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Political geography – political geographies of globalization III: resistance

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I Introduction

From the broad themes of neocolonial dominance and neoliberal governance that formed the foci of my two previous reports (Sparke, 2004; 2006), this review of recent work on the political geographies of globalization turns to the still wider and more contested terrain of resistance. Whereas the 'neo' in both neocolonial and neoliberal invited reflections on questions of historical change and continuity, there is no obvious neologism qualifying the various forms of resistance that have emerged in relation to contemporary globalization. This is a telling irony. Critical claims about the forms of dominance and governance associated with global integration are frequently met with complaining calls to complicate the critiques with attention to 'resistance'. Yet in the rush to refer to the r-word the category itself is too often left uncomplicated. Questions about the significance of resistant agency, its geo-historical reach, limits, conditions, organization and impact are all often unanswered at the very same time as the rhetoric of resistance obscures the objects against which resistant agents are said to resist. While the basic idea of resistance rests on notions of people 'pushing back', the allure of the r-word itself can in this way ironically become a regulative 'pull' that disciplines critics: a pull, in other words, away from examining the messy middle grounds where control and opposition, structure and agency, hegemony and counter-hegemonic action, are all variously mediated. This problem of pull can be usefully ascribed to the *romance* of resistance. It is a romance that is initiated by assumptions about autonomous action and animated by diverse forms of idealism; a romance that ultimately imagines agency in the existential and ageographical terms of some seminal and heroically universalized human spirit, and thus a romance that also tends to pre-empt empirical research with metaphorical moves that make descriptions of socio-economic forces, racial and sexual subjectification, or even just everyday life seem somehow beside the point (for a related queer critique of the romance of community, see Joseph, 2002). As I explore further below, it is for the same reasons also a romance that allows authors to avoid acknowledging what David Scott

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(2004) so soberingly shows to be the alternative *tragic* elements in less comforting re-examinations of resistance.

Mapping many trails around the pitfalls of romance, recent research by geographers has been invaluable in improving our understanding of resistance, especially as it relates to global restructuring. Cindi Katz's careful distinctions between resistance, reworking and resilience are exemplary in this respect, showing us how contextualized accounts of agency in different sites can attend to its variations, including its limits, its structuring context and its uneven impact, rather than simply its autonomous existence (Katz, 2004; also Moore, 1997). She contrasts *resistance* that involves oppositional consciousness and achieves emancipatory change, with forms of *reworking* that alter the organization but not the polarization of power relations, with forms of *resilience* that enable people to survive without really changing the circumstances that make such survival so hard. Katz also poetically points to the further variants of *revolution* and *revanchism* at opposite ends beyond her three gradations, and following her example it is possible thus to see a whole range of resistant agency stretching from *revolutions*, *rebellions* and *retorts* at one end, through diverse forms of *resilience, rearticulation* and *reworking*, all the way on to the rebarbative formations of *retaliation, repression* and, as a reworked name for the rescaling of geopolitical *revenge* and *reprisal*, *revanchism* too.

The rhetorical ploy of using just 're' words to capture all the variations works to subvert the repetitive romance of resistance, pushing back against its rhetorical pull with repetitive difference. Repeating this move, the pages that follow also perform two additional tactics. First, they include occasional *resistance reports* that push back representationally against the ways some sorts of informal or non-refereed work on (and of) resistance are conventionally pulled out of formal academic progress reports. Second, and more systematically, the article reviews how the sorts of variations highlighted by Katz are still being mapped in a wide range of disciplinary work by geographers who put self-reflexive and open political engagement into the political of political geography. This means that, in common with other recent efforts to document progress in geography, the resulting survey also points along the way to how political geography is implicated in struggles over everything from cartography and ecology to ethics and identity (Mitchell, 2006a; Popke, 2006; Sharp, 2007; Walker, 2007; Kitchin and Dodge, 2007).

Writing on the geography of resistance is especially indicative of the widened field of political geography. Indeed, breaking the frame of what counts as 'political' might even be argued to be one of the major theoretical lessons of studying resistance without romance, a point not coincidentally advanced by Michel Foucault in *The history of sexuality* (1980). It is worth remembering thus how, after suggesting it was time for scholars to 'cut off the head of the king' in analysing power, Foucault proceeded to use a series of spatial metaphors to argue against imagining a single site of resistance opposite and bounded away from a single site of sovereignty: 'Where there is power, there is resistance,' he said, 'and yet or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power … Points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of Great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary' (Foucault, 1980: 95–96). Of course, there has been considerable philosophical debate about whether Foucault's own rather romantic refusal to replay disciplinary power left him unable to critique forms of violence (such as abusive paedophilia) perpetrated in the name of resistance (Hoy, 2004; on the passionate remaking of romance by Foucault, Miller, 1993). But for geographers who have sought to trace the lived geographies that Foucault mapped with metaphor, his arguments against the binary law of the romantic revolutionary (ie, the oppositional rubric bounding the powerless off from

sovereign power) have been profoundly enabling. Most notably (albeit unlikely to be noted because of its own refusal to subject itself to the demands of academic human capital metrics that privilege short articles, short editorials and long CVs) Chris Philo's insanely big book on 'the space reserved for insanity' shows how a conceptualization of power as productive, networked and capillary is in turn productive of a thoroughly non-romantic account of subjectification spaces (Philo, 2004). Tellingly there is no entry on 'resistance' in the index of his tome and Philo scrupulously avoids depicting the targets of the mad business as souls of revolt, but his concluding hopes point carefully beyond despair to imagine how the dispossession of 'the mad' through both liberal institutionalization and neoliberal deinstitutionalization might be avoided by providing a profusion of care spaces that allow people suffering with mental disease to repossess space and 'take their "place" in everyday life as human beings at ease with themselves, their loved ones and their immediate surroundings' (Philo, 2004: 660). Moving from dispossession to repossession (without either denying hierarchies that subjugate nor asserting the homogeneity of rational choice possessive individualism) seems in turn to represent a useful model for reflecting without romance on political geographies of resistance more globally. Thus, beginning here with representations that examine resistance as a response to dispossession, and then turning to others addressing the dilemmas of academic engagement with struggles for repossession, the following two main sections return repeatedly to the ways in which recommendable work on resistance registers both the hierarchy and heterogeneity of power relations at the very same time.

II Resistance geographies of dispossession

> RESISTANCE REPORT 1: PROGRESS IN THE WAR ON ERROR Taking on the errorists in the G8, World Bank and IMF with a new global war on error, General Unrest, Major Panic and the whole Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army are making carnival a tactic of anti-capitalist resistance that replaces the romance of heroic revolution with an open invitation to joyful rebellion against the society of the spectacle (http://www.clownarmy.org/ and Routledge, 2004). Joined by the Space Hijackers (http://spacehijackers.org/), GATTivisits (http://www.gatt.org/), Billionaires for Bush (http://billionairesforbush.com/index.php), and a host of other Yes Men (http://www.theyesmen.org/), new world disorderers (http://www.neworldisorder.tk/) and Adbusters (http://www.adbusters.org/home/), all these activist efforts turn satire – one of the few forms of public discourse that still enables mass media political critique (eg, Colbert, 2006) – into cultural jamming movements of the imagination (http://www.noeldouglas.net/moti/), micromedia movements that aim at cleaning up the macromedia mess of corporatization by turning its tools to resituated (and Situationist styled) uses (http://www.thevacuumcleaner.co.uk/ and http://www.nologo.org/). For commentaries on both the possibilities and the limits of such derivative détournement see CCCE (2007), Duncombe (2006), Harold (2007) and, for an especially impressive geographical re-take, Huse (2007).

In his convincing accounts of the new imperialism (Harvey, 2003) and neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005), David Harvey argues that both involve and, indeed, interconnect in expanding 'accumulation by dispossession'. It is a useful phrase that, as Jim Glassman (2006) has described in further detail, has a long intellectual heritage in Marxist thought: stretching from Marx himself on primitive accumulation (also Perelman, 2000), to Rosa Luxemburg, to the dependency school theorists, to recent studies by geographers on topics ranging from the sexual politics of expanded social reproduction (Mitchell *et al*., 2004) to the expansive ecological politics of free-trade agreements (McCarthy, 2004). As Glassman indicates with his final reflections on how accumulation by dispossession thereby relates to the complex diversity of

new social movements, it is also a hinge category that, by opening the door to concurrent extra-economic accounts of dispossession, invites the critical supplementation of Marxian theory (also Sidaway, 2007). In other words, alongside economic exploitation and all the other dispossessing dynamics unleashed by a social system predicated on the profit motive, accumulation by dispossession invites critics to examine the role played by racial, sexual and other social power dynamics in co-determining capitalist dispossession through extra-economic oppression (Sparke *et al.*, 2005). Of course, one implication of 'accumulation by dispossession' as a term is that it is still an accumulative and, as such, economic imperative that remains the primary frame for theorizing dispossession. However, if we reject such economic apriorism, and if we are adequately attuned to the accumulation of accounts of ongoing extra-economic dispossession by those struggling globally for social justice, an altogether more salutary possibility emerges. In short, we can thereby use the formula to point to ties between very different global forms of injury and injustice without on the one side falling prey to economic reductionism or on the other of pretending that the capitalist connections can be ignored. This is an argument that Gillian Hart has fleshed out with especial ethnographic élan in her elaboration of 'relational comparisons' (Hart, 2006). She argues that: 'Accumulation through dispossession may be a useful first step in highlighting the depradations wrought by neoliberal forms of capital, but it needs to be infused with concrete understandings of specific histories, memories, meanings of dispossession. To be grasped as an ongoing process, dispossession also needs to be rendered historically and geographically specific, as well as interconnected – and these specificities and connections can do political as well as analytical work' (Hart, 2006: 988).

RESISTANCE REPORT 2: PROGRESS IN ARTICULATING CIVIL SOCIETY IN AND ACROSS THE GLOBAL SOUTH

The Durban-based Center for Civil Society is exemplary in showing how global justice movements can both learn from and link the dispossessed across the Global South: see http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/ Networked through the global periphery, such sites open and connect spaces for resistance globally. See
http://www.openspaceforum.net/
http://www.weareeverywhere.org/
http://www.aidc.org.za/
http://www.sane.org.za/
http://indiaresource.org/
http://www.mstbrazil.org/
http://upsidedownworld.org/main/
http://www.twnside.org.sg/
http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/
http://www.focusweb.org/
http://www.indymedia.org/
http://viacampesina.org/main_en/index.php

Hart's own more recent reflections on the rise of Jacob Zuma as a populist critic of ANC neoliberalism in South Africa are an inspiring illustration of how to examine the ways in which racial, sexual and class-based dispossession are unevenly articulated in political discontent in specific places (Hart, 2007). Contemporary work on other African examples has further emphasized the need to attend to how resistance relates to ecological dispossession too (Moore, 2005; Ferguson, 2006; Chari, 2007), and Donald Moore has shown in this regard how useful the concept of 'articulated assemblage' is for coming to terms with the resulting complex of forces shaping both the possibilities and limits of resistant agency in particular conjunctures. 'Articulated assemblages,' he says, allow him to explore the entanglements 'of livelihoods, landscape, and environmental resources as well as ancestral spirits, rainmaking territory, and political rule' (Moore, 2005: 25). However, Moore cautions, with a gentle critique of the often apolitical invocation of assemblage-speak, 'unlike assemblage, articulation foregrounds how power relations and historical sediments formatively shape contingent constellations that become materially and discursively consequential'. This political as well as theoretical point is given

further force by Hart (2007) herself who also explores with great clarity the often ignored insights of Stuart Hall's new left arguments about articulation as a way of theorizing the power geometries of counter-hegemony with attention to place specific histories of hegemony (Hall, 1996, 2003; also Scott's, 2005 review of Hall's conjuncture-responsive ethics).

Elsewhere, including even in the journal *New Left Review* itself, more romantic representations of heroic resistance too frequently hold sway instead. Recently, for example, the always erudite and informative Tariq Ali waxed lyrical about resistance in the journal's pages with comments about how the so-called 'Caracas effect' was spreading. 'Cuba's long isolation has been broken,' Ali argued, 'the Bolivian oligarchy defeated in La Paz and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has assumed a central role in mobilizing popular anti-neoliberal movements in virtually every Latin American country … In Iran and Palestine, elections have humiliated those on whom it had counted as pliable instruments or interlocutors, propelling more radical forces into power. In Iraq, the resistance has inflicted a steady train of blows on the US occupation, preventing any stabilization of the collaborator regime and sapping support for the war in America itself' (Ali, 2006: 6; for less romantic readings of the complex roots of forces such as Hezbollah see http://www.merip.org/, last accessed 12 November 2007). Ali is certainly no naive liberal humanist, but what still seems romantic about this representation (and what might be called the seminal style of *New Left Review* writing more generally) is its invocation of a planetary zeitgeist of resistance: a neo-Hegelian spectre of the Caracas effect haunting not just Latin America, but spreading across the rest of the world as some singular swash-buckling spirit of opposition to neoliberal empire (Ali, 2007). Much like the equally romantic concept of the Multitude (Hardt and Negri, 2004) – itself also haunted by the writerly romance of resonating with the spectre-haunting Europe in the *Communist Manifesto* – the spiritual singularity of the Caracas effect and Ali's egregiously singularizing invocation of 'the resistance' in Iraq fail to do justice to the obvious and, in Iraq at least, violently divided, heterogeneity of the forces in conflict. Nor do categorical assertions of the internal complexity and diversity of 'the Multitude' or 'the resistance' adequately address these concerns. It is one thing to observe how the precariousness of life provides some sort of postfoundational foundation for planetary solidarity (Butler, 2004; also McRobbie, 2006). It is quite another to fail to distinguish between different forces that contribute to precariousness in different ways in different places at different times. And sanguine invocations of 'the resistance' only seem to make such failure more likely by rushing so quickly to vindicate the humanity of those involved that they risk ignoring how one community's resistance can become another's violent demise. As a careful corrective to just such risks, David Scott's study of *The Black Jacobins* is extraordinary, highlighting as it does the lessons that we can continue to learn from one of most powerful accounts of some of the most revolutionary pirates the Caribbean has ever seen (James, 1963).

In 1938 when C.L.R. James first published his masterpiece on the Haitian revolution he depicted Toussaint L'Ouverture's leadership and the world-changing victory of the former slaves over their French masters as an inspiring eighteenth-century anticipation of the postcolonial possibilities awaiting the independence movements of his own time. In this sense, Scott argues, the successful revolutionary resistance portrayed in *The Black Jacobins* was presented as a romantic vindication of black agency *vis-à-vis* the brutal inhumanity of imperial white supremacy. Given other important books describing the ways in which the modernity of the slaves' agency has traditionally been excised from histories of the age of revolution (especially, Fischer, 2004; Trouillot, 1995),

it is vital to stress that Scott's point about romantic vindicationism rests on a formal literary account of romanticism and is by no means meant as a trivializing diminution of the achievements of the most revolutionary slave resistance in history. Instead, it is about the aspirations and emplotments involved in representations of such resistance, and most particularly about the specific narrative of postcolonial possibility James wrote into the 1938 edition of *The Black Jacobins*. Scott's re-reading is especially compelling because he draws our attention in turn to how James subsequently changed the tone and tenor of the book with his edits and additions to the second edition published in the USA in 1963. In this edition, Scott shows, James again approaches his account of eighteenth-century Haiti with his own contemporary twentieth-century concerns, but this time – the time of the 1960s, the fading of Bandung radicalism and the increasing eclipse of postcolonial possibility by cold war and neocolonial exigency – the narrative of romantic vindication gives way to the quite different emplotment of tragedy. Toussaint is still a hero in this account, but, argues Scott, his history-making fate, like that of the heroes of the Greek and Shakespearean tragedy with which James was familiar, is determined more by conditions that he could not choose. Marx's famous sensitivity to circumstances not of history-makers' own choosing is evident here (Marx, 1963), and Scott suggests also that the particular Marxian inspiration of the *History of the Russian Revolution* (Trotsky, 1936) was another contemporary account informing James's concern for context. Yet much of *The Black Jacobins*, including even its title, remains marked by an equally famous but earlier and romantic narrative of the revolution in France (Michelet, 1972), its vindicationist spirit only heightened by the racist double standards that had French revolutionaries brutally repressing the *liberté, egalité* and *fraternité* of the former Haitian slaves even as Toussaint sought to rearticulate and constitutionally entrench the egalitarian principles of 1789 (Sala-Molins, 2006, on enlightenment exceptionalism in French thinking; Buck-Morss, 2000; Fischer, 2004; Dubois, 2004, on the rearticulated enlightenment of Haitian leaders).

Reading Scott reading James is immensely valuable for anyone interested in representations of resistance, especially anti-colonial resistance. But reading James after reading Scott also raises some questions about the formalistic use of the 'romance versus tragedy' binary. Perhaps there are other genres of emplotment that call out for attention, or at least a wider and more open-ended gap between the formal theory of tragedy and the radically diverse responses of resistant subjects to the tragic circumstances of reality (on the latter possibility see Eagleton, 2003). The 'take no prisoners' black commander Dessalines, for example, does not emerge clearly as either a tragic or romantic hero in *The Black Jacobins*, and yet he receives increasing attention from James as a counter-example of successful praxis in juxtaposition to Toussaint's tragic flaw: 'the desire to avoid destruction, … the recurring error of moderates when face to face with a revolutionary struggle' (James, 1963: 300). While lacking this flaw, Dessalines appears just as modern as Toussaint: a former slave who learns from the systematic brutality of the French and the modernity of the plantation colony. As such he is also a good illustration of the importance of an underlying Foucauldian thesis in *Conscripts of modernity*: namely, that colonial power, contrary to traditional romantic resistance narratives, was powerfully productive of slave subjects even as it brutally repressed their freedoms. But, insofar as his success as a military leader is guided more by a focus on immediate reality (a term that James uses somewhat sexistly to describe 'a woman's instinctive sense' James, 1963: 303), Dessalines is neither neatly romantic nor tragic: his practical, but as such unheroic, 'uncultured' and vengeful vindicationism paradoxically presenting James with the basis of his concluding 1963 claim that 'the massacre of the whites was

a tragedy; not for the whites' (James, 1963: 373). Scott himself, it must be said, carefully avoids turning his study into a plot and character development textual analysis by repeatedly reminding us that he is trying to explore the 'problem-spaces' that condition the contemporary questions scholar-critics such as James ask of history. But, in turn, he is so concerned with the historical and philosophical framing of these problem-spaces that he does not explore their geo-graphical formation as *spaces*, including in James's case, their changing time–space location in a 'Black Atlantic' that arguably has enabled emplotments of double-consciousness that supercede or otherwise take critics beyond romance *and* tragedy altogether (cf. Gilroy, 1993; Sparke, 2007a).

> RESISTANCE REPORT 3: PROGRESS IN GOING BEYOND ROMANTIC RECUPERATIONS OF PARADOXICAL SPACE AS THIRD SPACE 'Here we can note ideas, places, and concepts such as "the middle passage", "the underground", Ralph Ellison's "invisible man", Houston A. Baker Jr and Marlene Nourbese Philip's black (w)hole(s), the slave ship, Dionne Brand's "a map to the door of no return", bell hooks's "margin" and "homeplace", Carole Boyce Davies's "politics of location", Paul Gilroy's "the Black Atlantic" … The interconnections between the metaphorical and the material (for example real and symbolic underground[s]) bring into focus the terrain of struggle inside and outside social theory' (McKittrick, 2006: 17–18). And we might likewise note a new 'LA school' of geography, *in the streets*: 'The geography of the region was transformed by the boycott and marches – morning traffic was eerily nonexistent and commerce in central Los Angeles was largely shut down. As a participant, it was the largest sea of humanity that I had ever experienced. I was moved by the courage and resilience of *mi gente* to come out in massive numbers, to demand their rights as workers, as human beings fully deserving of respect and dignity. Here was a people not only resisting efforts to criminalize them, but demanding full amnesty and legalization' (Pulido, 2007: 2; also Houston and Pulido, 2002).

Recent work on anti-racist imagining, organizing and place-making certainly shows how it is possible to chart important problem-spaces of study in ways that turn the question of space itself into a problem in the course of research on resistance (and it's not just geographers that do this, see Camp, 2002). Katherine McKittrick's explorations of what she calls the 'demonic grounds' of black women's resistance geography are especially compelling in this respect, offering along the way a non-identitarian critique of the aestheticization and simplification of black geographies by other geographers such as Steve Pile (McKittrick, 2006: 20 and 155; also Mullings, 2005; McKittrick and Woods, 2007; for a resonant critique of problems and possibilities of studying white geographies, Shaw, 2006). Other important recent studies further complicate enquiry into the activist reworking of race, space and gender with ongoing enquiry into how these formations are articulated with (or not) class-based resistance too (Pulido, 2006; Gilmore, 2007). It would be mistaken, though, to downplay the differences between these two critical Californian contributions as they relate to the racial politics of resistance. While Laura Pulido's work on the Black Panther Party, El Centro de Acción Social y Autónomo and East Wind is closely focused on the distinct 'Black, Brown and Yellow' radicalisms of Southern California (whose common extra-American orientations she glosses with the singular geo-catachresis of an ironically Americanized 'Third World Left'), Ruth Gilmore's prisons-as-spatial-fix account of California's 'Golden Gulag' is concerned with systemic ties between the 'antistate state' (her inspired term for neoliberal governmentality under market-led globalization) and the dehumanized 'non-human human' (itself a more pedagogically useful concept than Agamben's *homo sacer*). Gilmore's engaged and engaging attention to opposition to prison system racism is palpable from the start (with the bus leaving Holman Methodist Church on page 1) to

finish (with its metaphorical bus of grassroots alliance-building on page 251), but her postethnic definition of race in terms of group-based vulnerability to premature death and her preference for a demand-side account of prison building over a supply-side account of the prisoners produced by a racist legal system combine to make her also eschew ideas of resistance relayed through race. Yet, while Gilmore's account might thus seem especially attentive to Golden Gulag tragedy, and Pulido's more vindicationist *vis-à-vis* Black, Brown and Yellow organizing, both illustrate geographically sensitive ways to go beyond the traditional romance that pictures purified human resistance amidst impurely created spaces of exception.

Distinct from the explicitly oppositional and emancipation-oriented resistance struggles described by Gilmore and Pulido, other recent political geographies have focused on the indirect forms of rearticulation delineated by Katz's other categories of reworking and resilience. Further south in Mexican California, for example, there have been some detailed studies of the survival strategies of child laborers (Aitken *et al*., 2006; Jennings *et al*., 2006), and, with attention to the lives of Mexicans that are torn between the two Californias and the two countries more generally, Monica Varsanyi (2006) has shown with similar care the non-emancipatory but still enabling role *Matrículas Consulares* can play in improving life chances for border-crossed labouring livelihoods. The ongoing salience of lessons about 'Learning to Labour' through recuperated and/or regulated resistance (Willis, 1981) are clear in such studies, although they point in radically different directions than employment on the shopfloor of a British factory. For example, one direction charted with great ethnographic and theoretical nuance in another new study of growing up global has been towards *unemployment* in North India (Jeffrey *et al*., 2008; on recent reactionary resistance to such limited lower caste agency see Foroohar, 2007).

Out of Asia also, but attuned specifically to the ecologies of resilience and reworking, have come inspiring accounts of the struggles to remake life, justice and nature in the aftermath of neocolonial dam and resource extraction projects (Roy, 2001; Khagram, 2004; Goldman, 2005). And yet other studies on the nature of resilience-turned-protest against neocolonialism elsewhere in the world illustrate how the ecological reimagination involved often also includes the ab-original remapping of originally-colonial-turned-national cartography too (Mackenzie and Dalby, 2003; Clapp, 2004; Rossiter, 2004; Larsen, 2006; Nah, 2006; Koschade and Peters, 2006). Such mediated indigenous claims to nature often clash in environmentalist resistance with what Rod Neuman refers to as the 'imposed wilderness' of western NGOs and environmentalists (Neumann, 1998; 2005; also Hodgson and Schroeder, 2002; Walker *et al*., 2007), and this was one kind of complication left unaddressed in a recent intervention in *Nature* aimed to challenge the neoliberal 'ecosystem-services' approach to conservation biology (McCauley, 2006; on the reverse danger of presenting native people as the voices of nature see Braun, 2002). But as a piece of academic resistance to the marketization of everything (cf. Watts, 1994), McCauley's paper still serves as another good reminder that in addressing globalized dispossession we need to be attentive to the danger of employing ideas of possessive individualism and associated assumptions of market rationality in the struggle for repossession. The next section explores at further length how much geographical scholarship on resistance has sought to complicate the romanticization of repossession through attention to just such dangers.

III Resistance geographies on repossession

One of the most impressive efforts at both theorizing and embodying resistance in recent Anglophone geographical scholarship has been the publication of *Playing with fire* (Sangtin Writers and Nagar, 2006). Among its many other achievements, this creative

collaboration between Minnesota-based geographer Richa Nagar and seven Indian women NGO workers from Sitapur in UP offers a critique of the NGOization of global development politics (also Nagar *et al.*, 2008). Many others have already pointed to the depoliticizing repossession of discontent around dispossession through NGOs (Katz, 2005), including the way it threatens, in Arundhati Roy's tragi-comic terms 'to turn resistance into a well-mannered, reasonable, salaried, 9–5 job. With a few perks thrown in' (quoted in Benson and Nagar, 2006: 582). But, as a deliberative and collaborative critique of such dangers from feminists who have worked on the frontline of NGO intervention in rural India, the book introduces an acutely 'inbetween' topography of feminist political engagement (Katz, 2001). Based on painstaking personal reflection, it avoids the (re-)possessive egoism that can attend individualistic autobiographical argument by subjecting the personal narratives of the women to a solidaristic auto-critical deliberation by the whole group (Sparke, 2008). As a result, the title of the book reflects genuine risk-taking by its authors who really make themselves vulnerable at the same time as they highlight the vulnerabilities of NGO work falling prey to the cooptive careerism and possessive individualism of elitist development professionals.

One of the symptoms of re-possessive NGOization in action is the governmentalization of targets of shadow state intervention. Some recent and critically engaged political-geographical papers show in turn how such processes involve complex combinations of subjectification and objectification coming together in particular ways in different global conjunctures. Addressing the governmentalization of gender in Asia through both humanitarian and micro-credit constructions of rational economic woman (Hyndman and de Alwis, 2003; Rankin and Shakya, 2007), the governmentalization of indigeneity in Latin America (Radcliffe, 2007) and the governmentalization of gay and lesbian identities in North America (Brown and Knopp, 2006), these searching and engaging studies simultaneously illustrate the wisdom of Samuel Weber's thesis that targets are always already networked to wider relations from which they can only ever be temporarily and artificially abstracted. While the noun 'target' may thus seem to 'resist subsumption under established rules', the verb 'targeting' implies that the particularities of 'time and space are to be transformed from media of alteration and dislocation into conditions of self-fulfillment and appropriation' (Weber, 2005: 5). Weber himself is more concerned with the anti-geopolitical implications of this double-movement (along with their philosophical repossession in reactionary thought that ranges from Carl Schmitt's Catholic political romance with resurrection to Admiral Cebrowski's creationist account of US manifest destiny in the age of the internet), but it also offers a useful framework for reflecting on how critical geographers have sought to complicate conceptions of place-based resistance through solidaristic research that also attends to wider webs of relations. Three themes stand out in such solidaristic political geography: (1) the examination and facilitation of public participation locally and globally; (2) the study of alter-globalization actions and the lessons about alternatives to neoliberal globalization they provide; and (3) the intellectual work of countering and resituating place-targeted geographies of blame. The last part of this article will outline each in turn.

1 Public participation

While some militaristic geographers argue that geovisual technologies are ideal for counter-terrorism targeting and other more revanchist resistance strategies globally (see O'Loughlin, 2005; for further critique of the history of such military geography, see Barnes and Farish, 2006), others have been exploring ways in which to make a more democratic and participatory GIS a tactical tool for tackling dispossession locally in both the North and

Global South (eg, Harris *et al*., 1995; Elwood and Leitner, 1998; KwakuKyem, 2001; Ghose, 2003; Elwood, 2006a; 2006b; on the distinction between strategy and tactics as they relate to everyday resilience and reworking in urban space, see de Certeau, 2002). Participation in this sense carries a double meaning: primarily describing the ways GIS is being adapted to facilitate participatory deliberation and representation by community 'stake-holders', and yet also secondarily referring to GIS specialists becoming enabling participant observers in community activism. As Sarah Elwood (2006a) explains, there are many dangers of cooptation and misrepresentation – including the cadastral neoliberalization of stake-holding – in such GIS-mediated participation, but, as Elwood also indicates with great care, reworking and emancipatory opportunities can nevertheless be enabled through geovisual technologies that allow community groups to collectively repossess the landscapes of everyday life through deliberative and collective critique of possessive cadastralization.

The same tensions and possibilities around participation have animated the wider ongoing discussion of geography being public, political and relevant. While dangers of withering instrumentalization and neoliberalization abound (Heyman, 2006), clear calls to action continue to highlight how abdication from participation in public debate is not an option as long as we keep researching, reading, writing and teaching, albeit often as dissidents (Blunt and Wills, 2000; Mitchell, 2006b; Murphy, 2006; and most movingly for all of us who now miss his dissidence, Pred, 2007). Not surprisingly, the ways in which academics have sought to thus become participatory public scholars are many (see Mitchell, 2008; on the possibilities of turning public complicity into public subversion, see Roy, 2006). They include tactics that range from the revalorization of solidaristic marching (see the parallels between Retort, 2005, and Akatiff, 1974), to 'travelling East as Walter Kurtz' (Routledge, 2002), to critical work on the use of the law to fight for the repossession of human rights (Boyer, 2006), to political-ecological explorations of praxis in global-local food networks (Wakefield, 2007), to reflections on the tensional ties between participation and empowerment in NGO-led development (Walker *et al*., 2007), to feminist (anti-)geopolitical involvement in war-zone body counting (Hyndman, 2007), to the direct challenging of links between the academic publishers of *Political Geography* and the global arms trade (Chatterton and Featherstone, 2007). More generally there has been widespread work by politically active geographers to counter the consolations of neoliberalism: taking on the TINA-tout rhetoric that 'resistance is useless' (eg, Burch, 2003) by going public with support for ongoing anti-neoliberal organizing (eg, Peck, 2006; Leitner *et al*., 2007). As England and Ward (2007: 261–62) conclude their valuable survey of neoliberalization: 'a geographical imagination that engages with the material and with the lives of people "on the ground" can uncover the contradictions, continuities and nuances in neoliberalism that might otherwise be seen as monolithic and inevitable. This in turn offers potential avenues for all sorts of empirical, theoretical and political possibilities, the progressive use of research, and hopefully even strategies for social and political change'.

RESISTANCE REPORT 4: PROGRESS IN CONNECTING CAMPUS ACTIVISM TO WORLDWIDE CHANGE FOR WORKERS AND CONSUMERS 'By resisting the silencing preferred by the corporatizing university, feminist scholars and activists can build stronger alliances with factory workers internationally' (Silvey, 2002: 203) One example of such resistance is the Worker Rights Consortium. Focused on the labour practices of companies that make products that bear university logos, the WRC is continuing to connect the efforts of students fighting sweatshop labour practices with a global factory assessment programme that enables workers themselves to report exploitation and abuse

http://www.workersrights.org/ The Factory Disclosure Database made available online by the WRC is a remarkable teaching tool for educating students about where their clothes are made, but beyond tracking outsourcing, it has proved more limited at mitigating sweatshop practices. As a result, the WRC is now campaigning in concert with students on multiple campuses to persuade university administrations to join the new Designated Supplier Program aimed to develop more sustainable and transparent ties between campus consumers and factories that open-up to ongoing monitoring of worker rights, pay and conditions. On the history of the WRC as an antidote to the manufacturers' front-group – the FLA – see Sparke and Lawson (2003). For further reflection on the possibilities of cross-campus activism, see the inspiring invocation of a post-liberal academic action in Lott (2006). For a discussion of another healthy opportunity for anti-corporate campus engagement see the teaching notes of Wiist (2006).

Searching for avenues for political participation may seem hopelessly humdrum from the heady heterarchy of the neocritical intellectual business-class, but, as the persuasive push-back to their flat world flights of fancy has shown (eg, Heynen, 2006; Smith, 2006; Wills, 2006), there remains an urgent need to stay grounded and attuned to the earthly uneven-ness and hierarchies of our globalized world. One great example of an area in which academics have been engaging with the progressive use of such grounded research is in solidarity with worker organizing. Taking on sweat-shops and the business-class dispossession of workers locally and globally, this scholarship has ranged from local campus-based activism (Silvey, 2002), to research on 'glocal organizing' against sweatshops (Miller, 2004), to thoughtful reflections on the ways repossession of some worker rights relates to the dispossession of others (Theodore, 2007), to studies on and with service workers who clean-up for the global business-class (Savage, 2006; Aguiar and Herod, 2006), to the extensive work by Jane Wills on and with union activists concerned with combining community and international solidarity (eg, Wills, 2001; 2004; Waterman and Wills, 2001; Hale and Wills, 2005).

2 Alter-globalization

Wills's collaboration with Peter Waterman on international labour organizing connects in turn with another important area of solidaristic political geography: namely, research contributing to, reflecting on and learning from global gatherings and local economic practices that challenge the neoliberal and/or neoimperial governance of globalization (also Waterman and Timms, 2004). Again, while target talk tends to code such events and efforts as punctual basing points for terrorism, work on the political geographies of networking involved reveals an altogether more emancipatory insurgency of time–space transcending, transnational, relational and yet, as such, non-romanticized rebellion (for more on the time–space geometries of activism see Panelli, 2007; for more on the complexity of transnational ties, see Glassman, 2001; for more on challenges and limits of academic solidarity within them, see Sundberg, 2007). Whether it is documenting the debunking of myths about global capital demonstrated by women's protests in US–Mexican border zones (Wright, 2004; 2005; 2006; Jepson, 2006), or following in the footsteps of those who contest the triangulations of business boosterism in SE Asian cross-border regions (Chou, 2006; Bunnel *et al*., 2006); or studying what can be learned from the changing tactics of anti-WTO/anti-G8 activism (Glassman, 2001; D'Arcus, 2006; Wainright, 2007), or researching the spatial imaginaries deployed in the organizing of the landless in Latin America (Wolford, 2004), or even examining contrasting community forestry efforts in North America (McCarthy, 2006), scholars are showing how we can learn from struggles against dispossession about alternatives to neoliberalism and neoimperialism. As David Featherstone has valuably argued with his examination of struggles in eighteenth-century London, such site-specific examples

also illustrate the importance of exploring how so-called militant particularisms are always already relational and thus space-spanning constructions (Featherstone, 2005; his relational analysis of subaltern networking also pointing to how the 1768 East End municipal insurrection may have been learning from the west end of the Black Atlantic and the inspiration of increasing slave insurrection in places such as Haiti). While they still downplay the relational ties to organizing for alternatives *within* global capitalism, Gibson-Graham's collaboration has also now moved to emphasizing the practical and space-spanning lessons provided by community groups seeking to develop economic systems not predicated on the profit motive (Gibson-Graham, 2006; also Lee, 2006). And it is in a similar way that key lessons about non-neoliberal and non-economistic alternatives to market-led globalization can be learned from the increasingly dispersed World Social Forum (WSF) gatherings (Sparke *et al*., 2005). Some have suggested that the broad WSF left is really not all that Left (Wills, 2006), others have warned of its creeping neoliberalization (Huish, 2006), and, such concerns should surely make us re-read earlier announcements of its global significance with careful attention to their limits (Fisher and Ponniah, 2003). Yet there is no doubting that as a form of 'convergence space' (Routledge, 2003) where global 'maps of grievance' (Featherstone, 2003) are charted collectively, deliberatively and open-endedly, the WSF has been an ongoing inspiration to anti-neoliberal resistance around the world (Sen *et al*., 2007).

3 Replacing blame

Routledge's critical concept of resistance networked through convergence spaces connects in turn to the final theme of solidaristic geography to be addressed here: namely, political geographical efforts to push back against the pathologization of place. The connection here is to calls to study local regions and places with attention to the ways in which they are interarticulated with global space-spanning ties and traces. This is the point that Hart (2006) has highlighted by emphasizing the relationality in relational comparisons, and it is also an approach that Katz (2001; 2004) has advocated with her critical takes on global counter-topographies of engagement. In the context of a neoliberal-cum-neoimperial war on terror that targets particular places as pathologically disconnected from globalization (Roberts *et al*., 2003; Dalby, 2007), the need for such relational global geographies becomes ever more urgent. To put this in more ethically exacting terms, we have a critical responsibility to resist the pathologization of place by describing the global processes of dispossession that account for local efforts at repossession (Sparke, 2007b). For example, as the USA confronts its imperial debacle in Iraq and begins its long retreat, we need to be prepared for inevitable arguments that the middle of the Middle East is doomed for entirely endogenous reasons – because of pathological oriental passion, irrationality, zealotry, laziness, licentiousness, oil dependency and all the rest of it – and ready to recount the global geographies of colonial dispossession that are the back story of unrest in the neocolonial present (Gregory, 2004). Just as with the ill-considered but influential return to environmental determinism by the likes of Jeffrey Sachs – itself promoted as a clinical antidote to neoconservative geographies of pathology (Sachs, 2005) – we need to resist and reverse the tendency to exculpate the global by blaming the local (for especially useful pedagogical resistance to such dominant D/development diktat, see Lawson, 2007). The 'we' here certainly includes *de jure* geographers whose work on particular places shows how we can counter pathologization by exploring territorial particularity in terms of extra-territorial globality (eg, Merrett, 2001; McKinnon, 2006; Falah *et al*., 2006). But it also clearly needs to include *de facto* geographers who challenge

geographies of blame in literatures that reach wider audiences. Taking us back once more to the lessons of Haiti, the extraordinary combination of medical, anthropological and historical-geographical work produced by Paul Farmer in collaboration with Haiti's dispossessed is one of the most inspiring examples available of political geography that makes a difference, including (silence please Dr Sachs) a real clinical difference too (Farmer, 1992; 1999; 2004; 2005; 2006; also Kidder, 2003). Although his first big book on Haiti even refers to geography in the title, professional geographers have been slow to register its importance. To be sure, criticisms can and have been made of the ways in which Farmer's account of 'structural violence' conflates too many processes (see critical responses in Farmer, 2004), and yet other concerns may be raised about his take on the colonial heritage of western medicine. But Farmer's refusal to blame the victims of dispossession, his willingness to record their own local recriminations about global violence, and his simultaneous commitment to explore the American and European roots and routes of this violence, have helped him to help Haitians fight for their health in vital and transformative ways. This, then, is a form of repossession with a difference. Critical of possessive individualism from the start, inherently incomplete and unending, and attuned to the 'mountains beyond mountains' of struggle against the coalition of the billing, Farmer's 'ouvre' is an inspiring articulation of resistance in/to twenty-first century global power-geometries: resistance that – like *The Black Jacobins* in its own twentieth-century problem-spaces, though neither entirely romantic nor tragic – seems especially well-suited to a world that isn't flat.

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