginalized or discredited, such as partici-

patory democracy or popular democracy. Recently, participatory democracy has attained a new dynamics. It has engaged primarily subaltern communities and social groups that, propelled by the aspiration to more inclusive social contracts and high-intensity democracy, struggle against social exclusion and the suppression or trivialization of citizenship. By this I mean local initiatives in urban or rural contexts that gradually develop bonds of inter-recognition and interaction with parallel initiatives, thus giving rise to the formation, as yet embryonic, of transnational networks of participatory democracy. To my mind, one of the major conflicts between the North and the South will increasingly result from the confrontation between representative and participatory democracy. Such a confrontation, often shown in representative democracy's systematically denying the legitimacy of participatory democracy, will be resolved only to the extent that such a denial is replaced by the development of forms of complementarity between the two forms of democracy that may contribute to deepen both one and the other. Such complementarity serves to pave one of the ways to the reinvention of social emancipation.

Volume II, entitled *Another Production is Possible: Beyond the Capitalist Canon* (Verso, 2006), deals, on the one hand, with the non-capitalist production alternatives that for the past two decades have been gaining new life in their resistance to the social exclusion and wild exploitation brought about by neoliberal globalization, and, on the other hand, with the new struggles of workers against such exploitation, which signal the emergence of a new labor internationalism. Alternative models to capitalist development, generally known as solidary economy or social economy, are analyzed, and case studies of popular economic organizations, cooperatives, communitarian or collective land management and associations of local development are presented. Also analyzed are the new forms of the conflict between capital and labor, derived, on the one hand, from the end of the Cold War and, on the other, from the fact that in the last three decades labor has become a global resource, though without the emergence of any globally organized labor market. From this disjunction has resulted the weakening of the union movement as we know it. Meanwhile, it is clear today that labor solidarity is reconstituting itself under new forms, on both local and national levels, and on a global level as well. The book deals in detail with some of these new forms.

Volume IV, entitled *Voices of the World*, is different from the previous volumes. Rather than focusing on the scientific and social analysis of alternatives, it focuses on the discourse and practical knowledge of the protagonists of such alternatives. One of the core concerns of the project *Reinventing Social Emancipation* is to contribute to renovating the social sciences (see the general introduction to the first volume). One of the paths

of renovation resides in confronting the knowledge the social sciences produce with other knowledges—practical, plebeian, popular, common, tacit knowledges—which, although being an integral part of the social practices analyzed by the social sciences, are always ignored by the latter. In this book, voice is given to the leaders and activists of social movements, initiatives and organizations, many of which are studied in the previous volumes. To this effect, long interviews were conducted and transcribed.

Finally, Volume 5, provisionally entitled *Reinventing Social Emancipation: Toward New Manifestos*, presents my theoretical, analytical, and epistemological reflection upon the major themes of this project and its main results. In addition, it reflects as well on the project itself as the construction of a scientific community under conditions and according to rules largely outside the conventional models.

Sixty-one researchers participated in this project; more than fifty-three initiatives were analyzed. A project of such proportions was possible only thanks to a demanding series of conditions. In the first place, adequate funding was available; I am grateful to the MacArthur Foundation for financial support. Second, the project was made possible by a number of coordinators, one in each country, who helped me to select the themes and researchers, and finally to bring the various strands of the research to conclusion. I was fortunate enough to have the collaboration of Sakhela Buhlungu in South Africa, Maria Célia Paoli in Brazil, Mauricio García-Villegas in Colombia, Shalini Randeria and Achyut Yagnik in India and Teresa Cruz e Silva in Mozambique. My most heartfelt gratitude to all of them.

This project would not have been possible without the support of a dedicated and highly competent Secretariat. Sílvia Ferreira, Paula Meneses and Ana Cristina Santos shared administrative, scientific, and editorial tasks, but they all did a little bit of everything. In the course of three years, they accomplished a remarkable amount of work, creating the best conditions to make my meetings with the country coordinators and the researchers productive, to meet all of the researchers' needs and requests, and to facilitate the production of all the texts. Theirs was a Herculean task, and I am only too happy to mention this here in order to keep it from lying buried in the many pages of this series of books.

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Boaventura de Sousa Santos

Notes

- 1 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, ed. (2005). *Democratizing Democracy: Beyond the Liberal Democratic Canon*. London: Verso.
- 2 Besides this English edition, this series is also being published in Brazil (Civilização Brasileira), Mexico (Fondo de Cultura Económica), Italy (Città Aperta Edizioni), and Portugal (Afrontamento).