

Planetize the movement

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The Historical Conuncture

These are times of great uncertainty. Contradictions are growing and confirm a turning point in the history of the world.

After the 2008 crisis, the rise of racist, securitarian and xenophobic ideologies and the wave of decentralised wars opens a period of counter-revolutions. Neoliberalism, in an austeritarian phase, is hardening its domination and strengthening its securitarian character based on repression and coups d'état. Reactionary and autocratic governments took power in several countries. Several conservative counter-revolutions are underway.

In 2019, 47 countries, a quarter of the world's countries, experienced civil revolts and massive demonstrations that continue into 2020¹. Let us recall Gramsci's premonitory sentence in 1937, the old world is dying, the new world is slow to appear, and in this chiaroscuro the monsters are rising.

Profound changes are building the new world and prefiguring the contradictions of the future. Let us propose to identify five mutations in progress. The women's rights revolution challenges millenary relationships of domination. The rights of peoples, the second phase of decolonization, after the independence of States, emphasizes the liberation of peoples and questions the multiple identities and forms of the nation-state. The ecological awareness is a philosophical revolution, which publicly rests on the idea that we live in a time and space that are no longer unlimited. Digital technology is renewing language and writing, and biotechnologies are questioning the limits of the human body. The upheaval in the world's population is in progress; migration is one aspect of a global demographic revolution. These are unfinished and uncertain revolutions. There is no guarantee that they will not be crushed, deviated or recuperated. But there is also no reason to say that they will be. For the time being, they provoke rejection and great violence and allow monsters to emerge.

The exacerbation of ecological, social, democratic and geopolitical contradictions reinforces the hypothesis of a crisis of civilisation. What the covid19 coronavirus pandemic reveals is the low resilience of the international system, particularly the occidental one, to an unforeseen event of such magnitude. A recent book² recalls the role of epidemics, the pest, and of the climate, volcanic eruptions, in the third century in the first fall of the Roman Empire, confronted with its economic and geopolitical crises. The ecological rupture leads us to reflect on what a crisis of civilization implies, without falling into millenarianist fears, but by taking the measure of the upheavals that result.

¹ Verisk Maplecroft [report](#)

² Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome*, Ed Princeton University Press 2017 ; version française *Comment l'Empire romain s'est effondré*, Ed La Découverte 2019.

A Missing Global Actor

Understanding the changes that are in the making is essential for movements, for societies and for world society³. A new generation of social movements is looking for a new generational culture⁴. What the different movements have in common is the rejection of social inequalities and discrimination and the rejection of corruption. In this, the social movements are the bearers of a counter-offensive against the dominant ideology of neo-liberal globalization.

The new social movements are political movements. They assume distrust of political institutions and particularly of political parties. The search for a new synthesis, or at least a better articulation between the movement-form and the party-form is on the agenda. It is linked to the questioning of the formerly dominant strategy of social transformation: create a party, to conquer the state, to change society. What is at stake is the definition of a new strategy of political transformation. It is on democracy that the challenge is the most difficult to respond. It is to invent new forms of democracy that a philosophical and cultural revolution is needed.

This revolution, which is still underground, but driven by movements, is based on the globally shared idea that inequality, injustice, arbitrariness and corruption are unbearable. And that revolt to no longer bear them is legitimate. All the more legitimate as it concerns the future of humanity itself, which is facing a major climate and ecological crisis that the powers in place refuse to take into account. Revolts are not just uprisings of refusal. Revolts become revolutions when outcomes appear possible. If inequalities and injustices have become unbearable and unacceptable, it is also because a world without inequalities and injustices appears possible.

Catalytic Action Now

Proposals depend on the situation, but they also require horizontal strategic thinking on a global scale. The approach is to articulate three strategic moments according to time horizons.

The immediate strategy is that of urgency and resistance to the dominant racist, securitarian and xenophobic ideology. It proposes the contestation of capitalism, including green capitalism and austeritarian neo-liberalism, the rejection of the merchandization of Nature and Life, and the effectiveness of rights and freedoms.

The long-term strategy is that of alternatives, for another possible world, involving the overcoming of capitalism. This involves access to fundamental rights for all and a co-construction of a new universalism. It is based on the concepts in definition, common goods, buen-vivir, social and collective property, free and public services, radical

³ Zeynep Tufekci, *Twitter and tear gas : the power and fragility of networked protest*, Yale University Press, 2017 ; *Twitter & les gaz lacrymogènes : Forces et fragilités de la contestation connectée* Ed C&F contact@cfeditions.com

⁴ Gustavo Massiah, *les mouvements sociaux à l'ère du numérique*, Ed C&F, 2019 – *Os movimentos sociais na era digital*, *Le Monde Diplomatique Brazil*, fev 2020

democratisation of democracy, etc. It is a project to be invented so that the overcoming of capitalism does not result in new forms of domination.

The medium-term strategies for the coming decades define the stages for social, ecological, democratic and geopolitical transformation and the policies to be undertaken. It may be that of prosperity without growth and the Green New Deal. It includes a new international system and can be adapted to different situations. One example is the Green New Deal proposal developed, in the case of the United States, by Alexandria Ocasio Cortiz for a democratic socialism.

In the immediate term, there is an urgent need to link alterglobalism and internationalism. Alterglobalism is built by the diversity and convergence of social and citizen movements; it needs to enter in a new phase⁵. Internationalism was concerned with organizational capacities, the specificity of politics, and the articulation of the local, national and global levels. It needs to be reinvented.

This strategic approach recalls the importance of revolutionary periods but is not expecting a magical change. Revolutions can accelerate evolution, they invent new ways, they do not eliminate the long time of history.

^{5 5} GTN_WSF Massiah

March 2, 2020

Dear GTN,

Our March discussion bookends a long GTN series on movement streams that kicked off in November 2017 with a framing discussion on “the problem of action.” That initial discussion was introduced by my [How Do We Get There? The Problem of Action](#) , which I encourage you to review along with the rich [GTN commentary](#) it generated. Now, we return to the overarching question of how to envision and catalyze a coherent global movement matched to the task of Great Transition.

The title for the March discussion—**PLANETIZE THE MOVEMENT!**—is from Martin Luther King, who understood the need for systemic solidarity for systemic change. Val Moghadam, a global movement scholar, starts us off with an [opening essay](#) (soon to arrive by email as well). Val counsels us to draw lessons and inspiration from left history as we fashion a uniquely twenty-first century strategy, intriguingly calling for “two Internationals.” Her essay sets the structure for our discussion:

The Historical Conuncture

The character of our fraught globalized moment and the systemic change agents it spawns

A Missing Global Actor

Movement fragmentation, the basis for common cause, and the contours of a unified movement

Catalytic Action Now

Strategies for building a global movement and specific initiatives for getting the show on the road

I look forward to your comments, brief or extended (but less than 1,200 words), through **April 1**. Then Val will respond, and, as usual, we will assemble a public GTI Forum sampling the internal GTN discussion.

Over to you,
Paul