



Facing an unequal world

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Abstract

To face an unequal world requires us to interpret and explain it, to be sure, but also to engage it, that is, to recognize that we are part of it and that we are partly responsible for it. In other words, inequality is not just something external to us, but also invades our own world. I begin, therefore, by examining the global community of sociology through the lens of inequality. I then consider two recent perspectives on our unequal world from outside sociology: the moral radicalism of Pope Francis that emphasizes *exclusion* from market society, and the innovative research of the economist Thomas Piketty that emphasizes *unequal inclusion* in market society. These two faces of global inequality mirror the social movements reverberating from the economic crisis of 2008 but which have their roots in a reaction to a broader wave of marketization, the third to engulf modern capitalism. To explore the meaning of third-wave marketization, otherwise known as neoliberalism, and the social movements it provokes I draw on two concepts from Karl Polanyi – ‘fictitious commodities’ and ‘countermovement’ – as well as a theory of the dynamics of capitalism. I conclude with three challenges facing a global sociology that centers social movements: to develop a theory that speaks to the globally diverse experiences of commodification; to develop a methodology that recognizes that we are unavoidably participants in the world we study; and to develop a politics that defends a particular vision of that world, a vision that has defined the sociological tradition from its beginning, namely one that upholds the centrality of civil society against the over-extension of market and state.

Keywords

Globalization, inequality, markets, social movements, sociology

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Over 6000 sociologists assembled in Yokohama to discuss and debate the multiple dimensions, the sources and the consequences of inequality¹ – one of sociology's defining themes. Inequality, however, is never just an object of study, it is also always on display. It invades our lives as scholars and teachers. Moreover, as sociology becomes global the more palpable becomes the hierarchy and exclusion in our midst.

Take the International Sociological Association itself. Figure 1 shows the number of registrants at Congresses and Forums growing in strength with every meeting. Over the 65 years since its birth, the ISA has become increasingly international in membership as well as in name. At the 2014 World Congress 103 countries were represented. Using the World Bank classification of gross national income per capita, we divide the countries of the world into A (high income), B (middle income) and C (lowest income) categories. Following this classification we find that Yokohama participants come from 43 A countries, 34 B countries and 43 C countries; however, 71% of the participants were from A countries, 19% were from B countries and 10% were from C countries. This maps the uneven development of sociology across the planet, reflecting the unequal global field of higher education, which, in turn, is tied to persistently unequal levels of economic development.² Less visible, globally, but just as important are the inequalities within countries – between cosmopolitan elites that have funds for international travel and locally oriented sociologists with far fewer resources. No matter where they are from, those able to attend the Congress are already a privileged stratum.

Turning to the ISA's individual members we find 65% are from A countries, 22% are from B countries and 13% are from C countries – again very unequal despite the much lower membership fees for B and C countries. Yet the data in Figure 2 do show a small but continuous drop in the proportion of members from A countries: from 74% in 2002 to 65% in 2014. Figure 3 shows the same progress in National Association membership. Gone are the days when the ISA was a club of a few hundred members from Europe, the US and a few members from the Soviet bloc.

As we include more sociologists from different countries so we become more heterogeneous and more aware of our own internal inequalities. In 2014 the Executive Committee, i.e. the Association's elected leaders, included 13 (62%) from A countries, 5 (24%) from B countries and 3 (14%) from C countries, roughly corresponding to the composition of the membership. Yet, in 2014, 48 Presidents of the Research Committees – the heartbeat of the ISA – were from A countries (13 from North America, 25 from Europe and the remaining 10 from elsewhere) as compared to 7 from B countries and 1 from a C country.³ This is a far more skewed representation, reflecting once again the concentration of research resources in the North. If we were to use nationality of doctoral degree rather than country of residence we would find an even more unequal distribution.

Over the years the ISA has made efforts to attract sociologists from under-represented countries, with a sliding scale of membership and registration fees based on country of residence, with steep concessions for students too. In the beginning English and French were the official languages of the ISA, but, following protests at the first Congress in Latin America (Mexico City in 1982), Spanish became the third language – albeit some eight years later at the Madrid Congress (Platt, 1998: 37). Still, English dominates proceedings and the official journals are in English, which gives an

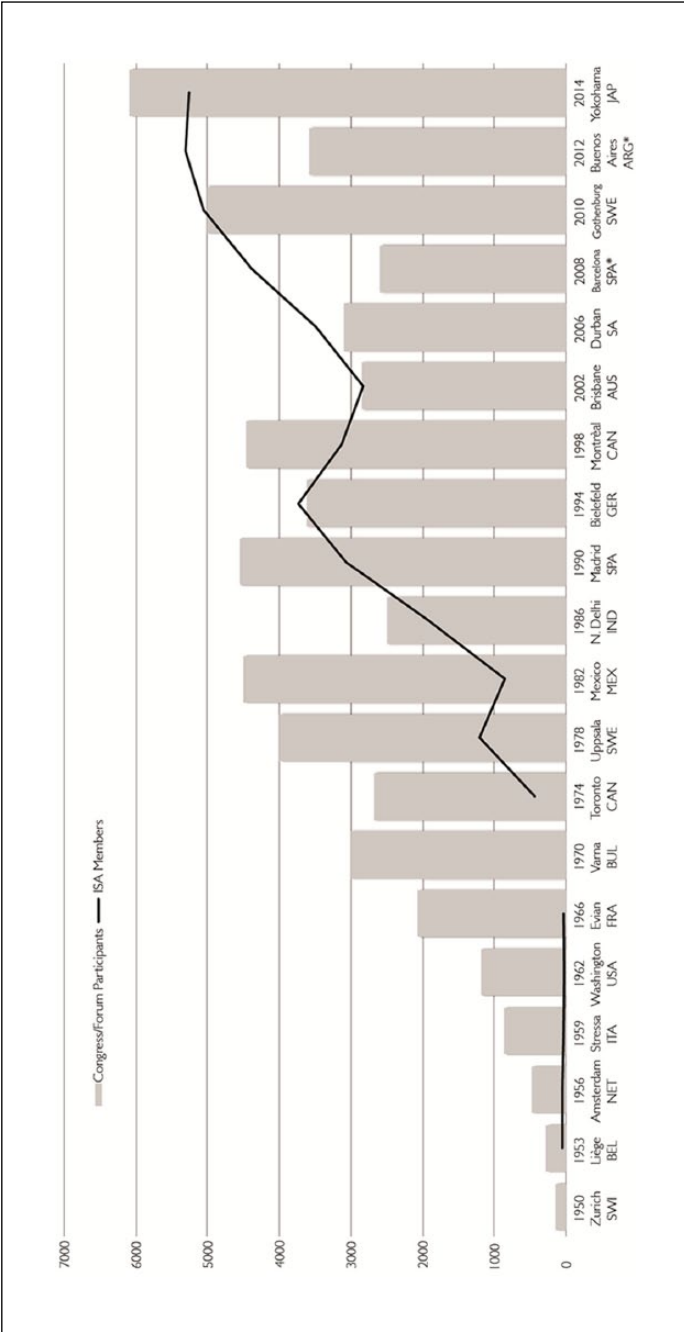


Figure 1. ISA individual membership and Congress/Forum participants 1950–2014.
 Source: ISA's Madrid Secretariat. * indicates Forum rather than Congress.

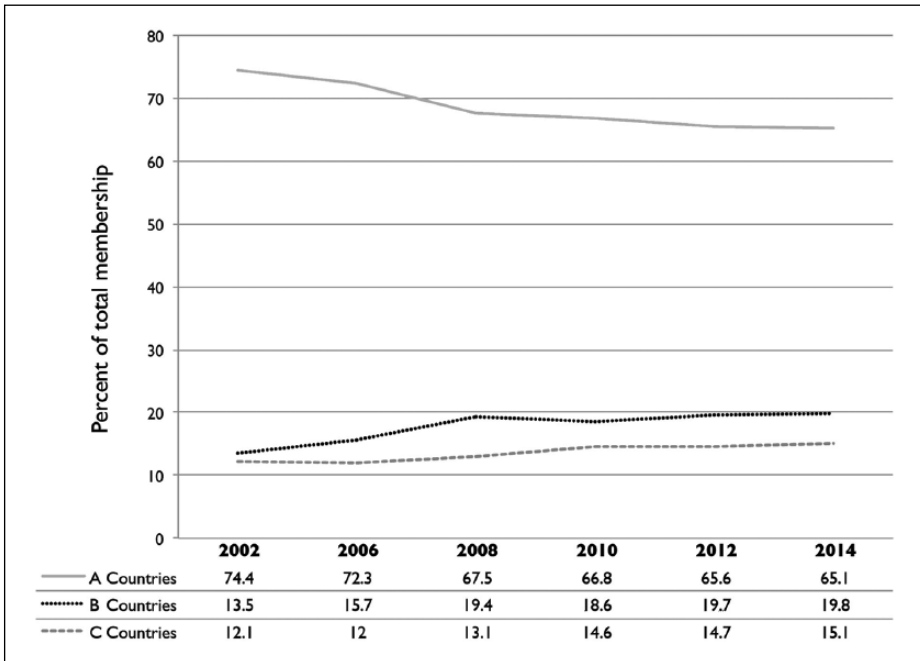


Figure 2. Distribution of ISA members from different countries by year.
 Source: ISA's Madrid Secretariat.

advantage to native English speakers. By virtue of being the most popular second language, English has become the most widely used lingua franca.

In recent years the ISA has created a host of digital worlds aimed at making sociology accessible to sociologists everywhere without having to travel to expensive meetings across the world. The intention has been to build a virtual global community with blogs, such as the one on universities in crisis; digital platforms like the one on social justice and democratization; video interviews with prominent sociologists; international seminars such as the ones on public sociology and global sociology; a website for posting PhD dissertation abstracts; *Global Dialogue*, the ISA magazine that appears four times a year in 14 languages as well as *Sociopedia.isa*, the ISA's international encyclopedia and the online articles of *eSymposium*. Together these are attempts to build a wider community but, in reality, they do little to reverse the inequalities that invade our association.

Summarizing the above trends, we can discern two faces of inequality that beset the ISA. On the one hand, as we become more inclusive, so we become more aware of those left outside. The rejection of the earlier elitist model and the opening of the ISA to all sociologists of the world have made *exclusion* even more an issue of concern and debate.⁴ Greater inclusion has also made us more rather than less aware of the hierarchies that continue, and even deepen, *within* the organization. These twin forces of exclusion and unequal inclusion form a microcosm of inequality at the global level. As

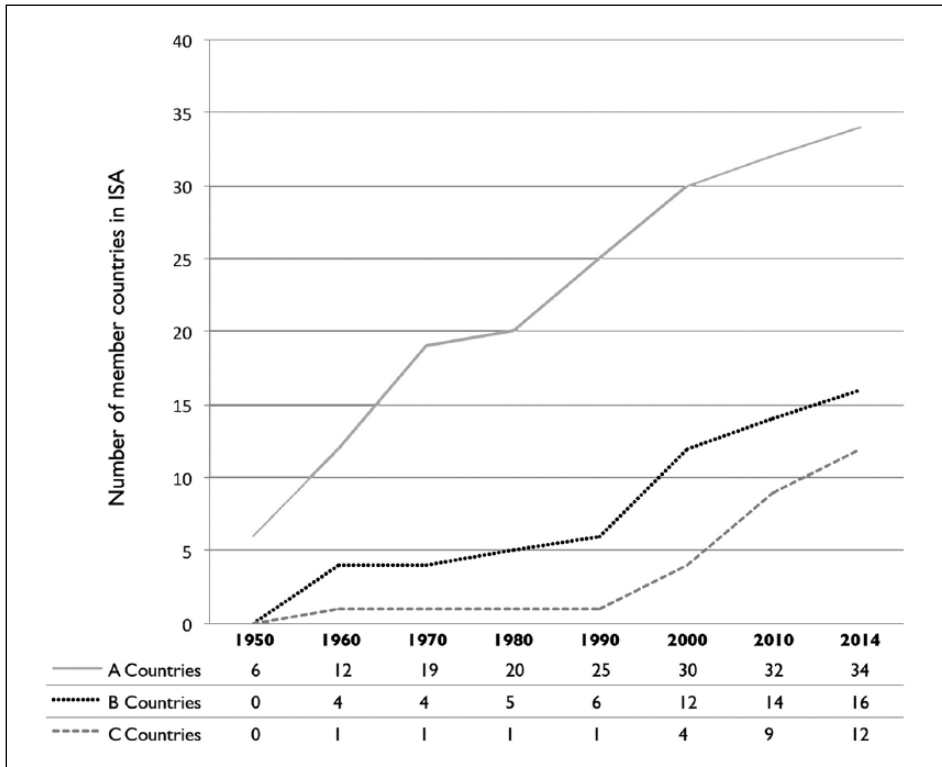


Figure 3. Growth of National Associations in ISA.

Source: ISA's Madrid Secretariat.

I shall argue, they have to be studied in their dynamic interrelation – the vicious circle through which exclusion promotes unequal inclusion, which, in turn, leads to further exclusion.

Representing these two divergent perspectives on inequality, I begin by examining recent disquisitions of Pope Francis and the economist Thomas Piketty. Breaking with the inherited conservatism of ecclesiastical and economic thinking, their perspectives do not come from nowhere. They reflect the wave of protests that followed in the wake of the economic crisis of 2008. To grasp the sources of both types of inequality, therefore, it is necessary to delve into the meaning of these social movements. My hypothesis is that they can best be explored with the help of Karl Polanyi's (2001 [1944]) theory of fictitious commodities, his analysis of market fundamentalism and his idea of counter-movement. In reconstructing his canonical work, *The Great Transformation*, I draw attention to the absence of a theory of the dynamics of capitalism – one that can explain the ebb and flow of marketization that is the driving force behind the movements. I conclude by linking the reconstruction of *The Great Transformation* to three challenges facing global sociology: to be a sociology *of* the world but, at the same time, to be a sociology *in* the world and *for* the world.

From Pope Francis to Thomas Piketty

During the last four years, the theme of inequality has achieved unanticipated prominence in public debate and often from the most unexpected quarters. Thus, Pope Francis – elected in March 2013 as the first Jesuit Pope, the first Pope from Argentina, indeed, the first Pope from the Global South – has been vigorously condemning inequality. Within six months of his election he delivered his first Apostolic Exhortation (Francis, 2013: 52–75), which included the following theses on inequality.

- I. *No to an economy of inequality and exclusion.* Just as the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ sets a clear limit in order to safeguard the value of human life, today we also have to say ‘thou shalt not’ to an economy of exclusion and inequality. Such an economy kills. How can it be that it is not a news item when an elderly homeless person dies of exposure, but it is news when the stock market loses two points? This is a case of exclusion. Can we continue to stand by when food is thrown away while people are starving? This is a case of inequality. Today everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape.The excluded are not the ‘exploited’ but the outcast, the ‘leftovers’.
- II. *No to trickle-down economics.* Some people continue to defend trickle-down theories which assume that economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world. This opinion, which has never been confirmed by the facts, expresses a crude and naïve trust in the goodness of those wielding economic power and in the sacralized workings of the prevailing economic system.
- III. *No to the new idolatry of money.* One cause of this situation is found in our relationship with money, since we calmly accept its dominion over ourselves and our societies. ... We have created new idols. The worship of the ancient golden calf has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose.
- IV. *No to the tyranny of profit.* While the earnings of a minority are growing exponentially, so too is the gap separating the majority from the prosperity enjoyed by those happy few. ... A new tyranny is thus born, invisible and often virtual, which unilaterally and relentlessly imposes its own laws and rules. ... In this system, which tends to devour everything which stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule.
- V. *No to the inequality that spawns violence.* Today in many places we hear a call for greater security. But until exclusion and inequality in society and between peoples are reversed, it will be impossible to eliminate violence. ... When a society – whether local, national or global – is willing to leave a part of itself on the fringes, no political programmes or resources spent on law enforcement or surveillance systems can indefinitely guarantee tranquility. This is not the case simply because inequality provokes a violent reaction from those excluded from the system, but because the socioeconomic system is unjust at its root.
- VI. *No to a financial system that rules rather than serves.* I encourage financial experts and political leaders to ponder the words of one of the sages of antiquity: ‘Not to share one’s

wealth with the poor is to steal from them and to take away their livelihood. It is not our own goods which we hold, but theirs.' A financial reform open to such ethical considerations would require a vigorous change of approach on the part of political leaders. ... Money must serve, not rule!

This is a radical program befitting of Marx's early writings, inspired no doubt by liberation theology. Of the two dimensions of inequality – exclusion and unequal inclusion – the Pope is clearly focusing on the former. Thesis I sets the tone with its clear focus on exclusion that is ignored by conventional economics (Thesis II), rooted in the worship of the market (Thesis III), driven by profit (Thesis IV), resulting in violence (Thesis V), calling for the repudiation of dispossession (Thesis VI). The Pope expressly distinguishes between the excluded and the exploited and yet, of course, they are closely connected. An expanding reservoir of mobile surplus labor intensifies unequal inclusion, eroding the capacity of the exploited to contest their exploitation.

This critique of exclusion is one from the Global South even if it is increasingly a reality in the Global North with the ghettoization of racial minorities and a precarity that is creeping up the socio-economic hierarchy.⁵ For a no less devastating indictment, this time of the second face of inequality – unequal inclusion – we turn to another unlikely source. Most economists do not worry about inequality, arising as it does from returns to 'marginal productivity' or investment in human capital – the supposedly just and inevitable outcome of economic growth. But today a new breed of heterodox economists has surfaced, including James Galbraith (2012) and Nobel Prize Winners Joseph Stiglitz (2014) and Amartya Sen (1995), who point to untamed markets as the source of incapacitating and escalating inequality. In 2014, however, a young French economist, Thomas Piketty, stole the limelight from the senior statesmen, with his blockbuster book, *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*. It is curious that a somewhat tedious 600-page book should have captured the imagination not just of the academic world but also of the world of business and politics.

Piketty and his collaborators have collected massive original data sets, documenting two and a half centuries of income and wealth inequality for a variety of countries, not just the US and Europe but also several major developing economies. The data show that the period between the 1930s and the 1970s was an aberration of declining inequality brought about by wars and economic crisis, and that in recent decades inequality has resumed its upward 19th-century trajectory, showing no sign of reversing itself. He calls this a return to the patrimonial capitalism of the past, based on the relatively unrestricted inheritance of privilege and wealth. These claims challenge the foundational assumptions of neoclassical economics and, in effect, call for new theories of capitalism. Piketty's analysis, however, is confined to one dimension of inequality – the unequal inclusion within capitalism. The nature of his data drawn from taxation records, his concern with the endogenous effects of the market and the focus on mainly rich countries lead him to confine his analysis to the differentially and ever-more differentially included rather than the excluded.

Inequality was once the preserve of sociology, but the Pope and the new economists have stolen our thunder, up-staging us on our own terrain. Yet they have no real answers to the problems they pose: the Pope calls for a new ethics, love and empathy, yet so far

– and not for want of trying – he has failed to do much about the existence and cover-up of sexual abuse or the Church’s conservative positions on questions of gay sexuality, contraception, divorce and abortion. Radical on economic matters, he has found it more difficult to make headway on social matters. Yet, as I shall argue, it is precisely from the social realm that challenges to inequality, whether unequal inclusion or exclusion, will appear. Piketty, on the other hand, offers solutions that revolve around taxing the rich and super-rich but from where will the political will for such taxation come? He has no theory of politics, no theory of the state, no theory of social movements, no theory of culture and above all, no theory of capitalism. He has a formula for increasing inequality but the factors behind the variables (rates of return on capital and economic growth) are left unexplained. So he veers between a radical indeterminism – ‘anything is possible’ – and a radical empiricism that presumes the world will just continue as it is.

We are sociologists. We do not begin with moral exhortation nor end with *deus ex machina* politics but concern ourselves with the real movement of real people in real relations as they live their real lives. From where does the Pope get his theses on inequality if not from the social movements of the Argentinian people? And Piketty begins his book with the striking Marikana mineworkers of South Africa, but he might as well have begun with Occupy Wall Street or the *Indignados*. Piketty quickly loses sight of the Marikana miners in thickets of economic data. The Pope and Piketty are religious and scholarly refractions of the new social movements that have influenced the ascendant public concern with inequality. We must, therefore, turn to the movements themselves.

A wave of social movements, 2010–2014⁶

Many expected the coincidence of the election of Barack Obama and the financial crisis of 2008 to restore an organized capitalism that would regulate the banks and redistribute wealth. Far from it. The new administration consolidated the global power of finance capital while the aftershocks of the crisis reverberated across continents, giving rise to a trajectory of social protest from 2010 through 2013. I will follow the path, beginning with the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi on 17 December 2010.

Bouazizi was not the first Tunisian to immolate himself, so why did he trigger a movement that would within a month overthrow the 23-year dictatorship of Ben Ali? Bouazizi came from Sidi Bouzid, a small town in central Tunisia brimming with grievances from farmers dispossessed of their land by agribusiness, from employees in the phosphate mines displaced by migrants, and from unemployed graduates. Bouazizi crystallized the discontent, and became the catalyst of protests that spread to Tunis and the more wealthy north, where middle-class professionals and trade union branches ignited civil society. President Ben Ali had been the darling of the West not only because he kept the Islamic tide at bay, but also because he had ruthlessly followed a neoliberal model that combined austerity with economic concessions to a narrowing circle of beneficiaries around the first family. Increasingly the middle classes were shut out from the largesse of the dictatorship, galvanizing their participation in the swelling movement. Here again we see the coming together of grievances stemming from deepening exclusion on the one side and an expanding inequality of inclusion on the other side.

The Tunisian revolution inspired the revolution of 25 January in Egypt and three weeks later the 30-year President, Hosni Mubarak, was toppled. Here too there had been previous street protests by workers and youth, disaffected by economic policies, prior to the inspiration of Tunisia. Amassed in Tahrir Square, the people discovered a new sense of their own power that would not dissipate. The Arab revolutions cultivated powerful opposition forces in Libya, in Yemen, in Bahrain and, of course, in Syria, but they were fueled by unemployment and exclusion brought about by neoliberal economic policies (Hanieh, 2013).

Moving forward to 11 March 2011, when one of the largest earthquakes on record, and one of the deadliest environmental disasters in recent history, struck Japan. An estimated 18,500 people died, including 2600 still missing. The majority of the victims were killed by the tsunami which also caused the catastrophic meltdown of the Fukushima nuclear power plant. The tsunami itself and then the nuclear accident forced a mass resettlement, displacing some 380,000 people. Japan was the third largest consumer of nuclear power (after the US and France). Disregarding a history of popular opposition to nuclear power the dominant Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) expanded the number of plants, especially in poor communities, lured by strong economic inducements. Even the opposition party, the Democratic Party of Japan, when it took power in 2009, planned to expand the reliance on nuclear power in the name of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Fukushima disaster detonated a large anti-nuclear movement, outraged by the criminal neglect of government and its all too cozy relation with the nuclear industry that dictated terms for its own profitability. Despite the mounting movement that could bring out up to 200,000 protestors at a time, the LDP that was returned to power in 2012 committed itself to the expansion of nuclear power, restarting the plants whose operations had been suspended.⁷

Meanwhile a rich variety of environmental movements have captured the public imagination across the planet, many of them instigated by land dispossession or degradation – the excluded more than the included. In India protests have paralyzed land expropriations for Special Economic Zones (Levien, 2013); in China there have been protests against local government involvement in land speculation and land grabs (Chuang, 2014); in Palestine there have been innovative and risky protests against the extension of Israeli settlements; across Latin America there have been protests against international mining consortia that have displaced populations and destroyed water supplies; in the US and Canada protests are growing against fracking. Climate change has inspired protests around the world, although here too countries are differentially affected by global warming, making it more urgent in some places than in others. Although they are difficult to organize and coordinate, there is a growing popular sense that relations to nature, in the long run, will determine the survival of the planet, notwithstanding the increasingly sharp boundary that separates the protected from the vulnerable.

The movement of the *Indignados*, while it began in Portugal, received its christening in Spain as the May 15 (M-15) Movement. Following the economic crisis of 2008, the Spanish economy went into a tailspin and austerity was imposed at the behest of the troika – the Central Bank of Europe, the IMF and the European Commission. This hit youth particularly hard as they found themselves, often well-credentialed, without secure employment or any employment at all. Under the slogan ‘Real Democracy Now’ and

'We are not goods in the hands of politicians and bankers' they packed the squares of the main cities and began to organize an alternative world. Similar movements, responding to similar austerity and insecurity, sprung up all over Southern Europe – in Italy, Portugal and Greece as well as Spain – each with a national complexion, reflecting distinctive political contexts. Greece was hit hardest by austerity measures and there the movement was the most militant, shaping national politics in a deeper way than in Spain, Portugal or even Italy.

In August 2011, the locus of protest moved to Latin America and the student movement that had its epicenter in Chile. Despite recent socialist governments, many of Pinochet's neoliberal policies were never reversed. Most spectacularly, Chile leads the continent in the privatization of education. Protests by university students, demanding a return to public education and free access for all, had its origins in the 'March of the Penguins,' nation-wide demonstrations by high school students in 2006 – a generation that had now entered university. Student demonstrations in Latin America are a regular occurrence, but in Chile they prompted massive and broad support from the middle classes, saddled with exorbitant fees for their children's education. Ever since the Córdoba revolution of 1918, more than anywhere else in the world, Latin American universities have had open access, limited fees and democratic governance. Chile has gone furthest in reversing this historic pattern, making privatization a defining political issue in the 2013 election. From its roots in Chile, the movement against the privatization of higher education has assumed global proportions with protest hitting the headlines in many countries in and beyond Latin America, including the UK, France and above all in Quebec where students were especially militant.

September 2011 saw the Occupy Wall Street take off in New York with its public assault on the 1% – ever more wealthy, ever more removed from society, ever more powerful. The rhetorical focus of the protest was the big banks, which had made a killing from the new technologies of finance and yet were 'too big to fail,' and thus received handsome bail outs from the crisis they had created while the helpless people they had victimized absorbed the costs. The Occupy Movement spread across the United States, and indeed across the world, capitalizing on connections to the *Indignados*, to the Arab Spring, and to the student movement. It too was propelled by a new generation of protesters, 'Millennials,' often carrying hefty student loans and yet without secure employment. By 2013 it was in abeyance, having suffered coordinated attacks from militarized police, evicting them from the public spaces they had occupied. Still, the flame of the Occupy Movement was hard to extinguish as it flared up in unexpected places, not least in Istanbul's Taksim Square where protestors rallied to the defense of Gezi Park against government sponsored real estate speculation. As I write we are witnessing its reincarnation in Hong Kong where young protestors are out in force in defense of democratic government.

The labor movement is in retreat across the world as surplus migrant populations compete for jobs while states aid and abet capital. The strike has been increasingly turned against labor, and into a weapon of capital, the lock out. Still, labor struggles have far from disappeared, especially in the Global South. In 2012 dramatic strikes by South African miners at Lonmin platinum mine in Marikana drew attention to the forces arrayed against them. Starting as a strike for wage equity among rock drill operators, the

unresponsive National Union of Mineworkers stood aside as mining companies collaborated with the state to bring force to bear, as the police shot 34 miners dead (Alexander et al., 2013). Echoes of apartheid and the Sharpeville massacre of 1960 reverberated around South Africa, instigating a strike wave across the country. The labor movement is still a potent force not only in South Africa but also in Brazil, where it flexed its muscles in the popular protests of June 2013. Still, these episodes of labor strife in semi-peripheral countries do not gainsay its more general weakness. Unable to exercise leverage in production, workers have sought to develop new organizational forms such as worker centers outside production or symbolic politics that build alliances in the public arena (Agarwala, 2013; Chun, 2009; Milkman and Ott, 2014; Milkman et al., 2010) or the *piqueteros*, an organization of unemployed workers in Argentina that sought common cause with the ‘recovered’ factory movement.

Casting an eye over the last four years one cannot ignore the rise of movements of the right as well as of the left, most prominently the Golden Dawn Movement in Greece, but also aspects of the Grillo phenomenon in Italy. The former Soviet bloc has experienced the strongest surge of conservative movements. There progressive forces support the expansion of democracy and, in delinking themselves to the Soviet past, tend to be pro-market, while the reactionary movements lead the charge against the market. The Euro-Maidan movement in the Ukraine was instigated by the refusal of Yanukovich’s pro-Russian government to sign accords with the European Union in November 2013. The protestors settled in Kyiv’s Maidan Square, and secured the fall of Yanukovich, but this only prompted the escalation of geopolitical tensions, Russian invasion of the Crimea and the subversion of Russian-speaking Eastern Ukraine (Ishchenko, 2014). Though poverty abounds and economic issues are at stake, it is hard to make the claim that they are the factors driving the protests, except in the sense that political elites are sabotaging the operation of the market.

If 2011 was the year it was ‘kicking off everywhere,’ as Paul Mason (2013) put it in his best-selling book, by 2014 the picture looked very different. In the Middle East counter-revolutions dominate the political scene – from Egypt to Israel, from Libya to Syria. Without roots in the broader public and repudiating formal institutions, the democracy movements were snuffed out of existence by determined state repression, often given legitimacy by the rightward drift in electoral politics. In Latin America, with its deeper engagement in civic life, movements have managed to hold their course. While many social movements have been forced to retreat and their gains reversed, nonetheless they have left their trace in the sands of popular consciousness and given participants and supporters a sense of shared collective efficacy. With their different articulations of exclusion and unequal inclusion, these movements supply the ingredients to grasp the contours and limits of the contemporary wave of marketization.

Shared repertoires

Do these movements represent a global wave of protest with a convergent set of repertoires, engendering each other in a complex process of contagion? Certainly, there is much evidence of their mutual influence: the Arab uprisings were triggered by the Tunisian uprising which then infected other countries, similarly, the *Indignados*’

movement spread rapidly across Southern Europe; both helped to spark the Occupy Movement which, in turn, spread across the world. In this mutual influence social media played a crucial role, although we should remember that similar waves of protest existed long before such technologies appeared – think of the 1848 revolutions that spread across Europe or the movements that led to the collapse of the Soviet Empire. Movements have always offered ‘concrete phantasies’ that inspire creative imitation.

If these movements were globally connected, it was their national framing that drove their distinctive momentum. They may share underlying economic causes but their expression is shaped by the terms and structure of national politics. This is as true within each region as between regions: Greece is not Spain is not Portugal, just as Tunisia is not Egypt is not Libya, even if they adopted broadly similar targets within each region: authoritarian rule in the Arab context, the troika in Southern Europe, the alliance of international capital and the state in Latin America.

Nonetheless, within these nationally driven but globally conscious movements, there is a shared politics, a sense of political dispossession facing, as Zygmunt Bauman (2000) puts it, a separation of popular politics and power. Economic powers, especially finance capital, dictate terms to states, thereby disabling any form of democratic politics. In Tunisia the forces of the IMF, the World Bank and foreign capital collaborated with an authoritarian state to deprive the people of any political role. The same is true of Egypt where the military control a sizable fraction of the economy. In South Africa the collusion between Lonmin and the state was transparent. Where there are the rudiments of democracy political dispossession is intensified by the gap between appearance and reality: democratic in form, capitalist in content.

Social movements respond by creating new forms of direct or participatory democracy that have a very concrete geographical focus, usually the control of some symbolic space – Tahrir Square in Cairo, Taksim Square in Istanbul, Zuccotti Park in New York, Catalonia Square in Barcelona, etc. Social media may have created a penumbra of support but the heart of these movements lay in the assemblies that controlled these urban spaces. There a prefigurative politics took priority, imagining what education, family, welfare, banking might look like in a ‘really’ democratic world. This participatory democracy embraced a new political language of accountability suspicious of all inherited institutions and ideologies, and even of leadership itself. All hierarchies were supposedly dissolved and energy was channeled into ‘horizontalism,’ building lateral ties, including those that went beyond the locality and beyond the nation-state. This gave the movements great flexibility, but, by the same token, rendered them institutionally weak.

The struggle over the control of urban space often became violent. The concentration in singular places was a source of strength so long as movements were tolerated by the powers, but a source of vulnerability once they were put on the defensive.⁸ Still, even then, the fluidity of the movements remained a major asset. Using Bauman’s metaphor, we can say that these movements had a liquid character, gone today but reappearing tomorrow in a new guise and in a new place. The movements, at least in the beginning, out-maneuvered the rather clumsy verticality of the state. Yet repression has usually prevailed, and the movements have gone underground, dispersed, perhaps to reappear, perhaps not. What has emerged is a different consciousness, a different sense of possibility, a critique of what exists as neither natural nor inevitable and with it a new informal politics.⁹

Beyond social movement theory

Our interpretation of social movements cannot rest with assessments of their longevity or their transformative power. They are a critical tool for facing an unequal world. They tell us about that world at the same time as they condemn it, offering hope for a better one. Social movements need to be at the very center of a new sociology of critique in an era where domination is overweening and alternative futures are in short supply (Boltanski, 2011).

Social movements did not figure prominently in Durkheim or Weber's theories of modern society. Neither, for example, was especially impressed by the socialist movement of their day, although they each took it as a barometer of the times. For Durkheim social movements were symptoms of societal malaise whereas Weber saw them as the mobilization of irrational sentiments by charismatic leaders. In contrast, Marx made a social movement – the labor movement – central to his theory of society. The proletariat was the subject and object of history, formed by history in order to create history. As I shall argue, Marx's focus on the labor movement reflected the specific conditions of 19th century Europe.

Modernization theory of the 1950s extended the Weberian and Durkheimian traditions of pathologizing collective action. Responding to the critique that structural functionalism – the grand theory developed by Talcott Parsons and his colleagues – had no theory of social change, Neil Smelser (1959) advanced a theory of collective action as an irrational response to social differentiation. His critique of Marxism portrayed the 19th-century English working-class movement as a reaction to the disorganization of family production, brought on by the industrial revolution. He traced the factory movement not to exploitation but to the differentiation of work and family. Along these lines, he subsequently developed a general theory of 'collective behavior' (Smelser, 1962).

This set the context for the rise of contemporary US social movement theory, associated with such names as Charles Tilly, William Gamson, Douglas McAdam and Sidney Tarrow. They treated social movements not as an irrational reaction to structural change, but rather a rational extra-parliamentary politics. Grievances were never sufficient to explain collective action, they argued, but depended on resources – both economic and social as well as political opportunities and effective framing. Departing radically from their predecessors' focus on the irrational, they nonetheless shared a common ambition: to produce a general theory of social movements that would apply across time and space. That led them to lose sight of the specific context, now reduced to inert variables. Yet these general theories were built on the basis of particular social movements, especially the civil rights movement and other mid-20th-century social movements and in the case of Charles Tilly, 19th-century movements too, all of which took the state as their object. Their variation was turned into a demonstration of universal invariance.

European social movement theorists, especially Alain Touraine and his students, took a different approach. They, too, took exception to the idea that social movements were an irrational reaction to structural forces. Focusing on the French student movement of the 1960s, but also the Chilean trade union movement, the Polish solidarity movement and European anti-nuclear movements, Touraine argued that all these movements reflected a distinct period, that of post-industrialism or the programmed society, governed by

'historicity,' that is the collective 'self-production' of society. He deliberately broke with classical social theory that depicted history in terms of natural laws, the unfolding of such metaphysical entities as reason, progress, rationality and development. 'Society used to be in history; now history is within societies, and they have the capacity to choose their organization, their values, and their processes of change without having to legitimate these choices by making them conform to natural or historical laws' (Touraine, 1988: 40). New social movements, therefore, were very different from the movements driven by industrialization; new social movements, swimming in a post-materialist world, had history within their grasp. In this conception, the role of the sociologist was to 'conscientize' social movements and to help them forge a world in their own image. Such a messianic vision of society, not surprisingly, gave way to a pessimistic turn in Touraine's later work, most recently culminating in *The End of Society*. The lasting importance of Touraine's approach lies in placing social movements at the center of sociology – a sociology that is self-conscious about its place in history.

Today we no longer live (if we ever did) in an era of the programmed society of post-industrialism where state and economy contained each other's predatory tendencies, each subject to the influence of forces emanating from civil society. We now live in a world where state and economy reinforce each other's tendency to over-reach their own sphere of influence and threaten civil society. In short, we live in the age of neoliberalism, a term that means all things to all people. For some it is an ideology, for others it is a practice; for some it refers to the state, for others to capital; for some it marks state withdrawal, or *laissez faire*; for others it marks a regulatory state; for some it is a form of governmentality and corresponding individualism, for others simply the end of society.

Instead of 'neoliberalism' I propose to use and elaborate the term 'marketization.' This allows me, first, to compare the present epoch with previous periods of 'marketization,' and second, to elucidate the lived experience instigating social movements as involving different dimensions of commodification. My starting point, therefore, is neither Touraine nor Marx, neither Weber nor Durkheim, but instead Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*, which analyzes 'marketization' from the standpoint of the social movements it spawns.

The fictitious commodity: From commodification to ex-commodification

The Pope's theses on inequality recall Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation*. First published in 1944, it is a searing account of the threat posed by the over-extended market to the survival of society – a threat so dire that, on pain of death, it would precipitate society's self-defense. To understand the lived experience of marketization and the possibility of its reversal Polanyi's concept of 'fictitious commodity' is especially useful.¹⁰

Repudiating Marx's account of exploitation as the defining experiential feature of capitalism, Polanyi focuses on the destructive character of commodification:

To allow the market mechanism to be sole director of the fate of human beings and their natural environment indeed, even of the amount and use of purchasing power, would result in the demolition of society. For the alleged commodity 'labor power' cannot be shoved about, used

indiscriminately, or even left unused, without affecting also the human individual who happens to be the bearer of this peculiar commodity. In disposing of a man's labor power the system would, incidentally, dispose of the physical, psychological, and moral entity 'man' attached to that tag. Robbed of the protective covering of cultural institutions, human beings would perish from the effects of social exposure; they would die as the victims of acute social dislocation through voice, perversion, crime, and starvation. Nature would be reduced to its elements, neighborhoods and landscapes defiled, rivers polluted, military safety jeopardized, the power to produce food and raw materials destroyed. Finally, the market administration of purchasing power would periodically liquidate business enterprise, for shortages and surfeits of money would prove as disastrous to business as floods and droughts in primitive society. Undoubtedly, labor, land, and money markets *are* essential to a market economy. But no society could stand the effects of such a system of crude fictions even for the shortest stretch of time unless its human and natural substance as well as its business organization was protected against the ravages of this satanic mill. (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]: 76–77)

Polanyi argues that labor, land and money – three factors of production – were never intended to be bought and sold and their unregulated commodification destroys their 'true' or 'essential' character. He presumes that they live up to their essential character in pre-market societies.¹¹ When labor power is exchanged without protection against injury or sickness, unemployment or over-employment, or below-subsistence wages, the labor that can be extracted rapidly declines, and it veers towards uselessness. Equally, when land, or more broadly nature, is subject to commodification then it can no longer support the basic necessities for human life. Finally, when money is used to make money, for example through currency speculation, then its value becomes so uncertain that it can no longer be used as a means of exchange, putting businesses out of business and generating economic crises.

Today we have to add a fourth fictitious commodity – knowledge – a factor of production that is not only an essential ingredient of the modern economy but crucial to the production of the other three factors (Jessop, 2007). Information technology has transformed the labor process so as to make the sale of labor power ever more precarious. It is at the center of new-fangled financial technologies and new modes of transforming nature (for example, in genetically manufactured crops). At the same time, knowledge is itself subject to commodification, as its production and dissemination is increasingly organized for the needs of those who can buy it, notwithstanding its open dissemination. Most significantly, the university as a major locus for the production and dissemination of knowledge is increasingly oriented to private rather than public interests, particular rather than general interests, immediate rather than future interests – a distortion that makes knowledge a fictitious commodity.

How do fictitious commodities partake in shaping the lived experience of marketization? While fictitious commodities may provide the link between the expansion of the market and the movement to restrict it in what Polanyi calls the double movement, his account remains ambiguous as to how and why this happens. What is it about the commodification of labor, land, money and knowledge that contributes to social movements?

Polanyi points to the act of exchange itself as violating the essential nature of land, money and labor. It is true that trafficking of human beings or trading of human organs may arouse such abhorrence that they can lead to social movements, but they are unlikely

to be movements of those who are trafficked or who sell their organs. Alternatively, social movements may be a response to the lifting of protections won against commodification, what we might call recommodification – as when welfare benefits are reduced, trade unions are decertified, labor laws violated or withdrawn. In the public imagination certain things should not be commodified.

There are, however, other ways of attributing movement responses to commodification distinct from the process of exchange itself. Polanyi devotes little attention to the processes through which entities are turned into commodities, processes of disembedding the commodity from its social integument, what David Harvey (2003, 2005) has called accumulation through *dispossession*. Polanyi de-emphasized this genesis of commodification and when he did attend to it, as in the case of the enclosures, he played down the role of violence.¹² Marx's original 'primitive accumulation' focused on land expropriation for the creation of a labor force dependent on wage labor. Today the dispossession of peasantries is designed to commodify land rather than create a dependent labor force, which becomes its by-product, swelling the ranks of the unemployed. Whatever the goal, land expropriation has generated much determined resistance.

Equivalently, the expropriation of knowledge from the craft worker in pursuit of deskilling (Braverman, 1974) has historically generated much labor protest. Today, however, it is not only the deskilling of the worker that is at stake, but the appropriation and commodification of the product, namely knowledge itself. In the privatization of universities, for example, dispossession involves turning knowledge from a public good into a sellable asset. It has entailed the corporatization of the university, dependent on ever-greater student fees for credentials of ever-less value. This, too, is the source of much protest.

Table 1. Fictitious Commodities as Sources of Social Movements.

	Ex-Commodification	Commodification
Inequality	LABOR (precarity)	MONEY (debt)
Dispossession	NATURE (destruction)	KNOWLEDGE (privatization)

In addition to the dispossession that produces the commodity, another source of social movements is the *growing inequality* that follows from commodification. For example, in the sale of labor power 'precarity' or insecurity has become the dominant experience of increasing proportions of the population, so much so that Guy Standing (2011) argues that a precariat has replaced the proletariat. Unleashing the commodification of labor power leads to multiple earner families and the commodification of the reproduction of labor power and ultimately to the care deficit (Fraser, 2013). The commodification of labor power has been compounded by the commodification of money, making money from money by gambling on debt. As Fourcade and Healy (2013) have argued, debt and credit have become fundamental features of contemporary stratification that, in turn, have led to movements to cancel debt.

The distinction between dispossession that produces the commodity and inequality that results from commodification relates to our earlier distinction between exclusion and unequal inclusion. Polanyi was concerned with the process of commodification and

its regulation, the relationship between recommodification and decommodification, but he overlooked the process of excommodification – the expulsion of entities from the market, entities that were formerly commodities but no longer.¹³ Excommodification captures the expanded production of waste – the idea that there are lots of useful things that, to their detriment, are expelled from the market. In the face of excommodification, commodification can be a very attractive prospect.

In relation to *labor*, the source of precarity is, indeed, exclusion from the labor market. As Joan Robinson said long ago, if there is a condition worse than exploitation it is not being exploited. In many places, and increasingly all over the world, expanding reservoirs of surplus labor make it a privilege to be exploited. Vast populations are exiled or confined to the informal sector of the economy where they eke out a hand to mouth existence, enter into petty trade or produce things for one another. In relation to *nature* it is often the *absence* of the market that is responsible for its undervaluation. As Nicholas Stern (2007) has written with respect to climate change, nature represents the biggest market failure, that we are able to plunder nature because it has insignificant market value. In other words, nature is destroyed precisely because it is *not* commodified. Others such as Neil Smith (2007) and Castree (2003, 2008) argue the opposite, that it is the incorporation of nature into a capitalist economy that is so wasteful.

Very different are *knowledge* and *money* where commodification leads not to waste but to distorted utilization – the production of knowledge is geared to those who can pay for it while the production of different types of money is used to create profit from debt. Here the response has been to carve out social and economic spaces that are free of commodification or assume a regulated form of commodification. Thus, Michel Bauwens (2009) describes ‘peer production’ and the struggle for common pools of knowledge around open access software and control of the internet. Michel Lallement (2015) studied anarchist groups of hackers, working in San Francisco’s fabrication labs and experimenting with new manufacturing technologies such as 3D machines. Faced with the commodification of money, there are many examples of retreat to forms of exchange in which money is purely a token of exchange, or money is abandoned altogether in favor of barter. In post-Soviet Russia the rapid transition to the market and the devaluation of the ruble led to new local currencies and new forms of barter (Woodruff, 1999). This is not excommodification but ‘anti-commodification,’ that is, a limited countermovement to commodification.

Moving beyond the characteristics of fictitious commodities it is important to examine their interrelations in specific historical contexts. Indeed, social movements have to be understood not as a reaction to the (ex)commodification of a single fictitious commodity, but as responses to the *articulation* of the (ex)commodification of labor, money, nature and knowledge. Following on the work of Ananya Roy (2010) and Hanieh (2013), the Arab uprising represents the intersection of the precarity of labor and indebtedness due to micro-finance; the student movement can be analyzed in terms of precarity of labor and privatization of knowledge production; environmental movements lie at the intersection of the destruction or commodification of nature and the precarity of labor. This framework of fictitious commodities not only provides an account of the underlying forces driving protest, but elaborates the language of the movements themselves. Both the Occupy Movement and the *Indignados* were concerned with the way finance capital

has induced precarity, debt, foreclosures and knowledge privatization. Indeed, the rhetoric of these movements illuminates contemporary marketization in terms that recall Polanyi's critique of fictitious commodities.

The articulation of the (ex)commodification of fictitious commodities can be used to understand not just different movements in different parts of the world today, but also different historical periods of marketization. The second step, therefore, in the reconstruction of *The Great Transformation* is to discern the specific character of contemporary marketization, the so-called age of neoliberalism.

Third-wave marketization and the problematic countermovement

In truth Polanyi pays little attention to fictitious commodities, more concerned to develop his majestic history that begins with the advance of marketization at the end of the 18th century and ends in the 1930s with a countermovement that brings about new forms of state regulation – both those that advance freedoms, such as the New Deal and social democracy and those that restrict freedoms, such as Fascism and Stalinism. The double threat – on the one hand to the survival of society and, then, to freedom ravaged by the reaction to the destruction of society – led Polanyi to believe that humanity would never again experiment with market fundamentalism.

Our thesis is that the idea of a self-adjusting market implied a stark utopia. Such an institution could not exist for any length of time without annihilating the human and natural substance of society; it would have physically destroyed man and transformed his surroundings into a wilderness. Inevitably, society took measures to protect itself, but whatever measure it took impaired the self-regulation of the market, disorganized industrial life, and thus endangered society in yet another way. (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]: 3–4)

Polanyi was wrong. Beginning in 1973 there developed a new round of market fundamentalism which has had far reaching consequences for the history of capitalism and the specificity of the contemporary period. Polanyi's account, so far as it goes, dovetails well with Piketty's history of income and wealth inequalities in the 19th and early 20th centuries, followed by declining inequality after 1940. Writing 70 years later, Piketty supplements Polanyi's analysis, by plotting rising inequality beginning in the 1970s and extrapolating this into a future, marked by returns to capital that continue to increase while rates of economic growth stagnate. He anticipates a return to the 19th century with a vengeance, the reassertion of what he calls 'patrimonial capitalism' in which the rich and the super-rich wallow in their increasing profits. Significantly, Piketty makes no reference to Polanyi, but we must develop a Polyanian response to Piketty's doomsday scenario – a response that does not invoke some utopian state intervention, such as a wealth tax, but considers the conditions of possibility for what Polanyi called a countermovement. We need to meet the challenge of Piketty with the reconstruction of Polanyi's theory of countermovement in the light of the history of the last 70 years.

Recognizing another wave of marketization, starting in the 1970s, leads one to question whether Polanyi's long arc of marketization is as singular as he claims. Indeed, looking back one can see three waves, each with their associated, real or (in the case of

the third wave) potential countermovement. Referring to English history – the main focus of Polanyi’s analysis – the first wave can be said to begin at the end of the 18th century with the Speenhamland Law of 1795 which became a critical obstacle to the development of a national labor market that would only crystallize with the New Poor Law of 1834. Then, pushed to its limit, the labor market generated its own countermovement: ‘The abolishment of Speenhamland was the true birthday of the modern working class, whose immediate self-interest destined them to become the protectors of society against the intrinsic dangers of a machine civilization’ (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]: 105). Of the New Poor Law Polanyi wrote:

In short, if Speenhamland meant the rot of immobility, now the peril was that of death through exposure. ... Yet almost simultaneously the self-protection of society set in: factory laws and social legislation, and a political and industrial working-class movement sprang into being. (Polanyi, 2001 [1944]: 87)¹⁴

The countermovement revolved around the formation of a working class through the factory movement, cooperatives, trade unions, Chartism and the formation of a political party.

Although English agriculture was subject to international competition with the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1844, and national currency was subject to regulation in the Banking Act of 1848, still the fictitious commodity labor power was the driving force of this period, giving rise to such labor rights as the reduction of the length of the working day, the formation of trade unions and the extension of suffrage.

The second wave of marketization began after the First World War with a renewed ascendancy of the market that included the recommodification of labor, and the opening up of free trade based on the gold standard. This worked very well for imperial countries like the US and UK, but for competing countries such as Italy and Germany the constraints of rigid exchange rates resulted in catastrophic decline in the economy and rampant inflation that led them to break with the international economy and turn to a reactionary regime of market regulation. This redounded back to the US and the rest of Europe with the Depression that was only counteracted by state intervention and market regulation, in this case of a progressive character. With the defeat of Fascism in the Second World War, the more liberal regimes prevailed. Even in the USSR there was a certain liberalization in the 1950s. In advanced capitalism this period was ruled by Keynesianism and ‘embedded liberalism’ in economics and the end of ideology in sociology, only to be burst open by the upswing of social movements in the 1960s.

Distinguishing between the first and second wave exposes Polanyi’s collapse of state and society as a singular and unified response to market fundamentalism. The rise of civil society was the backdrop to the first countermovement whereas the state was the fulcrum of the second countermovement. In the second countermovement labor rights were transcended by social rights with access to unemployment compensation, minimum wage legislation, health care and education. These rights appeared across the political spectrum of countries and associated with diverse forms of state regulation.

The third wave, not anticipated by Polanyi, begins in 1973 with the energy crisis, subsequently described as the Washington Consensus with a major impetus from the Thatcher and Reagan administrations in the form of a renewed assault on labor. Over

time it has become an era of the recommodification of money with the ascendancy of finance (Krippner, 2011) and the deepening commodification of nature, that is of air, land and water. This third-wave marketization led to and was given new energy by the collapse of state socialism, whether in the dramatic form of the Soviet bloc or the more evolutionary path of China. Structural adjustment came to Latin America at the very time it was emerging from dictatorship, prompting experiments in participatory democracy. Indeed, whereas in core countries the waves of marketization have succeeded one another over two centuries, more peripheral countries have had to face these waves in rapid succession, making them all the more explosive.

There have been national reactions to market expansion – whether in the form of Islamic nationalism or shades of socialism in Latin America – but they cannot reverse third-wave marketization as this requires a planetary response to the global reach of finance capital and the looming environmental catastrophe that threatens the whole earth. Indeed, finance capital is the force behind the precariatization of labor – both its recommodification and, correlatively, its excommodification (Dörre, 2012) – as well as the rising levels of debt, not just at the level of the individual but also of the community, the city, the state, and even the region. Finance capital has commodified and propelled knowledge into production and together they have incorporated nature as an accumulation strategy of capital (Smith, 2007). A countermovement will have to assume a global character, couched in terms of human rights since the survival of the human species is at stake.

Have the contemporary social movements, sketched earlier in this article, contributed to a Polanyian countermovement that could reverse marketization? First, although they are globally interconnected and mutually influential, as I have said, these movements are primarily shaped by national political terrains, and have difficulty building global solidarity. Second, even if commodification is the common experience propelling subjugated populations into collective action, there is no reason to believe that forging a united front even within a nation-state can be easily accomplished. Third, although emerging as reactions to commodification, these movements can also have the unintended consequence of extending marketization.

To illustrate the last point, take the example of the environmental movement. The organization of consumerist recycling has become a vehicle for profit making as well as diverting attention from the enormous accumulation of waste in the sphere of production (Barnard, 2015; Jaeger, 2014). Inasmuch as the solution to climate change becomes the creation of a carbon market, i.e. the purchase of the right to pollute, so again the result is the extension of the market with no obvious diminution of global warming. Similarly, labor movements are often forced to accept the terms of the market in fighting against precarity. And protest against the privatization of the university is directed at limiting the increase of student fees or the search for alternative funding from private corporations, or employing of armies of adjunct instructors. In all these cases, the struggle to contain the consequences of commodification leads to the further extension of the market. On the other hand, even if these movements are national in scope, fragmented in their interests and deepen marketization, nevertheless they can help call attention to the destructiveness of the market. In a world where markets are presented as the solution to all problems, an ideological challenge to the supremacy of the market is a crucial preliminary to any effective countermovement.

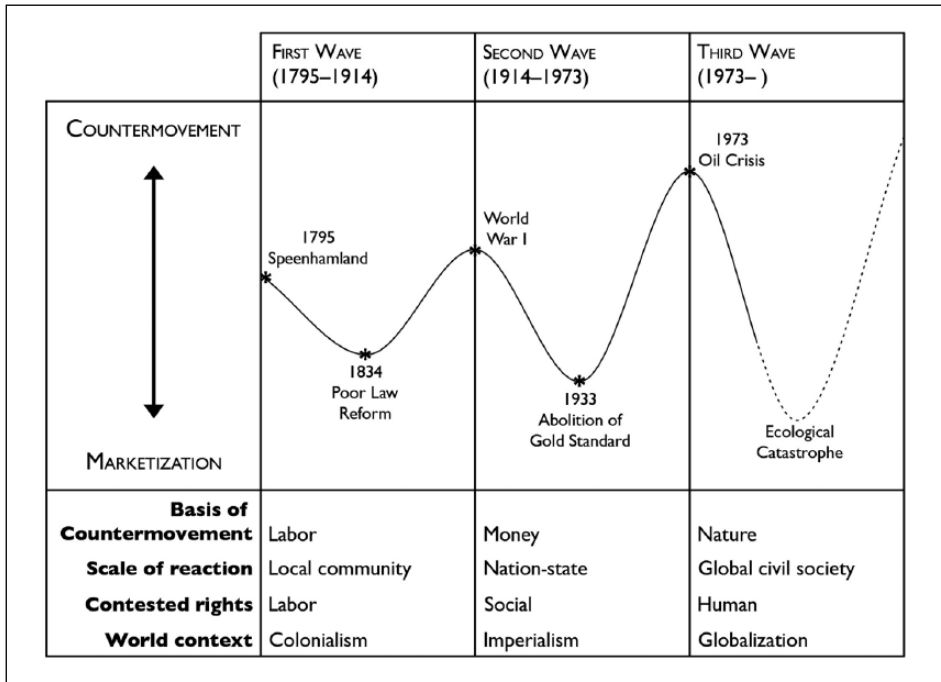


Figure 4. Waves of marketization and their countermovements.

Figure 4 raises the question of where exactly we are on the curve of third-wave marketization. Optimists have argued that third-wave marketization has already begun to reverse itself and that we are climbing towards the confinement of marketization. Others think that commodification has been far from halted. Many, including myself, thought that the economic crisis of 2008 and the reshuffling of world power offered an opportunity for a countermovement, but this proved to be illusory. If anything the crisis of 2008 gave renewed energy to marketization propelled by finance capital and incapable of addressing environmental degradation. That being the case, what form will the ecological catastrophe assume? It will probably not come in a single conflagration but through a succession of deepening disasters that will disproportionately affect poorer communities. It is possible that the countermovement is still in the distant future just as it is also possible that there will never be a countermovement.

A Polanyian response to Piketty’s account of the history of inequality is now clear. Piketty’s figures on inequality, whether they refer to wealth or income, treat capital as a single aggregate, measured by its market value. His analysis misses the specific inequalities engendered by different capitals: relations of insecurity around the commodification of labor power, relations of indebtedness around the commodification of money, and relations of dispossession around the commodification of nature and knowledge. By abstracting from the concreteness of capitals Piketty ignores their consequences for creating destitution, marginality and dispossession as well as economic and ecological crises.

The dynamics of capitalism: From idealism to political economy

Polanyi makes two erroneous assumptions: first, that there would not be another wave of marketization and second that the countermovement was inevitable, the only question was the form it would take, whether it would expand or contract freedoms. These two assumptions have a common source: Polanyi's view that marketization was propelled by ideas, and therefore can be averted by critical thinking.¹⁵ Even if we read him as agnostic about the future, his account of the origins of market expansion suggest that it sprung from the head of English political economists, appalled by Speenhamland's blocking of the labor market. The stark utopia of the liberal creed was the force behind *laissez faire*.

In their comparison of the world hegemonies of Britain and the US Silver and Arrighi (2003) question Polanyi's idealistic account of the rise of marketization. They argue that the market fundamentalism of the 19th century was driven by Britain's position in the world economy that made it the primary beneficiary of free trade, until its hegemony was threatened by German imperial aspirations and later by the US. US hegemony had a different basis since unlike Britain it had no empire and was largely self-sufficient. After the Second World War it built its hegemony on the regulation of markets through a modified gold standard (Bretton Woods), the Marshall Plan and development projects in the Third World. US commitment to market ideology was more rhetorical than real since it practiced protectionism at home. The decline of US hegemony was marked, as in the case of the British hegemony, by the rise of the US as a financial *entrepôt*, attracting investment from the rest of the world. The dissection of decline is more complicated since it also involved the challenges of nationalism and communism from outside the developed world, but it has the important virtue of calling attention to the material forces at work behind the rise and fall of marketization (Arrighi, 2003).

Embedded in Arrighi's (1994) account of history is a theory of capitalist dynamics, that world hegemonies are created in succession – Dutch, British and US – through processes of over-accumulation, leading to financialization. He goes on to speculate that China will be the next world hegemon, following the world economic crisis that threatens US hegemony (Arrighi, 2007). In this view marketization-as-financialization ends through the re-centering of world political hegemony and the restructuring of world capitalism.

Another approach is to tie waves of marketization to the technological restructuring of capitalism. Using such data as global output, levels of employment, rates of profit and productivity, and developing the idea of Kondratieff waves, Ernest Mandel (1995) proposed five waves: 1790–1850 with a turning point around 1815; 1850–1890 with a turning point around 1870; 1890–1940 with a turning point around 1913; and 1940 to the present with a turning point around 1973. Each wave has a characteristic mode of accumulation linked to new technologies, with an upswing of economic expansion followed by a downswing of contraction. The latter coincides with market expansion. While the exhaustion of the upswing and the following downswing is *endogenous* to capitalism, the impetus for renewed expansion is *exogenous*, the result of subjective factors that include wars, levels of class struggle and ideologies. In other words, while the expansion of the market to resolve the crisis of the 1970s may have been inevitable, there is nothing

inevitable about the countermovement. This returns us to the question of the political origins of the countermovement, but, at the same time, it offers a more realistic view of the pressures behind marketization than Polanyi's idealism.

Whether it be Polanyi's idealism, the Pope's moral exhortation or Piketty's dismal view of increasing inequality, all three fail to consider the dynamics of capitalism. For an economist to examine the self-aggrandizing power of wealth is no less startling than to find the Pope condemning capitalism. Still, Piketty's treatment of capital as a monolithic whole not only misses the destructiveness of distinct forms of capital, but also obscures the way in which competition among different fractions of the capitalist class drives the dynamics of capitalism. For all his important contributions, Piketty's rejection of political economy limits his diagnosis of the catastrophe towards which we are heading. Yet political economy, too, has its limitations, handicapped by its productivist focus, and its underestimation of the lived experience of marketization. It needs to be embedded within a Polanyian *global sociology*.

The challenges of global sociology

In *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Jürgen Habermas wrote of three modalities of knowledge – positivist, hermeneutic and critical – and their corresponding interests. I, too, see three ways of facing an unequal world: examining its structure and dynamics, understanding our place within it, and exposing and confronting its destructive effects. Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* has been my constant companion in this journey.

The Great Transformation takes us through two centuries of history, linking the micro-experiences of commodification to national politics and global economics. From the standpoint of the present wave of marketization, however, it is a flawed account calling for reconstruction. To summarize:

- Re-examining history from the standpoint of the present, leads to replacing Polanyi's singular wave of marketization with three waves: the first in the 19th century, the second in the 20th and the third, which is still ongoing, stretching into the 21st century.
- In examining countermovements to each of these three waves it is important to distinguish movements that originate in civil society from those that are propelled by the state. Polanyi's fusion of state and society has to be replaced by a more complex and variable relation between state and civil society.
- Today any countermovement against market fundamentalism will have to assume global proportions even if it is built on national and local grievances. Such a countermovement is by no means inevitable. And even if it were to take place we have to recognize that it can assume a reactionary as well as a progressive form.
- The destructiveness of the market can be understood through the lens of fictitious commodities – nature, labor and money – to which must be added knowledge. These commodifications should be understood in relation to one another and their combined effect on lived experience.

- Each fictitious commodity creates its own form of inequality based on precarity (for labor), indebtedness (for money) and dispossession (for nature and knowledge).
- The production of these fictitious commodities requires what some have called ‘disembedding,’ a benign phraseology that hides violent forms of dispossession, both catastrophic and slow everyday violence (Nixon, 2011).
- Excommodification is as important as commodification, the production of waste is as important as the production of use-value. Protesting exclusion from the market can be as important as protesting unequal inclusion.
- In studying the possibility of countermovements, we must examine the material forces driving marketization, forces arising from the dynamics of capitalism itself.
- Only in the light of all these considerations is it possible to ask whether and which social movements of today contribute, intentionally or not, to the advance of marketization or its reversal.

In reconstructing *The Great Transformation* in this way, the danger of false universalization of the standpoint of the observer rears its head. Notwithstanding his treatment of colonialism, Polanyi’s standpoint was definitively from the West. Redeploying and expanding the notion of fictitious commodities, recognizing the interdependence of commodification and excommodification, can shed light on social movements in all corners of the globe. Still, can the succession of waves of marketization be sustained for Latin America, Asia and the Middle East? Is it possible to develop a Polanyian perspective from the South or is it irrevocably European?

As sociology has become more inclusive, Orientalism has been discarded in favor of a global sociology that speaks to diverse experiences. We can no longer project the particular – whether it be the US or France, whether it be men or colonizers – as the universal. Yet nor can we fall back into a swamp of disconnected particularisms. Global sociology has to be built on a dialogue among particularisms, especially particularisms evoked by social movements, but not only social movements. Thus, sociology needs to listen to social movements but also give voice to the excluded.

A global sociology, therefore, has not only to be a sociology *of* society but also a sociology *in* society, recognizing the place of the sociologist-qua-scientist within a planetary context. Yet sociologists have not only a place on the planet but also in history. The succession of waves has given rise to a succession of sociologies – community-based, state-centric and global. The study of social movements has also its historicity. Today’s social movement theory is inherited from the past, reflecting the 1960s and 1970s – a period of capitalist expansion through state administered markets. The context of third-wave marketization calls for a different theory of social movements as interpreters of the moment and propagators of alternatives, what Erik Wright (2010) calls ‘real utopias.’

Sociologists are Janus-faced, simultaneously participants in society and observers of society. Neither face can be ignored. The assertion of such reflexivity is not to demonstrate the impossibility of science but to enhance its development, to move towards a genuine rather than a false universalism. Coming to terms with being *in* the world is especially challenging at a time when the very production of knowledge, including sociological knowledge, is subject to forces of rationalization and commodification. We can no longer pretend to be outside society when society is invading our scholarly lives. We

can be complicit in our own commodification, selling our wares to the highest bidder or we can join forces with publics suffering a similar fate. There is no neutral position – the outsider does not exist.

There are, therefore, three challenges for global sociology. If the first challenge is to compose a sociology *of* society, and the second is to build a sociology *in* society, the third challenge is to construct a sociology *for* society, defending the very object – civil society – that was sociology's original foundation. Indeed, sociology arose with civil society in the second half of the 19th century as a response to first-wave marketization. Throughout its history sociology has taken the standpoint of civil society against market fundamentalism. This was true not only of Marx, Weber and Durkheim but also of Parsons, Wallerstein, Touraine and Bourdieu. Yet it would be a mistake to stop at civil society since there is a world below civil society, expelled from the market. It is a world inhabited by the excluded that has been variously theorized by feminism, queer theory, critical race theory and most explicitly by subaltern studies (Chatterjee, 2004). While sociology concerns itself with the way third-wave marketization creates exclusion and unequal inclusion, conventional economics and increasingly conventional political science – notwithstanding dissidents – have fed the ideologies that justify third-wave marketization and its collaborating states.

Reflecting on the dilemmas facing the social sciences, the Gulbenkian Commission (1996), chaired by Immanuel Wallerstein, called for the dissolution of disciplinary boundaries. They are a legacy of the anachronistic 19th-century division of state, economy and civil society. Having seen the blurring of lines in the 20th century, today we are back in the 19th century. If there were to be a singular social science, it would be dominated by economics and political science, and sociology would simply disappear together with its critical perspectives.¹⁶ Therefore, sociology's future lies with such neighboring disciplines as anthropology and human geography in mapping the destructive expansion of markets. Sociology is not against markets *per se*, but against their over-extension. As Pope Francis decreed, the point is to control markets rather than being controlled by them.

If both the head of the Catholic Church and leading economists are heading in the direction of sociology we should return the compliment by staking out a bigger claim for ourselves as a critical discipline and as an intervention in society. Sociology is uniquely positioned to face the unequal world: first, to understand inequality and its multiple intersecting forms; second, to recognize that we are a living part of those inequalities along with social movements; and third, to realize that, despite all our differences, our fate as sociologists is intimately tied up with the fate of humanity.

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Notes

1. This address was given at the International Sociological Association's (ISA) XVIII World Congress of Sociology that met in Yokohama, Japan, 13–19 July 2014. The Congress theme was 'Facing an Unequal World: Challenges for Global Sociology,' the focus of both plenaries and sessions of the 55 Research Committees. The breadth of debate is reflected in the five books chosen for author-meets-critics sessions: *The Killing Fields of Inequality* by Göran Therborn, *Tools of Justice: Non-discrimination and the Indian Constitution* by Kalpana Kannabiran; *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* by Asef Bayat; *Para Descolonizar Occidente* [For the Decolonization of the Occident] by Boaventura de Sousa Santos; and *Framed by Gender: How Gender Inequality Persists in the Modern World* by Cecilia Ridgeway.
2. Marginson and Ordorika (2011) have compiled impressive evidence of US domination of the global field of research and higher education. In the sheer amount of funding devoted to higher education the US spends seven times as much as Japan, the next highest spender on the list (\$359.9 billion as opposed to \$51.1 billion). In terms of research output the gap between the US and the rest of the world is staggering. In 2001 scientists and social scientists published 200,870 papers in 'major journals,' followed by Japan with 57,420, the UK with 47,660, Germany 43,623, France 31,317 and China 20,978. When it comes to the number of 'highly cited' researchers, the US has 3835, more than eight times the second ranking country, the UK. The US produced fewer than a third of the world's scientific articles in 2001, but counted for 44% of the citations, though obviously not just a matter of prestige but the tendency of US scholars to cite each other. These figures are based on arbitrary assumptions but assumptions that are, nonetheless, key to defining the scientific field – the distribution of rewards, the forms of recognition, the rules of competition, the stakes of struggles.
3. With regard to gender, the 2014–2018 Executive Committee has 15 women and 6 men, and the distribution of Presidents of Research Committees is 28 men and 27 women. At

Yokohama 52% of the registrants were women. Among the national contingents with more than 100 registrants the proportion of women ranged from a low of 41% for the Netherlands and China, 44% for Japan and 46% for India to a high of 61% for Brazil and 63% for Russia and Australia. Therefore, the overall gender distribution at the ISA's Congress has become fairly equal, but this hides a not insignificant gender imbalance within countries.

4. At the XVIII Congress in Yokohama, six former ISA Presidents – Margaret Archer (in absentia), TK Oommen, Immanuel Wallerstein, Alberto Martinelli, Piotr Sztompka and Michel Wieviorka – came together to assess the first 65 years of the ISA and the road ahead. The former Presidents looked upon the inclusion of ever-greater numbers of sociologists from different parts of the world as a mixed blessing: some were nostalgic for the days when the ISA was an elite club of renowned scientists while others lamented the failure of incomplete internationalization. As inclusion has increased, Presidents have had to take up the challenge of recognizing different languages – ever more difficult in light of the expanding use of English as lingua franca. The six papers are published in *Global Dialogue* (2014) 4(4).
5. Klaus Dörre (2010, 2012) has described how the dialectic of exclusion and unequal inclusion assumes a specific form under finance capitalism through what he calls the 'Landnahme,' or one might say dispossession, that leads to ever greater levels of capital accumulation on the one side and growing precariatization, or what he calls secondary exploitation, on the other. For a similar argument, see David Harvey (2006).
6. In mapping the wave of social movements I have drawn on my own observations and interviews and an emerging literature that connects social movements to capitalism. See, for example, Pleyers (2010), Castells (2012), Benski et al. (2013), Mason (2013), Hanieh (2013), Bayat (2013), Hetland and Goodwin (2013), Cox and Nilsen (2014) and Fominaya (2014).
7. Koichi Hasegawa (2014) contrasts the obduracy of the Japanese government with the German government's reversal of its nuclear policies, responding to the massive popular protest in the wake of the Fukushima disaster.
8. Lev Luis Grinberg (2014) has argued that the focus on the occupation of a physical space was as much a sign of weakness as of strength, marking the absence of a vibrant oppositional civil society. When movements were ejected from their squares they had nowhere to go and their politics fizzled out. He compares the opening of political spaces in Chile and Tunisia where occupation was less important with the reconsolidation of the old regime in Israel and Egypt where occupation had been central to the politics of protest.
9. See, for example, Mona Abaza's (forthcoming) assessment of post-revolutionary Cairo – the revolutionizing of the meaning of urban space, a new politics of informality among street vendors and a flourishing art scene.
10. As market fundamentalism shows no signs of abating, despite opposition, more social scientists have begun to embrace Polanyi's idea of fictitious commodities. See, for example, Streeck (2014), Reich (2014) and Fraser (2013).
11. This is what Nancy Fraser (2012) calls the 'ontological' reading of fictitiousness, which she rejects in favor of a 'structural' reading that the act of exchange destroys use-value.
12. Polanyi did write about colonialism in these terms, but here he perhaps over-emphasized the role of violence and expropriation, missing the importance of indirect rule and the creation of labor reserves to subsidize the reproduction of migrant labor.
13. Alex Barnard has developed this concept in his study of Freegans (Barnard, 2015), who politicize capitalism's tendency to produce waste – the excommodification of edible food.
14. According to EP Thompson (1963) the formation of the English working class was a long historical process that long predates the New Poor Law and was shaped by cultural and political legacies. Yet Thompson is focused on the making of the artisanal working class whereas Polanyi focuses on the industrial working class employed in manufacturing, and especially the textile mills.

15. Mark Blyth (2002) has developed a more nuanced understanding of the place of ideas in 'great transformations' – the turn away from the market in the 1930s and 1940s in the US and Sweden, and the turn back to the market in these same countries, beginning in the 1970s. The idea of market fundamentalism played a key role in the way capital responded to the uncertainty created by economic crisis.
16. Marion Fourcade and her collaborators have shown just how powerful the profession of economics is by looking at its global reach, its internal coherence and its sense of 'superiority.' See Fourcade (2006) and Fourcade et al. (forthcoming).

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