Essays on globalization: a journey to a possibly new stage of capitalism
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Preface

Since the mid-1990s both academic interest and social movements have fuelled and crossfertilized my fascination for the development and consequences of economic globalization. I find this a fruitful combination, since scientific puzzles about the driving forces behind and dynamics of globalization are equally relevant to the question how a different world can be envisaged. This dual source of inspiration has also allowed me to write and lecture for and discuss with varied audiences, and test and debate ideas and hypotheses with both academics and people involved in social movements. Although I am of course solely responsible for the final result and for any mistakes, this work thus owes a great deal to many colleagues, comrades, friends and adversaries from various walks of life.

Lectures and discussions at numerous sessions of the International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE) in Amsterdam gave me an invaluable opportunity to exchange perspectives on globalization with social movement activists from every part of the world. The annual conferences of the European Association for Evolutionary and Political Economy (EAEPE) in Lisbon (1998), Prague (1999) and Berlin (2000) were a chance to present to heterodox economists papers that have found their way into this book. The weekly meetings of the Amsterdam Research Group in History and Methodology of Economics were always agreeable and stimulating, and I have learned a great deal in exchanges there with Marcel Boumans, Hsiang-Ke Chao, Joshua Cohen, Carla van El, Ewald Engelen, Edith Kuiper, Harro Maas, Mary Morgan, Geert Reuten, Peter Rodenburg and Jack Vroman, who participated in (a number of) these sessions while I was present. Finally, the annual meetings of the network of European Economists for an Alternative Economic Policy in Europe have been a source of inspiration, since they bring together colleagues with a similar interest in policy-relevant analyses of the development of the world economy and Europe’s place in it.

The many talks, lectures, panel discussions and workshops on globalization that I have given since 1996 – at universities and other educational
institutions, for different social movements, for ATTAC (Association for Taxation of Financial Transactions in the Interests of the Citizen) in the Netherlands and Belgium, or for trade union groups – forced me to (re)formulate ideas and concepts more clearly and concretely. Participants’ reactions and comments during these activities often gave me food for further thought.

There are some meetings that I will never forget because they were special. The debate with Alfred Kleinknecht and Wim Boerboom, organized by the trade union magazine Solidariteit (Solidarity) in 1996, was not only an educational and pleasant confrontation between three views on globalization, but also taught me that you always have to bring your overhead sheets, since Wim even brought a portable projector. The economists’ seminars at the Ernest Mandel Study Centre were an occasion for exceptionally stimulating exchanges with like-minded economists from several other countries. My presentations at shop steward trainings of the Transport Union FNV were memorable because discussions with the participants went in so many directions that I never managed to finish even half of the three-hour presentation that I had prepared for the three hours scheduled. And the alternative conference for a different Europe that was held in Amsterdam during the June 1997 EU summit, where I participated in two panel discussions, was memorable not only because of the many people from all over Europe who were present, but also because of the creative atmosphere which gave us the feeling – at least for a few days – that change was in the air.

My thanks to Klaus Dräger, Peter Drucker (also for his careful correction of my English), Rob Gerretsen, Michel Husson, Joost Kircz, Alfred Kleinknecht, Francisco Louça, Terry McDonough, Angelo Reati, Tony Smith, referees of the Journal of Economic Issues, and referees of Science and Society, who commented on one or more drafts of chapters and/or suggested complementary literature.

Most of all, I am grateful to my supervisors Mark Blaug and Geert Reuten. Mark put his finger on some deficiencies when I thought that the thesis was almost done, and helped to correct them. Geert kept reading and correcting my new drafts and rewritten versions again and again, indefatigably, sometimes replying with e-mails that were sent at an hour when my alarm clock was about to wake me up to go to work. Over the years Geert and I
have also done some teaching and writing together, which I hope will continue.

I was encouraged by the interest shown in this project by my parents; by my parents-in-law Martha, and Rien who is unfortunately no longer here to see the result; by my brothers and sisters and their partners; by colleagues at the Faculty of Economics and Econometrics of the University of Amsterdam, and at The Netherlands Court of Audit (Algemene Rekenkamer); and by many friends and acquaintances whom I will not try to list for fear of forgetting someone.

Finally for her infinite support and for being there, my thanks of course to Elsa, who is always willing to ping-pong ideas back and forth and laugh about ourselves and the rest of the world. I have discouraged you from reading each of the many drafts that I have written and rewritten, advising you to wait for the final product. Now that it’s done I’m curious: do you like it?

Robert Went