

bulk of the labour force performing in-person services), and older workers in mature industries.¹⁹

Seen in this way, globalization can be compared to a three-headed hydra; a series of material practices (relating, in the specific case of this paper, to the restructuring of the global economy, although such universalizing practices are not limited to the economic sphere), a political project adopted by key economic actors and some states,²⁰ and an ideology which proposes globalization as the only, and necessary, alternative, however much the 'global reality' portrayed may not be experienced on the ground. Together, these three elements make up the discourse surrounding globalization; they become our constructed 'reality,' our view of what globalization *is*. Globalization as a series of material practices becomes indissociable from the meanings we ascribe to it, and it is precisely the meanings that we ascribe to these practices which create or foreclose opportunities for political action. In other words, globalization as a particular configuration of meaning is also globalization as physical or empirical practice, since the physical or empirical practice cannot be dissociated from the way it is interpreted. The very real understanding of globalization as a series of (technologically driven) economic practices, supported by powerful political actors, and defended by a pervasive ideological framework, defines a terrain upon which political action can, and cannot, take place. More particularly, because globalization sets itself up discursively as a process for which there are no alternatives and from which there is no escape, there can be no political choice but to conform to its exigencies. What is at its roots a profoundly political process (for the restructuring and extension of the market cannot take place in the absence of a regulatory framework, both domestic and international) becomes an apolitical 'reality'. We are either part of globalization, on the global bandwagon so to speak, or we are nowhere. We either become more competitive, efficient, leaner and meaner, or we are left to face some