# LOCAL LEFT STRATEGY NOW

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**NOTE:  In the hardback edition of the *Handbook,* most of the subsection headings have been printed in the style of section headings.  This seriously alters the logic of the argument.  In this typescript the subsection headings are given correctly, in italics.**

## Introduction

Leftwing local initiatives often develop out of a capitalist crisis such as that which has developed globally since 2007 – Germany in the 1920s, Italy in the 1970s, Britain in the 1980s, the US in the 1990s, Latin America in the current decade. When living standards fall, when the proportion of those in unemployed or in poverty rises, when nation states either choose not to or are powerless to intervene, then a radical local politics *may* emerge. This politics may go beyond quantitative amelioration of economic conditions to develop qualitatively new social relations and genuinely liberatory politics.  Crises do not always, however, lead to such local politics: the strategies adopted by the left can be crucial, and these are the subject of this chapter. We put forward our own views on left strategy, but include others' through critique. We consider more developed countries (MDCs) and urban areas in Newly Industrialised Countries (NICs), where the majority of the population depend directly

or indirectly on waged labour; we shall use the Marxist term 'the working class' to refer to this majority; we do not consider local struggles in the rural Third World.

Since the industrial revolution, the left, with the partial exceptions of anarchism, syndicalism and utopian socialism, has tended to see the national and international scales as strategically the most important. Key flows of capital and commodities are at these scales, and nation states have greater powers and resources than local and regional government; accordingly, the focus of the left has been to influence these economic flows and the nation state. But we shall argue in this chapter that the 'local' scale, stretching from home and workplace to region, is an essential scale for left politics, and indeed has specific strengths for the left. It is true that the place of the local within wider economic flows and higher-scale state structures makes left local strategy problematic and replete with tensions and pitfalls: localism has often been a trap for the left. The purpose of this chapter is to shed light on some of these difficulties and dilemmas, in the present context of neoliberalism and its crisis. Such a discussion is particularly important in the present period due to the burgeoning of local economic initiatives and urban programmes, most of which do not advance left politics and many of which militate against it. We therefore seek here to develop ideas for a distinctively left approach to local development which prioritises the interests of the working class.

We first consider the dependence of left local politics on its national and international political setting by using the example of left initiatives in Britain since the late 1960s. We then consider the present difficult – but not hopeless - situation internationally for the left after 30 years of neoliberalism. Section 4 considers some strategic issues for a

left local politics that can begin to overcome working class fragmentation and depoliticisation   Section 5 considers how these principles might be carried through in particular kinds of local initiative.

## 2.  The rise and fall of the local left in Britain

In Britain from the late 1960s until the defeat of the miners' strike in 1985 there was an open political crisis, generated by unprecedentedly low profit rates of British capital, moves to austerity by capital and the state, and militant resistance to the latter by trade unions, social movements and residents' organisations (Glyn and Harrison 1980).  While some of this resistance was nationally-organised, much of it arose from local organisations.  Regarding employment, previously non-militant groups of workers such as British Asians and women in Ford, Imperial Typewriters and Grunwick, as well as previously well-organised workers such as dockers, printers and car workers, undertook long disputes; workers occupied closed factories; even the two crucial national miners' strikes of 1973 and 1984-5 were strongly rooted in the mining communities.  A well-organised national network of shop stewards was sometimes able to link strong workplace organisation to solidarity within and beyond the industry.  Resistance around council house rents and squatting was also highly localised and differentiated, as were many of the actions of the women's and black movements.  Responding to grassroots resistance, the 1970s and early 1980s also saw radical initiatives issuing from some left Labour councils – sometimes rather grandly dubbed 'municipal socialism'. Their main foci were the maintenance of their services and the tax revenue to fund them, and initiatives to sustain and improve local jobs and further equal opportunities (Boddy and Fudge 1984; Eisenschitz and Gough 1993: 75-

86; GLC 1985; 1986; Gyford 1985). The latter local economic initiatives were inspired by the dominant strategy adopted by the trade union and Labour left nationally, the Alternative Economic Strategy (Coventry *et al.* Trades Councils 1980; London CSE 1980) – a major statement of which was edited by the current British prime minister (Brown 1975). This strategy envisaged public investment in the private economy, with the state exerting increasing control, to improve innovativeness and productivity, widen and deepen skills, give workers greater say in their industries, and overcome social disadvantages within work; conversion to socially-useful and eco products was also proposed. These ideas made a brief appearance in the manifesto and first year of the 1974 Labour government; but otherwise local authorities had to carve out their left policies within tight legal and financial constraints, in opposition to national governments; after the decisive defeat of the miners and the government's 1986 abolition of the Metropolitan Counties, these efforts collapsed.

The subsequent 20 years in Britain have seen very few localised struggles, notable exceptions being the local-national revolt against the poll tax in 1990 and some site-based ecological protests; the few workplace-based strikes have generally remained isolated and been defeated. Neoliberal discipline was imposed in Britain more heavily and successfully than in other developed countries excepting the US, through maintaining a high value of sterling (deflating manufacturing in particular), imposing anti-trade-union laws, and privatising much of the previously well-unionised public sector. The strongly credit-based expansions of 1992-9 and 2001-7 gave the appearance that neoliberalism had regenerated the British economy, even though economic inequality increased. Local public services increasingly excluded both clients and workers from influence. Local politics became dominated by a

consensual, apparently apolitical 'partnership' between councils, business and community organisations which implemented 'pro-business' policies (Cochrane 2007). Trade unionists, especially at the workplace level, were largely shut out of local politics, including from Labour Party decision making. Where residential communities were formally drawn in to urban programmes, as they increasingly were from the 1990s, they found that the key decisions were made elsewhere and that the militant community politics of the 1970s was ruled out (Atkinson 1999; Gough and Eisenschitz 2006: 148-56, 200-2). Deregulation and privatisation of housing and public transport effectively separated them from working class political influence. Coming into the present crisis, then, popular organisations in Britain, including those at a local level, are numerically weakened and politically demoralised.

Because they promised a boost to production, some of the policies developed by left councils in the 1980s have come into the mainstream, but in forms compatible with, and even reinforcing, neoliberalism. Supporting old and new industrial districts was pioneered by the 1980s Enterprise Boards, and now, as 'clusters', is the central strategy of the English Regional Development Agencies, shorn of considerations of job quality, equalities or workers' influence (Balls and Ealey 2000; Gough 2003). Promotion of the social economy, seen in the 1980s as opening to workers' self-management, is now a central part of national and local anti-poverty policy, in the form of semi-private self-help and quasi-privatisation of public services (Amin, Cameron and Hudson 2002). Training for oppressed groups has shifted from skilled waged work to self-employment and entrepreneurship. Lack of pressure from popular organisations has allowed the productive and disciplinary potential of these policies to be used while suppressing their radical potential.

This history suggests some general points.  Firstly, left advance at any spatial scale is critically dependent on militant struggles by popular collective organisations; left policies of government are a response to pressure from them. Secondly, the left may be able to take initiatives in particular localities against the flow of national politics; but these initiatives are limited and fragile unless there is a revival of the left at a national level.  Thirdly, a given policy may be used in *politically* very varied ways (Eisenschitz and Gough 1993: Ch.2; Gough and Eisenschitz 2006: Ch.8).  In particular, for policies of the state and of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to be implemented with empowering dynamics requires particular strategies and continuous pressure from popular organisations.  We expand on these points below.

## 3.  The legacy of neoliberalism

Since the 1980s neoliberalism has defeated, or inhibited the emergence of, left local initiatives not only in Britain but worldwide.  Offensives by firms to raise their profitability have increased job insecurity and weakened union organisation, exacerbated by cuts and privatisation in state employment.  Increased mobilities of productive and money capital and commodities have undermined the old centres of union strength and the working class community organisation that often went with that (Silver and Arrigi 2000).  At the same time, an enormous reserve of labour has been opened up in the Third World through industrialisation of agriculture and explosive growth of cities, resulting in an urban working class of one billion people (Davis 2004), of which half are either un- or under-employed and a large proportion work in the informal economy (Petras and Veltmeyer 2001).  An increasing part of

the urban working class globally makes its living through crime, particularly the illegal drugs industry which has been created by criminalisation, and crime organisation disorganises and sometimes directly attacks progressive collectivities (Ramonet, 2002).

Capital's demands and its mobility have weakened taxation, public spending and state regulation of business.  Austerity has encouraged competition for welfare services and jobs within the working class, resulting in a steep rise in ethnic or religious identification and xenophobia throughout the world (Panitch and Leys 2002). Insecurity of personal and household income, widening of individual and household incomes, erosion of welfare services, and weakening of established community ties by enforced migration, have weakened cultures of collectivity and mutuality and encouraged anomie and possessive individualism (Vail, Wheelock and Hill 1999; Sennett 1998; Beck 2001).  In the developed countries, particularly, workers, even the poor, come to blame *themselves* for their problems (Galbraith 1992).  The disavowal of responsibility for economic and social wellbeing by neoliberal states has further inhibited working class political involvement.  Socio-economic weakening of open, formal popular organisation, and states' and capital's repression, have meant that much collective organisation is (semi-) illegal, hidden within sub-cultures (Scott, 2005).

Thus neoliberalism has had major success in its central objectives – to atomise and individualise the world working class, weaken collective organisations in both production and social spheres, and depoliticise the population by imposing 'the rule of markets'.

Since the 1990s, however, there has been a certain revival of both militant unionism and urban struggles (Moody 1997; R. Cox 1999; Merrifield 2002; Leitner et al. 2007). This process has been highly uneven between countries due to in part to differences in the severity of the attacks on living standards, in the effective fragmentation of the working class, and in direct repression. Resistance has also varied with territorially-specific political-economic traditions which can be durable over many decades and to some extent survive changes in global regulation such as neoliberalism; even among the MDCs there are enormous variations in 'national regimes' (Coates 2000). Thus in the US, Britain, Canada, Australia and Japan since the 1980s, and the former Eastern Block countries since 1989, collective resistance has been weak. By contrast, in many EU countries since the 1990s there have been militant struggles around jobs, pensions, unemployment and racism. In these countries local and regional governments have in some cases been able to maintain or innovate some top-down, mildly social democratic policies, partially shielding their populations from neoliberalism; in the US, the weakness of social democracy has meant that this role has in some places been played by innovative community development initiatives (Williamson et al 2002). The Newly Industrialising Countries, despite strong long term growth, have seen accumulation and/or financial crises which have elicited much militant, even explosive, collective action – even in the face of brutal repression, as in China; this has tended to remain localised because of repression of national popular networks (Sanyal 2008). In those parts of the Third World with low or negative growth, the economic weakness of the working class has mostly enabled dictatorial regimes to prevent collective action for economic and social aims, or to channel it into inter-ethnic conflict; this is true of most of the Middle East and Africa, and to some extent

India.  It is in Latin America that popular resistance to neoliberalism has been strongest, including movements of the rural poor, struggles by unionised and unemployed workers and by *indigenos,* often organised at the neighbourhood level*,* mostly against the state; these have led to the formation of left or social democratic governments (Panizza 2005).  Overlaid on these national differences are, in many nations, large differences in the strength of the left between regions and localities (Jonas 1996; Agnew 1997; K. Cox 1998; Castree et al 2004: Ch.6).  In the late 2000s, then, the possibilities for building left initiatives at a local level start from very different positions in different continents, countries and localities.  As we write the picture changes weekly, as protests against the effects of the global recession erupt across the Third World, former Eastern Block and the MDCs.

## 4. Strategic ideas for left local politics

### *Class, collectivity and the local*

In these circumstances, how can left initiatives be built against neoliberal disempowerment using the local scale?  Basic principles should be to combat neo-liberal individualism and anomie by building wide, varied and comprehensive collective *organisations* of ordinary people, developing collective *control* over the economy, enhancing collective *social reproduction,* and thus extending *democracy* through all aspects of society.  Empowerment must be collective to combat the market-fatalism that social atomisation has created, to provide force of numbers against capital and (often) the state, and to begin to plan production and reproduction according to genuinely social criteria.  This implies that a social democratic strategy

limited to progressive policies carried out top-down by the local state (for example

Allmendinger 2003) is inadequate. But equally, a libertarian/anarchist strategy

limited to building islands of progressive practice such as individual social enterprises

(Gorz 1982; Gibson-Graham 1996) or Foucauldian heterotopias (Genocchio 1995;

MacCannell 2008) is inadequate in that it organises only a small elite, does not

confront markets, and does not offer solutions for the majority of the population; it

therefore cannot develop inclusive, strong organisations and action.

A strategy of collective organisation needs to be rooted in, though not limited to, the

*local* scale. This scale facilitates the involvement of increasing numbers of people

through the immediacy and visibility of local problems of economic, social and

cultural life. Collective organisation can draw on existing bonds of friendship,

acquaintance and trust. The sharp constraints of money and time that most people

have for participation in politics are easiest to overcome with local organisation. In

some cases, though not all, longstanding local traditions of solidarity can be drawn on

(Wills, 1998). Thus Sklair (1998) argues that, even to confront the major *global*

institutions and practices of power, local action is the essential starting point – even

though this needs to be multiplied and linked at higher spatial scales. The local scale

is thus essential to a strategy of collective organisation and action. It is then possible

to build 'a sense of local community', not in its currently dominant form as

reinforcement of local hierarchy and competition with other localities, but in a

progressive way which can contest power (Cowley et al. 1977; Massey 1993; Craig

and Mayo 1995).

Collective working-class organisations are, in the first place, *oppositional* to capital

and the state rather than 'constructive', since by definition they do not have control over the major social resources. Trade unions form and develop through defence against employers. Residents' organisations make demands on the local state and on property, infrastructural and service capital. This organisation around immediate, daily needs can involve large numbers of people in organisation and activity. This practical-oppositional nature of working class organisation is neglected by some purportedly 'Gramscian' strategists who see the *central* task of a progressive movement as being the construction of an alternative hegemonic ideology (Laclau and Mouffe 1985; Hall and Jacques 1989); this privileges the activity of left intellectuals and marginalises all others', and dodges addressing the immediate material needs of the majority. It is also glossed over by theorists who deny or downplay the existence of 'power over' (Allen, 2003) and who propose alternatives based on Deleuzian networks (Amin and Thrift 2002; Swyngedouw 2008); it is at best unclear how such networks can confront the major forms of power in contemporary society (Slair 1998). Similarly, the oppositional nature of working class organisation is neglected by those, including all the major global institutions, who propose the building of *generic* 'social capital' in working class, especially poor, communities (World Bank 2000; Social Exclusion Unit 2001). This approach occludes how social capital and civil society are profoundly shaped by capital and the state (R.Cox 1999), and that local relations between people are *specific* to particular social projects and thus particular political strategies (Fine 2001; Das 2004).

The crucial organisations here are not only those of the poor – the target group for so many mainstream local economic initiatives – but those of the whole working class, including 'the middle class'. Throughout industrial capitalism the non-poor have had

had better formal organisation than the poor because of their stronger position in production and greater resources for organising; and in recent decades the poor have tended further to loose organisational capacity through economic and social atomisation and the drugs industry.  A symptom of this problem is that in recent years the poor and deracinated have found expression for their anger in fruitless rioting, inter-ethnic fights, and battles with the police which lead nowhere, as instanced in South Los Angeles in 1992, British cities in 1981 and 1991, the Paris *banlieux* in 2004, and Greece in winter 2008-9.  Besides, in the last 30 years the non-poor have acquired increasing reasons for self-organisation and militancy.  Job loss, insecurity, deskilling, loss of autonomy within work, and erosion of pensions and welfare services started with unskilled workers but have moved 'upwards' through middle layers to professionals, and this tendency 'to share the misery' is obvious in the present crisis.  Thus during the crisis of 2001-3 in Argentina, the middle class played a substantial role in local mobilisations (Ozarow 2007).  The struggle specifically against extreme poverty therefore needs to link collective action of the poor to mainstream working class organisations; the latter have an interest in this since poverty is essentially a distillation and concentration of oppressions experienced by all the working class (Gough and Eisenschitz 2006).  If this link is made, then the poor will have more effective means of organisation than the riot (cf Zizek 2008). [1] Left local strategy, then, can and should encompass organisation of the great majority of the population, from the poor to the middle class.


   ***The local state, capital and social enterprises***


While workers organisation are in the first place oppositional, a left strategy cannot be

*simply* in opposition to the local state.  Especially in the developed countries and the NICs, the local state has substantial powers and resources which the left needs to use and develop.  Basic services such as education, health, social housing and environmental services cannot be adequately provided for without the taxation and borrowing powers of the state, and the socialisation of the economy cannot proceed without the powers and funds of the state.  The left therefore needs to resist cuts in spending on useful services and restriction of local governments' abilities to tax and borrow, and defend direct state delivery of services against fragmentation into cost centres, contracting out, quangoisation and outright privatisation (Whitfield 2006).  It needs to defend, or push for, egalitarian delivery of services which empower users and build their sociability, as for example in the revolutionary education practices of Reggio Emilia in Italy (Dahlberg and Moss 2006).

The left also needs to defend the existing powers of the local state to regulate investment, for example in the built environment, and to run trading enterprises. More ambitiously, it needs to push the local state to intervene into the local economy on the side of workers (Gough 1986; Totterdill 1989; Cumbers and Whittam 2007). The local economy is centrally important not just because most people's incomes depend on it, but also because it determines workers' autonomy, quality of labour and ability to organise within the working day.   Local production politics has, however, to recognise that it may not be possible, in the medium term, to gain the necessary powers or funding**.**

'Support for state action' does not, though, mean allowing elected representatives and state officers a free hand.  On the contrary, collective organisations in civil society

need to impose continuous pressure on the local state, open up its processes of decision-making to inspection, and become an integral part of that decision-making - in short, a real and popular democracy. For example, any state policies involving employment and production need to be made in association with the relevant trade unions, and pupils, parents and teachers' organisations need to direct schools. Such possibility of real influence also encourages wider and more active participation in those collective organisations, which is the best insurance against their bureaucratisation, capture by 'leaders', or corruption (which are chronic problems everywhere). The Argentinian *piqueteros* negotiated for the neighbourhood in the street in order to put pressure on the state representatives and to prevent clientalist corruption (Starr 2005). Since the local state is formally controlled by political parties, left trajectories for the local state are also furthered by the development of left parties genuinely responsive to their membership and committed to working class interests. Politicians from such parties who control local government can both 'take the local state outwards' through supporting popular organisations and actions, and take these organisations 'into the local state' by making it more open and responsive to them (Wainwright 1994: Ch.7).

A corollary is that the oldest and still most popular aim of the left, extending democracy, is not achieved simply or mainly by extending formal methods of participation in local government: 'participation' needs to be of a form which achieves radical results. Collective organisations need to achieve real control and design of state services, investments and regulation of private interests (Eisenschitz, 2008). If this does not happen, participation simply results in demoralisation of people and bureaucratisation of their organisations. In particular, decentralisation of

state powers and spending from nation to region to locality to neighbourhood in the name of increasing participation – a current consensus from right to left - is meaningless unless the smaller scale facilitates greater popular control over resources and powers. Moreover, for the left 'extending democracy' should not concern merely the state but private capital and indeed social enterprises: for socialists, the disempowerment of working people within production is central to their social, political and cultural disempowerment. If production is, then, to be subjected to greater democratic control, this must be partly through the direct actions of local collective organisations. Given these caveats, extensions of democracy into the state and economy can form virtuous circles, whereby ordinary people come to understand social mechanisms better, feel greater ability to change them, and thus propose more radical solutions.

These considerations raise important dilemmas concerning the contracting out of local state services to not-for-profit enterprises and the VCS. This type of contracting out has been a major aspect of reform of local government in, for example, Britain; the Labour government has argued that the VCS is more plural, democratic, responsive and innovative compared with the 'bureaucratic' and 'inflexible' state (Paxton and Pearce 2005). Some centre-left commentators of a post-modern or associationalist bent have supported this process on the grounds that it empowers civil society, democratises the services, and weakens the overbearing state (Amin and Thrift 2002). It is true that non-state organisation have sometimes delivered essential services in ways which are more visionary and innovative than departments of the local state. For brief periods of crisis, community enterprises may form something of an alternative that may be a means of reshaping the state. In the city of Mosconi in

Argentina, for instance, there were 300 projects built by well-organised grassroots organisations that effectively developed a parallel local state (Starr 2005). But the left needs to be cautious before calling for wholesale hand-over to the VCS. In the first place, these services remain dependent on state funding; the projects in Mosconi, for instance, relied on local and national state funding, World Bank-backed workfare schemes, and the goodwill of local oil firms (Schaumberg 2008: 378). Existing contracting out to the VCS is taking place for the same, neoliberal reasons as contracting out to private firms: to lower wages and conditions, and to depoliticise services by passing the buck for ensuring their quality. This has fragmented service delivery, created greater unevenness across localities, and made it more difficult for the local state to pursue pro-working class policies (Mayer 2007). A strong, continuing role for the local state in delivery of services is in our view essential in order to ensure their universality, equity and quality, and in order that they can be democratically planned across the locality. But, as we have just argued, these very roles of the local state need to be opened up to much greater control by residents, clients and service workers. The left needs to ensure that social enterprises funded to provide essential services do not under-cut public sector employment conditions, are genuinely democratically accountable, are efficient, and are not corrupt. Under these conditions, their innovativeness can help to make the services directly run by the state more innovative. With this kind of approach, many different concrete articulations of the local state, community organisations, and collective social groups are possible in delivering essential services.

A related debate concerns the role of social enterprises and worker cooperatives in producing marketed commodities. Some associationalist (Cooke and Morgan 1998;

Gibson-Graham 1996) and market-socialist (Nove 1983; Sayer 1995) authors argue that a *comprehensive system* of such enterprises, relating through markets, is a potential, feasible alternative to capitalist production. They argue that it is a desirable one since it allows workers much greater autonomy and control within their enterprises, increases innovativeness and productivity, and spatially decentralises decision-making. If this were so, then the left has a simple, comprehensive alternative to both state and market (Catterall *et al.* 1996); Mance (2009) speaks of social enterprises as 'the material base of post capitalist societies'. In the last decades there have indeed been many local left initiatives to support such enterprises (Pearce 2003). However, once again, we think that the left should not pursue producer cooperatives operating in free markets as the *only* strategy for production of commodities (Gough and Eisenschitz 2006: 216-21). Cooperatives tend to be under-capitalised and thus find it hard to out-compete the private sector. They often rely for survival on self-exploitation of the workforce. They typically need the state for both funding and coordination, so that they cannot so easily escape the state's 'dead hand'. We therefore believe that we need strategies for local state production and left strategies within-and-against the existing private sector: see further section 5. And since left strategy for social enterprise, in both state-funded services and commmodity production, is far from straightforward, we also discuss this further in section 5.

### *Connecting different aspects of local life*

Left local strategies need to address all aspects of the locality *holistically*, in particular combating the characteristic splits in capitalist society between production and reproduction, the public sphere and the home, economy, social life and culture, and

society and nature (Meszaros 1995: 464ff). Left strategy should refuse the division between 'economic', 'social', 'environmental' and 'cultural' policy-making. For example, democratisation of privately-controlled production means not only pushing for more skilled and autonomous work (Hales 1980; Cooley 1987) but also changing its goods and services towards basic human needs (Mackintosh and Wainwright 1987: Ch.7; Elson 1988). While reproduction of people under capitalism is centred on private domestic work and private use of commodities purchased, these are in fact strongly *socially* constructed, particularly by capital; left strategy should aim to make this socialisation conscious and democratic, whether it be food and nutrition, the geography of retailing, the design of housing, or public transport versus the car. In each of these areas there can be collaboration between workers in the service and residents consuming it, redesigning the service for the benefit of both groups (Lavelette and Mooney 2000; on housing see Arkitektkontor AB 1974; on public transport see GLC, 1985: Ch.20). Moreover, safeguarding of ecosystems through local action nearly always involves decisions which span the spheres of production and social life respectively. Such actions across the two spheres are the best way of developing a culture of *care* for both humans and nature, by posing the question of the *aims* of production (use values versus private profit) and the nature of human and ecosystem *needs*. Such actions can expose the alienated nature of both production and consumption under capitalism (Pepper 1993).

Moreover, they imply collaboration between popular organisations in the respective spheres – trade unions, residents groups and social movements – and hence their mutual support. These alliances can be very powerful: for example, in Glasgow during the First World War and in Turin in 1969-70, strong and militant union

organisation inspired revolts in the social sphere – rent strikes for rent controls in the former case, mass squatting of housing and free public transport in the second. These collaborations are not always easy, however: there are likely to be tensions between local groups due to their different preoccupations and foci: for example, workers in polluting industries may clash with local residents' groups; male workers may not see the point of expanding nursery provision; users of cars may be unwilling to see their use restricted. But the *local* level is the ideal scale at which to thrash out these disagreements and negotiate practical ways forward, since the different groups can meet face-to-face and also directly inspect the concrete local facts relevant to the dispute.

### *The problem of spatial scale*

While the locality is a necessary and potentially powerful scale for left action, the latter always needs to be linked into higher spatial scales. The world is constructed through the relations between territories, but by the same token each locality is constructed by its relations to others (Howitt 1993). The key task considered in this chapter, of constructing solidarity and collectivity *within* localities, is thus inseparable from constructing them at wider spatial scales (Swyngedouw 2000; Gough 2002). In modern society, social actors within any locality have powerful impacts on society and nature outside it. Conversely, progressive actions within localities can easily be undermined by markets in land, production, commodities and money operating at larger scales, by firms based outside the locality, and by spatially-higher levels of the state (Obi 2005). The latter problem is worse the smaller the 'locality' (another reason why spatial decentralisation of state decision-making can be counter-

productive).  The limitations of the local are *less* the more broad and inclusive are the local collective organisations (so that higher scale pressures do not so easily create divisions), and the more holistic are the initiatives being taken (so that the democratic forms of social and economic life in the locality have greater resilience).  But the scale problem cannot be avoided.  In consequence, local collective organisation always needs to seek the greatest solidarity and cooperation with similar organisations elsewhere.  This solidarity is especially necessary when localities are linked by capital's investments: gains by workers in one workplace or locality can be easily undermined by capital (and workers) elsewhere in the same industry unless workers cooperate across space (Hudson and Sadler 1986).  To the extent that a local civil society begins to direct local government in progressive ways, it needs to prevent undermining by both other local governments and the nation state.  Thus left organisation, strategy and transformation at higher spatial scales are essential to any left local advance that is to last more than a year or two.  To change the hallowed slogan, 'think *and* act locally *and* globally'.

Such cooperation across localities and nations cannot rely on the state nor even on national and international bureaucracies of popular organisations such as trade unions: it has to be built from the bottom up.  Thus on employment, in recent years a new National Shop Stewards Network has been constructed in Britain, and many international campaigning organisations have been built from the grass-roots (Moody 1997) – an early pioneer was the Transnational Information Exchange (Chapkis and Enloe 1983).  In the last fifteen years or so a loosely organised movement against neoliberal globalisation (or 'alter-globalisation movement') has emerged linking national, and to a lesser extent local, unions, community organisations and

progressive NGOs, meeting through the Social Forums which were, significantly, initiated by the *city* government of Porto Alegre, Brasil. So far, this movement has not organised any large scale actions, but has yielded many useful bilateral cooperations (Amoore 2005; Routledge and Cumbers 2009).

Through this kind of overall strategy, the depoliticisation wrought by neoliberalism can start to be reversed, as the social nature of daily life becomes increasingly evident and it begins to be more strongly subject to collective political debate and action. These processes are path dependent; in particular, existing consciousness and socio-economic practices may mean that apparently modest reforms can have radical dynamics. We have noted the very different degrees of collective organisation and militancy between countries and localities at present, and these will affect how bold initiatives can be. Moreover, left tactics need to vary over time: in Britain for example, rather than simply widening the VCS as in the 1980s, we need to radicalise and democratise it; and rather than simply resisting privatisation, we need to bring services back into public ownership. Tactical acumen is essential for the local left.

## 5. Fields of action

### *Struggles around jobs*

The workplace is the most essential scale for trade union organisation and contestation: larger scale workers' organisation has no base and no purchase without it. The daily interactions between workers within the workplace, and the recognition of their common situation there, are the basis for collective organisation. At the

workplace scale workers can act rapidly, and in ways that provide a spectacle of resistance in walk-outs, pickets and occupations, helping to win support from other workers *and* residents in the locality (Hudson and Sadler 1986; Jonas, 1998).

If the workplace is profitable, then it can be possible for workers to gain concessions from management through action restricted to that workplace (Castree *et al* 2004: xvii-xviii, 18-23); this was often done, for example, in large manufacturing plants in Britain in the 1960s, and this developed a strongly decentralised union movement. But when profitability is low or there is overcapacity in the industry, purely local action is insufficient: management can threaten to close the workplace if workers resist restructuring or wage cuts; and if workers are successful in keeping *their* plant open, this will tend to cause job loss elsewhere in the industry or multi-plant firm (Herod 1997; Harvey 1996: Ch.1). The spatial divisions and competition between workers orchestrated by management can be combatted only by cooperation between workers in different workplaces within the industry. The logic of such cooperation is then for unions to begin to monitor patterns of investment and disinvestment across the industry, at scales from the locality to the globe depending on the sector, and then begin to make demands on that investment: the germs of socialist planning (Gough 2002; Gough 2004: 269-83).

Where there is a locally-centred industrial district or dense local subcontracting linkages between workplaces, unions can gain strength from organising within the industry across workplaces, sometimes using blockage of contracting linkages for bargaining (GLC 1985: Ch.15; Castree *et al*. 2004: 162-5); powerful *local* solidarity can thus be developed. This approach can sometimes be used in industrial districts

where workers and employers belong to the same minority ethnicity. The employers often use ethnicity to subordinate their workforce (Kakios and van der Velden 1984); but workers may use community bonds to organise *their* solidarity, as have the Turkish and Kurdish workers in the London clothing industry.

The local scale is also an essential one for organising the worst-organised workers. The extreme exploitation of most homeworkers can be addressed through community-based campaigns (Allen and Wolkowitz 1987). A large proportion of the workforce in MDCs now works in small, non-unionised workplaces of diverse sectors within each locality. These have been addressed by 'community unionism' targeted on industrial neighbourhoods and using those spaces to develop solidarity (Wills 2001). 'Living wage' campaigns based in particular cities or neighbourhoods have successfully organised to improve wages of low paid, often casualised, sometimes illegal-immigrant, service workers, including those that work in small work units such as caretakers and cleaners (Savage 1998; Figart 2004). Thus in recent years London Citizens, based in residential-community, minority-ethnic and church organisations, has worked with unions to secure a living wage well above the national minimum wage for groups of low paid workers, something the unions alone had not achieved (Holgate and Wills 2007). In globally-traded goods, such local campaigns can be further strengthened through international networks of solidarity (Ross 1997). Finally, the local scale is an essential one for organising the unemployed since – given the widespread failure of unions to organise them - they are outside (larger scale) production-related networks. In recent years local organisation has been the basis for regional and national marches and actions of the unemployed in some European countries, reconnecting them with employed workers and residents (Mathers 2007).

In times of acute crisis, workers' collective actions of different types can catalyse each other across a locality.  Thus in the crisis of the early 2000s in Argentina militant neighbourhood assemblies and local organisations of the unemployed posed an alternative power to capital and state.  With this support, workers in many localities tried to seize the means of production, despite more than half of workers being in the informal sector (Schaumberg 2008); some 170 cooperatives were formed as workers took control of (mostly small) closed factories (Dinerstein 2007).

Altogether, then, localities remain essential, though not sufficient, sites for workers' collective resistance to capital.

### *The organisation of production and investment*

Despite the very limited resources and powers of local and regional government around production (albeit with big variation between countries), there are progressive policies which they may be able to implement or at least push for.  First, the local state may be able to invest in and run trading enterprises.  The local authority in Glasgow, USA, for instance, provided a local telecommunications network giving a cheaper and better internet connection for residents and attracting strong inward investment (Williamson *et al.* 2002: 152).  Such investments or plans for them can be used to put in question the efficiency and social impacts of private production (on building work see Direct Labour Collective 1978; on telecoms see GLC 1985: Ch. 16).

Secondly, there is powerful legitimacy for the local state to bring into use underused resources, be they unemployed workers or unused land and buildings. The political point is further reinforced if these resources are used for innovative forms of production, for example worker cooperatives, skilled and autonomous forms of work, or socially-useful products.

Thirdly, investment money may be channelled into the locality by using political pressure on the major holders of savings, the pension funds and insurance companies; the latter are vulnerable to this pressure because they hold working people's savings. In social democratic countries such as Sweden trade unions have long had a say in how their industry's pension fund is invested; in other countries, unions and local governments can apply pressure for the same ends (Minns 1980; Blackburn 2003). Again, the point should be to democratise and politicise the process of investment and the choices it involves, for example to prioritise high unemployment areas or green production.

Fourthly, it is possible to take local initiatives in money circulation which put into question its capitalist forms. Local money (Monbiot 2009) can increase circulation and, if it stimulates corresponding production, is non-inflationary. Thus the city government of Curitiba in Brazil paid its own workforce partly in local money which it had organised for local municipal and private services to accept, leading to rapid local economic growth. In Argentina there was a massive growth in local voucher schemes from 1995 in response to economic collapse; the number of these *Trueques* peaked at 4700 in the 2002 crisis; the vouchers were exchangeable between schemes, creating an effective second national currency. The schemes enabled the

unemployed, particularly women, to market their labour power, micro-enterprises and a few larger worker cooperatives to be set up, abandoned buildings and land to be used, unsold production from local factories to be exchanged, and local services to gain adequate custom. Half of surveyed local households made over half their income through the schemes, and many subsistence goods could be purchased with vouchers (Gomez and Helmsing 2008). Local Exchange and Trading Schemes (LETS) organise direct exchange of individuals' labour time, enabling production and consumption of useful services, albeit limited to those without substantial fixed capital or economies of scale (Walker and Goldsmith 2001). Cooperatively-owned credit unions or local government-owned peoples' banks can provide much better terms for savings and borrowing than the private sector (Fuller and Jonas 2003). All these forms of money make the link between production and consumption more direct and transparent, and thus encourage a *social* view of the local economy.

### *The Third Sector*

The 'Third Sector', not-for-profit enterprises or the 'social economy' can play an important role in left strategy, by demonstrating the possibilities for workers' or residents' control of the enterprise, social innovation, production directly to meet social needs, and efficient production without capitalist direction. South Central Farm in Los Angeles, for example, improved food quality and security, preserved traditions of a peasant community recently uprooted to the city, and enabled members to develop as individuals and as a collective; the potentially militant dynamic of such initiatives is shown by the strong fight waged to take the land into community ownership (Irazabal, and Punja 2009: 11). However, social enterprises can equally

well serve rightwing politics: they may survive through self-exploitation, with wages, hours and conditions inferior to the industry average; they may be used to habituate people to poor employment; they may be under-resourced self-help, an inferior substitute for formal welfare services; and the state may contract out to them in order to cut wages and conditions; in short, they may teach 'standing on your own two feet' rather than working class cooperation (Eick 2007). In Britain at present, for example, the social economy inclines more to the rightwing than the leftwing model (Amin *et al.* 2002; Fuller and Jonas 2003).

To lead the social economy in a leftwards direction strategy is therefore vital (Medoff and Sklar 1994; Eisenschitz and Gough 2009). Social enterprises need to form the strongest possible ties to unionised workers in mainstream production, by being unionised and by tapping into the technical expertise of mainstream workers; they can then, reciprocally, show the latter the advantages of having immediate control over one's production process. Adequate capital should be secured from the local state (including as land and buildings), from socialised finance, or from recycling of profits from other social enterprises. Economic and political economies of scale should be sought through networking of community enterprises locally, nationally and internationally. There are global networks that attempt to build cooperation between the millions of people involved in the social economy worldwide. These explicitly liberatory campaigns seek to generate synergies of alternative finance, local currencies, fair trade, ethical consumption and low impact technologies, using a variety of ownership forms. The accumulation of political strength is important since the social economy has to constantly fight against being legally marginalised by lobbying from private business. With this kind of strategy, the social economy can

complement and radicalise, rather than undermine, increases in workers' influence within mainstream production and the extension of democratic state-owned production.

In the medium term, however, a liberatory social economy is dependent on left advance in the whole society, without which community-based organisations tend merely to manage their place within capitalist markets. Petras (1997) argues that Latin American NGOs from the 1980s moved from progressive politics to becoming neoliberalism's community face. In Argentina, the radical community-based initiatives in welfare and production of the early 2000s withered when the Kirchner government used the national scale to seize the political initiative from the left. Only 10% of the *Trueques* present in 2002 survived until 2007, and this was partly due to lack of support from and integration with local governments (Gomez and Helmsing 2008). In the US employee ownership of firms has not made any fundamental challenge to capitalism (Williamson *et al.* 2002). Particularly in times of economic decline, wider left advance is needed for worker- and community-controlled enterprises to maintain their radical dynamics.

*Fighting social oppressions*

Various social oppressions are substantially – though never wholly – constructed within localities, and many radical struggles against them have had this scale (Gough and Eisenschitz 2006: 131-5, 224-8; Craig and Mayo 1995). The oppression of women is rooted in local relations between home, neighbourhood and waged work. Campaigns for more social care for children and the infirm, better housing, housing

suitable for varied households, closer proximity of home, waged work, welfare and services, more convenient and free public transport, and for women's equality within waged work, can lead to practical gains, and can show that apparently individual problems are social and have collective solutions (Rowbotham 1989; Greed 1994; Darke, Lewith and Woods 2000). Racism's deepest roots are in relations between the national and international scales. But racism is strongly expressed and developed within localities, and is fought there in campaigns for equality in housing, education and health care and against super-exploitation in waged work (Sivanandan 1990). Mainly locally-based campaigns for safety in both homes and public spaces have been waged by black people, women, and lesbians and gay men (Rowbotham 1989; Bhavnani and Coulson 2005). Neighbourhood and local scales are vital *cultural* supports to all these struggles, since antagonistic groups there confront each other not as abstractions but face-to-face and thus, potentially, as full persons. For example, campaigns to stop deportation of refugees in Britain have had their greatest success in stubborn defence of refugees by their British neighbours who have befriended them (Hayter 2000); conversely, some of the worst racism in Britain is found in regions such as Cumbria and Lincolnshire with very few black or immigrant residents. Local settings can thus be powerful in overcoming prejudice and developing practical solidarity.


### *Housing and land*


The last 25 years have seen rapid inflation in house prices throughout the MDCs and NICs, resulting for the majority of the working class in drain on income, poor accommodation, overcrowding, insecurity, and blocking of inter-local migration.

This crisis has been caused by insufficient new building to meet monetarily-effective demand, let alone need, plus a massive channelling of capital into property via direct investment and credit, much of it directed at speculative gain (Harvey 1989: Ch.2; Turner 2008). The left internationally has been extraordinarily unsuccessful in pushing for expanded supply of affordable housing. This is in part due to the legal, institutional and financial structures of housing provision being almost entirely in the hands of *nation* states, over which the left has had virtually no influence.

The most substantial local struggles around housing under neoliberalism have been to defend poor people's occupation of, or tenure in, *existing* stock. In the 1970s and 1980s, there was mass squatting by the poor in the fast-growing northern Italian cities, and widespread squatting, mainly by young people, in high-value empty housing in central cities. However, state violence against squatters increased, and further rises in value have meant declining space available for squatting in major cities. There have also been struggles to oppose eviction of (largely long-standing) poor residents from CBD-fringe neighbourhoods to make way for commercial buildings and expensive apartments; in recent years the latter has been a central part of the vaunted 'urban renaissance' (Swyngedouw, Moulaert and Rodriguez 2002;). In the 1970s and 1980s these defensive campaigns had some successes (Wates 1976; Tuckett 1988); but more recently there have been few successes and many defeats; most of the successes have been in defending or setting up work and living spaces for low-income creative self-employed people (Porter and Shaw 2008). This deterioration reflects, in part, the ever-increasing profits from CBD-fringe development, and the consequent increasing ruthless of developers and state in pushing it through; creative spaces can, however, sometimes be welcomed as adding 'vibrancy'. Another form of resistance, in Britain

and Germany for example, has been of social housing tenants to (semi-) privatisation
of their homes; well-organised neighbourhood campaigns have had some successes
here, though without reversing the national policies.

These campaigns, however, have been essentially defensive, and have not achieved
new programmes to *increase the supply* of affordable housing.  Yet given the manifest
disaster of neoliberal housing provision, now exacerbated by the recession, left
campaigns for affordable housing could be very popular, as they were in the 19th and
early 20th century MDCs.  Left strategy should focus on the partial de-
commodification of housing, through state and cooperative ownership (Bowie 2008)
funded by control of the major national and international investment funds, zero-
carbon construction by state-owned or cooperative building firms backed by the
builders' unions, and state appropriation of empty housing.  While this is essentially a
national task, local actions can dramatise the housing shortage, for example through
small-scale state and community building as well as resistance to city-fringe evictions,
boycott by building workers of demolition of low-income housing (as in the Sydney
'green bans' in the 1970s: Mundey 1981), or coordinated mass squatting of empty
property.  The vast experience of self-build on squatted land in Third World cities
over the last fifty years suggests another possible avenue; but this constructs slums
unless tied to collective organisation of building, as in contemporary Venezuela, to
legalisation of occupation, to provision of physical infrastructures by the state.

Such campaigns point towards social ownership of all land.  Private ownership of
land, extended by neoliberalism, is a deep, chronic generator of privatised culture
(Low and Smith 2003), whereas its public ownership is a palpable assertion of the

primacy of the social.  Capital gains to private owners from change of land use are a gross example of unearned income, and so lack legitimacy: the left should push for their full appropriation by the state (Massey and Catalano 1978: 188-90; Sandercock 1979: Ch.6).

Again, national legislation is key. But local actions around major office and luxury-housing developments and the state's facilitation of them can make propaganda for the socialisation of land (Oudenampsen 2008; Holgersen 2008).   More positively, with legislative backing social ownership of land may be developed as local community ownership, where gains from land development can be used for locally-determined social good, whether in further fixed investment or in welfare services. This was indeed the strategy of the early 20th century Garden City movement in Britain; today the community trust in Letchworth has a property income of £6m, used for social purposes.  Such land ownership can breed radical political dynamics.  Thus Boston's Dudley Street Neighbourhood Initiative managed to appropriate the private landlords, and used this political momentum to develop strong policies on jobs, health, education, transport and local services (Medoff and Sklar 1994).  However, the left needs to guard against governments using development values as an excuse to cut direct state funding, and in ways which exacerbate spatial uneven development.  Thus in recent years in Britain, with little central state funding for social housing, local governments have been forced to negotiate social housing as 'planning gain' from private development, hence subordinating it to the market.  The Development Trusts which have multiplied in poor neighbourhoods of Britain in recent years often own fixed assets; but this has been used to make anti-poverty measures a local responsibility dependent on low-value local resources (Development Trusts

Association 2008). Community asset management can be used in depoliticising ways (Aiken, Cairns and Thake 2008). Community land ownership needs to be an additional gain, not compensation for cuts in other fields.

### *Participatory budgeting*

Participatory budgeting, in which neighbourhood assemblies have control over the local state's spending in their neighbourhood, was pioneered in 1989 by the far-left government of Porto Alegre. It has since been taken up in many localities in Latin America and beyond (Sintomer *et al.* 2008), sometimes under strong pressure from the working class (Rogers 2005: 5). In Porto Alegre decisions on annual priorities for capital investment were discussed in open neighbourhood assemblies; these decisions were then centralised through delegates to boroughs and from them to the city, which then decided on distribution *between* boroughs. This method politicised local government and elicited extraordinary participation from the population, especially from previously-marginalised women, black people, those without secondary education and unskilled workers; in the first five years, 8% of the adult population was involved at some stage (Abers 1998). The process stimulated the formation of neighbourhood associations and self-organisation of blacks, disabled people and the elderly (Bairerle 2002). Over the years there was a shift from parochial defence of one's patch to support for the most needy neighbourhoods. Investment switched sharply from prestigious projects mainly used by the better-off to basic infrastructures such as street paving, sewers and schools. Spending became more efficient and less corrupt (Abers 1998).

But, even in Porto Alegre, participatory budgeting has had limitations (Baierle 2002). The delegation structure was not powerful enough to prevent the council bureaucracy continuing its control over city-wide infrastructures. The city was hemmed in by the authority of State and Federal governments which were less democratic and radical. Most importantly, democracy in the city was strongly affected by the overall political atmosphere in the locality and beyond: the Brazilian trade unions were on the offensive in the 1980s but from the 1990s have been in retreat in the face of a neoliberal offensive which has greatly increased unemployment. Once again we see that formal democracy of the local state cannot be effective if the working class is disempowered and unable to act in the economic and social spheres. Indeed, *under these conditions* formal democratic methods of government may function to *contain* discontent by dividing and co-opting community groups (Cockburn 1977); according to Sintomer *et al.* (2008) this has indeed been the most common experience of participatory budgeting in recent years.

### *Alternative accounting systems*

Economic actors in capitalist society normally make decisions through a calculus of prices and incomes, assumed to arise from exchange in markets. This calculus tends to lock people's strategies into the order of capitalist society, and thus subordinate them to its forms of power (Mohun 1979). Conversely, alternative calculi can potentially challenge capitalist logics. In the field of local and regional politics in particular, in recent years capitalist accounting and criteria have been (increasingly) dominant; the left needs to challenge precisely these notions of 'development' (Pike, Rodriguez-Pose and Tomany 2007).

One alternative approach to accounting has been welfare economics, which uses price calculations but shifts from individual actors in markets to aggregate outcomes for social groups and the public good. Thus cost-benefit analysis puts a price on the impacts of, for example, a major infrastructure investment, including both social actors and phenomena such as noise excluded in the relevant market exchanges. Social impact assessments of (dis)investment decisions can demonstrate their wider benefits and costs, for example how closure of a large workplace imposes costs on the state in lost taxes, income support and health spending and on suppliers in lost income (Glyn 1985). Calculation of a money value of domestic work has sometimes been used to argue for feminist policies (Peterson and Runyan 2005). Such calculations can be useful in showing that capitalist society is not 'economically rational' *even in its own terms*, and in getting people to think socially. But they have limitations. Many calculations assume key prices and incomes as given, as when cost benefit analysis values people's free time as a fixed fraction of their money income (Ball 1979). More profoundly, the calculations do not in themselves reveal the *social relations* which give rise to the initial mis-calculation of costs and benefits. For example, the fact that a workplace closure imposes costs on the local state which may exceed the saving by the firm does not prevent the closure, since the state and the firm are separate social actors subject to quite different social relations. A genuinely radical dynamic here would need to *question and violate these social relations*, for example by the state taking over the firm without compensation.

Another approach to social valuation is that of LETS. LETS does indeed change social relations of production by setting up direct exchange of work without money.

Though creating another money (labour time units), it enables revaluation of people's labour, skills, caring work, and even humanity through increased (self-) esteem (Walker and Goldsmith 2001).

Other alternative calculi seek to value 'the non-economic', that is, neither labour nor products of labour. One such is accounting of aspects of the ecosystem, such as green-house gases, water and agricultural land. Again, this accounting is ideologically important for the left in highlighting eco-societal impacts and long-term consequences of present actions, and in pointing the finger at both capitalist production dynamics and mindless consumption. But again, the accounting can be the basis for quite *different* political directions. Are carbon emissions to be fixed in advance, or made to respond to profits and incomes through trading of quotas? A left strategy adopts the former approach, thus violating capitalist logic. Moreover, ecological production relations should be made more transparent by linking local people to the workers 'producing' the green-house gases, water and food they 'consume', partially by-passing the commodity form.

Finally, a recently-developed strategy has been 'the economics of happiness' (Layard 2006; Michaelson *et al.* 2009). Like welfare economics, this starts from a critique of neoclassical economics, arguing that aspects of human wellbeing such as health, education, creativity and general happiness are mis-priced 'by markets' but nevertheless need to be accounted for in economic policy. This work can justify allocating economic resources to support these aspects of wellbeing. But the limitation of this work is that aspects of wellbeing are pictured as quasi-commodities which can be 'delivered' *to individuals*; again, the approach fails to focus on *social*

*relations*. Thus Layard does not critique capitalist social relations of production and the low self-esteem and unhappiness that are intrinsic to exploitation (Marx 1980; Sennett 1998), nor how capitalism generates indifference to others (Geras 1998). Wellbeing is not simply something which individuals have more or less of but is *within* relations to others. Thus Wilkinson and Pickett (2009) show that the well-being of a country's inhabitants is strongly correlated with low income inequality, that is, with its relations of distribution. At a smaller scale, Baker *et al.* (2004: Ch.2) argue that a fundamental aspect of wellbeing is being within relationships of care.

Alternative calculi, then, can form powerful critiques of capitalist outcomes and point to social solutions. But the left needs to act on these by challenging the *relations* of the economy.

## 5. Conclusion

Socialist tradition has emphasised solidarity and economic planning at national and international scales. The local scale has been seen as problematic because of the subordination of enterprises and local economies to competition at higher spatial scales, and because of the weaker powers of the local state compared with the national. Neoliberal globalisation is said to have exacerbated these problems. But we have argued that localities are a crucial site for left strategy, because important social and economic relations are enacted and reproduced there, because of dense local relations between economy and social life, and because daily interactions and proximity facilitate building relations of solidarity and collectivity. Transforming social relations at higher spatial scales is certainly necessary, but local struggles are a dialectical moment in this.

The left local strategy discussed here is above all a class policy, against the individualisation and division of the working class which is the foundation of all capitalist power and which has been deepened by neoliberalism. Accordingly, we have given primacy to collective self-organisation and practical collective economics rather than autonomous progressive action by capital and the state. The heart of a radical local politics is a journey from individual to collective modes of thinking and acting. This implies a development of place-based community, not as the commonly-encountered self-subordination of the weak to the strong, but as the solidarity of the weak against the powerful. We hope we have shown that there are many promising tactics for carrying forward this strategy during the present crisis.

**Notes**

1. Gough and Eisenschitz (2006: Ch.12) is an extensive discussion of left strategies specifically of and for the poor, which we do not repeat in this chapter.

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