

Ideas of Alterglobalization Movements and Marxism¹

1. Introduction

Globalization was the buzz word for most disciplines of social sciences and humanities of the 1990s. The discourses of globalization and 'TINA' become fashionable after the fall of the Soviet and Eastern Europe. However, contrary to the promise of peaceful and harmonious 'Global Village', the world after the 1990s has been characterized by the recurrent wars, economic crisis and extreme social polarization, as was witnessed by the Gulf War, Kosovo War, Iraq War, and the world economic crises of 1997-98 and current one. The alterglobalization movements, dated back to Chiapas revolt in 1994, but dramatically came out with the 'Battle of Seattle' of 1999, were the expression of the contradictions of globalization. With this background, alterglobalization movements have become one of the new important topics for some of humanities and social sciences of the 21st century. Alterglobalization movements have several different names, such as, 'anti-globalization movement', 'global justice movements', or 'anti-capitalist movement', etc. However, I prefer calling them as alterglobalization movements, for the movements are far from against globalization as such but for the globalization from below, also actively seeking the realization of the '*alter-monde*', or post-capitalist society.

The rise of the alterglobalization movements with the 'Battle of Seattle' of 1999 represent a sort of epistemological break in that it challenges the ideology of 'TINA' which has been received as a common sense even for some progressives. Considering that even some progressives talked about the so-called 'crisis of workers movement' last decade, the emergence of alterglobalization movements indicates that the declaration of 'crisis of workers movement' was too premature.

¹ This paper is a revised English translation of the article in Korean with the same title published in <Economy and Society>, a journal published by association of Korean critical sociologists, 2009 (Winter), pp. 183-205.

Alterglobalization movements have a world-historic significance in that they try to build a counter-hegemony, replacing the neoliberal globalization, beyond the theatrical showing of the discontents. Indeed, social movements, including the workers movement, have regained their power all over the world since the 'Battle of Seattle' of 1999.

However, it is also true that the alterglobalization movements lost some of their initial explosive momentum with the rise of anti-war movements after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. In contrast, traditional working class movements seem to revive with the onset of the 'Great Depression 2.0.' As for Korea, while the candlelight movements of 2008 against the import of US beef, suspicious of mad cow disease, which many observers regarded as the epochal moment of Korean alterglobalization movements, suddenly receded after the late 2008, traditional peoples' resistances have begun to flex their muscle, as was shown in the the Ssangyong workers' struggle in the Summer of 2009.² These new conjunctures seem to raise some important questions about the relation between alterglobalization movements and traditional workers movements, including question of the commonalities and differences between ideas of alterglobalization movements and Marxism.

In this paper, I will typify the main ideas of alterglobalization movements and compare them with Marxism. I will show that the ideas of alterglobalization movements share some important common grounds with Marxism despite their substantial differences. I will argue that alterglobalization movements could contribute to the social progress in the 21st century only by articulating and dialoguing with traditional workers' movements and Marxism not by differentiating or distancing from them.

This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 attempts to draw a typology of alterglobalization movements after critically reviewing existing studies on the alterglobalization movements. Section 3 assesses the virtues and limitations of some important ideas of alterglobalization movements from a Marxist standpoint. Specifically, my discussion concentrates on

² For more details about Ssangyong workers' strike in the Summer of 2009, refer to Goldner(2009).

the following concepts of alterglobalization movements: commodification, commodity fetishism, financialization, decommodification, commons, network, counter-hegemony, 'commue-ism' etc.

Section 4 raises the necessity of articulation of the ideas of alterglobalization movements with Marxism before some concluding remarks on the implication for Korea.

2. Main Ideas of Alterglobalization Movements

2.1. Studies on Alterglobalization Movements

Many studies have already been produced on the subject of alterglobalization movements. Of course, recent successes of the radical social movements in Latin America, as was culminated by the 'socialism for the 21st century' in Venezuela, accelerated the study (Lebowitz, 2006; Harnecker, 2007; Katz, 2007; Rochlin, 2007). The study on the alternative progressive societal model also becomes a fashion for the progressive academics in the South Korea. Indeed, more than dozen of 'progressive think-tanks' have produced various ideas of progressive alternative societal models, such as extending the 'commons' or 'social investment state', nationalization of the land for housing, introducing the 'basic income plan', etc.³

However, existing studies on the alternative progressive societal models lack of the in-depth study on the alterglobalization movement, the vital link which mediates the contradiction of globalization with the alternative to it. As a result, existing studies largely end up reformistic alternative policy advice, or, at most, the exercise of abstract modeling without basing themselves upon the actual social movement for the alternative. For example, they propose to fix the discontents with globalization by applying alternative policies of extending 'public sector' from above in a techno-bureaucratic way, not through the social movements from below. In this respect, some of

³ For example, Shin(2007), Kang(2009), Kwack(2008).

existing progressives' alternative projects are similar with the 'Third Way', 'social liberalism', or 'Post Washington Consensus'. In order to explain the structural contradictions of neoliberal globalization and concretize the alternative societal model on the basis of the actual movements, study on the alterglobalization is indispensable.

Although the studies on the alterglobalization movements began only a few years ago, many important works have already been accumulated.⁴ Building upon these works, this paper will focus on discussing the typical ideas of alterglobalization movements from a Marxist standpoint.

Admitting the nobleness of the alterglobalization movements, existing studies seem to make too much of it. For example, neo-Gramscian scholars, such as Gill(2000), Rupert(2006), Bieler and Morton eds.(2006), and Butko(2006), tend to overemphasize the freshness of the alterglobalization movements, highlighting the unemployed or irregular workers movements, ecological, feministic, or postmodern issues, while downplaying the importance of the traditional social movements and their related ideas and organizations, such as, socialism, social democracy, party, or trade unions. However, this paper will argue that the alterglobalization movements do not nullify the significance of the traditional social movements in the 20th century. As section 3 shows, the core ideas of the alterglobalization movements could be interpreted as the development of the revolutionary ideas of the traditional social movements in the changing conditions of the 21st century, rather than their negations.

Although the majority of the studies on the alterglobalization movements are from Autonomist or the global Keynesianism, such as De Angelis(2005a), Cleaver(2006), or Monbiot(2003), there also exist some Marxist approaches to the alterglobalization movements: (1) Neo-Gramscian International Political Economy⁵; (2) Open Marxism⁶; (3) Trotskyism⁷. Neo-

⁴ For example, Callinicos(2003), Mertes ed.(2004), Eschle and Maiguashca eds. (2005), Evans(2005), Kiely(2005), McNally(2006), Held and McGrew(2007), Wintrebert(2007), Porta ed.(2007), Cassen(2003), Bonnet(2006), Mathers(2007), Wilpert(2007), Wintrebert(2007), Schalit ed.(2002), Fisher and Ponniah(2003), Reza ed.(2003), Dee ed.(2004), Tormey(2004), Amoore ed.(2005).

⁵ For example, Rupert(2006), Morton(2007).

Gramscians have succeeded in establishing the studies on the alterglobalization movements as an academic discipline. However, they seem to be biased to the superstructure, counter culture, or civil society, as is shown by their main paradigm, that is, ‘transition from the hegemony to the counter-hegemony bloc’, They also tend to overemphasize the break of the alterglobalization movements with the traditional movements, while downplaying the potential of the latter (Bieler and Morton eds., 2006). Contrary to Neo-Gramscians, scholars of Open Marxism are usually skeptical of the alterglobalization movements, criticizing its alleged reformistic or nationalistic biases.⁸ In this respect, Open Marxists differ from Autonomists who idealize the alterglobalization movements. Also, unlike Autonomists, Open Marxists openly claim their Marxist credentials.⁹ There are two distinct Trotskyist approaches to the alterglobalization movements: (1) International Socialist Tendency, represented by the SWP in Britain¹⁰; (2) Fourth International, represented by LCR (now NPA) in France.¹¹ Despite some important differences between both approaches, they commonly emphasize the necessity of the solidarity of the alterglobalization movements with the traditional social movements on the basis of Marxist analysis of the contradictions of the neoliberal globalization.

While starting from a Trotskyist hypotheses that the neoliberal globalization has been pursued by the nation states in order to assist capital to recover the capitalist profitability, which had been worsened with the onset of the long downswing from the early 1970s, and that the explosion of the class contradictions between capital and labor on a world scale, exacerbated by the neoliberal globalization, were behind the explosion of the alterglobalization movements, this paper will submit and substantiate the thesis that one of the most important limitation of the hitherto alterglobalization

⁶ For example, Bonefeld(2006), Cleaver(2008), De Angelis(2007).

⁷ For example, Callinicos(2006; 2008), Callinicos and Nineham(2007), Bensaid(2006; 2007).

⁸ For example, Postone(2006), Thomas(2007), Bonefeld(2006). For a review of the debates between Open Marxism and Neo-Gramscian International Political Economy, refer to Bieler et al.(2006)

⁹ For example, Bonefeld, a representative theoretician of Open Marxism, argues for the abolition of the accumulation of the productive capital as well as regulation of the speculative capital and advocates the “democratic organization of the socially necessary time by the associated producers themselves”(Bonefeld, 2006: 55–56).

¹⁰ For example, Callinicos(2006; 2008), Callinicos and Nineham(2007).

¹¹ For example, Bensaid(2006; 2007).

movements is their neglect to associate with the traditional social movements, especially workers movement and the politics of the revolutionary party.¹² After attempting a Marxist evaluation of the main ideas of alterglobalization movements, largely drawing upon Trotskyist approaches, while critically appropriating the contributions by Neo-Gramscians and Open Marxists, this paper will argue that the interaction of alterglobalization movements with the traditional revolutionary politics is essential for the extension of the counter-hegemony towards the transcendence of capitalism.

2.2. Typology of Ideas of Alterglobalization Movement

While the alterglobalization movement cover extremely diverse ideas and subjects, the main ideas of the alterglobalization movements can be represented by following six currents, considering the specificities of their historical backgrounds and the evolutions: (1) eco-localism; (2) Third World nationalism; (3) global governance; (4) Autonomism; (5) social movement unionism; (6) revolutionary socialism.¹³

Table 1 compares the main characteristics of the above representative ideas of alterglobalization movements, using the criteria of ‘essence of globalization’, ‘main contradictions of globalization’, ‘status of nation-state’, ‘main subjects of the movements’, ‘direction of the movements’, ‘attitude to anti-war movements’, ‘strategies and tactics’ and ‘main theoreticians and organizations’.

Let me repeat some of the characteristics of each ideas of alterglobalization movements. Eco-localism tries to transcend the all kinds of growth oriented social system and build the ecologically sustainable local community. Decommodification, ‘reclaiming the commons’, or construction of ‘positions of counter-hegemony’ is the favorite strategy of eco-localism. Third World nationalism seems to revitalize especially in some Latin American and Middle Eastern countries. The

¹² For a similar approach, though not focusing on alterglobalization movements, refer to Ercan and Oguz(2007) or Petras(2007).

¹³ As for different typologies of the ideas of alterglobalization movements, refer to Callinicos(2003), Kiely(2005), Bond(2007), and Harvey(2009b).

main strategy of Third World nationalism is anti-American imperialism and anti-war movements.

Table 1: Typology of Ideas of Alterglobalization Movements

| | Eco-Localism | Third World Nationalism | Global Governance | Autonomism | Social Movement Unionism | Revolutionary Socialism |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|---|
| Essence of Globalization | Commodification | Americanization, Global polarization | Market fundamentalism Financialization (reversible) | Commodification, Universalization of commodity fetishism (irreversible) | Global commodity chain | Globalization of capital-labor relation |
| Main Contradiction of Globalization | Ecological crisis Destruction of community | Global polarization North vs. South | Financial instability Unequal distribution | Empire vs. Multitude | Global capital vs. Global labor | Capital vs. Labor |
| Power of Nation State | Decrease | Decrease | Decrease | Decrease | Decrease | Increase |
| Subject of Movement | Local community, NGO | Nation state | Nation state, Global governance | Multitude | Trade union | Working class |
| Direction of Movement | From below | From above | From above | From below | From below | From below |
| Attitude to Anti-War Movement | Inactive | Active | Inactive | Inactive | Inactive | Active |
| Organization and Strategy | Decommodification, Reclaiming commons, Counter-hegemony, LETS | Anti-US imperialism ALBA | Global governance, Reform of IMF-WB | Network, direct action, Commune-ism | Solidarity with social movement, Internationalism | Party, united front |
| Representation | Global Exchange (Hines) | Brazil(Lula), Bolivia(Morales), Islam Fundamentalism | ATTAC(Cassen) Monbiot, Bello | Disobedianti (Negri) | Moody, Waterman | SWP(Callinicos), LCR-NPA (Bensaïd) |

Theoreticians of Global governance usually conceives the essence of globalization as financialization or financial deregulation and argues for the reform of the international organization, especially IMF, World Bank and WTO, and introduction of the regulation of international speculative capital, such as Tobin tax. Autonomism opposes the role of the revolutionary party or the trade unions

and uphold so-called ‘multitude’ as the transformative subjects. Autonomists usually resort to ‘direct action’ and network as their main strategies. Social movement unionism tries to overcome the ‘crisis of workers movement’ through the solidarity of trade union movements with new social movements, development of the workplace democracy and the promotion of labor internationalism.¹⁴

Revolutionary socialism argues that the organized labor and the party should still shoulder the task of leading alterglobalization movements towards post-capitalist transformation. Currently, the radical left parties, such as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) in Britain or Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire (LCR, now reconstructed as Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste(NPA)) in France adhere to the idea of revolutionary socialism.

3. Comparison of Ideas of Alterglobalization Movement and Classical Marxism

This section will extrapolate some of essential concepts from the main ideas of alterglobalization movements listed in section 2, and compare them with the classical Marxist ideas. Among the six ideas of alterglobalization movements, as is summarized in **Table 1**, this paper will not discuss much about the Third World nationalism, social movement unionism and revolutionary socialism. Third World nationalism and revolutionary socialism are hard to be viewed as the ideas specific to alterglobalization movements such as ‘Battle of Seattle’ in 1999, while conceding that they provided their historical background. It is true that social movement unionism was one of the main spirits of alterglobalization movements since 1999. However, it is also true that the social movement unionism has emerged as early as 1980s in Brazil, South Africa and South Korea as a new current in trade union movements, seeking to unite trade union movements with new social movements as well

¹⁴ Upchurch et al.(2009) or Yoon(2008) advocate social movement unionism as the only rational alternative progressives. Refer to Chang(2009) as a useful antidote.

as to develop the union democracy and labor internationalism.¹⁵ For these reasons, this paper will delimit remaining three ideas, that is, eco-localism, global Keynesianism and Autonomism as the typical ideas that characterize the alterglobalization movements.¹⁶ Their specific understandings of the contradictions of globalization and related strategies to solve them can be summarized as the yellow-colored cells of **Table 1**, that is, (1) commodification, commodity fetishism and decommodification; (2) ‘accumulation by dispossession’ and ‘reclaiming the commons’; (3) financialization and global governance; (4) hegemony and counter-hegemony; (5) network and ‘commune-ism’. In the following, I will compare these core concepts of alterglobalization movements with ideas of classical Marxism and discuss their commonalities and differences.

3.1. Commodification, Commodity Fetishism, Decommodification

Many studies on the alterglobalization movements find the distinctive feature and problems of globalization in the commodification or commodity fetishism. Indeed, the ‘Battle of Seattle’ in 1999 was famous for its slogan, ‘World is not for sale!’ Naomi Klein, one of the best theoretician of the alterglobalization movements, titled her book as *No Logo*. She argues that the essence of the globalization can be found in the wholesale commodification covering the local culture and even the genetic information of the human body. Many theoreticians of alterglobalization movements, especially Autonomists or Open Marxists, argue that the concept of the commodity fetishism is useful for criticizing the upside down of the relations between human beings as the relations between things as well as debunking the fact that the human beings become the slaves of the commodities and money which they themselves create. Autonomists and Open Marxists regard the concepts of commodification,

¹⁵ Heartfield(2003) also argues that alterglobalization movements has emerged since 1980s with the recede of organized labor and Third World nationalism, hitherto representative anti-capitalist forces till 1970s.

¹⁶ Gilbert Achcar, after reading the first draft of this paper, suggested to separately deal with anarchism as one of the representative ideas of alterglobalization movements. However, anarchism usually appear as combined with with eco-localism or autonomism, rather than on its own. As for the role of anarchism, refer to Rupert(2004) and Day(2005).

commodity fetishism and decommodification as as one of the essential ideas of alterglobalization movements. Sometimes, they are viewed as the theoretical innovation carried out by the alterglobalization movements.¹⁷

Considering that Marxian problematic of commodity fetishism had become nominal or repressed in Stalinist or Althusserian political economics, alterglobalization movements deserve the praise for reviving it. However, I think that critiquing capitalism in terms of Marxian concept of commodity fetishism is as old as the classical Marxist tradition. Indeed, one of the core concepts of the critical theory of Frankfurt school or Lukacs's *History and Class Consciousness* (1923) is commodity fetishism. There also exist several other previous attempts to conceptualize the characteristics or contradictions of capitalism in terms of commodification. The best example is, of course, Karl Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* (1944). As for the decommodification, G. Esping-Anderson's *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990) formulates it as the progressive alternative against the neoliberal scrapping of welfare state.

Problem is that Polanyi or Esping-Anderson tends to present the concepts of commodification or decommodification without acknowledging that they had already been formulated more systematically in Marxian critique of political economy. Indeed, Marx's *Capital*, Vol.1 starts from the problematic of commodification. "The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appear as an immense collection of commodities; the individual commodity appears as its elementary form"(Marx, 1981; 125). Also, the conclusion of the first chapter of Marx's *Capital*, Vol.1, 'The Commodity', is nothing else than the problematic of decommodification, in other words, appeal for replacing the world of commodity fetishism by the "transparent", "conscious and planned control" of "freely associated men"(Marx, 1981: 172, 173).

More importantly, the concepts of commodification and decommodification should be placed in the whole conceptual framework of Marxian critique of political economy, the essence of

¹⁷ Refer to De Angelis(2007), Bond(2007), McNally(2006) and Westra(2008).

which is the dialectic of the surplus value and class struggle. If they are privileged apart from the latter, it leads to the theory and practice different from classical Marxism. Indeed, some theoreticians of the alterglobalization movements tend to privilege the problematic of commodification, that is, the form-determinant of capitalism, while downplaying its substance-determinant, that is, capital-labor relation, or the production of surplus value. However, as Callinicos(2005: 18) indicates, pursuing the form analysis to its extreme and viewing the essence of capital solely as commodity fetishism is to conceive capital as a trans-historical one. Lebowitz also criticizes that John Holloway's *Change the World without Taking Power* (2002) absolutized the problematic of commodity fetishism and displaced the centrality of the sale of labor-power by the sale of commodities and the exploitation of worker by the fetishism of commodities (Lebowitz, 2005: 224). As Bensaïd(2005: 188) indicates, "while commodities, money, capital and the state are fetishes, they are not mere illusions, they are real illusions. ... What follows from this, in practical terms (is) (t)hat abolishing these illusions requires abolishing the social relations that make them necessary and fabricate them". When the problematic of commodification and commodity fetishism is privileged, the task of confronting the capitalist relation of exploitation supported by the institutionalized force of the state will be relativized and the anti-capitalist movements will be disoriented as well. Indeed, some of previous alterglobalization movements, which equate the main problem of globalization with commodification, sometimes puts the top priority to some sort of anti-consumerist movement, anti-corporate movement under the slogan of 'reclaim the commons' or 'reclaim the street'.¹⁸

Absolutizing the commodity fetishism is even more problematic in that it easily leads to the pessimism. Indeed, John Holloway, one of main theoretician of Open Marxism, argues that the traditional revolutionary strategies, including the revolutionary party, is no longer feasible in the era of globalization when the commodity fetishism totally dominates the consciousness of people.

¹⁸ For example, Chesnais et.al(2000) praises the merit of the slogan, 'world is not for sale'. De Angelis(2003) also argues that the strategy of 'reclaiming the commons' can contribute to overcoming the market and the world of commodities. As for anti-consumerist movement, refer to Worth and Kuhling(2004).

However, Lukacs convincingly proved the necessity of the revolutionary party, based on nothing else than the analysis of the dialectics of commodity fetishism in his *History and Class Consciousness* (1923).¹⁹

Moreover, if the globalization is simply equated with the universalization of commodification or commodity fetishism, it will be reduced to just economic globalization. In that case, the significances of the nation states as the executor of globalization and concomitant geo-political competition between the states will be abstracted from the concept of globalization. Indeed, Hardt and Negri(2000), *Empire*, representative Autonomist work on globalization, anticipates that the political and military competition and war between nation states will be minimized with the universalization of commodification and globalization of capital. In this context, alterglobalization movements tend to be reduced just as a decommodification, exterior to or even opposite to the anti-war movement from it. Trapped in the problematique of commodification/decommodification, some of Neo-Gramscians also had difficulty in coping with the issue of anti-war, which has suddenly popped up at the forefront after September 11 of 2001. For example, Rupert(2003: 198), an influential Neo-Gramscian scholar, argued that the growing of Anti-Americanism and nationalism after September 11 represented a direct hindrance to the transformative project of alterglobalization movements. Even some best theoreticians of alterglobalization movements, like Naomi Klein(2003), alleging that the free trade was itself war, confined the target of the alterglobalization movements to the economic problems of globalization, such as tyranny of transnational corporations, IMF, WTO, etc.,

¹⁹ Unlike Holloway, who totally reject the necessity of organization, De Angelis, a Open Marxist, seems to admit it, when he argues that “the problematic of the transcendence of commodity fetishism points to the problematic of organization. ... if power-over is not something opposed to power-to, but the end result of clashing between powers-to running in opposite direction, then strategic self-reflection on ‘our power to’, is a moment of our own empowerment”(De Angelis, 2005b: 242, 244). Bonefeld(2005: 269), another chief Open Marxist, also admitted the necessity of organization, though rejected Leninist party: “Only organized negation is able to transform the existence of class struggle in and against bourgeois social relations into the beyond of human history. This organized negation has however to be a self-organized negation.”

while minimizing or avoiding the task of anti-war disappears.²⁰ However, as Serfati(2002) succinctly expresses, globalization can exist and function only as “armed globalization”.

3.2. Accumulation by Dispossession and Reclaiming of Commons

Many theoreticians of the alterglobalization movements often characterize the essential dynamics of the current capital accumulation as ‘accumulation by dispossession’, Harvey’s re-naming Marxian term of ‘primitive accumulation’. They argue that the ‘accumulation by dispossession’ or ‘primitive accumulation’ is not the thing of the past when capitalism has emerged but the everlasting process which continues even in the 21st century. However, ‘accumulation by dispossession’ or ‘primitive accumulation’ is one of the essential concepts of Marxian critique of political economy, especially his *Capital*, Vol.1. Regardless of some ambivalence, Marx seems to mean it as the precondition for the capital accumulation as such, that is, extended accumulation based on the production of the surplus value. On the contrary, Harvey(2003), De Angelis(2007), or Bonefeld(2002) argues that the primitive accumulation is permanent and on-going process. They argue that process of separating the direct producers from their means of production, as is represented by the enclosure of commons, is not just the historical process of creating the capitalist relations of production for the first time but also still-continuing process. For example, De Angelis(2007: 146) lumps together all the problems of neoliberalism, such as the privatization, strengthening intellectual property rights, dismantling the welfare state, marketization of education, or even the Iraq War, under the rubric of the primitive accumulation in that they represent the ‘new enclosure’ of common. Moreover, Harvey argues that if the ‘accumulation by reproduction’ was the main arena of the traditional workers’ movements, the ‘accumulation by dispossession’ provides the *raison d’etre* of the alterglobalization

²⁰ It is true that Naomi Klein actively participated in the anti-war movements after the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and emphasized the role of war and terror in forcing neoliberalism to the countries of the South as is illustrated in her recent work *The Shock Doctrine* (Klein, 2007). However, what she is questioning is still the form of capitalism, that is, neoliberalism, rather than the capitalism itself. Her position seems to change from anarchism or Autonomism to Keynesianism. Indeed, she openly supported Obama in the last US presidential election.

movements.²¹

The fact that the concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ or ‘primitive accumulation’ plays the crucial role in the theory and practice of the alterglobalization movements shows that the concept of Marxian critique of political economy is still effective in explaining the contradictions of and alternatives to the 21st century capitalism. However, like the concepts of commodification or commodity fetishism, the concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ or primitive accumulation needs to be configured within the whole system of concepts of Marxian critique of political economy, rather than absolutized as such, apart from the system. It is unfortunate that alterglobalization movements theorists tend to privilege the concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ or primitive accumulation at the expense of marginalizing the significance of the ‘accumulation by reproduction’, that is, the production of surplus value based on the wage labor, and the related importance of the capital-labor contradiction and the struggle of organized labor. Remember that the mainspring of the capital accumulation in the 21st century is still not ‘accumulation by dispossession’ but ‘accumulation by reproduction.’²² Although Marx did emphasize the fact that the capital accumulation as such continuously produces the separation of capital and labor, in other words, the reproduction of capitalist social relations, he never equated it with the historical process of primitive accumulation.²³

If the progressive politics is based on the dichotomy of ‘accumulation by dispossession’ and ‘accumulation by reproduction’ à la Harvey, it will be prone to be reformistic. Indeed, Harvey asserts that the main enemy of the progressives in the neoliberal era is the ‘accumulation by dispossession’, and advocates the introduction of ‘new New Deal’ in order to substitute ‘accumulation by

²¹ “Accumulation by dispossession in our own times has similarly provoked political and social struggles and vast swaths of resistance. Many of these now form the core of a diverse and seemingly inchoate but widespread anti- or alternative globalization movement”(Harvey, 2003: 162).

²² As Ashman and Callinicos(2006: 118) emphasized, “contemporary capitalism continues to derive its profit from the exploitation of wage-labor, and that the process continues to be concentrated primarily in the OECD region, with the very important addition of China.”

²³ For more discussion, refer to Zarembka(2002).

reproduction' for 'accumulation by dispossession'.²⁴ Harvey exactly anticipates what Obama is now doing in the midst of world economic crisis six years earlier!²⁵

3.3. Financialization and 'Global Governance'

Global Keynesianism is also one of the constituents of the ideas of alterglobalization movements. The representative organization which adheres to this is ATTAC (Association pour une Taxation des Transactions financiers pour l'Aide aux Citoyens). They usually conceptualize the main characteristic of the current capitalism as the financialization. They also seek the progressive alternative to the financialization or neoliberal globalization in the introduction of the new democratic global governance, such as new financial architecture including Tobin tax.

Theoreticians of the global governance usually argue that the current capitalism has entered a totally new phase or stage, so-called 'finance-led accumulation regime', with the financialization as early as the 1980s. As they share the paradigm of 'finance-led accumulation regime', despite their critical attitude to it, they had difficulties to forecast the coming world economic crisis prior to its onset. Indeed, the theoreticians of the global governance had not been able to notice that the financialized accumulation was nothing but a bubble which is destined to explode. Indeed, regardless of whether they are Keynesians, Autonomists, Open Marxists, or Neo-Gramscians, most theoreticians of alterglobalization movements failed to conceive the neoliberal globalization as a financial bubble.

²⁴ Harvey(2003: 209) argues that "The only possible, albeit temporary, answer to this problem within the rules of any capitalistic model of production is some sort of new 'New Deal' that has a global reach. This means liberating the logic of capital circulation and accumulation from its neo-liberal chains, reformulating state power along much more interventionist and redistributive lines, curbing the speculative powers of finance capital, and decentralizing or democratically controlling the overwhelming power of oligopolies and monopolies (in particular the nefarious influence of the military-industrial complex) to dictate everything from terms of international trade to what we see, read, and hear in the media".

²⁵ However, Harvey(2009a) recently argued that due to the enormous burden of the government deficit Keynesian 'new New Deal' would not be feasible in the US, while China can try it with its ample dollar reserves through the construction of social infrastructure on a large scale, thereby provide an exit for the current world economic crisis. For more critiques of Harvey from Marxist positions, refer to Brenner(2006) and Fine(2006).

Instead, they tend to conceive it as an established accumulation regime. It evidences how deeply they have been imprisoned in the scheme of stagism or ‘epochal change’. For this, they turned out to be surprisingly insensitive to the coming world economic crisis, let alone the internal contradictions and crisis tendency of the current capitalism.

Some theoreticians of alterglobalization movements argue that the financialization is too noble phenomenon to be explained by Marxian theory. For them, the recipe should be sought in Keynes or Minsky not Marx. However, it is groundless to assert that Marxian economic theory is only interested in the production of real sector, neglecting the issues of money and finance. Indeed, Marx’s *Capital*, Vol.3 provides the rich and insightful discussion of fictitious capital and the contradictory dynamics between the financial capital and industrial capital during the business cycle, which in many respects, anticipates the Keynes’s or Minsky’s analysis of financialization. Therefore, it is not legitimate to argue for the Keynesian or Minskyian theory of finance on the ground that Marxian theory is too out-of-dated to explain the alleged ‘new’ phenomenon of financialization. Intoxicated by the financial bubble, theoreticians of financialization generally discarded Marxian theory of crisis, especially the law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. As a result, most of them could not detect the imminent world economic crisis even at the point of the US sub-prime mortgage crisis in the Summer of 2007. Now, they argue that the current economic crisis was caused by the neoliberal financialization, financial deregulation, or financial globalization after the 1980s. However, they confuse the cause with effects. So-called financialization after the 1980s should be understood as the result of or response to the deepening structural crisis which has already begun in the early 1970s underpinned by the long-run falling of the rate of profit. Far from causing the current crisis, financialization has provided the way for the world economy to avoid falling into the great depression through blowing a series of financial bubbles after 1980s.²⁶

Despite its fundamental limitations, Keynesian ideas of global governance, including

²⁶ For more discussion, refer to Brenner(2009).

financial regulation, nationalization and new international financial architecture, could function as a progressive anti-neoliberal discourse during the heyday of neoliberalism. That is why some of excellent activists of alterglobalization movements draw upon or ally with them. However, since the 2007-09 world economic crisis, Keynesian ideas have no longer functioned as a progressive ideas. Instead, they have totally been incorporated into the ideology or policy regime of the ruling class. Indeed, most of ruling ideologues, including ex-neoliberals, suddenly declare that “We are all Keynesians”, emphasizing the necessity of the global responses to the global crisis, as was shown in the recent G-20 summit. Recent developments suggest that the alterglobalization movements should break with the Keynesian ideas of global governance, which some of it had long cherished, if it continue to be anti- and post-capitalist transformative movement.

3.4. Hegemony and Counter-Hegemony

Theoreticians of Neo-Gramscian International Political Economy (IPE), such as Cox, Rupert and Morton, conceptualize the alterglobalization movements in terms of Gramscian hegemony and counter-hegemony. For them, the essence of the strategy of alterglobalization movements is building the counter-hegemony against the neoliberal hegemony.

There exist hundreds of competing interpretations of Gramscian concepts of hegemony or counter-hegemony. According to Post-Marxists, such as Laclau and Mouffe, Gramscian concept of hegemony is meant to reject the traditional strategy of proletarian dictatorship of the revolutionary party and justify the postmodern politics of civil democracy. Neo-Gramscian IPE largely accepts the postmodern interpretation of Gramscian concept of hegemony. Therefore, they tend to highlight the significance of the superstructure, such as the roles of idea, culture or education in combating the existing hegemony and building the counter-hegemony.²⁷ Some of them even fall in a kind of conspiracy theory, when they argue that so-called Trilateral Commission orchestrated the creation of

²⁷ For example, refer to Butko(2006).

neoliberal globalization after 1980s.²⁸

Gramscian concept of hegemony should be interpreted to stand in the same terrain of the strategy of united front formulated by Lenin and Trotsky in the early Comintern (Bensaïd, 2007). Because Gramscian concept of hegemony assumes the unevenness of the social forces which compose the hegemony, it inescapably implies the necessity of leadership, in other words, revolutionary party as the ‘modern prince’. Indeed, Morton, a representative Neo-Gramscian scholar, admits that “there remains a Leninist bias toward statism” in Gramscian concept of hegemony or counter-hegemony (Morton, 2007: 208-211). Just remember that Gramsci himself mentioned in his *Prison Notebooks* that “one hundred per cent homogeneous on the level of ideology” is needed for the counter-hegemonic historical bloc to carry out the social transformation (Gramsci, 1971: 366). Despite the solid embeddedness of Gramscian concept of hegemony within the classical Marxist tradition, some of alterglobalization movements theorists, especially Autonomists, tend to reduce it to some kind of decentered network concept and thereby negate the relevance of the united front strategy as well as Leninist revolutionary party. However, if EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation), the role model for Autonomists, is not a kind of revolutionary party, what else is it?²⁹

Theoreticians of eco-localism or global governance also tend to dichotomize Gramscian dialectical opposition ‘state/ civil society’ and worship the virtue of ‘civil society’. They tend to privilege the local or global resistances beneath or above the level of nation state, while avoiding the confrontation with the nation state. They conceive the civil society as autonomous from the state as well as innately democratic. However what is needed for alterglobalization movements to become anti- and post- capitalist transformative movements is not to escape from the politics of the state and privilege the virtue of ‘civil society’, but to overcome the dichotomous opposition ‘local vs. state’ or ‘civil society vs. state’ (Kiely, 2005: 284).

²⁸ As for recent discussion about how Neo-Gramscian IPE misinterpretes or distorts Gramsci’s original concept of hegemony, refer to Worth and Murray (2009).

²⁹ For more discussion, refer to Bensaïd (2005: 178).

3.5. Network and ‘Commune-ism’

Autonomists also privilege the direct action and direct democracy based on network, while describing the classical Marxism as its opposite. However, it is a serious confusion of Stalinism with classical Marxism, the essence of which is ‘socialism from below’. I think that classical Marxism is not incompatible with the ideas of direct democracy, direct action and network which have prominently revived with the rise of alterglobalization movements. The principles or tactics of direct democracy, direct action and internet-based networks, which have been developed in the alterglobalization movements, need to be positively incorporated by Marxist radical organizations.³⁰ However, when Autonomists object to all kinds of organization and leadership, argue for the unmediated direct equivalence, and absolutize the direct democracy based on direct action and network, etc., they simply ignore the undeniable reality of the uneven development of the mass consciousness in capitalism. Some degree of representative democracy and the leadership is unavoidable ‘necessary evil’ for the progressives in the ‘war of manoeuvre’ to confront with and overthrow the capitalist state power highly organized with force.

Some of alterglobalization movements activists imagine that the post-capitalist society could be built within the capitalist system by strengthening the counter-hegemonic positions through the education and cultural projects. In this respect, the strategy of the counter-hegemony of some alterglobalization movements has a lot in common with so-called ‘Commune-ism’ or communitarianism. Also, as is evidenced in De Angelis(2007) or Klein(2001), the transformative strategies of Autonomism or Open Marxism are reduced to so-called ‘reclaiming the commons’, or creating and strengthening the ‘commune’ within the capitalist system. They imagine that they could transit toward post-capitalist *altermonde* through the growth and extension of ‘commons’ or

³⁰ For more discussion on the direct democracy and direct action in the alterglobalization movements, refer to Carter(2005). Cleaver(2008), a Marxist Autonomist, admitted the static limits of the concept of network and suggested to augment it by the concepts of ‘rhizomes’ or ‘deep currents’.

‘commune’ within the capitalist system without confronting and smashing the capitalist state power. However, it is simply a evolutionary cultural socialist illusion.³¹

As is evidenced in the experience of the dual power during the Russian Revolution of 1917, all kinds of ‘war of position’, based on the power of ‘commune’ or ‘commons’, cannot but inroad the capitalist relation of production and provoke the reaction of the ruling class armed with state power, finally lead to the ‘war of manoeuvre’, including classical mass strike and mass insurrection, when they grow over certain threshold. If the revolutionary forces avoid the ‘war of manoeuvre’ and confine themselves within the ‘war of position’, the power of ‘commune’ or ‘commons’ will be brutally destroyed by the capitalist state, as was evidenced in Allende’s Chile in 1973, or incorporated as marginal and harmless components of the system.³²

Indeed, it is difficult to conceive the ideas of so-called ‘Commune-ism’ or communitarianism, shared by some of alterglobalization movements activists, as anti- or post-capitalist. Most of them accept and accommodate the logic of market economy and do not attempt to transcend capitalism. Related with this issue, I think that Karatani Kojin, an influential theoreticians of ‘Commune-ism’ or so-called NAM (New Association Movement) in Japan, seriously misrepresents Marx’s critique of Proudhon’s socialism. As is well known, Proudhon argued that the commune society based on the ‘non-capitalist market economy’ could be constructed simply by replacing the capitalist money with the ‘labor money’ without abolishing the capitalist relations of production. However, Karatani(2003) asserted that Marx adopted Proudhon’s scheme of commune society based on the ‘labor money’. It is not true. In fact, Marx severely criticized that Proudhon’s project of ‘labor money’ failed to understand the dialectical necessity of the emergence of the capital from the money

³¹ For an insightful discussion of the experiment of ‘cultural socialism’ in ‘Red Vienna’ in 1920s, refer to Eley(2002). For a Marxist critique of ‘Commune-ism’ in Korea, refer to Jeong(2009a).

³² Harvey(2009b) also indicates the localist or communitarian movements as follows: “But the effectiveness of all these movements (leaving aside their more violent fringes) is limited by their reluctance and inability to scale up their activism into large-scale organizational forms capable of confronting global problems. The presumption that local action is the only meaningful level of change and that anything that smacks of hierarchy is anti-revolutionary is self-defeating when it comes to larger questions.”

and commodity. Marx consistently criticized Proudhon from his *Poverty of Philosophy*, through *Grundrisse*, to *Capital* (McNally, 1993). In some respects, whole system of Marx's critique of political economy can be reinterpreted as a critique of Proudhonism. I think that Marx's critique of Proudhon's project of 'labor money' can be applied to some of the ideas of alterglobalization movements, such as Neo-Gramscian strategy of counter-hegemony, Karatani's 'Commune-ism' or NAM, eco-localist Local Exchange and Trading System (LETS), Giovanni Arrighi(2008)'s 'non-capitalist market economy'.³³

4. Concluding Remarks

Alterglobalization movements have developed some of wonderful transformative imageries such as commodification, commodity fetishism, decommodification, financialization, global governance, hegemony and counter-hegemony etc. They are valuable contributions to the development of anti- and post-capitalist transformative politics. Indeed, they highlight the aspects which have sometimes been neglected or suppressed in the traditional Marxism which emphasizes the central importance of the exploitation in the production process and the role of the organized labor and revolutionary party. However, it is wrong for some of the theorists of alterglobalization movements, especially Autonomists and Left-Keynesians, to treat their favorite concepts of commodification, commodity fetishism, financialization, counter-hegemony as alien to or incompatible with the classical Marxist tradition. Indeed, above concepts, essential to the alterglobalization movements, are central to Marxian critique of political economy and classical Marxist tradition as well. Nonetheless, these concepts should be properly configured and situated in the whole system of Marxian critique of political economy. If these concepts are privileged without considering their unevenly interwoven systemness, they would lead to the non-Marxian theories and

³³ For a critique of Arrighi's proposal for 'non-capitalist market economy', refer to Jeong(2009b).

politics. Developing the concepts of commodification, decommodification, financialization and counter-hegemony within the Marxian conceptual system is indispensable for the alterglobalization movements to unite with the organized labor and the revolutionary politics for overthrowing and transcending capitalism.

Let me conclude this paper with some implications of above this discussion for the development of alterglobalization movements in Korea.³⁴ I think the candlelight movement of 2008 can be described as a Korean alterglobalization activism, given that the Free Trade Agreements was a global issue. Indeed, it shared the values of the international anti-neoliberal and alterglobalization movement, above all, “reclaiming the commons”, or “people before profit”, as was evidenced by the fact that the protesters were directed towards not only the importation of US beef but all the attempts by Lee Myung-bak government to “enclosure” the “commons”, such as privatization of public education, health insurance, public media, electricity, gas and water, and most importantly, construction of vast transportation canal crosscutting the Korean peninsula (“Grand Canal”) from the first day of demonstration. What is particularly interesting about the candlelight movement is the fashion in which it morphed from a protest against importation of US beef into a mass movement which included students, workers, activists, even Buddhist monks, all aligned against a wide range of issues mentioned above. Especially it was the plan of “Grand Canal”, given its potentially environmental destructive bent, which incensed the monks and brought them out on the streets. The movement was also similar with other international alterglobalization movements since the “Battle of Seattle” of 1999, in that its major key word was “spontaneism” or “direct democracy”. In fact, the candlelight movement of 2008 had not started with calls from the left political organizations. Many of them entered the scene late and in a timid way. Also, the noble aspects of the movement were the combination of online and off-line protests as well as the active participation of teenagers, reflecting their anger against the government’s plan of privatization of education. However, the inadequate

³⁴ For more discussion of the alterglobalization movements in Korea, refer to Jeong and Westra(2009).

participation of the organized workers was one of the weak points of the movement. It was also unfortunate that some sort of Autonomist mindset dominated the movement, worshipping the “spontaneity” of so-called “multitude”. The absence of the political leadership of radical left was one of the reasons why the movement, which had erupted on such a splendid scale and so tenaciously continued, gradually became out of steam after August 2008 without achieving any of the initial targets of the movement, even the renegotiation of the US beef importation. Moreover, recent upsurge of the traditional social movements in the midst of global economic crisis, as was highlighted by the recent Ssangyong Motor’s Strike, showed the limitations of the candlelight movement of 2008, where the issues of labor or poverty, crucial to the current conjunctures of deepening economic crisis, had been addressed only marginally.

What is needed for the Korean progressives is to acknowledge the central roles of organized labor and the radical politics in the anti- and post-capitalist struggles, while drawing upon or communicating with the experiences of international alterglobalization movements as well as the new young generation of resistance in Korea, so-called, “Generation of Candlelight”, which was the most important achievements of the movement of 2008.

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