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2 Social movements in the neoliberal age

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South Africa stands at the crossroads of two types of social movements – movements based on unequal inclusion in the major institutions of society and movements based on forcible exclusion from those institutions. This book offers case studies of the included – largely the well-established labor movement that exercises its power through the resources at its disposal and the dependence of capital and state on labor – but also of the excluded, typically protests against service-delivery deficiencies (electricity, water, healthcare, sanitation, etc.) that often resort to violence precisely because they have few resources to mobilize.

We might say that post-apartheid South Africa, having been born with expectations of inclusion, is increasingly the terrain of movements based on the excluded. The Marikana massacre of 2012 represents a turning point from one to the other – a strike by miners for a living wage is treated by the state as an insurgent revolt of the outsider. Earlier the appearance of xenophobic violence against immigrants in 2008 was another expression of a politics of precarity. The challenge to the ruling alliance – the formation of the United Front and the populist appeal of the party of the Economic Freedom Fighters – similarly reflects a turn toward a politics of exclusion. The move from inclusion to exclusion is a political shift in the relations between state and society as Marcel Paret describes in this volume (Chapter 3) and elsewhere.²

The transition so vividly being played out in South Africa reflects a much broader shift in the world beyond – from struggles of the included to struggles of the excluded, from Marx to Fanon; or to use Guy Standing's formulation, from the proletariat to a precariat; or in Partha Chatterjee's conceptualization, from the struggles in civil society to those of political society.³ There is a certain ambiguity in Chatterjee's account as to whether the struggles of political society are distinctive of the global South, but others, such as Jean and John Comaroff are more forthright. They argue that the legacies of colonialism have made the South more vulnerable to the assault of 'neoliberalism', so that new modes of mobilization in the South are running ahead of the North, or as Jan Breman writes, the West is following the rest.⁴ They are reversing the modernization teleology in which all things progressive were supposed to emanate from the North – now it is the South that is taking the lead as the 'hyperbolic prefiguration of its [north's] future-in-the-making.'⁵ The South and North are such heterogeneous categories that it is difficult

to make claims that one is following the other. Nevertheless, it can indeed be said that many countries of the North are heading in a southerly direction as they face the erosions of civil rights and workplace protections – protections that never existed in the South and where many novel experiments in market containment are now being developed, especially in semi-peripheral countries such as South Africa, Brazil, and India.

Rather than replace one teleology with another, I argue that we have to think of capitalism driving marketization across the globe, with very varying effects in different countries and regions, depending on the nexus of political, economic, and social structures. Nevertheless, the global wave of movements that began in 2011 and fizzled out two years later does reflect a broad but uneven shift towards exclusionary politics. I describe such exclusionary politics by reference to the rise of marketization – often summarily and inadequately labeled as neoliberalism – that lies behind a distinctive set of social movement repertoires found in both the North and the South. These movement repertoires call for a new theory of social protest that connects them to marketization.

As many others have done, I turn to Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* to theorize social movements from the standpoint of marketization, more specifically as a response to the lived experience of commodification but also a response to the obverse process of ex-commodification, the expulsion from the market.⁶ In this way I situate social movements in relation to the development of capitalism, expressing itself in what I call third-wave marketization. Finally, I turn to the place of sociology within this context – a field of study that is also under threat of commodification and, even worse, expulsion from commodification, that is, ex-commodification, whose survival will depend upon organizing itself as a social movement. Here, too, South Africa has been leading the way.

From marketization to exclusionary politics

If one is looking for innovative social movements from the South, then Latin America should be our first port of call. For many years much of the subcontinent was ruled by military dictatorship. The transition to democracy was a major and indisputable advance, but it has not fulfilled its promises, not least because the fall of political dictatorship was followed by another dictatorship, the dictatorship of the market through structural adjustment. In its wake came wave upon wave of injustice and inequality that have inspired Latin Americans, sociologists among them, to battle for a deeper democracy. We see this, for example, in the schemes of participatory budgeting in Brazil and elsewhere, in the piquetero movement and factory occupations in Argentina, in the ethnic democracy of Bolivia, and in the student movement of Chile. There has been a relentless struggle to counter market fundamentalism with new forms of participatory democracy, many of these movements have been inspired by those who have been dispossessed by – often state-sponsored – marketization.⁷

This Latin American history of the past 30 years has been replayed in concentrated form but in different registers across the world. The silent encroachment

of markets instigated the Arab Uprisings.⁸ It began with the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia on December 17, 2010, that sparked uprisings across the region in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Libya, Syria, and Bahrain. Calling for 'bread, freedom and social justice' these uprisings may have been revolutionary in their demands but they have not delivered the outcomes they sought. All eyes were fixed on Egypt, where national rebellion gave rise to a frail democracy that was then hijacked by the military. Difficult though it has been to dislodge dictatorships, the real problems only began after their dissolution.

In part inspired by these movements, protest by the indignados of Southern Europe have stood up to the regimes of austerity, imposed by ruling parties aided and abetted by regional and international financial agencies. In 2011 and 2012 we witnessed a wave of remarkable protests allied to trade unions in Portugal and to more anarchist politics in Spain as well as to the growing strength of Podemos, to Grillo's populism in Italy and to a massive General Strike in Greece, leading to the rise of Syriza but also the neo-fascist Golden Dawn – all different responses to economic insecurity, unemployment, debt, and dispossession. Thus, we see in Southern Europe the shift from movements secure in their inclusion to movements precarious in their exclusion.

The Occupy Movement followed a similar pattern. Lodged in public spaces it targeted the 1% that runs the world economy as the dispossessing other. The movement began in Zuccotti Park, targeting Wall Street, the home of finance capital, and spread across the United States, travelled to Europe, Latin America, and Asia. Once again, the driving force is not a mobilization from within major institutions but from outside against those institutions. Moving farther afield, in India, for example, peasants fought against their dispossession by the introduction of Special Economic Zones, collusive arrangements between finance capital and the Indian state.⁹ Many of these projects now lie moribund. In China today the engine of growth is moving from the flood of cheap migrant labor into the towns to land appropriation and real estate speculation for the urbanization of rural areas.¹⁰ Again protests, perhaps less advertised, are spreading across rural China even if so far they have not been very effective in arresting the formation of a rentier class. Similar struggles are familiar in Latin America, where the expansion of international mining has not only displaced populations but also polluted water and air.

We must also pay attention to the student movement, most spectacularly emanating from Chile, that has been struggling against the marketization of education at all levels. Chile has vast disparities of wealth, and students are at the vanguard of protests in a society throttled by accumulating private debt. We saw similar struggles in England, where students faced soaring fees, but also spreading across Europe as financialization and regulation begin to corrode what were once strongholds of public education. Students, once the pride and joy of the nation's future, suddenly find themselves fighting for their survival, turning them from citizens to consumers, corrupting the meaning of public education.

Not all social movements can be so easily connected to forces of marketization. Social movements in Russia and its former tributaries in Central and Eastern Europe, having been liberated from the pathologies of administered economies,

retain a faith in markets. There, movements focus on political authoritarianism. Yet even here the effects of marketization might be seen as propelling many of the rightist movements. They point to a swing away from more emancipatory movements to right-wing populist movements not just in the former Soviet bloc but across Europe and indeed across the global South.

Can we say that the wave and counter-wave of social movements have anything in common that would justify talking about them as an expression of a particular historical epoch? Can we detect any convergent set of repertoires that allow us to talk of a common wave of protest? Or should they be considered in isolation, reflective only of local or national rather than the global context? I first identify a set of repertoires that many of the movements share and then try to link them to the rise of marketization, an uneven process that spans the globe.

Common political repertoires

These new social movements of exclusion may be marked by their economic origins – responses to different forms and dimensions of marketization – but they gain expression and consciousness in the political arena. Let us consider some of the features they share.

First, they share what differentiates them. They all have a national specificity, whether it be a struggle against dictatorship, against austerity, or against the privatization of education. They are framed by national political terrains, which exhibit regional patterns – Southern Europe, Middle East, Latin America, South-East Asia, and Africa. Yet, at the same time, these movements are also globally connected whether through social media or traveling ambassadors. Movements have become an inspiration for each other even if their frame of reference is usually national.

Second, they derive from a common inspiration, the idea that electoral democracy has been hijacked by capitalism, or more specifically, finance capital. Governments are beholden to finance capital, which effectively paralyzes electoral democracy – capitalist in content and democratic in form. In Zygmunt Bauman's terms there is a separation of power and politics, so that power is concentrated in the hands of the capital-state nexus, while electoral politics is reduced to an ineffectual ritual.¹¹

Third, the movements reject formal democracy to adopt direct democracy, sometimes called 'prefigurative politics' that involve horizontal connections as much as vertical struggles. The General Assemblies of participatory democracy have been the cellular foundation of many of these movements. The challenge, then, is to bring unity and broader vision to these autonomous, and often separatist, struggles. They have had varying success in connecting themselves to wider publics in more than ephemeral moments.

Fourth, while much has been made of virtual connections, these make concrete real space more rather than less necessary. To be effective, virtual communications requires its complement – the assembly points of public space, Zuccotti Park in New York, Catalunya Square in Barcelona, Tahrir Square in Cairo, Taksim

Square in Ankara, etc. These assembly points were crucial to establish dense and creative communities, and the planning of new and novel actions. Social media become an auxiliary, if essential, tool of communication.

Finally and fifth, the occupation of public spaces has made the social movements vulnerable to a severe repressive backlash from police, often, but not always, backed up by the military. This repression is consistent with the destruction of the public more generally and the valorization of the private, but it has prompted a continuing cat and mouse game between movements and police, involving targeted repression and preemptive neutralization as well as naked coercion.¹² These movements have enormous staying power. They are a form of 'liquid protest' that disappears here only to reappear elsewhere. We have to look at them as part of a connected global movement, connected by social media that provide the vehicle for continual reorganization and flexibility. Fear of coercion has been replaced by despair and anger.

I agree with Carin Runciman's discussion in this volume that South Africa represents such a shift toward a movement of the excluded. Ostensibly the strike of the Lonmin miners was a strike of the employed and the included but it quickly turned into a struggle of the excluded. It was a specifically national strike framed by national political context. The striking Lonmin miners rejected their union and increasingly the ANC, convinced that capital and the state collaborated in their violent defeat. They formed a cohesive movement that definitely inspired struggles in other sectors of the economy, although there is little evidence that the struggles in South Africa were connected to struggles beyond. For the Marikana workers, geographical assembly points were more crucial than social media. At the same time the focus on physical location reflects and deepens their isolation from the wider society. Finally, the Marikana killings represent the prototype of the deployment of naked coercion, but also the way such ham-fisted techniques can actually galvanize public support for a social movement.

The conjecture of this paper is that these social movements which are *represented and represent* themselves as the revolt of the excluded can, indeed, be *explained* in terms of a differentiated response to marketization that has become a defining feature of our era. We need, in other words, a new sociology of movements that attends not only to the political repertoires they deploy but also to the pressures of marketization to which they are a response. Second, such a sociology should advance a unifying vision *for* these movements, a vision they so badly need that knits them together in a common project. Finally, third, sociology is itself subject to pressures of commodification and ex-commodification. As social scientists we have to drop the pretense that we are outside society, and explicitly recognize that we are part of the world we study and have no alternative but to take a stand. If we do not, sociology will become irrelevant and dissolve. Just as it is disrupting society, so marketization is also undermining the conditions of our own existence through the spread of poorly paid contingent faculty, expansion of on-line education and vocational degrees, and the rise of consumerized education. We need to connect sociology to its potential allies beyond the university before it is too late – *sociology becomes a social movement*. We take up each of these tasks in turn.

Sociology of social movements

In the past 25 years, social movement and protest research has become one of the major subfields of sociology. The literature is large and diverse, but it is fair to say that the field's defining concepts – resources, organization, political opportunity, and framing, among others – seem to be less relevant for understanding movements of exclusion. It is worth noting that recent trends indicate that more of the field's practitioners recognize the theoretical limitations of these concepts. First, there was the dynamics of contention perspective that rejected the goal of a comprehensive theory as unachievable.¹³ Second, there is a recent trend that stresses relational elements of movement development, mitigating grand theoretical designs by playing close attention to context and the full repertoire of actors.¹⁴ Third, some have called to reintroduce political economy and Marxist concepts into the analysis,¹⁵ which have been conspicuous by their absence in the field.

Just as James McCarthy and Mayer Zald¹⁶ saw the turbulent 1960s as teeming with grievances, so now we see the world is teeming with social movements of the excluded that fall outside the field's theories of the past 25 years. The problem is not the existence of social movements but their temporality which can be understood only by exploring their origins and their context. We need to turn to the society from which they emanate; we need to (re)turn to theories of collective action that see them as rooted in the wider society. Thus, Alain Touraine and his collaborators insisted on rooting 'new social movements' of the 1960s and 1970s in post-industrial society, giving movements the possibility of fabricating their own worlds.¹⁷ These were movements that transcended the pursuit of material interests characteristic of the old social movements (specifically the labor movement).

The 'new' social movements of today, however, have to grapple not with post-industrialism but with the devastation of society wrought by market fundamentalism, which affects the whole planet and not just particular societies, although their expression is usually inflected through a national sieve. To understand the connection between today's social movements and unregulated marketization I propose to turn to Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*.

Written in 1944, explaining the continued existence of capitalism but without denying its problematic character, *The Great Transformation* can be considered a revision of *The Communist Manifesto* written a century earlier.¹⁸ Polanyi argues that the experience of commodification is more profound and immediate than the experience of exploitation, which as Marx himself argued was hidden from those who were supposed to rebel against it. In effect Polanyi takes Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, namely that market exchange obscures its ties to production, more seriously than Marx who thinks such illusions will dissolve in class struggle. For Polanyi, the source of resistance lies in the experience of the market rather than production. The expansion of the unregulated market threatens to destroy society which reacts in self-defense, what he calls the counter-movement against the market.

One of the virtues of Polanyi's theory, like Marx's, is that it links the micro-experience of people to the world systemic movements of capitalism through a series of mediating levels. The lynchpin of the connection lies in the idea of the fictitious commodity – a factor of production which when subject to unregulated exchange loses its use value. For Polanyi labor is but one such fictitious commodity; the others are land and money. Today these factors of production are subject to an unprecedented commodification that even Polanyi never anticipated.

When labor is subject to unregulated exchange, that is, when it is commodified, when it is hired and fired at will with no protection, when the wage falls below the cost of the reproduction of labor power and when the laborer cannot develop the tacit skills necessary for any production, so the use value of labor also falls:

For the alleged commodity 'labor power' cannot be shoved about, used indiscriminately, or even left unused, without affecting also the human individual who happens to be the bearer of this peculiar commodity. In disposing of a man's labor power the system would, incidentally, dispose of the physical, psychological, and moral entity 'man' attached to that tag. Robbed of the protective covering of cultural institutions, human beings would perish from the effects of social exposure; they would die as the victims of acute social dislocation through vice, perversion, crime, and starvation.¹⁹

The issue, therefore, is not exploitation but commodification. Indeed, as Guy Standing has eloquently demonstrated, the problem today is the disappearance of guaranteed exploitation, and in its place the rise of precarity, not just within the proletariat but climbing up the skill hierarchy.²⁰ Precarity is part of the lived experience behind so many contemporary movements – from the Arab Uprisings to the Indignados, from the Occupy Movement to Student movements – but also, just as clearly behind so many of the movements in South Africa.

Thus, today's movements of the excluded have to grapple with the dispossession from access to alternative means of subsistence, that is, the elimination of social supports – including minimum wage legislation, unemployment compensation, and pensions but also access to land. Just as the separation of labor from land provides for the commodification of labor, so it also provides for the commodification of land, which according to Polanyi also threatens the viability of the human species. 'Nature would be reduced to its elements, neighborhoods and landscapes defiled, rivers polluted, military safety jeopardized, the power to produce food and raw materials destroyed.'²¹

The economic argument could be easily expanded so as to include the conditions of safety and security attached to the integrity of the soil and its resources – such as the vigor and stamina of the population, the abundance of food supplies, the amount and character of defence materials, even the climate of the country which might suffer from the denudation of forests, from erosions and

dust bowls, all of which, ultimately, depend upon the factor land, yet none of which respond to the supply-and-demand mechanism of the market.²²

These prescient comments prefigure contemporary discussions about the plunder of nature, how the destructiveness of markets has led to a host of struggles, especially in the Global South, from landless movements in Latin America to popular insurgency against Special Economic Zones in India, protests against land speculation and expropriation in China. Throughout the world the mining of natural resources has generated militant opposition from communities whose livelihoods are threatened. It takes place within the urban context, too, against such processes as gentrification and the attempt to build global cities, both of which involve the expulsion of the marginal from their homes. We have to extend the commodification of land to the commodification of nature more broadly: the commodification of water that generated water wars in countries as far apart as South Africa and Bolivia, protest against market solutions to climate change, so-called carbon trading, and most recently against fossil fuel extraction through fracking.

Polanyi regarded money as a third fictitious commodity. For Polanyi money is what makes market exchange possible, but when it itself becomes the object of exchange, when the attempt is to make money from money then its use value as a medium of exchange is undermined. 'Finally, the market administration of purchasing power would periodically liquidate business enterprise, for shortages and surfeits of money would prove as disastrous to business as floods and droughts in primitive society.'²³ Polanyi was especially concerned that fixed exchange rates between currencies organized through the gold standard would create economic rigidities within national economies while going off the gold standard would create chaos and radical uncertainty. Today, we see how finance capital again becomes a prominent source of profit, making money from money, whether it be through micro-finance, whether it be loans to nation states, whether it be student loans or mortgages or credit cards. The extraordinary expansion of debt eventually and inevitably brings about bubbles and just as inevitably their popping. The creation of debt only further intensifies insecurity and immiseration, feeding protest across the globe. Indeed, loan sharks, even sponsored by the mining companies, were another major grievance of the Marikana miners.

There is a fourth fictitious commodity – knowledge – that Polanyi did not consider. The theorists of postindustrial society, preeminently Daniel Bell, recognized knowledge as an ever-more-important factor of production giving pride and place to the university as its center of production.²⁴ But Bell did not anticipate the way the production and dissemination of knowledge would be commodified, leading the university to sell its knowledge to the highest bidders, biasing research toward private rather than public interests, cultivating students as customers who pay ever-increasing fees for instrumentalized forms of knowledge. The university reorganizes itself as a corporation that maximizes profit not only through increasing revenues, but also cheapening and degrading its manpower by reducing tenured faculty, increasing the employment of low-paid adjunct faculty (which the university itself produces), and outsourcing services, all the while expanding its

managerial and administrative ranks. The protests emanating from universities, from Chile to Quebec – be they from students or faculty – center on its privatization and the distortion of the production and dissemination of knowledge brought on by commodification.

Contemporary social movements, therefore, can be understood in terms of the creation of the fictitious commodity through different forms of *dispossession*, through the reduction of the fictitious commodity to an *object of exchange* that annihilates its commonly understood purpose, and through the new forms of *inequality* commodification produces. Any given movement may organize itself in the political realm, but its driving force lies in the experience of the *articulation of these different commodifications*. But marketization entails not just commodification but ex-commodification, the expulsion of potential commodities from the market. Whether this be labor, money, nature, or knowledge the other side of commodification is waste, which itself stirs up so many protests. When labor can no longer sell its labor power, when money is no longer of use value, when nature is destroyed, this also propels collective reaction. There is no one-to-one relation between social movement and a given fictitious commodity, but each movement is the product of the relation among fictitious commodifications and real ex-commodifications, both being the result of the wider and deeper expansion of the market. This is a general theory that insists on the particularity of social movements, which makes any sort of unity across movements difficult to achieve.

The wave of protests that have arisen to challenge this round of marketization does not, at least as yet, add up to a Polanyian counter-movement that would contain or reverse marketization. For that, there needs to be a far greater self-consciousness and vision among the participants of the connections among their movements and their roots in marketization. Such a consciousness requires not just a sociology of social movements but a sociology for social movements.

A sociology for social movements

Touraine's theory of social movements was also a theory for social movements.²⁵ At the center of his recast sociological theory were social movements, making history themselves, what he called 'historicity'. The sociologist was no longer outside society, studying its inherent laws of change, but inside society heightening the self-consciousness of movements in the fashioning of history. This reflected a period – post-industrialism – in which there was confidence in human agency to direct history whether via the state or civil society. There was an underlying optimism that capitalism could somehow be tamed and directed to human ends. That has all disappeared. We are now living in an era in which markets run amok, devastating all that stands in their way. A sociology for social movements must begin by understanding this period of unconstrained marketization.

We need, therefore, to situate Polanyi's fictitious commodities within a wider framework of the history of capitalism. The essence of *The Great Transformation* lies in an argument about the dangers of the expansion of the market, namely that it leads to a reaction from society that can be of a progressive character (social

democracy, New Deal) but also of a reactionary character – fascism and Stalinism.²⁶ Thus, Polanyi’s history has one long expansion of the market, starting at the end of the eighteenth century, destroying society along the way but also leading to a defense of society, secured through a counter-movement directed by states that regulate the market, specifically arising in response to the economic crisis of the 1930s – states that include regimes of social democracy and New Deal as well as fascism and Stalinism. Polanyi could not imagine humanity would dare to risk another round of market fundamentalism. Yet, that is just what happened, starting in the middle 1970s, developing on a global scale, leaving few spaces of the planet unaffected. The rising concern with globalization expresses the global reach of markets.

But this is not capitalism’s first wave of marketization as is often implied by the use of the term ‘neoliberalism’. Indeed, examining Polanyi’s own history suggests it is not even the second but the third wave. Where he saw a singular wave spreading over a century and a half, we can now discern two – one that advanced through the first half of the nineteenth century and was turned back by the labor movement in the second half, and a second wave that advanced after World War I and was reversed by state regulation in the 1930s extending into the 1970s, which in turn was succeeded by a third wave of marketization that has yet to be contained. These waves of marketization become deeper over time as their scale increases, but they also involve different combinations of the fictitious commodities. The counter-movement to first-wave marketization in the nineteenth

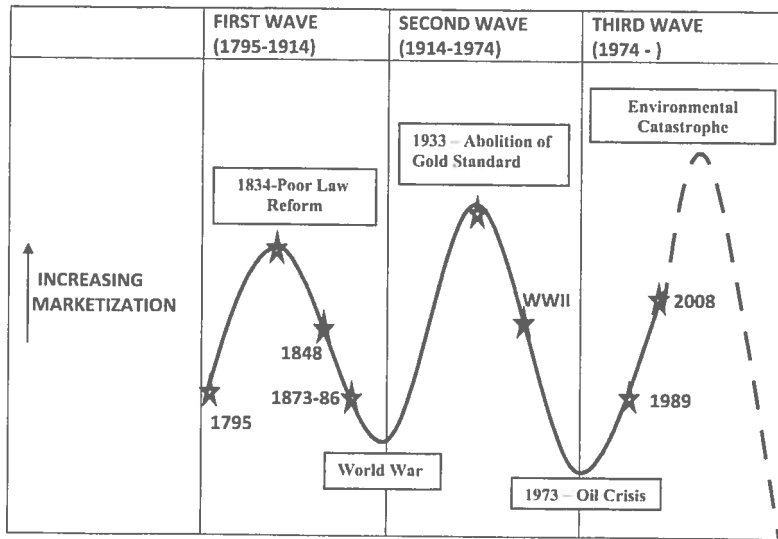


Figure 2.1 Three waves of marketization and their counter-movements

century was dominated by the struggle to decommodify labor. In England (about which Polanyi writes) this assumed the form of the factory movement, cooperatives, Owenism, trade union formation, and the Labour Party. The local struggles spread, melded together, and compelled changes in state policy.

The success of labor struggles in the nineteenth century led to a crisis of capitalism, resolved through imperialist strategies and World War I, followed by an offensive from capital, leading to the *recommodification* of labor. The assault of the market spread to the loosening of constraints on international trade through currencies pegged to the gold standard that, in turn, led to uncontrollable inflation and the renewal of class struggles. The upshot was a variety of regimes that sought to regulate markets through the extension of social rights as well as labor rights.

These regimes – whether social democratic, fascist, or Soviet – lasted until the middle 1970s at which time they faced a renewed and mounting assault from capital not only against the protections labor had won for itself but also against state regulation of finance, marked by the end of Bretton Woods. Indeed, we can see how the offensive against labor across the planet, but especially in the North, led to a crisis of overproduction that did not lead to a renewed Keynesian politics but to the financialization of the economy via the creation of new moneys that could be extended to individuals in the form of credit (credit cards, student loans, and, above all, sub-prime mortgages), but also to enterprises and countries generating unprecedented levels of debt. The bubble burst when the debtors – whether individuals, enterprises, or countries – could no longer deliver on their interest payments. There were few limits to what finance capital could commodify – from minerals to water, from land to air – creating the environmental catastrophe that the planet now faces. The solution to create new markets in the rights to pollute and destroy the atmosphere – the so-called carbon markets – has not proven to be a solution but a way of making money from the deepening ecological crisis.²⁷

Third-wave marketization has gone far deeper than second-wave marketization in the commodification of labor, nature, and money. Moreover, to turn something into a commodity requires first that it be disembedded from its social and political moorings. Labor has to be dispossessed from its supports in the state, peasants have to be dispossessed from access to their land, people have to be dispossessed of access to their own body (so that their organs can be sold). This dispossession requires, in short, the escalation of violence perpetrated by states on behalf of capital, and direct deployment of violence by capital. Violence is at the heart of third-wave marketization in a way that Polanyi never anticipated.

Moreover, Polanyi did not and could not have anticipated a fourth fictitious commodity – knowledge. Today what used to be a public good – knowledge produced, for example, in the university was available to all – is fast becoming a private good. The production and dissemination of knowledge in the university has been commodified as a result of the forcible withdrawal of public funding. With important exceptions in such countries as China, India, and Brazil – and even here the situation is changing – the university has had to become self-financing by selling the knowledge it produces to industry (the growth of the collaboration of bio-medical sciences and pharmaceuticals), by seeking funds from donors and

alumni, and above all by an exponential increase in student fees. The major universities around the world are sacrificing their accountability to local and national interests as they are subject to world ranking systems that force them to follow the standards of the richest universities in the United States. This program of rationalization brands the university as worthy or not of investment, working hand in glove with the commodification of the production and dissemination of knowledge which, in turn, is the source of new strategies for the commodification of labor, nature, and finance.

This Polanyian analysis faces a number of challenges. First, it is a perspective from the North. Polanyi has little to say about the world beyond Europe and the United States, except for the interesting description of colonialism in South Africa which he presents as an extreme destruction of society through commodification. What he misses, of course, is the importance of indirect rule, the development of labor reserves and what was effectively a cheap labor policy that set *limits* on the commodification of labor, if not its exploitation. Omitted is the crucial role South Africa and other parts of the colonial and dependent world played in the global economy, in sustaining Northern capitalisms. A revision of our Polanyian theory would require looking at the South African economic history from the standpoint of the three waves of marketization. Broadly speaking one can indeed say that the first wave of marketization focused on the development of South African mining; the second wave saw the superimposition and rising of dominance of manufacturing and new forms of commodification of land and labor – commodification that would experience a reversal in the form of apartheid. In the 1980s the third wave of marketization arrived with the apartheid state opening up the African labor market and challenging the protections of white labor. But it was the post-apartheid state, jettisoning the ANC's more socialist leanings, that became an agent of third-wave marketization. Indeed, democratization became a vehicle of loosening up and expanding markets in labor, land, water, and housing – although these processes should not be exaggerated as the South African state has made considerable efforts to provide welfare through social grants and housing schemes. In the area of higher education – a continuing strength of South Africa – there are pressures toward privatization, raising fees, outsourcing, and so on. Third-wave marketization is, indeed, sweeping the world but we have to also think of the *interdependence* of its different expressions in different countries and how in turn these different expressions give rise to reactive social movements.

The second problem of the Polanyian scheme is its inability to explain marketization itself. For him the rise of industrial civilization is coterminous with marketization and for Polanyi the future faces two alternatives: fascism or socialism. His account of the genesis of marketization in Britain stresses the role of ideas – the ideas of political economists, appalled by the Speenhamland system that created local subsidies for labor and thereby set up barriers to the development of a national labor market. However, once one recognizes the recurrent waves of marketization, then one has to begin to link them to the dynamics of capitalism – how marketization is a response to crises of accumulation, both crises of profitability and crises of overproduction.²⁸ The profitability crisis of the 1970s led to the expansion of the market through the commodification of labor, money, nature, and knowledge,

a combination that varies over time and space. If the upswing of marketization is driven by the endogenous logic of capital, then there is no such endogenous logic to the countermovement, which is governed by subjective factors. Marketization certainly generates multiple reactive movements, but when and how they will add up to a counter-movement depends on the balance of social forces. For that we need to develop a sociology that establishes their inter-connection – a sociology built on the relation between crises of capitalist accumulation and market expansion. What I have offered here are the building blocks of such a theory – the specificity of third-wave marketization as the underlying cause of social movements, and third-wave marketization understood as the articulation of four fictitious commodities – labor, nature, finance, and knowledge. The possibility of a counter-movement has to take into account the forces that are propelling marketization.

Sociology as social movement

In underlining the fourth fictitious commodity – knowledge – I am pointing to the transformation of the conditions of production of knowledge. What relative autonomy the university possesses is rapidly evaporating in the face of its privatization. The pressures are visible here in South Africa where the university system has managed to maintain its integrity, but in much of the continent universities are becoming fee-paying vocational schools. To the extent that research continues it moves into policy units and think tanks. The academy is no longer outside society, an objective platform from which to study society as an external object of examination. The market has invaded this once-sacred terrain. Those disciplines that are best able to exploit market opportunities are the ones to benefit – the biomedical sciences, engineering, law, and business schools – and they become the more powerful influences within the university at the potential cost of the social sciences and humanities whose existence is under threat.

The social sciences, however, do not form a homogeneous block. Ironically, economics has created the ideological justification of market fundamentalism – the very force that is destroying the university as an arena for the independent pursuit of knowledge. Political science, concerned with political order, now aspires to be an extension of economics, reflecting the increasingly collusive relation between markets (and especially finance capital) and nation states. Of course, there are dissidents within both fields, and they play an important role, but the dominant tendency is the endorsement of market fundamentalism through the embrace of utilitarianism. Sociology, too, has endured efforts to turn it into a branch of economics, but the anti-utilitarian tradition within sociology from Marx, Weber, and Durkheim all the way to Parsons, Bourdieu, feminism, and postcolonial theory are so well entrenched that economic models have made few inroads.

Nor is this surprising since sociology was born with civil society – an arena of institutions, organizations, and movements that are neither part of the state nor part of the economy. But we should be careful not to romanticize civil society as some coherent, solidary whole as though it were free of exclusions, dominations, and fragmentations. It is Janus faced – it can aid the expansion of the market and state, but it can also obstruct or, at least, contain their expansion. This is

where sociology is situated – its distinctive standpoint is civil society with all its divisions – examining the economy and state from the perspective of their consequences for civil society as well as the ways in which civil society supports the economy and the state. Like civil society, sociology looks two ways. On the one side it examines the social conditions of the existence of markets and states. On the other side, along with such neighboring disciplines as anthropology and geography, it studies and condemns the unregulated expansion of the state-market nexus with its destruction of civil society.

In the context of the rationalization and commercialization of the university, sociology is the one discipline whose standpoint, viz. civil society, behooves it to cultivate a community of critical discourse about the very nature of the modern university, but also conduct a conversation with publics beyond the university, making it accountable to those publics without losing its commitment to its scientific research programs. South African sociology has always stood at the forefront of such critical engagement, developing ties to civil society, pursuing questions generated by those ties, yet at the same time sustaining an autonomy and independence, essential to the development of research programs. The distinctiveness of South Africa's contribution to sociological analysis can be found not so much in the jettisoning of Northern sociology but in transforming it, hybridizing it, provincializing it, and reversing it, and above all making it accountable to local publics without losing its global referents. I'm thinking here of such institutions as SWOP (now called the Society, Work and Development Institute) at the University of the Witwatersrand that celebrated its thirtieth anniversary in 2015, or the Centre for Sociological Research at the University of Johannesburg, and most significantly the newly created National Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences whose architects and leaders have been sociologists.

As the membrane separating the university from society becomes ever thinner, failure to counter-balance the privatization of the university will end with the destruction of the university as we know it. It is in this sense that we must think of sociology as a social movement as well as scientific discipline, calling for a critical engagement with the world around. To sustain this dual and contradictory role, the discipline must develop its own mechanisms for internal dialogue, mechanisms that appear at the local level within the university, and at a national level but most importantly at a global level. Building such a global sociology requires the development of a global infrastructure that fosters dialogue and outreach, that produces a third-wave sociology to meet the theoretical and practical challenges of third-wave marketization, and to halt the Third World War that is being waged on communities across the planet.

Notes

- 1 I'd like to thank Marcel Paret both for his unflagging criticisms of this paper and for teaching me much about the politics of precarity. Thanks also to an anonymous reviewer who went through the text with meticulous care, correcting misstatements and adding others that I have adopted.
- 2 Marcel Paret, 'Precarious Class Formations in the United States and South Africa,' *International Labour and Working Class History* 89 (2016): 84–106.

- 3 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963 [1961]); Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011); Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).
- 4 Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Theory from the South* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2012); Jan Breman, 'A Bogus Concept?' *New Left Review* 84 (2013): 130–8.
- 5 Comaroff and Comaroff, *Theory from the South*, 19.
- 6 Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001 [1944]).
- 7 Here I have been influenced by the research of Gabe Hetland's and his PhD dissertation *Making Democracy Real: Participatory Governance in Urban Latin America* (University of California, Berkeley, 2015).
- 8 See Adam Hanich, *Lineages of Revolt* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015).
- 9 Here I have been influenced by the research and dissertation of Michael Levien, *Regimes of Dispossession: Special Economic Zones and the Political Economy of Land in India* (Berkeley: University of California, 2013).
- 10 Here I have been influenced by the research and dissertation of Julia Chuang, *The Changing Foundations of Chinese Development: From Low-Cost Labor to Land Dispossession* (Berkeley: University of California, 2014).
- 11 Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).
- 12 See Laleh Behbhanian, *Preemption of Resistance: Occupy Oakland and the Evolution of State Power* (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2016).
- 13 Doug McAdam, *Sidney Tarrow and Charles Tilly, Dynamics of Contention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Doug McAdam, and Sidney Tarrow, 'Introduction: *Dynamics of Contention* Ten Years On,' *Mobilization* 16 (2011): 1–10.
- 14 Charles Tilly, *Contentious Performances* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 2008).
- 15 Laurence Cox and Alf Nilsen, *We Make Our Own History: Marxism and Social Movements in the Twilight of Neoliberalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2014).
- 16 Jon McCarthy and Mayer Zald, 'Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory,' *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (1972).
- 17 Alain Touraine, *Return of the Actor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).
- 18 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*; Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London: Verso, 1998).
- 19 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 76.
- 20 Standing, *The Precariat*.
- 21 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, 76.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 193.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 76.
- 24 Daniel Bell, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1976).
- 25 Touraine, *Return of the Actor*.
- 26 Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*.
- 27 Here I have learned much from Herbert Docena's PhD dissertation, *Passive Revolution on the World Stage: The Political Origins of Climate Change* (University of California, Berkeley, 2016).
- 28 Here I have been influenced by theory of long waves or Kondratieff waves. See, for example, Ernest Mandel, *Long Waves of Capitalist Development* (London: Verso, 1995). This theory of waves also broadly fit with the waves of inequality discovered by Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).