



Insurgent Imaginations*

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abstract

In the 1980s, ascendant neoconservative and neoliberal elites intoned ‘there is no alternative’ to global capitalism and its trappings of liberal democracy and in the decades since they have demonstrated their unrestrained desire to make reality match rhetoric. Today neoliberal capitalism dominates the global economic landscape even as its war machine strives for ‘full spectrum dominance’. The concrete realities of people’s lives around the world have been shaped by the brute materiality of these practices and processes but there is also another terrain that has become subject to colonization and enclosure: the imagination. Yet, as movements such as the Zapatistas have so powerfully reminded us, we never concede our capacity to dream, to envision other worlds, and to begin walking towards them. In this spirit, this article considers the intersection of Zapatismo, the insurgent imaginations of northern activists in the Americas, and radical political practice. By exploring this complex terrain, I intend to provide a glimpse of the powerful possibilities available to peoples’ movements that take up the challenge of reimagining the world even as they attempt to remake it.

In *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopias East and West* (2000), Susan Buck-Morss offers a provocation on the passing of modern utopias and the relationship between emerging collective political imaginaries and radical socio-political possibility:

From the Wall of China to the Berlin Wall, the political principle of geographical isolation belongs to an earlier human epoch. That the new era will be better is in no way guaranteed. It depends on the power structures in which people desire and dream, and on the cultural meanings they give to the changed situation. The end of the Cold War has done more than rearrange the old spatial cartographies of East and West and the old historico-temporal cartographies of advanced and

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backward. It has also given space for new imaginings to occupy and cultivate the semantic field leveled by the shattering of the Cold War discourse.

As long as the old structures of power remain intact, such imaginings will be dreamworlds, nothing more. They will be capable of producing phantasmagoric deceptions as well as critical illumination. But they are a cause for hope. Their democratic, political promise would appear to be greatest when they do not presume the collectivity that will receive them. Rather than shoring up existing group identities, they need to create new ones. (2000: 277-278)

Since the mid-1990s, no movement has better exemplified the spirit, possibility, and precariousness of the era Buck-Morss illuminates here than the Zapatistas of Chiapas, Mexico. On January 1, 1994, in the midst of neoliberal triumphalism in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union and with flagrant disregard for the grandiosely declared 'end of history,' the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), a guerrilla army composed primarily of indigenous Mayan peasants, rose up in the far southeastern Mexican state of Chiapas and declared '¡Ya basta! – Enough!' to the neoliberal reincarnation of the 500 year old trajectory of genocide, racism, colonialism, and imperialism. While the EZLN declared its intention to advance on Mexico City, overcome the federal army, depose the federal executive and allow for free and democratic elections (see Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2001a), the shape of the insurgency would ultimately bear little resemblance to this relatively straightforward revolutionary agenda. Furthermore, while Mexican civil society would indeed respond to the Zapatista uprising, this response would not take the form of the mass insurgency initially called for by the Zapatistas. Perhaps most surprisingly, the Zapatista rebellion would resonate far beyond the borders of Mexico, engaging in a complex and unanticipated transnational dialogue with a diversity of voices.

The resonance of Zapatismo, the political philosophy and practice of the Zapatista movement, amongst groups of North American political activists and the insurgent political imagination which has fuelled it are the phenomena upon which I focus here. Rather than focusing upon the concrete practices which have emerged out of the resonance of Zapatismo in the north, in this paper I examine the ways in which this resonance has provoked new imaginings of the political amongst a diversity of activists, a process which has in turn served to lay the groundwork for the articulation of new forms of radical political action. In employing the term 'resonance' I seek to describe an experience by which people are able not only to engage with political struggles which have emerged far from the contexts within which they live and work but, more significantly, through which they are able to find those struggles meaningful within their own spaces and places. In this sense, resonance refers neither to the act of 'projecting' a struggle nor to the act of 'receiving' it; rather, it is the non-linear process and experience of making new political connections and new political meanings out of an encounter with another. These encounters need not be physical, communications technologies such as DVDs, CDs, the Internet, and a variety of textual forms can, and often do, serve as the 'connective tissue' facilitating resonance. Yet resonance is neither random nor is it simply romantic, instead it testifies to the emergence of new understandings of political action, struggle, and possibility. Amongst the actors involved, it also speaks to a sense of sharing a terrain of struggle – however broadly defined – as well as the recognition of a common threat or subject against which to struggle.

As for the notion of insurgent political imaginations, I employ this term as a double reference: generally, to imagination as a fundamental dimension of radical political action; specifically, to the political projects that have emerged directly and indirectly due to the influence of Zapatismo's transnational resonance. As will become clear, these imaginations are 'insurgent' for four reasons: first, they orbit around a radical understanding of socio-political action as a project which must be directed from below rather than imposed from above; second, these imaginations embrace a notion of socio-political change as multi-layered and dynamic rather than being dominated by ideological dogmatism; third, these imaginations envision a political horizon of radical social, cultural, economic, and political transformation rather than piecemeal reform; fourth, these imaginations are not fully formed projects or political blueprints, they are provocations which offer glimpses of many possible futures that do not rely upon the logic of hegemony to inspire action. In this sense, they are what Utopian Marxist theorist Ernst Bloch (1986) called 'forward dreams,' unfolding visions of the future that are multiple and unclosed. Theoretically, this conceptualization of the political imagination shares an affinity with Susan Buck-Morss' use of the 'political imaginary'. Drawing from the work of Russian philosophers Valerii Podoroga and Elena Petrovskaja, Buck-Morss explains that rather than referring merely to "the logic of a discourse, or world view" the political imaginary is a "topographical concept... not a political *logic* but a political *landscape*, a concrete visual field in which political actors are positioned" (Buck-Morss, 2000: 11-12). Imagination seen in this way is the terrain of possibility. This understanding of the political imagination in its insurgent formations also evokes the ambivalent, plural, and diverse political imaginary of 'utopian spaces' rather than the totalizing, teleological, and forever deferring political imaginary of 'utopian worlds' engaged by Simon Tormey in his exploration of the social forum process (2005). It is precisely this unclosed terrain of possibility that so much contemporary political and social movement analysis misses due to a reliance on an overly structural and hydraulic framework. As Eric Selbin argues:

along with the material or structural conditions which commonly guide our investigations, it is imperative to recognize the role played by stories, narratives of popular resistance, rebellion and revolution which have animated and emboldened generations of revolutionaries across time and cultures. (Selbin, 2003: 84)

This imaginative terrain generated through the encounter between northern activists and Zapatismo is precisely what I explore here. This analysis draws upon a year of interviews, fieldwork, and targeted participant observation with alter-globalization, anti-capitalist, and social justice activists in Canada, the United States, and Mexico for whom Zapatismo had proven to be powerfully resonant.¹ In Canada and the United States, the resonance of Zapatismo has given rise not only to a diversity of organizations expressing direct solidarity with the Zapatistas but also to forms of

1 From September 2003 to October 2004 I worked with activists in Canada, the United States, and Mexico who were engaged in political action they themselves identified as bearing the marks of Zapatismo's resonance. The organizations and groups represented by these activists include: Building Bridges, Global Exchange, the Mexico Solidarity Network, Food for Chiapas, Big Noise Tactical, the Chiapas Media Project, members from the organizing committee for the Third Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, Peoples' Global Action, the smartMeme Strategy and Training Project, and the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty.

political activism which overflow the bounds of solidarity and which have yielded new and unanticipated results. The existence of these collectives, organizations, and individuals can be read as signifying the material consequences of Zapatismo's transnational resonance but it is to the reflections of individual activists that I turn in this paper in order to explore the generative role played by Zapatismo in the emergence of new insurgent imaginations of political action and possibility.

Radical Hope, Insurgent Imaginations

Invocations of 'hope' and 'imagination' are of course not the exclusive province of progressive or radical political movements. Indeed, 'hope' and 'imagination' are key terrains of commodification and colonization for neoliberal capitalism just as they are for a variety of reactionary and even fascist political projects. During our conversation in the winter of 2004, Patrick Reinsborough of the smartMeme Strategy and Training Project, a collective directed toward 'injecting new ideas into culture' and challenging the system at 'the point of assumption', spoke of his own evaluation of the significance of imagination and its relationship to the social in ways that connect to analyses of imagination as a constitutive force:

around much of the world and in many marginalized communities in the United States... coercion is maintained through physical brutality, whether it's the nightsticks of police or the brutality of the paycheck and the factory, but for many people in the United States the coercion that keeps them in line with the system is less about physical brutality and more of an ideological coercion, a mythological coercion. (interview, March 9, 2004)

The coercion exercised by corporate news and entertainment media, educational curricula increasingly tailored to meet the needs of capital, and the neoliberal dogma continually repeated by government and right wing, 'market-oriented' think tanks serves to produce 'control mythologies' which effectively constrain people's ability to even imagine how the world might look different (Reinsborough, 2004). Patrick's comment speaks powerfully to the notion that the imagination in a social context is not merely something to be 'mobilized' but rather is something that is always at work and which can function to inspire reactionary tendencies just as easily as democratic and liberatory ones. The challenge thus becomes finding ways of liberating imagination from the enclosures imposed upon it by neoliberal capitalism and by various political projects directed toward protecting existing structures of privilege and power.

Imagination as a powerful collective resource for the constitution of any social order is a theme that ran through my conversations with activists engaged in a wide variety of projects. Manuel Rozental, Colombian political exile, member of the Canada-Colombian Solidarity Campaign, and physician, reflected on this theme in our conversation during the winter of 2003. With respect to the importance of imagination in relation to political action and socio-political change, Manuel remarked:

I think that... it's the essential component [in the political], but what one understands by imagination is different and that's the key... see, we human beings are by nature, as strange as it may sound, creators of history, this is what we do different from a tree or a cow, we make history so... that transforms that into both a right and a responsibility, an obligation, we have to create

history. Now the sources, the inspiration for us to become involved in creating history and the expressions are all related to imagination, we have to imagine what history should be like, what our lives should be like, what everybody else's lives should be like and in fact the main thrust of communication between human beings... is precisely a shared imagination. So we're alive precisely for that, we're alive to develop an image of what life should be and then to name it collectively, to give it words, and to give it actions, and then that thing turns around in circles, the more we see the more we imagine, the more we imagine the more we act, the more we act the more we see again and imagine and act and the more we relate to each other through that and political passion is actually the outcome of the passion to achieve something from imagining and politics are actually the act of sharing imagination and without that what sense would there be? (interview, December 10, 2003)

Imagination as a creative, communicative, and foundational act is eloquently expressed in Manuel's comment. As Manuel asserts, imagination is not merely an individual act, it is a collective potential and expression and it is the tool by which human beings are able to engage their responsibilities as creators of cultural and historical meaning. Ultimately, it is the way in which as human beings we are able to envision and build possible futures.

Fiona Jeffries, cultural writer, academic, activist, and participant in the first Zapatista-convoked Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism² in 1996 also spoke of the conflicted nature of imagination during our conversation in the winter of 2004 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Fiona explored the ambivalence of imagination in a context characterized by the voracious expansion of neoliberal capitalism:

Yes [imagination is] important... but... there's no... perfect articulation of a problem that's going to grab people's imagination and make people go with it 'cause... it's not just about imagination it's about... the circumstances of people's lives... I think that's one of the things that neoliberalism has done so successfully is... this serious frontal assault on the imagination, well I mean neoliberalism as... the outer limit of... commodity fetishism and citizenship through consumption... as an ethos... all your sense of imagination and self is externalized into this... act of drawing things around you... that make you a member, that include you... implicitly and explicitly... (interview, March 13, 2004).

2 The Intercontinental Encuentros (Encounters) for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism emerged from the Zapatista movement's engagement with individuals and social movements around the world following the Zapatista uprising. More than 3000 grassroots activists from over 40 countries attended the first Encuentro held from July 27 to August 3, 1996 in Zapatista territory in Chiapas, Mexico to discuss the dynamics of and alternatives to neoliberal capitalist globalization (Kingsnorth, 2003; Neill, 2001; Notes From Nowhere, 2003). The most significant outcome of the first Encuentro, aside from bringing such a diversity of activists together, was the commitment on the part of the participants to create an intercontinental network of resistance and communication and to hold a second Encuentro a year later in Europe. One year later, the second Encuentro, organized by a variety of groups, was held in Spain. Drawing more than 3000 activists from 50 countries, the second Encuentro was directed toward building the networks of communication and resistance which emerged from the first Encuentro (Esteva, 2001; Flood, 2003). Two additional Encuentros have since been held in Zapatista territory in Chiapas, Mexico, one in December 2006/January 2007 and the other in July 2007. These Encuentros have been aimed at reinvigorating a global movement of resistance and alternative-building to neoliberal capitalism as well as reconnecting the Zapatista struggle with other movements around the world.

Thus imagination cannot be taken as an uncompromised force for progressive political change, particularly within a context shaped by the logics of neoliberal capitalism. As critical cultural theorist Henry Giroux forcefully argues, under conditions of suffering, inequality, and structural violence generated by neoliberalism, imagination can just as easily be put to work upon a political landscape of proto-fascism (Giroux, 2004). It is therefore not a matter of simply ‘liberating the imagination’ or creating spaces within which it is possible to ‘imagine alternatives’ precisely because of the fact that imagination in a social context is always at work, but it is at work according to specific socio-political conditions and dynamics. ‘Hope’ and ‘imagination’ are indeed terrains of power and possibility but they are by no means inherently liberatory and their content must be collectively articulated and defended if they are to provide more than a bulwark for the status quo. Indeed, unless it is grounded in the lived realities of people’s lives, imagination, even in its most radical formation, can constitute little more than a fantastic escape from the complexities and difficulties involved in organizing movements for radical change. Even more dangerously, an imagination divorced from lived contexts and living communities can become spectacular in nature, productive not of movement but of a culture of performance and spectatorship (see Routledge, 2005).

The Political Imagination of Zapatismo

Before proceeding to my analysis of the insurgent imaginations provoked by Zapatismo’s resonance, a few words need to be said about Zapatismo itself and the concrete socio-historical context from which it has emerged. Indeed, in order to appreciate the significance of the resonance of Zapatismo’s insurgent imagination the politico-ethical practice of Zapatismo needs to be situated and understood. One of the very first indications that the Zapatista Army of National Liberation was something other than the familiar Maoist or Guevarist insurgent inhabiting so much of Latin American history was provided on January 1, 1994, the first day of the Zapatista uprising. In an impromptu interview following the EZLN’s liberation of San Cristóbal de las Casas, the old colonial capital of Chiapas, an insurgent calling himself Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos provided the following explanation for the uprising:

what was needed was for someone to give a lesson in dignity, and this fell to the most ancient inhabitants of this country that is now called Mexico, but when they were here it did not have a name, that name. It fell to the lowest citizens of this country to raise their heads, with dignity. And this should be a lesson for all. We cannot let ourselves be treated this way, and we have to try and construct a better world, a world truly for everyone, and not only a few, as the current regime does. This is what we want. We do not want to monopolize the vanguard or say that we are the light, the only alternative, or stingily claim the qualification of revolutionary for one or another current. We say, look at what happened. That is what we had to do.

We have dignity, patriotism and we are demonstrating it. You should do the same, within your ideology, within your means, within your beliefs, and make your human condition count. (Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, 2002: 211-212)

While some commentators have claimed that the EZLN’s indigenous character and the rhetoric of dignity, radical democracy, and inclusivity were cynical political manoeuvres made by the Zapatista leadership to mobilize international support only

after the rebellion began (see Meyer, 2002; Oppenheimer, 2002), Marcos' invocation of these elements as well as his explicit renunciation of revolutionary vanguardism on the first day of the uprising point instead to the fundamental nature of these principles for the Zapatistas.

The Zapatista Army of National Liberation appeared publicly for the first time on January 1, 1994 when thousands of EZLN guerrillas seized several towns and hundreds of ranches in Chiapas. Later it would be known that in mid-1992, Zapatista communities had made the decision to go to war "to coincide with 500 years of resistance" (Harvey, 1998: 198). In 'The First Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle,' the Zapatista declaration of war which was publicly issued just prior to the interview with Subcomandante Marcos quoted from above, the General Command of the EZLN states that "we are a product of five hundred years of struggle," explicitly narrating a history of struggle not only of Indigenous peoples against Spanish invaders, but of the people of Mexico against invasion, dictatorship, poverty, and repression (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2001a: 13). While asserting their goal to advance on the Mexican capital and depose the federal executive in order to allow "the people liberated to elect, freely and democratically, their own administrative authorities," the Zapatistas also outline the central goals of their struggle, namely: "work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice, and peace" (*ibid.*: 14). These demands evoke not only the concrete concerns of peasants living in the far southeast of Mexico today, but also echo the demands of Mexican revolutionaries for almost three hundred years. Significantly absent from this list of goals are the seizure of the state apparatus, the claiming of ownership of radical struggle and its spoils by one particular group, and the invocation of a singular revolutionary telos. 'The First Declaration of the Lacandón Jungle' is, in this sense, an explicit reclamation of the Mexican Revolution and the Mexican nation from those who had usurped it and an invitation to a multitude of others to join in a struggle whose contours must be shaped collectively.

From the moment of its public emergence, the EZLN appeared at once familiar within the pantheon of revolutionary struggle in Latin America and radically different from it. An examination of the socio-historical roots of Zapatismo offers compelling insight into why. By calling themselves 'Zapatistas', the contemporary Zapatista movement is invoking the original Zapatista movement which took place during the Mexican Revolution from 1910-1917. Led by the agrarian revolutionary Emiliano Zapata, after whom both original and contemporary Zapatistas take their name, the Liberating Army of the South, an insurgent peasant army, would become one of the most significant fighting forces during the course of the Revolution. Under the banner of 'liberty, justice, and law,' Zapata and his insurgent forces fought for and, for a time, successfully defended radical land reform, community autonomy, and direct democratic practice in what was the most radical political manifestation of the Mexican Revolution. On April 10, 1919, Zapata was lured into an ambush by government forces and assassinated. To this day, his legacy remains that of an uncompromised revolutionary in Mexico and has been deployed by forces of the left and right in order to lay claim to this authentic revolutionary heritage. Indeed, by explicitly situating themselves in relation to this lineage, the contemporary Zapatistas are laying claim to a revolutionary heritage and legitimacy that continues to have profound resonance in Mexico.

Historical allusions aside, contemporary Zapatismo originated out of the encounter between indigenous communities in the Lacandón Jungle and highlands of Chiapas, Mexico and the urban and Marxist-inspired revolutionary cadres who arrived in Chiapas in the early 1980s to begin the work of organizing the peasantry for a revolution. By all accounts, this encounter resulted not in the ‘revolutionizing’ of the indigenous communities but rather in the ‘defeat’ of Marxist dogma at the hands of these indigenous realities, a defeat which actually allowed for the emergence of the Zapatista struggle itself. While Subcomandante Marcos, who would become the Zapatistas’ spokesperson and one of their chief military strategists, and other urban *guerrilleros* arrived not only with the ideological discourse of Marxism but with worldviews shaped by the legacy of the Enlightenment via rational and scientific thought, the indigenous communities whom they encountered grounded their existence upon very different understandings of the world.

As Neil Harvey describes, to the indigenous communities of Chiapas, the rugged mountainous terrain where Marcos and the other guerrillas first lived upon their arrival was not merely a location well-suited to concealing the nascent EZLN, more importantly it was “a respected and feared place of stories, myths, and ghosts” (1998: 165). Furthermore, Marcos and the other urban revolutionary cadres quickly began to realize that indigenous notions of time, history, and reality were fundamentally different from what they had been taught to believe (*ibid.*: 165). As Harvey explains, for these urban guerrillas, “[l]earning the indigenous languages and understanding their own interpretations of their history and culture led to an appreciation of the political importance of patience” (*ibid.*: 166). This lesson in patience would come to characterize Zapatismo’s political imagination for years to come and would provide a powerful model for those struggling in other contexts.

Learning from the indigenous communities and ultimately subordinating their own preconceptions to the realities they encountered in Chiapas had a profound effect not only upon the *mestizo* (mixed heritage) Zapatistas, it also proved vital to the formation of the EZLN itself. “Instead of arriving directly from the city or the university, the EZLN emerged out of la montaña, that magical world inhabited by the whole of Mayan history, by the spirits of ancestors, and by Zapata himself” (*ibid.*: 166). While Marcos had come to teach politics and history to the indigenous of Chiapas, he quickly discovered that this revolutionary pedagogy, steeped in its own epistemology and ontology, made no sense to the communities (*ibid.*: 166). The emergent politics of this encounter required a new language, one that was born of the Zapatistas’ critical reading of Mexican history and current economic and political context combined with the communities’ own histories of genocide, racism, suffering, and exclusion (*ibid.*: 166). This new political discourse would achieve its most powerful form once it was translated into the local Mayan languages (*ibid.*: 166). In the canyons and Lacandón Jungle of Chiapas, Chol, Tzeltal, Tzotzil, and Tojolabal Mayan migrants who had been forced to leave their original highland communities due to chronic land shortages and political cronyism, had become products and practitioners of a very different kind of politics than that which was practiced in highland communities based on ranks of honour and established channels of privilege and power (Womack, Jr., 1999: 18). Separated from the highland context, these migrants constituted new communities and developed systems of politics based on the communal assembly and consensus-based

decision making, thus, in this setting the community ruled their authorities and it was the communities who had decided to go to war (*ibid.*:19). This relationship exemplifies the key Zapatista democratic notion of ‘commanding obeying’ as all authority and legitimacy in this case resides in the community and in the assembly rather than military strongmen or political bosses. As Harvey notes, “the support base of the EZLN inverted the traditional leader-masses relationship and provided a distinctive model of popular and democratic organization” (1998: 166-167). This novel political discourse and practice would infiltrate the imaginations of activists around the world following the uprising in 1994, allowing the result of this convergence to resonate far beyond the borders of Chiapas.

Both nationally and transnationally, the making of meaning and connections are central aspects to appreciating the resonance of Zapatismo. While the original stated goal of the EZLN was to topple the government of Carlos Salinas, defeat the Mexican military, and establish the space necessary for people to restore democracy, liberty, and justice to their own lives, the seizure of state power or the imposition of a unitary vision was never part of the EZLN’s aspirations. As Xóchitl Leyva Solano argues, the “convergence of different political actors” which occurred across Mexico following the Zapatista uprising should not be seen as accidental “since the EZLN discourse had always emphasised the necessity of fomenting ties between the various popular struggles that had taken place in Mexico, in ‘isolated nuclei’, over the past five decades” (Leyva Solano, 1998: 48). In pressing for the opening of democratic spaces within which others could also engage in the pursuit of democracy and social justice in Mexico, the EZLN “established a cultural strategy that called into question the [ruling regime’s] hegemony by reinterpreting national symbols and discourses in favor of an alternative transformative project” (Gilbreth and Otero, 2001: 9). But it was also more than just a strategy of ‘reinterpretation’. Since 1994, the Zapatistas have sought to communicate new kinds of possibilities and experiences not in order to recapture a stolen tradition or history but to make room for a future that has not been foreclosed upon. In the words of Luis Hernández Navarro, “among the most important consequences of the Zapatista movement in our times is that it has stimulated dreams of social change, and resisted the idea that all emancipatory projects must be sacrificed to global integration” and it did so through “the symbolic force of the image of armed revolution that still holds sway for many parts of the population” and “the moral force that indigenous struggles have acquired;” furthermore, once “the cult of the rifles” had worn off what remained and what sustained the Zapatista resonance was the very fact that they continued to articulate and build a new political project (Hernández Navarro, 2002: 64-65). This approach to political struggle, profoundly informed by an engagement with Mexican revolutionary histories, has also served as a powerful base for the transnational resonance of Zapatismo.

The Fourth World War

The Zapatistas have long asserted that the time and space within which we find ourselves now is that of ‘the Fourth World War.’ While the Third World War, otherwise known as the ‘Cold War,’ ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ‘victory’

of neoliberal capitalism over state-sponsored socialism, the Fourth World War marks a time when global neoliberal capitalism has ushered in “a new framework of international relations in which the new struggle for... new markets and territories” has produced “a new world war,” a war against humanity (Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, 2004a: 257). The socio-political challenge of our time thus becomes not one of capitalism versus communism but rather of a geopolitical system and its agents, armies, and weapons (military, socio-political, economic) versus the vast majority of humanity who not only continue to be marginalized and targeted by this system but who are actively seeking to build alternatives to it. As Marcos writes:

That is what this is all about. It is war. A war against humanity. The globalization of those who are above us is nothing more than a global machine that feeds on blood and defecates in dollars.

In the complex equation that turns death into money, there is a group of humans who command a very low price in the global slaughterhouse. We are the indigenous, the young, the women, the children, the elderly, the homosexuals, the migrants, all those who are different.

That is to say, the immense majority of humanity.

This is a world war of the powerful who want to turn the planet into a private club that reserves the right to refuse admission. The exclusive luxury zone where they meet is a microcosm of their project for the planet, a complex of hotels, restaurants, and recreation zones protected by armies and police forces.

All of us are given the option of being inside this zone, but only as servants. Or we can remain outside of the world, outside of life. But we have no reason to obey and accept this choice between living as servants or dying. We can build a new path, one where living means life with dignity and freedom. To build this alternative is possible and necessary. It is necessary because on it depends the future of humanity.

This future is up for grabs in every corner of each of the five continents. This alternative is possible because around the world people know that liberty is a word which is often used as an excuse for cynicism.

Brothers and sisters, there is dissent over the projects of globalization all over the world. Those above, who globalize conformism, cynicism, stupidity, war, destruction and death. And those below who globalize rebellion, hope, creativity, intelligence, imagination, life, memory, and the construction of a world that we can all fit in, a world with democracy, liberty and justice. (Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, 2004b: 626-627)

This is not a struggle engaged in by a homogeneous group of people, it is not a struggle built according to strict principles or a revolutionary blueprint, it is rather a struggle that is being joined by people all over the world seeking to affirm their autonomy and interconnectedness, their will to live in a world capable of holding many worlds. Notoriously absent from the quote above and from other Zapatista efforts at constructing and communicating this new politics of radical possibility are the more familiar tropes of socialist imaginations such as the proletariat, the masses, the vanguard, the revolutionary state, and the progressive path from capitalism to socialism to communism. As John Holloway asserts with respect to radical social struggle today, “What is at issue is not who exercises power, but how to create a world based on the mutual recognition of human dignity, on the formation of social relations which are not power relations... This, then, is the revolutionary challenge at the beginning of the twenty-first century: to change the world without taking power. This is the challenge

that has been formulated most clearly by the Zapatista uprising in the south-east of Mexico” (Holloway, 2002: 17-20).

The notion of a systemic and inclusive analysis of the global terrain of struggle emerging at a moment seemingly defined by the defeat of the insurgent left and state-sponsored socialism is a vital element in appreciating the resonance of Zapatismo and its significance for insurgent imaginations elsewhere. Dave Bleakney, a member of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) and one of the North American activists involved in the formation of Zapatista-inspired transnational anti-capitalist network of coordination and communication known as Peoples’ Global Action (PGA), articulated this very sentiment to me when I asked him about his encounter with Zapatismo and the reasons he felt this movement mattered:

When I was... in... Prague for the IMF meeting in 2000 [some PGA comrades and I] were saying what a difference it had been, two years ago nobody was saying the word ‘capitalism’ and now you can open a newspaper and actually see the word and that that was a result of the mobilizations... the discourse had been shifted because when people come and say ‘what are you out here for?’ you wouldn’t just say ‘I’m out here to stop the building of big dams’ or ‘I’m out here to stop racism’, people were saying ‘the system is... corrupt, the system is... exploiting people and is destroying the environment and the system is jailing people’ so it became... not just one issue... and no matter what your issue was, whether it was a workers’ issue or an environmental issue you could bring it back to the system of profit called capitalism and really that period between ’98 and 2000 was when it shifted, particularly around ’99 and after Seattle... [The Zapatistas absolutely had a role in this]... the Zapatistas have helped us to question the nature of things, the norms that we’ve just come to accept without laying out some kind of dogma... I think in many ways the Zapatistas have put a mirror up to us... and whether that happened by accident or was clearly constructed the fact is the mirror is up and the questions are asked. (interview, March 25, 2004)

The notion of Zapatismo as a mirror is a highly evocative image. Rather than merely being another example of a distant and facile fascination with revolutionary struggle in the south, for many activists the Zapatistas actually provided not just a moment of inspiration but one of serious reflection as well. The deliberateness and seriousness of their approach to politics and struggle has unquestionably infiltrated the political discourses of the global justice/anti-capitalist movement and has inflected radical political struggle with a new kind of ethics that is explicitly “for humanity and against neoliberalism.”

Indeed, Peoples’ Global Action, the transnational network with which Dave has been involved, is a powerful example of the significance of the political resonance of Zapatismo. At the end of the first Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism held in Chiapas in the summer of 1996, the General Command of the EZLN issued the ‘Second Declaration of La Realidad for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism’, calling for the creation of a “collective network of all our particular struggles and resistances, an intercontinental network of resistance against neoliberalism, an intercontinental network of resistance for humanity” (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2001b: 125). Specifying that this network would not be “an organizing structure,” that it would have “no central head or decision maker,” “no central command or hierarchies,” the EZLN called for the formation of a network that would provide channels of communication and support for the diverse struggles “for humanity and against neoliberalism” around the world (*ibid.*: 125). Peoples’ Global

Action would be the network emerging from this call with its ‘official’ birth occurring at a meeting in Geneva in February 1998 attended by 300 activists from 71 countries (Kingsnorth, 2003: 73). Since its birth PGA has been at the centre of many of the most impressive anti-capitalist actions including the protests that confronted the 3rd WTO Summit in Seattle in 1999 and has coordinated numerous Global Action Days, conferences, and political caravans.

In the quote above, Dave Bleakney deploys the metaphor of the mirror to evoke Zapatismo’s impact upon the radical imaginations of activists in the north but other activists saw Zapatismo’s resonance in other terms as well. Responding to my question about the significance and reception of Zapatismo by northern activists, Rick Rowley of the radical filmmaking collective Big Noise Tactical interpreted Zapatismo’s impact in terms of historical and imaginative rupture:

In terms of the continent... ‘93 was a several decade low point for movements in this hemisphere... the resistance movements in Latin America had been... successfully destroyed... NAFTA had just been signed... Mexico was already bought and sold basically when NAFTA was signed and the union movement in the States which had been limping along barely was smashed... there was a political horizon in which there was no hope and there were no actors who you could point to or... who would give you the least inkling of the possibility of movement, not in the universities, not in the countryside, not in the factories, not in the cities, nowhere, so... [when] the Zapatistas did emerge, [they] were a tear in the fabric of the present, they were a crack through which it was possible for people to... remember again histories of struggle that they’d been taught to forget or had been... worn away by the last couple of decades and to imagine possibilities of struggle and resistance and imagine different worlds that could be built in this world that they... had not been allowed to imagine... that was the main thing that Zapatismo gave us... it gave the lie... to NAFTA and the entire worldview it stood for, to the triumphalism of the Washington Consensus and... its model of corporate globalization. (interview, September 20, 2004)

In this poetic articulation of Zapatismo’s reception and immediate resonance, Rick points particularly toward the importance of Zapatismo as a “tear in the fabric of the present,” a crack through which it became possible for activists in the north to remember, reimagine, and reconnect with both histories and future possibilities of struggle which seemed to have all but disappeared. Tellingly, Big Noise Tactical, the radical filmmaking collective of which Rick is a part and which has produced such films as *Zapatista*, *This is What Democracy Looks Like*, and *The Fourth World War*, is itself a product of this rupture, emerging as a project out of the resonance of Zapatismo with some of its key activists. The centrality of the conceptual break which Zapatismo facilitated in the face of the ascendance of neoliberal capitalism is something which cannot be overstated and is reflected in the written histories of the contemporary global justice movement as well as in many of the reflections of the activists with whom I spoke.

Speaking a New Language of Political Possibility

Beyond a sense of shared struggle, Zapatismo has resonated for political activists in Canada and the United States on the basis of an emergent transnational consciousness which has been shaped in part by the operation of neoliberal capitalism itself which has introduced forms of exploitation, insecurity, and violence previously largely unknown

in the north. At a moment when neoliberal capitalism had become intimately and explicitly concerned with exerting total control over the production of subjectivities and over the reproduction of life itself, the Zapatistas reclaimed the struggle for human dignity through their radical and innovative political project and were joined by people all over the world who rejected the same erasure of their agency and humanity as well. As Rick Rowley from Big Noise Tactical eloquently articulated with respect to the connections between Zapatismo's radical and inspiring political imagination and the emergent transnational fabric of struggle for humanity and against neoliberalism:

Zapatismo's not like an ideology that's easy... to lay out... it's not structured like that... it's more like a structure of myth and parables... but so much of it just so clearly articulated something that was in the water already just waiting to be spoken... in the same way that Seattle worked... we were all waiting... the entire world was waiting for so long for something like that to happen in America and when it did it instantly captured everyone's imagination because this is what we were waiting for... the movements were waiting for this to happen... at this difficult moment when... the old logic of movements... that was based on nationalism... both state nationalism and inside of that cultural nationalisms... had been... successfully defeated pretty much all over the place, certainly inside the [United] States it had been marginalized and effectively screwed over... this new model of organizing was something that we... had all been looking for... there's a bunch... of their central points that hit home for everyone... the first and most important one I think was the way they reimagined cross-border solidarity... especially First World-Third World solidarity... the way that forever movements in the north had organized their solidarity with the south around guilt and said that what connects you to people down there is the connection that exists between the oppressor and the oppressed... and that's it, and that created... really hierarchical structures of authority inside of organizations that did solidarity work in the States... that's something that the Zapatistas effectively made impossible... [when] the one person who... could out-trump anyone else's claim to authentic ownership of the struggle... says that, then it's something totally different... so it's because we were all waiting for them to say what they had to say and they were in many ways the only people who could say what they said and have it mean what it meant. (interview, September 20, 2004)

Rick identifies several important points relating to Zapatismo's transnationalized insurgent imagination. First, the resonance of Zapatismo beyond Mexico's borders needs to be understood as a phenomenon intimately related to the context within which it occurred. As Rick notes, Zapatismo resonated so strongly transnationally not only because of its own internal force but because it offered a vision of possibility and resistance people were waiting to hear, something that was already 'in the water' in the aftermath of the global ascendancy of neoliberal capitalism and the demise of its state-sponsored socialist rival in the form of the Soviet Union. The Zapatista rebellion and the insurgent imagination emerging from it can be understood in this sense as a bright spark lighting an already existing fuse of dissent, desire, and political possibility. Second, Zapatismo's transnationally resonant insurgent imagination proved so significant not only because it challenged the old logic of revolutionary movements but also because it provided a new vision and language of what political solidarity could mean across borders. Rather than conceiving of solidarity as a relationship between oppressor and oppressed or privileging a particular subordinate subject position as *the* authentically revolutionary one, Zapatismo instead opened a door onto a new landscape of political subjectivities, possibilities, and relationships capable of inviting people from diverse spaces and places to share in a common struggle "for humanity and against neoliberalism" and for the creation of a world made of many worlds.

Beyond the acknowledgement of Zapatismo as a foundational moment or point of reference within the emergent history of the global justice/anti-capitalist movement as it has been related in the literature coming out of the movement (see Callahan, 2004; Kingsnorth, 2003; Klein, 2002; Midnight Notes, 2001; Notes From Nowhere, 2003; Solnit, 2004), how have political activists living and working in the US and Canada positioned themselves in relation to the Zapatistas? Patrick Reinsborough, a grassroots activist and co-founder of the smartMeme Strategy and Training Project, described his own experience with Zapatismo to me in the following way:

The beauty and the wit and the strategy with which the Zapatistas... set the terms of their own conflict and intervened in something much deeper than... state power in Mexico, they intervened in a global system in a way that was creating new spaces and I think that certainly... much of my political work is... tiny ripple effects of some of the amazing leaps of work that the Zapatistas created, also... the power of poetry... just these incredibly powerful poetic critiques that were happening in a very systemic way that incorporates all the different pieces whether you're talking about an economic critique or a political critique or an ecological critique but also ground them in a commonsense emotional critique I think that's something that I've been very attracted to... in the struggle of the Zapatista movement and other similar resistance movements and trying to figure out... how can we help translate some of the experience... [of] the communities who are being massacred and bulldozed and the places that are being destroyed to feed the insatiable appetite of global consumer society, finding that connection, changing the feedback loop so that those messages, those new ideas are able to reach different parts of society particularly now in America when... a lot of that affluence [that has been perceived as being the reason that Americans haven't been involved in systemic movements] is actually increasingly becoming mythologized... people without health care, vanishing jobs, [an] increasing propaganda state using weapons of mass deception to convince Americans that they should have troops occupying the world... it seems like we're in... a real exciting time, a real crisis and breaking point in the story of global capitalism and that breaking point is really very articulately and effectively foreshadowed by the Zapatistas... in the face of what would seem like the most powerful destructive empire ever created, a global empire of corporate control... the Zapatistas were very effective in reminding us where our real power was, those are the ripple effects that are being felt around the world. (interview, March 9, 2004)

The intersection of imagination and lived reality is brought insightfully to the fore in Patrick's comment. As Patrick foregrounds so importantly here, the powerful poetic critiques articulated by the Zapatistas of issues ranging from neoliberal capitalism to racism to the ethical bankruptcy of conventional representative politics have served to provoke vigorous new insurgent imaginations of the possible amongst a diversity of others.

In addition to poetry, many activists with whom I worked also articulated the importance of the new language of struggle articulated by Zapatismo. Instead of a more traditional revolutionary language focusing upon relations of production, historical teleologies, or social evolutionary schema, Zapatismo has instead connected radical political action with the guiding socio-cultural stories of our time by challenging these hegemonic stories and inviting all of us to imagine new ones upon which to begin building new worlds. Jacquie Soohen, a key activist and filmmaker involved in Big Noise Tactical, articulated the significance of Zapatismo's new language of political possibility and the multiple new ways of speaking when she noted:

so much of the activism in the '70s and the '80s and this whole idea of solidarity activism was... if you just show the truth then that will... overcome something and... it's about speaking truth to power but... I think we're entering a whole different time and the Zapatistas made it clear too that

it wasn't just about this media blockade, it wasn't just about the information not getting out there, it was about this ideological encirclement and how do you break that, and so in the same way [our] films... are not about speaking truth to power in that way... especially *The Fourth World War*, it's about... creating myths... inside this movement and... connections... like a connection-making machine... between these different movements and also... speaking in a way that shows our humanity and the world that we want... and we start to create our own language in different ways and touch people in different ways as opposed to taking the language... of the powerful and using it to just show information because... if there's anything we've learned and we learn more everyday... it's not just... about the information, especially now, it's about... how it's interpreted and used and how people are made to feel connected or disconnected from it. (interview, September 20, 2004)

As Jacquie expresses here, one of the most compelling dimensions of Zapatismo is the way in which it has directly engaged issues of subjectivity, power, and meaning-making. This 'new language' of political struggle materializes the promise of Zapatismo's provocations surrounding issues of vanguardism, the state, privileged identities of struggle, and innovative and inspiring tactics for social change. Equally importantly, this new language has in turn provoked the emergence of other discourses of political struggle and possibility, new languages for new landscapes of socio-political alterity. Of course, this does not mean that the Zapatistas themselves have worked out ideal solutions to the many and varied challenges of radical socio-political change. What it does mean is that through the movement's internal and external struggles as well its attempts at communication within and outside the geographical, political, and cultural bounds of its own space, Zapatismo has participated in provoking questions not only about the goal of social change but of its very nature as well.

If the struggle for a new world is one to be engaged in by people engaged in diverse struggles in their particular worlds, in what way can Zapatismo function as an insurgent imagination capable of catalyzing interconnected resistance and alternative-building across time and space? The capacity of Zapatismo to catalyze such a project is partially illuminated by the ways in which the Zapatistas have situated themselves in relation to a multitude of other peoples in struggle. At the opening ceremonies of the First Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism, held in Zapatista territory in rebellion in the summer of 1996 and drawing more than 3000 activists from around the world to consider the promise and possibility of shared struggle, the General Command of the EZLN explicitly articulated 'who we are' in the following way:

This is who we are.

The Zapatista National Liberation Army.
The voice that arms itself to be heard.
The face that hides itself to be seen.
The name that hides itself to be named.
The red star who calls out to humanity and the world
to be heard, to be seen, to be named.
The tomorrow to be harvested in the past.

Behind our black mask,
Behind our armed voice,
Behind our unnameable name,
Behind us, who you see,
Behind us, we are you.

Behind we are the same simple and ordinary men and women,
who are repeated in all races,
painted in all colors,
speak in all languages,
and live in all places.
The same forgotten men and women.

The same excluded,
The same untolerated,
The same persecuted,
We are you.

Behind us, you are us.
Behind our masks is the face of all excluded women,
Of all the forgotten indigenous,
Of all the persecuted homosexuals,
Of all the despised youth,
Of all the beaten migrants,
Of all those imprisoned for their words and thoughts,
Of all the humiliated workers,
Of all those dead from neglect,
Of all the simple and ordinary men and women,
Who don't count,
Who aren't seen,
Who are nameless,

Who have no tomorrow. (Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional, 2001c: 111-112)

The General Command's assertion of a shared identity with a multitude of diverse others is a powerful rhetorical move because even as it affirms a common struggle it does not erase or subsume difference. Combined with the evocative poetic power characteristic of this and many other Zapatista communiqués, Zapatismo's language and imagination of radical socio-political change represents a fundamental departure from the bureaucratic and homogenizing discourse of so many other revolutionary movements.

The radical diversity of subjectivities in struggle and the explicit recognition of the irreducible significance of a multitude of struggles has been a hallmark of the Zapatistas' approach to political analysis and solidarity from the outset of their movement. The flexibility and thoughtfulness constantly espoused by the Zapatistas with respect to their own struggle for radical socio-political change is something which has facilitated constructive dialogue with others engaged in similar efforts in their own spaces and places. The fundamentally unorthodox approach to radical socio-political change is woven through many Zapatista communiqués but the joy and possibility of this position is nowhere better expressed than in a communiqué issued by Subcomandante Marcos in 1994 in reply to an allegation made in the Mexican press that he was a homosexual:

Marcos is gay in San Francisco, a black person in South Africa, Asian in Europe, a Chicano in San Isidro, an anarchist in Spain, a Palestinian in Israel, an Indigenous person in the streets of San Cristóbal, a gang-member in Neza, a rocker on... campus, a Jew in Germany, an ombudsman in Department of Defense..., a feminist in a political party, a communist in the post-Cold War period, a prisoner in Cintalapa, a pacifist in Bosnia, a Mapuche in the Andes, a teacher in National Confederation of Educational..., an artist without a gallery or a portfolio, a housewife in any

neighborhood in any city in any part of Mexico on a Saturday night, a guerrilla in Mexico at the end of the twentieth century, a striker in the CTM, a sexist in the feminist movement, a woman alone in a Metro station at 10 p.m., a retired person standing around in the Zócalo, a campesino without land, an underground editor, an unemployed worker, a doctor with no office, a non-conformist student, a dissident against neoliberalism, a writer without books or readers, and a Zapatista in the Mexican Southeast. In other words, Marcos is a human being in this world. Marcos is every untolerated, oppressed, exploited minority that is resisting and saying, 'Enough!' He is every minority who is now beginning to speak and every majority that must shut up and listen. He is every untolerated group searching for a way to speak, their way to speak. Everything that makes power and the good consciences of those in power uncomfortable – this is Marcos. (Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, 1994: np)

This well-known quote by Marcos is important for several reasons. Rather than fencing off and defending a strict political or identity boundary, in both these quotes Marcos asserts a vision of radical plurality and groundless solidarity that confounds typical attempts to delegitimize individuals and struggles based on their authenticity. Facing allegations of homosexuality, Marcos responds not by denying them and reaffirming his masculinity but by establishing his position as one among a multitude of oppressed identities in struggle. Dave Bleakney, CUPW and PGA activist, reflected upon the importance of this statement and the politics it signifies:

I think the Zapatistas open up a whole other area of relations around the importance of honesty, that you don't need to spin anything... it was mentioned a few years ago in Mexico... that Marcos was gay... well here in our culture we would try to do damage control... [we'd say something like] he's not gay but supports gays and all this stuff, whereas there [Marcos] said I'm gay, I'm black... completely turning around the discourse to say yeah I am, I'm all those things, I'm all the things you don't like and more. (interview, March 25, 2004)

As Dave notes, and as with the mock interrogation quote above, instead of defending his purity and orthodoxy, Marcos instead locates himself and the struggle of the Zapatistas as one among a tremendous diversity of others. The political landscape which emerges from this affirmation of radical solidarity is one in which there is no privileged subject position from which to struggle, no correct revolutionary line, no single path to effecting fundamental socio-political change. It is a vision of political struggle and possibility that has provided a strong basis for the transnational resonance of Zapatismo's insurgent imagination.

The explicit and fundamental recognition of the interconnectedness of people's struggles on a global scale as well as the diversity and irreducible significance of each of these struggles is a powerful element of Zapatismo's resonance. In many ways, what the Zapatista discourse of radical inclusivity and openness achieves is what Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe consider in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985) as the construction of 'the chains of equivalents' between struggles. Rather than privileging any particular subject position or site of struggle, the Zapatistas explicitly sought to redefine the terrain of political struggle by articulating a vision of struggle and socio-political change in which all people's struggles for 'democracy, liberty, and justice,' for humanity and against neoliberalism, become equally as important as any other. Fiona Jeffries, a scholar, activist, and writer and who had attended the First Intercontinental Encuentro for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism in Chiapas in 1996 reflected upon the inclusivity of Zapatismo and its implications for political action in the following way:

That quote, that amazing quote “Marcos is gay in San Francisco and a student without books and a Jew in Poland and a Palestinian in Israel”.... That was such a powerful, pluralistic call that was like everybody’s got something... there’s a very few people that are actually benefiting from this situation, we’re all being convinced that this is as much as we can expect to benefit and we shouldn’t ask for anything more, or we shouldn’t fight for anything more, we shouldn’t fight for freedom, that we should just exist ‘cause it could be a lot worse and so I thought that was amazing and I think... that is their strength, their historical subject... is... not in any singular being, their historical subject is people’s desire for freedom... and justice and dignity. (interview, March 13, 2004)

Fiona expresses one of the most powerful elements of Zapatismo’s resonance here by asserting that the Zapatistas’ ‘historical subject’ is not a particular identity or subject position but rather “people’s desire for freedom... and justice and dignity.” Within such a formulation it is possible for people participating in a multiplicity of struggles to see themselves as vital participants in a shared struggle without subordinating themselves to it. Such a capacity to articulate common terrains of struggle and to envision the possibility of movements that are unique and diverse just as they are interconnected and enmeshed in a shared fabric of struggle is most surely the product of insurgent imaginations at work.

Insurgent Imaginations and Political Awakenings

The terrain that I have sought to explore here is one of imagination, but it is not one of an imaginative escape from reality. Instead, it is a terrain upon which it becomes possible to take up the challenges and promises of facing the often nightmarish realities of our present world order and confronting them with radical forward dreams of militant hope and possibility. While there can be a great deal to be learned from the study of organizing strategies and tactics in various locations as well as from paying close attention to the ways in which powerful socio-political struggles for radical change respond to and emerge out of the lived experience of those who constitute them, to take social change projects seriously we must also attend to this imaginative terrain and practice.

There is much more to be said about the significance of Zapatismo for new political imaginations both within and outside of Chiapas, Mexico. One aspect of this phenomenon that certainly demands attention and which I have only fleetingly engaged here is the question of the limits and dangers of powerful political imaginations. When and under what conditions do political imaginations become insurgent and productive of radical action and when do imaginations function as escapist or immobilizing? Even under conditions where insurgent political imaginations such as those provoked by Zapatismo emerge what is their limit given the fact that they remained confined to communities of resistance rather than achieving broad social resonance? Furthermore, is there a danger involved in radical political imaginations which in attempting to build non-hierarchical links amongst diverse struggles and to preserve specificity do so beneath political banners so broad and open they offer no serious, concrete basis for organized movement-building? These questions are beyond the scope of this piece but they loom large for any further consideration of the relationship between imagination as a political force and radical socio-political action. Here I have sought only to provide a

point of entry onto this rich and uncharted terrain and perhaps to provide a provocation urging its further exploration. Obviously, Zapatismo is only one entity inhabiting this terrain, others (including the resurgence of anarchism) also need to be engaged, but its significance for many contemporary radical challenges to the status quo around the world is profound and has often been treated far too instrumentally. To take seriously the promise and potential of these new collectivities in struggle it is essential to understand how the material and the imaginary are mutually constitutive of one another.

In the face of the failure of social democratic, Keynesian, and other technocratic approaches to ameliorating capitalism's worst consequences, the grotesque realities of 'revolutionary' socialist states such as the Soviet Union, and the arrogance of declarations of neoliberal capitalism and its trappings of liberal democracy as 'the end of history', insurgent imaginations such as those provoked by Zapatismo's transnational resonance offer visions of paths beyond these structural and ideological dead-ends. Rather than forwarding a ten point plan for revolutionary change for all peoples everywhere, the political imaginations inspired by Zapatismo that I have sought to partially trace here have instead offered radical, grassroots, hopeful, and open-ended visions of socio-political change. These imaginations are insurgent in relation to the hegemonic socio-political formations of both left and right that have held sway over the terrain of political possibility during the last century because they seek to unsettle the perception that these well-worn projects as the only viable ones. But these imaginations are also insurgent in the sense that they are provocations rather than blueprints, visions of possibility instead of revolutionary or reactionary science. The insurgent quality of these imaginations is central to their power and significance, particularly when they are juxtaposed to the poverty of mainstream political channels and discourse. Testing boundaries, moving over rough and less travelled terrain, always challenging singular claims to power, resisting established authorities and taken for granted truths – these are amongst the most important characteristics of insurgent imaginations. The insurgent political imaginations galvanized by Zapatismo's resonance that I have explored here embody four key qualities that offer hope for the realization of possible futures beyond the failures of familiar projects grounded in hegemony, the state, and a politics of power. The qualities making these political imaginations insurgent are woven through the reflections offered by my research partners just as they emerge from the discourse of Zapatismo itself, and they include: orbiting around a radical and grassroots understanding of socio-political action as a project necessarily directed from below rather than above; conceiving of socio-political change as multi-layered, contextual, and dynamic rather than beholden to ideological certainty; possessing a political horizon of radical social, political, economic, and cultural transformation rather than modest reform; and self-consciously celebrating their existence as provocations, not blueprints, offering glimpses of many possible futures rather than hegemonic monoliths.

Much more needs to be said about the powerful nexus of radical political possibility that is as much spectral as it is material, particularly in a world living through a waking nightmare of predatory accumulation, ecological crisis, and unending war. Neither the material nor the conceptual are privileged here, in fact, this dichotomy itself becomes nonsensical. Not only do insurgent imaginations draw from specific contexts and speak to the needs and demands of the people who inhabit them, they also serve to reshape how subjectivity itself is experienced within these spaces thus creating the opportunity

for new and previously unconsidered socio-political possibilities to emerge. In this spirit, and as a final provocation, I offer the reflections shared with me by Rick Rowley of Big Noise Tactical on the radical possibilities inhabiting the intersection of the spectral terrain of hope and imagination with the materiality of the everyday:

When you march... down a street and the police tell you to go home and you don't go, when fear breaks in that way and you refuse to... allow yourself to be controlled by authority like that then the world changes... I think it's hard to talk about it in terms of imagination because it's not limited to that... every police officer means something else to you, every street means something else... you've rewritten the meaning of the world you walk through and so if you have a network of these experiences that extends throughout every aspect of your life... that produces political subjectivities that are outside of the system... so that... bit by bit we retake our lifeworld... without imagining that there's some space outside of the system... we're not becoming hippies and going up in the mountains and saying 'oh we'll just grow our organic beans here... we can pretend like the rest of the world doesn't exist', that's not a revolutionary position to take either... that's making yourself irrelevant to the rest of the world, but... saying I can't disown this world, I was born into this language, this network, this system, and so... in a way that is... a battle of the imagination. (interview, September 20, 2004)

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