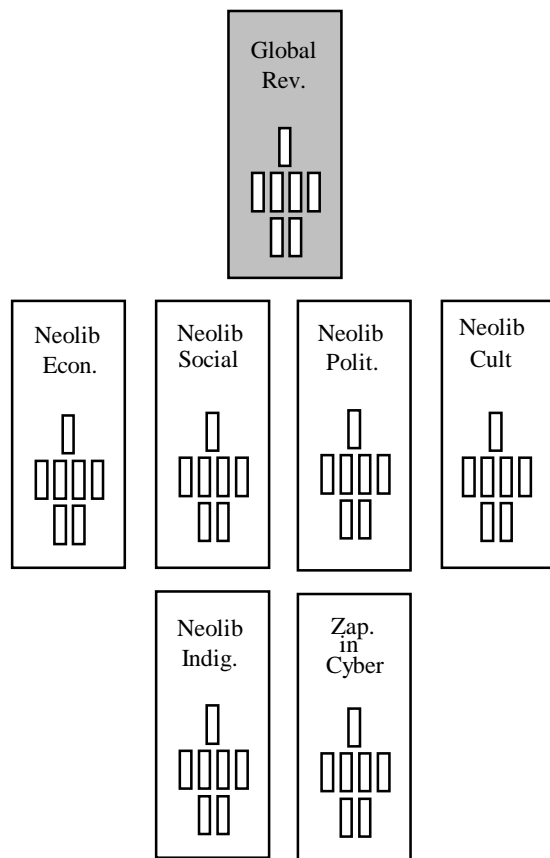


## Neoliberalism:

# Global Revolution

One of a series of interconnected notes prepared by Acción Zapatista de Austin ([www.utexas.edu/students/nave](http://www.utexas.edu/students/nave))



Revolutionary change “is about a process which incorporates different methods, different fronts, different and various levels of commitment and participation...[it] is no longer the problem of THE organization, THE method, THE caudillo.”  
Don Durito of the Lacandon, June 11, 1995

## Reform and Revolution

Neoliberalism is a form of capitalism. Each time mass movements have successfully fought against earlier forms of capitalist exploitation the system has metamorphosed and survived. In the 1930s, North America and European workers fought arbitrary management and periodically devastating unemployment. They demanded control over their work, steadily rising wages, full employment, unemployment compensation, paid vacations and collective voices in social policy and politics. They got Keynesianism: trade unions which collaborated with management, productivity deals that ignored their growing needs for free time, and in general government policies structured in favor of business but wrapped in the rhetoric of a “welfare state” for all. Out and out revolution has been subdued into reform. Mexican, Russian and Chinese peasants and workers who fought revolutionary wars for bread and land, dignity and justice found themselves saddled with a kind of state capitalism where revolution survived only as rhetoric and reforms were structured for the most rapid accumulation of capital possible. Anti-colonial struggles resulted in neo-colonialism --a change in form but not in substance. The implication is clear: we must change everything, everywhere, i.e., achieve a real revolution.

## Struggling Against Neoliberalism

A great weakness of our existing struggles against neoliberalism is our isolation from each other. The business interests and policies which have crafted and imposed neoliberalism are, unfortunately, much more united and coherent than we have been. Neoliberalism has been designed, pushed and implemented by some of the biggest, most powerful institutions in the world. Overcoming our own fragmentation does not require creating similarly concentrated institutions of power but rather elaborating a different kind of unity on as great a scale.

Organizing need not mean creating AN organization. Organizations tend to become bureaucratized, rigid and unresponsive to the evolving needs of organizing --witness the recurrent efforts to “reform” trade unions, etc. Better that we undertake a process of global organizing that consists of establishing linkages among variously organized local struggles and broader movements with the object of accelerating the circulation of struggles and the capacity to undertake joint or complementary actions.

In the past revolutionary efforts have sought “unity”

through the promulgation and adherence to ideologies. We have learned the hard way that this doesn't work. We humans, our ideas, our cultures, our ways of doing things are extremely diverse. Efforts to homogenize us are doomed to fail. Instead, we need to seek a more organic unity, like that of the divergent but complementary life forms that evolve to constitute a self-sustaining ecology.

## Communication and the Circulation of Struggle

Struggles against capitalism have always circulated. In the past they have followed or ruptured the circuits of capital itself. Struggles in different areas have been mediated and affected each other through trade and investment. Sailors and immigrants have carried their experiences and practices of struggle from place to place, and sometimes back again. With the development of increasingly rapid means of communication such circulation has accelerated. Trains and automobiles have permitted both news and organizers to circulate more rapidly. Telephone, mass media and fax have each, in turn been used to accelerate the circulation of understanding and cooperation of those in struggle. In the last few years computer networks have dramatically accelerated this process and their spread has made increasingly global complementarity and coordination possible. The mobilization of worldwide support for the Zapatistas has been a vivid demonstration of the usefulness of this new technology.

## Defining our Desires

To be global a revolution need not happen everywhere, all at once. It suffices that struggles intensify, link and expand, accelerating each other and multiplying to rip apart the sinews of business and empire faster than they can be reformed. For this to happen people need to be clear not only about the kinds of social, economic, political and cultural relationships that they want to abolish but also about those they wish to elaborate and develop. Although moments of revolutionary upheaval are vastly creative, that creativity springs from existing struggles renewed by collective energy. One of the most exciting things today is the plethora of alternatives that are being elaborated. New kinds of human relationships, new kinds of relationships between humans and the rest of nature, new forms of politics, new kinds of families, new approaches to learning, new ways of caring and sharing. The problem of revolution is that of freeing these diverse processes of invention from the stultifying bonds of business: commodification, a one-dimensional measure of value, profit maximization and above all, the subordination of life to endless work.