

Re-articulating Dissent: Representing the Working Class from Third Way to New Right in Britain and Chile

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This article takes the 2010 electoral defeats of the Chilean Concertación and British New Labour governments as a point of departure to analyse the crisis of representation in Third Way politics and how this crisis has allowed the right to articulate a successful project of subaltern dissent. The article develops a critical reading of Gramsci through an engagement with Spivak to analyse the complex and contested relations of representation through which subaltern subjectivities are constituted politically. In applying this critical deconstruction to Britain and Chile we discuss the ways in which the Third Way discursively, materially and institutionally acted to re-present a demobilised working-class subject as part of a model of a consensual (elite-led) and de-antagonised politics. We argue that this depoliticisation and demobilisation of popular activity has served to disembody Third Way parties from their core constituencies in civil society, allowing room for the political right to re-articulate subaltern dissent. We thus analyse how the right has sought to articulate subaltern good sense in terms of (1) nostalgia, (2) anti-politics and (3) disciplinarity. We conclude by suggesting some of the potential tensions and contradictions involved in this re-articulation of dissent, particularly in the re-emergence of popular mobilisation in both the UK and Chile.

Keywords: Third Way; Gramsci; subaltern; political right; Spivak

In the spring of 2010 the world's two most long-standing and influential Third Way governments,¹ the Concertación in Chile and New Labour in Great Britain, suffered historic electoral defeats to coalitions of a reinvigorated political right. Media analyses of these defeats focused on internal acrimony and moments of campaign farce, while party elites retreated into bouts of soul-searching and bitter recrimination. In this context there has as yet been little interest in asking more profound questions, in particular: how these twin defeats can help us understand the contradictory relations of Third Way governments with the subaltern; what they can tell us about the possibilities and limitations for subaltern political articulation in such a context; and more specifically, whether they mark the exhaustion of the Third Way in both countries as a hegemonic form of governance within neo-liberalism.

In this article we contribute to the work of answering these questions through the development of a neo-Gramscian analysis of the ways in which Third Way politics of popular class disarticulation have opened space for a re-articulation of subaltern dissent by new projects of the political right. Following Gayatri Spivak, however, we argue that this analysis cannot proceed from the positive projection of any abstract essential subaltern subject (such as the working class). Rather we argue for an analysis developed through the negative critique of the social relations of representation involved in the complex and contested processes of subaltern subjectivities in construction.² This theoretical strategy we suggest is fundamental to Gramsci's own critical method developed through the key

conceptual tools of hegemony, common sense and good sense, which we utilise to conceptualise processes of subject formation in a manner that is relational and immanent, rather than static.

With this we build a theoretical framework with which to analyse the disarticulation of subaltern social and political subjectivities by Third Way parties and governments, and the contradictions in such processes. These contradictions, we argue, pave the way for the political right's re-articulation of subaltern dissent as a strategy of continued subaltern disciplining, demonstrating how this represents a continuation as opposed to a radical rupture with their Third Way predecessors.

On this basis we analyse the ways in which the Chilean Socialist party (PSCh), as the popular class face of the Concertación coalition, and the British Labour party (BLP) have acted to re-present their subaltern constituents as post-antagonistic – developing discursive (at the level of ideas and discourse), institutional (between state/party and society, and party and base) and material (socio-economic and socio-political) relationships that demobilised, disarticulated and delegitimised the politicised subjectivities of the 1970s and 1980s. This act of re-presentation enabled a relatively stable period of governance grounded in the articulation of a neo-liberal common sense of highly individualised and commodified social relations. Yet we suggest that these very same strategies of disarticulation have also eroded institutional, cultural and ideological connections between the parties and their popular bases. These processes of disarticulation have therefore undercut the ability of Third Way politicians to 'speak for' their constituents, creating space for a new politics of the right to articulate the growing dissent among those sectors that have become alienated from the Third Way project. Developing this analysis we draw attention to three axes along which the right has sought to articulate subaltern dissent: (1) nostalgia for a lost sense of community; (2) disciplining of social deviance; and (3) anti-politics rejection of an 'out of touch' political elite. We conclude however by suggesting that while this re-articulated dissent has proved initially successful, it is itself beset by acute tensions and contradictions. These arise from the fact that the right's representation of the subaltern remains essentially passive and demobilised and as such dissent continues to be re-presented rather than organically expressed.

Gramsci and the Negativity of Critical Theory

In a seminal article of contemporary critical theory, Spivak (1988) asks the question, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' – is it possible to recover historical subaltern subjectivities written over by elite discourses? For Gramsci the term 'subaltern' signifies the problematic of subject formation in the social and spatial complexities of capitalist development in Italy; as such the subaltern 'by definition are not united and cannot unite until they become a "state"' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 52). The adoption of the subaltern for Spivak however signals a more fundamental project, relating to the difficulties of reconstructing subaltern subjectivity through dominant discourses, particularly in the context of colonial epistemological domination.³

In elaborating her arguments Spivak examines a key passage from the Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte in which Marx, she argues, crafts a consistent model of negative critique. In this piece Marx analyses the ambiguous process of class formation among the French small peasantry in the nineteenth century. Spivak suggests that Marx

develops a negative critique of the processes by which the ‘interest [of] millions of families’ become differentiated, ‘cut off ... from those of the other classes’ (Marx, 1973, p. 239). Yet in doing this, Spivak claims that ‘Marx is not working to create an undivided subject where desire and interest coincide’ but on the contrary to develop a ‘principle of a dispersed and dislocated class subject’ (Spivak, 1988, p. 276).

To justify this claim Spivak turns to the question of representation, an English word which it is suggested conflates two distinct German usages deployed by Marx: *Vertretung* (representation as political proxy) and *Darstellung* (re-presentation as aesthetic staging). In the Marxian analysis the French small peasants have shared interests, but lack a sense of self-identity and as such they seek a proxy representative who will act on their behalf. Yet Spivak suggests that Marx is quite conscious that this process of representation (as political proxy) implies within itself an associated act of re-presentation (an aesthetic staging). As she argues, ‘their representative must appear simultaneously as their master, as an authority over them’ (Marx, 1973, p. 239).

This relationship thus establishes social relations of power by which ‘the political influence in the place of the class interest ... finds its last expression ... in the executive force ... subordinating society to itself’ (Marx, 1973, p. 239). The fundamental act of power in ‘re-presentation’ is then hidden behind the more superficial act of political ‘representation’. With this sleight of hand (lost in the English translation) the representor reduces the represented to passivity, to ‘spoken for’. Very subtly the act of representation obscures ‘the staging of the world in re-presentation ... dissimulates the choice of and need for heroes, paternal proxies, agents of power’ (Spivak, 1988, p. 277). Thus to expose this dissimulation is precisely the role of the negative critique of the social relations of power involved in political representation.

This task of disrupting the re-presentation of subaltern subjectivities by those who claim to be their representatives is, then, crucial for critical theory.⁴ Gramsci’s Marxian-inspired theory of politics is particularly useful in this task because it involves a break with the positive determinist connection between the economic relations of production and the reproduction of political subjectivities (Morton, 2007; Robinson, 2005). For Gramsci specific forms of capitalism are not to be understood as mechanistically determined by their own internal laws of movement but instead by the complex conflicts within and between different social classes over the form and content of social reproduction.

The key relational concept with which Gramsci develops this analysis is the notion of hegemony, which is the most stable form of the reproduction of capitalism because it involves the construction of consent within the subaltern to their own subordination (Pessoa, 2003, p. 48). This is achieved through the construction of a historic bloc in which a leading social group is able to pursue its particular interests through a project that is internalised and accepted as universal by subordinate social groups (Gramsci, 1971, p. 182). This conception is not merely passive acceptance, but more constitutive and dynamic. It is a guiding force, giving direction and coherence to the ways in which people act, think and feel (Motta, 2007; Robinson, 2005).

Hegemony is therefore a concept that is profoundly relational, processual and constitutive through which particular subjectivities and practices become naturalised as common sense. As Gramsci suggests, ‘Hegemony within the realm of civil society is grasped when the

citizenry come to believe that authority over their lives emanates from the self' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 268). In moving beyond a theory of state as force, Gramscian analysis of the struggle over hegemony allows us to move on to the complex and contested terrain of intersubjective forms of consciousness in civil society which 'are like the trench systems of modern warfare' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 24). Thus the everyday practices, ideas and subjectivities of the subaltern are a key site (maybe the key site) for understanding and engaging with struggles over power and resistance (Femia, 1975; Motta, 2007). As Dante Germino describes it, 'Gramsci accomplishes a Copernican revolution ... by giving the world of political and social relationships a new Sun ... the everyday lives of the impoverished and illiterate majority of humankind' (Germino, 1990, p. 263).

Accordingly, the concept of hegemony does not positively propose any essential socio-political subjectivity, but analyses instead the processes and struggles over the relations of power and resistance which constitute subjectivities as politically meaningful. This analysis becomes even more apparent when Gramsci moves directly on to the terrain of consciousness, not as a positive act of recovery but primarily (through) 'the negative' critique of common sense. As Spivak suggested for Marx, the Gramscian category of common sense is not concerned with the unified subject, but the complex relations of power that traverse the subject (see also Nun and Cartier, 1986, p. 205).

Gramsci thus develops a critical strategy to analyse the disjuncture between common-sense discourses and everyday subaltern experience without proposing a fully formed positive subject-consciousness. This disjuncture arises because the subaltern is always more than their representation. They are subjects with past political struggles, histories, desires and cultural practices in potential conflict with common sense. Additionally, subaltern communities experience everyday contradictions between common-sense discourse and the realities of how the law, education and the market are, for example, classed, raced and gendered. The residues of such histories and the experience of such contradictions infuse everyday consciousness, and are conceptualised by Gramsci as moments of good sense, which 'rough and jagged though they always are, are better than the passing away of the world in its death-throes and the swan-song that it produces' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 343). Therefore everyday consciousness is contradictory and fragmented even when hegemonised. There is always the immanent possibility of the articulation of counter-hegemonic moral economies and political practices from, and of, the subaltern. Yet great care is taken to avoid any assertion of good sense as positive consciousness, instead defining this ambiguous category as what José Nun and William Cartier, citing Gramsci, refer to as 'an original "sense of separation", a basic negative and polemical position, which is far from indicating "a precise consciousness of its own historical identity" or "of the historical identity or the exact limits of its natural adversary" ' (Nun and Cartier, 1986, p. 205).

This neo-Gramscian framework offers powerful resources for a critical analysis of the ways in which the historical representatives of the popular sectors (BLP in Britain and PSCh in Chile) have achieved a leading role in the formation of a neo-liberal historic bloc through the re-presentation of their core constituency as 'post-antagonistic'. This act of re-presentation was crucial to the success of neo-liberal hegemony, which as Joseph Femia (1987, p. 35, p. 91) suggests can only be upheld if the antagonisms contained in antagonistic social reality are hidden from view.

This critique of a post-antagonistic common sense in Third Way re-presentation thus allows us to evaluate critically the disarticulation of arenas of working-class organic intellectuality⁵ and delegitimisation of politicised subaltern subjectivities as a fundamental feature of the reproduction of neo-liberal hegemony. The neo-Gramscian framework, however, also alerts us to the lack of sustainability in this project, the basic negativity beyond common sense, which is contained within the lived experience of material, psychological and emotional contradiction. It is this basic negativity that we hope to analyse in terms of a re-articulation of dissent, as a continued strategy of subaltern disciplining, by the political right through populist and authoritarian discourses, culminating in their recent electoral victories and subsequent return to power.

Chile and Britain: A Comparison

In conducting this analysis we have chosen to compare the cases of the UK and Chile. We have done this for three principal reasons. First, we seek to complement contemporary neo-Gramscian studies of the construction of neo-liberal hegemony within particular countries (understood as contributing to the international construction of neo-liberal hegemony) (Davies, 1999; Morton, 2007; Motta and Bailey, 2007). While these existing studies have facilitated an understanding of the development of neo-liberal hegemony at the national level, their focus has often been top down (elite discourses). Where they have focused on a bottom-up approach there has been little work on the contradictions of neo-liberal hegemony and their impact upon the possibilities and limitations of subaltern political self-articulation. In this article we develop a 'bottom-up' approach that concentrates on the relationship of political elites in the Third Way and new political right with the subaltern (see Motta and Bailey, 2007; Robinson, 2005, for further discussion of this approach).

Second, in focusing on two political contexts that differ significantly with regard to the locations of their national contexts within the international division of labour, their ideological and political traditions and their experiences in opposition during the initial stage of neo-liberalisation, we seek to understand how particular processes occur within, and as part of, general (inter)national phenomena. We seek, therefore, to understand both common and different trends within the particular development of the Third Way and its electoral defeat at the hands of a reinvigorated political right in the cases of Chile and Britain. We view this as aspects of a generalised process witnessing the construction of international neo-liberal hegemony and its current crisis. In this way, we hope to 'distinguish organic movements (relatively permanent) from movements which may be termed "conjunctural" (and which appear as occasional, immediate, almost accidental)' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 77).

Finally, Chile and Britain have been chosen because in both countries the main left parties were elected to office following a prolonged period of neo-liberal restructuring – under Pinochet and Thatcher, respectively (Motta and Bailey, 2007; see also Harvey, 2005). Building on previous research that compares Chile and Britain and the way left parties operate in such contexts, we explore not only their role in constructing a relatively stable period of subaltern consent for neo-liberalism but also the contradictions involved in this process and why and how this resulted in the return to power of the political right. This reflects our interest in the role of left parties (with their tradition of being the institutional

expression of the subaltern classes) and other elite political classes in constructing neo-liberal hegemony through forms of disarticulation and articulation as disciplining of the subaltern.

Moreover, the PSCh and BLP both conducted a substantial programmatic and organisational renewal as part of their attempt to adapt to neo-liberal restructuring. In focusing on these two parties we are able to compare left parties that have undergone similar transformations, and which therefore provide some of the clearest indications of the types of process and contradictions set in motion by Third Way left parties operating within neo-liberal historical blocs. Both parties thus exemplify the process of left party transformation in relation to the construction and unravelling of neo-liberal hegemony that we seek to investigate here.

Disarticulating Dissent: The Project of the Third Way

Both the PSCh and BLP have their historical origins in movements of the popular classes and were formed as representatives of emergent movements of organised labour. By the mid-twentieth century these organic connections had become largely institutionalised through the models of corporatist capitalism adopted in each country – Keynesianism in Britain and import substitution industrialisation in Chile. These frameworks secured for the parties' elite leaderships a crucial role in national political life and made possible significant political, social and economic advances for the organised working classes. This institutionalisation, however, also set important limits on popular demands and participation, particularly to the extent that these demands came into contradiction with logics of accumulation and intensified industrialisation (O'Donnell, 1973). By the late 1960s and 1970s these limits were increasingly coming under strain as a new and more combative generation of worker militancy sought to advance beyond corporatist arrangements towards socialist reform and/or revolution. In Chile this militancy culminated in the election of the Unidad Popular government of Salvador Allende in 1970, while in Britain mass mobilisation peaked in the strike waves of 1974 and 1978.

The crises prompted by these radical challenges from below prompted an unprecedented counter-offensive from capital resulting in a radical restructuring of corporatist hegemony and its associated accumulation strategies. In Chile this restructuring took the form of a pioneering passive revolutionary path to neo-liberalism with the 1973 coup and subsequent seventeen-year long military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, and the imposition of a radically new accumulation strategy based around export-orientated free market reforms (Davies, 1999; Harvey, 2005; Taylor, 2006). In Britain the 1979 election of Margaret Thatcher as prime minister inaugurated an eighteen-year period of what Stuart Hall (1985) has termed 'authoritarian populist' Conservative government committed to a low-taxation, privatised, post-industrial economic model built around a liberalised financial services sector. Both of these projects were premised on eradication of the collective ideologies, histories and cultures of the organised subaltern sectors and the assertion of the primacy of individualised and commodified social relations in public institutions and, perhaps even more importantly, in many areas of everyday life.⁶ As Thatcher declared in 1981, 'Economics are the method, the objective is to change the heart and soul' (*Sunday Times*, 1 May 1981).

The responses from the left to this new reality were to reassert the necessity for popular struggle manifested in the mobilisation and radicalisation of grassroots militancy. Particularly important in Britain was the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) as a movement of left-wing branch militants and shop stewards seeking to challenge party hierarchies and rebuild a new grassroots labour movement (Kogan and Kogan, 1982); while in Chile in the 1980s the popular classes coalesced around two democratic opposition movements: *Acción Democrática* (AD) and *Movimiento Democrático Popular* (MDP). The high point of militancy came in the mid-1980s, in Chile with the democratic protests of 1983–5 and in Britain in the historic miners' strike of 1984–5.

By the late 1980s the successful state suppression of these protests combined with internal conflicts within the forces of the left and centre-left⁷ enabled the reassertion of leadership by BLP elites and the ascendancy in Chile of the moderate AD democratic coalition that would later form the leadership of the *Concertación*. This brief moment of what Steven Fielding (2003) has called a 'crisis of control' created a coincidence of interests between the governing right and the opposition centre-left elites as both perceived their interests as threatened. They therefore sought a return to a consensual, elite-driven national politics and the disciplining of grassroots militancy.

In Chile this Third Way project became particularly associated with the modernising elites of the AD, from the parties of the Christian Democrats (*Partido Demócrata Cristiano de Chile*, PDC), newly formed Party for Democracy, (*Partido por la Democracia*, PPD) and Renovated Socialists who argued for consensual negotiation with the military regime to ensure a smooth democratic transition (Márquez Corvalán, 2001, pp. 422–3; Roberts, 1998). In Britain the division was more generational, with a new crop of younger politicians, influenced by the massive electoral defeat of 1983, arguing for a more pragmatic approach to politics as the only route to electoral success. Yet in both countries the Third Way was primarily shaped by the necessity for party elites to reassert control and discipline over their own grass roots and the militants of their associated mass movements. We will next explore how this project shaped the parties' subsequent development in terms of: (1) the delegitimisation of mass mobilisation and 'ideological' politics; (2) the undercutting of internal democracy and grassroots organisation; and (3) the construction of the 'professional' politician, before exploring in the following section how the contradictions in this project opened the space for the success of a re-articulated project of the political right.

Delegitimising Popular Activity and Left Alternatives

The primary discursive strategy deployed by the centre-left reformers from the mid-1980s onwards has been the consistent association of popular political activity and ideological discourses with an imagery of chaos, disorder, authoritarianism and outdated tradition (for Chile, see Cavallo, 1998, pp. 100–200; Gutiérrez González, 2003; Motta, 2007; for the UK, see Hefferman, 2001, p. 73). Thus Enrique Correa, a key figure in the *Tercerista* faction of the PSCh, describes his 'Third Way': 'I believe the less ideological and more programmatic the political forces in Chile, the more likely they can make the country governable ... the construction of a country that is politically viable and which has better economic perspectives' (quoted in Motta, 2007, p. 313).

This discourse clearly borrows from and reaffirms the common-sense vocabularies of the Pinochet critique of Allende socialism and Marxism as foreign, violent, anti-democratic and disruptive of social harmony (Gutiérrez González, 2003; Jocelyn-Holt, 2001; Márquez Corvalán, 2001; Richards, 2004, p. 107). The term 'ideological' is set up as a negative marker for the left, which is, once posited, revealed as incompatible with parallel markers of social peace 'governability', 'political viability' and 'better economic perspectives', the latter being claimed for the 'more programmatic' project of the reformers – a project that affectively transcends social antagonisms between rich and poor, labour and capital, dictatorship and democracy.

This discursive strategy has been elevated to the status of near sacred principle by New Labour, for whom 'there are no longer any significant social conflicts left to resolve. Class divisions ... have disappeared' (Rustin, 2004, p. 113). The key reference point here is the 'winter of discontent' as a symbolic moment of turmoil that must never be repeated. This was articulated by Tony Blair at the 1996 Labour Party Conference: 'forget the past, no more workers versus bosses, you are on the same side now, the same team' (Blair, 1996).

In both Britain and Chile this discourse of a post-antagonistic politics constitutes a fundamental effort of re-presentation (in the sense outlined by Spivak) of the working class as depoliticised and de-collectivised: aspirational voters, law-abiding citizens, hard-working families, etc. In the words of Philip Gould, a key architect of New Labour, 'the old working class has become a new middle class: aspiring, consuming ... they have outgrown crude collectivism and left it behind in the supermarket car park' (Gould, 1998, p. 4). The 'old' working-class collectivism is here associated with a string of negative allusions – immaturity, outdatedness and crudity. The contrast is made with the new middle-class subject who is dynamic in his or her embrace of individualism (aspiration) and consumerism.

Third Way discourse thus re-presents its 'new' constituency as fundamentally identified with participation in the market. The social is represented as without antagonisms in which one's desires are simulated on to the television screen, moulded by marketing executives and realised through an ever-increasing easy access to credit (and debt) (for Chile, see Illanes, 2002, pp. 191–224; for Britain, see Lilleker, 2003). As Tomas Moulian (1997, pp. 31–4) argues in the case of Chile, the subjectivities that are constructed are built around a politics of forgetting (in which the projects of the left are delegitimised as the cause of the military coup in 1973) and a policy of easy credit, which results in a sense of prosperity and independence, but also a dependency on the stability of the market, the appearance of social peace and the favourable conditions for investment.

Undercutting Internal Democracy and Grassroots Organisations

The discourse of post-antagonistic politics and the re-presentation of a de-collectivised working class has been institutionally manifested in transformations in internal (and in the Chilean case inter-coalition) party structures and practices and extra-party relationships with the parties' social base (for Chile, see Gutiérrez González, 2003, pp. 140–2; Motta, 2007; Olavarría, 2003, pp. 22–6; for the UK, see Davies, 2001; Tanner, 2000). In Britain the Thatcherite anti-trade union laws (of 1984 and 1988) served as a model for BLP reformers seeking to marginalise politically conscious grassroots activists in favour of more pliable 'sofa members' in the campaign to establish One Member One Vote

(OMOV) as an internal electoral mechanism (Quinn, 2004). Similar centralising measures were pursued by the PSCh, particularly through reforms to internal elections to the Consejo General (General Council) and selection of Congress delegates which allowed the party leadership an effective veto against candidates of whom it did not approve (Olavarría, 2003). Moreover in both cases the role of conference in effecting policy was almost entirely silenced (allowing the leadership and particularly those in government to act with almost complete autonomy from the party membership). This autonomy manifested itself in highly personalised practices of policy making – the so-called ‘Estilo Lagos’ and the Blairite model of ‘sofa government’ becoming notorious examples of de-institutionalised and unaccountable sites of policy formation, practised by unelected elites centred on the personal staff of the leader.

At the level of grassroots institutions these processes of centralisation and discourses of demobilisation resulted in a rapid decline in participation. One of the key institutions of the PSCh, the local party *comuna*, is now virtually non-existent, only coming to life at election time. Internal party communication has become fragmented and irregular while the role of political education has all but been abandoned (Olavarría, 2003, pp. 22–6). In Britain these trends can be seen in the historic decline of local institutions: labour clubs, welfares and branches have lost their central role in communities as spaces of political socialisation as well as centres of cultural life and solidarity (Seyd and Whiteley, 2002).

As these local institutional spaces have been abandoned, the role of the corporate media in mediating political communication has rapidly expanded. This is particularly evident during electoral campaigns which are increasingly run by specialists in marketing and expert political analysts targeting political consumers. The commodification of politics results in a generation of candidates who are moulded and sold to the electorate as personalities, rather than representatives of particular visions of society or sectoral interests (for Chile, see Moulian, 1997; Olavarría, 2003; for the UK, see Lilleker, 2003).

The Professionalisation of the Third Way Politician

The decline of party structures led to a new generation of Third Way politicians, no longer organic intellectuals such as trade unionists or barrio activists. Rather, they tend to be careerist professionals, largely coming from privileged social backgrounds, privately educated and attendees of elite universities, who enter the party as ministerial aides, assistants or researchers, with little or no experience of grassroots activity or life outside professional politics (Brierley, 2001; Teivainen, 2002). For many young members of the PSCh the meaning of tendencies or factions is understood in terms of social networks and relationships of patronage, while among the young members of New Labour there is a remarkable lack of knowledge of the party’s history and traditions, politics being understood purely in terms of careerist motivations and electoral calculus (for Chile, see Cortes-Terzi, 2002, pp. 5–6; for the UK, see Quinn, 2004). There is an accompanying shift in the cultural *habitus* of party elites who are at ease with other social and economic elites more than their party bases and traditional subaltern constituencies (for Chile, see Parra, 1998; Richards, 2004; for the UK, see Hefferman, 2001, p. 204). In Britain this was manifested in a policy nexus between New Labour spin doctors, the right-wing press and the City of London which came to dominate the formulation and presentation of policy. In Chile a policy-making

nexus was formed by Concertación elites and unelected advisers, business elites and the elites of the political right (Barrett, 2002; Silva, 2002).

Policy and Policy Discourse

The strategies developed by the Third Way modernisers in both Britain and Chile can be described as anti-popular in character. They sought to establish a leading position for party elites within the neo-liberal historic bloc by demobilising popular forces and disarticulating political alternatives. This strategy fundamentally shaped the policy agenda of these parties in government, to the extent that both operated in general continuity with their right predecessors. A striking example of this continuity in Chile was the support of key PSCh leaders for the retention of controversial anti-terror laws (condemned by human rights organisations) utilised during the Pinochet era to eliminate political opponents (Human Rights Watch, 2004; Vidal, 1995, pp. 200–28). Equally in both countries there was little interest in reversing the repressive laws on trade union regulation (condemned as some of the most restrictive in the world by the International Labour Organization [ILO]) and the right to strike introduced by the previous administrations (for Chile, see Barton, 2002, pp. 370–2; for the UK, see Welsh Labour Party, 1997).

In terms of economic policy there was broad continuity. Indeed, the fiscal measures developed by the Lagos administration were considerably more restrictive than those implemented in the latter years of the Pinochet regime (Agacino, 2003; Silva, 2002). The desire to avoid sending any negative signal to capital (particularly foreign investors) made any serious effort at economic redistribution difficult. Rather than seek the restoration of progressive taxation, the focus was primarily on regressive taxes, such as VAT as a mechanism for raising revenues, rather than addressing Chile's immense inequalities.

For New Labour, 'the party of enterprise and flexibility' (BBC, 2003), the picture was much the same. During its first term in government income inequality accelerated, rising to the highest levels since records began, before plateauing (still at historic highs) in the second term (Angeriz and Chakravarty, 2007). New Labour maintained the regressive tax regime inherited from the Thatcher years by which the poorest 10 per cent of the population pay 53 per cent of their income in tax, while the richest 10 per cent pay only 33 per cent (Shaw, 2007, pp. 57–8).

The Third Way embrace of neo-liberal economic and political logics resulted in the flexibilisation of labour contracts, growing inequality, lack of social mobility and breakdown of subaltern community solidarities. This was manifested socially in a pervasive sense of vulnerability. These feelings of precariousness were articulated by Third Way elites as part of a discourse of governance and risk, framing the causes of social ills such as unemployment, crime and lack of education as the result of individual failure, lack and deviance (for Chile, see Parra, 1998; Silva, 2002, pp. 340–50; for modes of gendered exclusion of the undeserving poor in the health sector, see Gideon, 2007; for the UK, see Jones, 2011). The solutions therefore became broadly technocratic and therapeutic policies, for example in parenting classes for young mothers, antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs) for problematic neighbours or health controls for obese children. Social policies thus involved ever greater penetration of disciplinary regimes into the everyday lives of the poor and marginalised. The discursive individualisation of delinquency and risk also gave rise to significant communal tensions

and fears in relation to an often pathologised ‘other’, be that the uncivil political militant (particularly in Chile the Mapuche), the antisocial neighbour, undeserving single mother or, particularly in Britain, the new immigrant.

Re-articulating Dissent: The Return of the Political Right

The discursive, institutional and policy project of the Third Way has since the mid-1980s played the leading role in both Britain and Chile in re-presenting and demobilising subaltern political subjectivities and embedding neo-liberal hegemony and common sense ever deeper into the contours of social, political and personal life. Yet there is a fundamental contradiction here: the post-antagonistic discourse of social harmony articulated by Third Way common sense runs counter to the experience of dislocation felt by many subaltern voters. While the Third Way succeeded in re-presenting a post-antagonistic politics, its embrace of neo-liberal logics has given rise to a whole range of antagonisms dispersed throughout society and new forms of social combativeness, which are now individualised and communalised among communities, against outsiders, between neighbours and across generations.

It is through articulating these good-sense feelings of unease, fear and betrayal that the political right in Britain and Chile has been able to return to power and reclaim leadership of the neo-liberal historic bloc. In the following section we outline three key axes along which this re-articulation is occurring: (1) nostalgia, (2) governmentality and (3) anti-politics, before finally suggesting potential contradictions that may arise from within this new project of re-presentation.

Nostalgia

The role of nostalgia in right discourses has been particularly important in articulating subaltern groups’ feelings of loss at the decline of community solidarities, social stability, shared values and dignified cultures. These feelings are thus framed in relation to an idealised past, which is articulated through references to apparently traditional values: stability, unity, community, homogeneity and hard work against immorality, delinquency, lack of godliness (in the case of Chile) and division. In Britain, Conservative leader David Cameron has referred to a contemporary malaise as ‘a broken society’ – a result of ‘family breakdown, welfare dependency, failing schools, crime, and the problems that we see in too many of our communities’ (BBC, 2008). In Chile Sebastian Piñera similarly speaks of his government’s objective to turn around the growth in delinquency and criminality by creating:

A society of solid values which means ... respect and promotion of the family, nature, honesty, justice, fraternity and peace. Faced with such challenges we must remember the words of Pope John Paul II when he visited Chile and referred to the moral causes of prosperity affirming that ‘[they] are to be found in a constellation of virtues: economic freedom, order, honesty, initiative, austerity, and a spirit of service’ (Piñera, 2010b, author’s translation).

This discourse invokes a powerful imagery of decay which strongly resonates with subaltern groups who feel abandoned through the decline of social safety nets, participation and social mobility. As Piñera expresses it, ‘We are in a world turned on its head. Honest people live terrified in their homes, behind gates and locks, whilst the delinquents enter homes ... with

total impunity' (Piñera, 2010a, author's translation). In both countries nostalgia is associated with nationalistic allusions connected to the idea of Chilean-ness or British values (Kirkup, 2011) which tend to suggest a point prior to the socio-political upheavals of the 1960s. In Chile this is combined with the repetition of the dominant discourse of the democratic transition which, as consensual and elite led, is suggested as representative of the modernity and civility of political elites in contradistinction to ideologies, political practices and beliefs expressed by non-civil and undemocratic political forces (Jocelyn-Holt, 2001, p. 200; Moulian, 1997, pp. 50–60; Torres, 2002). In Britain this nostalgia is, in right populist discourse, implicitly racialised through the concept of the white working class as 'the losers in the struggle for scarce resources, while minority ethnic groups are the winners' (Sveinsson, 2009, p. 3).

Such nostalgic constructs of 'community' signal a break with the Third Way by restoring an idea of collectivism in re-presenting the subaltern. However, they operate in continuity with the Third Way in displacing social antagonism from the idea of class struggle to the cultural realm, with an imagery of an ethnically homogeneous, socially and religiously harmonious and stable past in which working people 'knew their place' and 'played by the rules'. The implication is that it is the outsiders, the new immigrants – indigenous groups such as the Mapuche in Chile, informal workers and delinquent criminals – who have disrupted social harmony, which can only be restored by robustly reimposing homogeneity, discipline and order. Conservative party leader David Cameron thus rejects what he calls 'failed state multiculturalism', arguing that British values need to be more forcibly imposed (BBC, 2011a).

The expression of antagonism that has emerged from Third Way and Conservative discourses of representation has allowed a communalisation of social tensions. In Britain this has manifested in the demonisation of cultural 'others', particularly asylum seekers and Muslims, groups that are relentlessly posited as a problem of integration and a disruption to social harmony. This has been successfully radicalised by far right groups such as the English Defence League (EDL) and British National party (BNP), which have developed a discourse of threat in relation to claims of the 'Islamisation of Britain'. In Chile similar logics can be seen in tensions between the demonised and often criminalised informal poor and migrant workers as an ever-present threat to the civility of the Chilean middle classes – 'the backbone of Chilean society' – whose interests are framed as intrinsically linked to the maintenance of social order (Piñera, 2010a; 2010b).

Governmentality

The re-presented subaltern is thus discursively constructed not in antagonism to capital (as in socialist discourses of the 1970s) but as culturally threatened by an underclass of social deviants and outsiders. The social and economic situation of the individual in poverty became, in Third Way discourse, the consequence of an individual's own actions. These discourses have given rise to a demonisation of the working class characterised by a new pejorative vocabulary developed in reference to a pathologised, illegitimate, undeserving poor (Jones, 2011). This discourse has been articulated by the right in an argument that poverty 'lies ... in attitudes and assumptions about life's possibilities which have proved extraordinarily resistant to change' (Daley, 2008).

This has been developed by the British right to express the need for the reimposition of social disciplining of the poor. There has been a focus on the radical reform of welfare regimes, 'not [as] an exercise in accounting, but [instead] about changing our culture ... restoring the culture of respect for work' (Cameron, 2011) so that incentives and coercive mechanisms will be deployed to 'Put work, rather than hand-outs, at the heart of the welfare system' (Duncan-Smith, quoted in BBC, 2011b).

In Chile this has been articulated around a criminalising discourse of the delinquent and out-of-control young person in need of harsh sanctions through increased spending on, and respect for, the police force and interventions into the most criminal neighbourhoods. As Piñera puts it, '[O]ur objective is to progressively and systematically close all spaces of crime ... we will ensure that criminals feel the firm hand of the law' (Piñera, 2010a, author's translation). Second, the right has developed a therapeutic discourse heavily imbued with religiosity, particularly influenced by the teaching of Opus Dei with whom key members of the Union Demócrata Independiente (UDI) are closely associated. This seeks to construct the healthy, dutiful and entrepreneurial subject through a series of social programmes such as *Vida Sana*, *Vida Nueva* and increased investment in sports education, all with the objective of 'teaching values which are a powerful instrument to combat drug abuse, alcoholism and delinquency ... there is much wisdom in the argument of a healthy mind in a healthy body' (Piñera, 2010b, author's translation).

The establishment of hierarchies of good citizenship in Third Way discourses and policy regimes thus allows a radical disciplinarity to be introduced into the policy prescriptions of the right. Such disciplinarity continues to be articulated through the Third Way discourse of individualism and demobilisation, used to legitimise ever deeper advances of neo-liberal logics into the everyday realities of the marginalised poor and excluded.

Anti-politics

The third axis around which the right attempts to re-articulate subaltern dissent is the theme of anti-politics, which in both Britain and Chile has centred on a constantly repeated, yet loosely defined, notion of change. This anti-politics discourse is an outcome of the depoliticisation of politics practised by Third Way elites. Here the de-institutionalisation of internal party democracy, the decline of local sites of political socialisation, the professionalisation of Third Way politicians and the specialisation of electoral campaigns have effected detachment between the traditional parties of the left and centre-left and their historic social base. This has in turn effected a deep alienation from a party that speaks a very different language, has different cultural norms and practices and seems to have little empathy for the problems and challenges of ordinary people.

Such alienation was evidenced in Britain during the 2010 general election campaign when Labour leader Gordon Brown was overheard referring to a working-class Labour voter as 'some bigoted woman'. The incident symbolises what the populist right argues is New Labour's 'contempt for the white working class' (Liddle, 2010). This sense that the Labour party not only no longer 'speaks for' ordinary people, but moreover holds them in contemptuous disregard, has opened the institutional space for the far right BNP to situate itself as the representative of the white working class, against a distant 'out of touch', corrupt political elite (Ford and Goodwin, 2010, p. 15). The BNP has thus had

particular success by mobilising support around local ‘on the doorstep’ issues of perceived unfairness in the allocation of public services and resources (in particular council housing) as well as exploiting urban myths and racial tensions between subaltern communities (Goodwin, 2011).

In Chile the demobilisation of grassroots activism, community collectivity and institutions has manifested in the reassertion of clientelistic practices, particularly by the UDI. It has achieved a remarkable growth in shanty-town communities based on the use of private funds from its wealthy backers to offer resources and services such as school buildings and the repair of roads, in exchange for electoral support (Klein, 2004; Talavera, 2000). These communities were historically bastions of socialist (and communist) support, yet the disarticulation of grassroots activists and the ‘professionalisation’ of party cadres has seen the party effectively relinquish its organisational role, especially among the most deprived sectors (Klubock, 2004; Richards, 2004). This abandonment, combined with the lack of progress on issues of poverty and everyday exclusion, has led to a decline in support for the PSCh, opening the door for the UDI to emerge as the most active player in the shanty towns.

The Return of the Right and the Unravelling of Neo-liberal Hegemony?

There is an essential continuity between the processes of demobilisation and disarticulation developed by the parties of the Third Way and the re-articulation of resentments and dissents as part of a project from the political right. Yet these processes are far from smooth and unproblematic precisely because, as we have suggested, the construction of hegemony is not a one-way process of power imposed from above. It is rather a complex and contested interaction which traverses and incorporates fragmented subaltern histories, moral economies, traditions and desires within common sense and lived experience. As such, hegemony can never operate on a smooth surface of unified subjectivities expressing purely commodified and non-antagonistic political relationships. There is a crucial ambiguity between re-presentations and the embodied lives they claim to capture. It is in this ambiguous space of Gramsci’s good sense that contradictions, tensions, resentments and dissent emerge.

As such the very same discourses with which the right articulates its own project can be articulated differently. The construction of nostalgia and tradition that plays on collective memories can form the basis of a political subjectivity that recalls difference from elite projects (Barbera, 2009). This can be seen in Chile in the huge demonstrations of public mourning in response to the deaths of Gladys Marin in 2004 and Luis Corvalan in 2010, both historic figures of the Communist party associated with popular militancy since the 1960s who in dominant discourse are the illegitimate other of political civility (Clark, 2010; Teletrece, 2005). Here displays of nostalgia for a politicised sense of meaning beyond the technocratic policy discourse of political elites are enacted. It can also be seen in the use of the strategy of *tomas* (or occupation) by the Pinguino (Penguin) student movement which resurrects a common strategy of workers’ and peasants’ movements in the 1960s and 1970s. In parallel to this, oral history and popular education-inspired projects in shanty-town communities construct another type of remembering – a consciously politicised rejection

of the official transition-era 'politics of forgetting' – particularly with regard to the Allende period.⁸

Perhaps even more so, the consolidation and development of an anti-politics discourse by the right can serve to delegitimise the political class as a whole, destabilising the fundamental coherence of representative democracy. This has become particularly apparent in South American countries such as Argentina and Venezuela when in times of economic crisis discourses of anti-corruption have quickly transformed into all-encompassing rejections of representative politics: 'Que Se Vayan Todos' ('get rid of them all'). We witness elements of this in Chile in the organisation of the Penguin student protests which have increasingly come to reject formal party and union structures (Kubal, 2009). This has resulted in the most sustained and popular campaign of civil disobedience since the restoration of civilian rule. There have been over 40 significant demonstrations in Santiago alone, culminating in two massive demonstrations in August and October 2011 involving up to half a million people. Particularly notable are the high levels of public support this movement has attracted, contrasted with plummeting approval ratings for Piñera himself (falling below 30 per cent towards the end of 2011), and the radicalisation of Pinguino politics, increasingly developing new forms of political subjectivity and a politics of education that seeks to reinvent Chilean democracy (Hernandez-Santibañez, 2011). Much of the government's response to the unrest is suggestive of a return to passive revolutionary mechanisms, most notably discourses of terrorism deployed to discredit social movement activity, particularly the Mapuche, as well as incidents of violent attacks on left-wing activists and protests.

In Britain renewed dissent has been exemplified by the national movement of Occupy protests, which draw on and extend the experiences of the large student protests of 2010. Perhaps even more striking has been the most widespread outbreak of rioting, looting and disobedience in modern British history which spread across the country in August 2011. These phenomena, alongside the public outrage following the MPs' expenses scandal, suggest an explosive sense of dissatisfaction with the status quo, yet they lack a coherent articulation of social or political alternatives. Much of the response to these protests and civil disobedience, as in Chile, has suggested passive revolutionary tendencies, particularly in response to the summer riots, but also in threats of a more restrictive and authoritarian revision of regulations on strike ballots in response to the Trades Union Congress' (TUC) 30 November 2011 day of action.

Despite such notable evidence of growing tensions there is little sign of organised political parties being able to rebuild organic links in working-class communities. In Britain there is a profound sense of abandonment and disillusionment with New Labour, almost insurmountable scepticism towards the Conservative party and seemingly only very marginal enthusiasm for the far right. In Chile, the UDI's use of clientelistic practices suggests a weak institutional and cultural relationship between shanty-town dwellers and the party (Calvo and Murillo, 2009), while large sectors of the Pinguino movement articulate a politics against and beyond political parties.

The return of the right fails, then, to resolve the contradictions that emerged during the Third Way era and indeed in many cases extends and radicalises these contradictions. There is a growing alienation from the political, which suggests that hegemony is today less deeply embedded than at any point since the early 1980s. Neither the projects of the Third Way nor

those of the New Right have organic roots, both struggle to articulate a coherent social vision and neither has the legitimacy to 'speak for' significant sections of their societies. In both Britain and Chile, two of the most entrenched bastions of neo-liberalism, there is a brewing potential crisis of representation/re-presentation and of hegemonic stability.

Conclusions

In this article we have argued that the BLP and PSCh have been the key architects of a Third Way project in Britain and Chile which secured neo-liberal hegemony by disarticulating subaltern subjectivities. Drawing on the critical insights of Spivak and Gramsci we have demonstrated that this project involved the reassertion of control by centre-left elites over their grass roots and within subaltern communities through a consistent re-presentation of a demobilised working-class subject and a post-antagonistic politics. Yet we have also demonstrated that this project of disarticulation has involved a weakening of the organic relations of representation between centre-left politics and subaltern communities. These processes have opened contradictions that have allowed the political right to re-articulate subaltern good-sense feelings of abandonment, insecurity and loss through a common-sense discourse of dissent in terms of nostalgia, communalism and social discipline which culminated in their return to government in 2010.

In developing this analysis, however, we argue that a critical understanding of the relational and processual nature of hegemony and representation highlights the essential instability of any hegemonic project. Accordingly, we have drawn attention to the contradictions and tensions that exist at the heart of the right's own discourse to suggest that this new project is less secure and stable than its Third Way predecessor. Appeals to nostalgia and tradition can be re-articulated through political subjectivities that recall difference from contemporary elite projects, while anti-politics discourses destabilise and can undermine the ability to govern and legitimacy of governance. It is therefore possible to suggest that the elections of 2010 may mark, not the re-establishment of neo-liberal hegemony and governmentality in Chile and Britain, but their unravelling. Yet it seems far from clear what the character or content of a potential political alternative may look like.

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Notes

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- 1 The Third Way is a term used to refer to socialist and social democratic party ideological and policy transformation. Key tenets of this approach are: (1) the disavowal of structural transformation as an objective and possibility; (2) globalisation (particularly economic globalisation) set up as a marker that necessitates this aforementioned change; (3) an attempt to combine free markets (economic efficiency) with democracy and social equity; and consequently (4) an embrace of policy pragmatism (Barrientos and Powell, 2004, pp. 9–20).
- 2 The value of the term subaltern here is in its sense of ambiguity with regard to questions of identity. Subaltern does not assert consciousness or fixity to subject positions, but recognises the relationality of these subjects, their subalternised relation to the dominant – those (including academics and left elites) who are empowered to represent.
- 3 For Spivak this problematic is particularly relevant for an understanding of the situation of nineteenth-century India in which the subaltern is dominated by rival elite discourses and representations of the colonial and anti-colonial.
- 4 Particularly important in this problematic of critical theory has been the development of Gramscian-inspired discourse theory by thinkers such as Laclau and Mouffe (1988) and Hall (1985).
- 5 The concept of organic intellectual is developed by Gramsci in the *Prison Notebooks* to refer to those actors who emerge from within subaltern communities to fulfil the social task of linking good sense to a critical and emancipatory practice of social transformation.
- 6 For fuller discussion of these processes in Chile, see Davies (1999); Motta (2007); Mouliau (1997); for the UK, see Gamble (1988); Hall (1985); Heffernan (2001, pp. 29–47).
- 7 In Chile an important additional dimension in the formation of a moderate left that would lead the transition to democracy and become the democratic face of neo-liberalism was support from transnational actors including the US government and agencies such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and powerful international institutions such as the Catholic church.
- 8 See <http://www.cidpa.cl/cidpa.htm> for further details.

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