Forging a diagonal instrument for the global left: the vessel

Rebecca Álvarez & Christopher Chase-Dunn

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

Forging a diagonal instrument for the global left: the vessel

Rebecca Álvarez[a] and Christopher Chase-Dunn[b]

[a]New Mexico Highlands University, Las Vegas, NM, USA; [b]Institute for Research on World-Systems, University of California-Riverside, Riverside, CA, USA

ABSTRACT

This article takes up Samir Amin's challenge to rethink the issue of global political organization by proposing the building of a diagonal political organization for the Global Left that would link local, national and world regional and global networks and prefigurational communities to coordinate contention for power in the world-system during the next few decades of the 21st century. The World Social Forum (WSF) process needs to be reinvented for the current period of rising neo-fascist and populist reactionary nationalism and to foster the emergence of a capable instrument that can confront and contend with the global power structure of world capitalism and aid local and national struggles. This will involve overcoming the fragmentation of progressive movements that have been an outcome of the rise of possessive individualism, the precariat, and social media. We propose a holistic approach to organizing a vessel for the global left based on struggles for climate justice, human rights, queer rights, feminism, sharing networks, peace alliances, taking back the city, progressive nationalism and confronting and defeating neo-fascism and new forms of conservative populism.

Samir Amin, a leading scholar and co-founder of the world-systems tradition, died on August 12, 2018. Just before his death, he published, along with close allies, a call for 'workers and the people' to establish a 'fifth international' [https://www.pambazuka.org/global-south/letter-intent-inaugural-meeting-international-workers-and-peoples] to coordinate support to progressive movements. To honor Samir Amin's invaluable contribution to world-systems scholarship, we are pleased to present readers with a selection of essays responding to Amin's final message for today's anti-systemic movements. This forum is being co-published between Globalizations [https://www.tandfonline.com/rglo], the Journal of World-Systems Research [http://jwsr.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/jwsr/issue/view/75] and Pambazuka News [https://www.pambazuka.org/]. Additional essays and commentary can be found in these outlets.

Social movements have been important drivers of social change since the Stone Age. They both reproduce and alter social structures and institutions. In this essay, we use the world-systems perspective to examine the possibilities for increasing the cohesiveness and capability of progressive global social movements. The comparative evolutionary world-systems perspective studies the ways that waves of social movements have driven the rise of more complex and more hierarchical human societies over the past millennia. A long-run historical and global perspective is helpful

---

for comprehending the current moment and for devising political strategies that can help mitigate the problems that must be addressed in the 21st century so that humanity can move toward a more just, peaceful and sustainable global future. The contemporary world-system is entering another era that is similar in many ways to the 'age of extremes' that occurred in the first half of the 20th century (Hobsbawm, 1994). Devising a helpful political strategy for the Global Left requires that we understand the similarities and differences between the current period and the first half of the 20th century. It also requires that we understand the cultures of the movements and counter-movements that have emerged in the last few decades, as well as their structural organizations, which are critical for movement success. The current period is daunting and dangerous, but it is also a period of great opportunity for moving humanity toward a qualitatively different and improved world society.[1]

The global social justice movement and the World Social Forum process

The global social justice movement that emerged beginning in the 1990s with the regional successes of the Zapatistas in Southern Mexico formed in response to the neoliberal globalization project. The Pink Tide that followed was the advent of leftist-populist political regimes in most Latin American countries based on movements against the neoliberal structural adjustment programs promoted by the International Monetary Fund (Chase-Dunn, Morosin, & Álvarez, 2015). In 2001 the World Social Forum (WSF) was founded as a reaction to the exclusivity of the neoliberal World Economic Forum. Its purpose was to provide a global venue for popular progressive movements that were opposed to the neoliberal globalization project. The founding conferences were held in Porto Alegre, Brazil with the support of the Brazilian Workers Party who had just won the presidency under the leadership of Ignacio de Lula Silva, a former auto worker. The WSF adopted the slogan 'Another World Is Possible' to counter Margaret Thatcher's claim that there was no alternative to neoliberal globalization. The WSF held most of its global meetings in the Global South[2] but also sponsored important local and national meetings in all the world regions. This was an important venue for the emerging New Global Left and the global justice movement, but it did not include all of the movements of the Left (see below). It was intended to be a venue for activists from grass roots social movements to collaborate with one another.

The social forum process eventually spread to most regions of the world. Just a few months after the first annual event in 2001, the World Social Forum's International Council approved a 14-item Charter of Principles. It identified the intended use of the forum space by 'groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism' (World Social Forum Charter of Principles, 2001). The Charter did not permit participation by those who wanted to attend as representatives of organizations that were engaged in, or that advocated, armed struggle. Nor were governments, political parties or churches supposed to send representatives to the meetings. There was a great emphasis on diversity and on horizontal, as opposed to hierarchical, forms of organization. The use of the Internet for communication and mobilization made it possible for broad coalitions and loosely knit networks of grass roots movement activists to engage in collective action projects.

The participants in the social forum process engaged in a manifesto/charter-writing frenzy as those who sought a more organized approach to confronting global capitalism and neoliberalism attempted to formulate consensual goals and to put workable coalitions together (Wallerstein, 2007).

One issue that was debated was whether the World Social Forum should itself formulate a political program and take formal stances on issues. A survey of 625 attendees at the World Social Forum meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2005 asked whether the WSF should remain an open space or

should take political stances. Almost exactly half of the respondents favored the open space idea (Chase-Dunn et al., 2008). Thus, trying to change the WSF Charter to allow for a formal political program would have been very divisive.

But this was deemed not to be necessary. The WSF Charter also encouraged the formation of new political organizations. Those participants who wanted to form new coalitions and organizations were free to act, as long as they did not do so in the name of the WSF as a whole. The Assembly of Social Movements and other groups issued calls for global action and political manifestoes in Social Forum meetings at the both the global and national levels. Meeting in Bamako, Mali in 2006 a group of participants issued a manifesto entitled 'the Bamako Appeal' at the beginning of the meeting. The Bamako Appeal was a call for a global united front against neoliberalism and United States neo-imperialism (see Sen, Kumar, Bond, & Waterman, 2007). Samir Amin, the famous Marxist economist and co-founder of the world-system perspective (along with Immanuel Wallerstein, Andre Gunder Frank and Giovanni Arrighi), wrote a short essay entitled 'Toward a fifth international?' in which he briefly outlined the history of the first four internationals (Amin, 2008).[3] Peter Waterman (2006) proposed a 'global labor charter' and a coalition of women's groups meeting at the World Social Forum produced a feminist global manifesto that tried to overcome divisive North/South issues (Moghadam, 2005; Moghadam & Kaftan, 2019).[4]

There has always been a tension within the global left regarding antiglobalization versus the idea of an alternative progressive form of globalization. Samir Amin (1990) and Waldon Bello (2002) are important socialist advocates of deglobalization and delinking of the Global South from the Global North in order to protect against neo-imperialism and to make possible self-reliant and egalitarian development. Alter-globalization advocates an egalitarian world society that is integrated but without exploitation and domination. The alter-globalization project has been studied and articulated by Geoffrey Pleyers (2011) as an 'uneasy convergence' of largely horizontalist autonomous and independent activist groups and more institutionalist actors like intellectuals and NGOs. In our proposal for a way forward for the Global Left we advocate combining horizontalism and capable coordination in an instrument that can support and defend egalitarian projects and communities and struggle effectively against the power of reactionary states, firms and populist movements.

The culture of the world revolution of 20xx

There was an impasse in the global justice movement between those who wanted to move toward a global united front that could mobilize a strong coalition against the powers that be, and those who preferred local prefigurative horizontalist actions and horizontalist network forms of organization that renounce organizational hierarchy and refuse to participate in 'normal' political activities such as elections and lobbying. Prefigurationism is the idea that small groups can intentionally organize social relations in ways that can provide the seeds of transformation to a more desirable form of future human society. Horizontalism abjures hierarchy in organizations. It was inspired by Robert Michels's (1968 [1915]) observation that all organizations eventually become conservative because the leadership ends up mainly trying to defend their own interests and the survival of the organization. The natural history of parties and social movement organizations is to adapt to the existing exigencies of the world-system by giving up on revolutionary aspirations.

These horizontalist political stances had been inherited from the anti-authoritarian and anti-bureaucratic New Left movements of the world revolution of 1968. The New Left of 1968 embraced direct democracy, attacked bureaucratic organizations and was resistant to the building of new formal organizations that could act as instruments of revolution (Arrighi, Hopkins, & Wallerstein, 1989

[2012]). Institutions that had been instruments of revolutionary change and challengers to existing power structures were thought to have become sclerotic defenders of the status quo when they got old.

This resistance to institutionalized politics and contention for state power has also been a salient feature of the world revolution taking place today. It is based on a critique of the practices of earlier world revolutions in which labor unions and political parties became bogged down in short-term and self-interested struggles that were seen to have reinforced and reproduced the global capitalism and the interstate system. This rejection of formal organization is reflected in the charter of the World Social Forum as discussed above. And the same elements were strongly present in the Occupy movement as well as in most of the popular revolts of the Arab Spring (Mason, 2013).

Paul Mason's (2013)[5] analysis contends that the social structural basis for horizontalism and anti-formal organization, beyond the disappointment with the outcomes of the struggles carried out by the Old Left, was due to the presence of a large number of middle-class students as activists in the movements. The world revolution of 1968[6] was led mainly by college students who had emerged on the world stage with the global expansion of higher education since World War II. John W. Meyer (2009) explained the student revolt and the subsequent lowering of the voting age as another extension of citizenship to new and politically unincorporated groups demanding to be included, analogous to the earlier revolts and incorporations of men of no property and women.

Mason points out the similarities (and differences) with the world revolution of 1848, in which many of the activists were educated but underemployed students. He also argues that the composition of participation in the current world revolution has been heavily composed of highly educated young people who are facing the strong likelihood that they will not be able to find jobs commensurate with their skills and certification levels. Many of these 'graduates with no future' have gone into debt to finance their educations, and they are alienated from politics as usual and enraged by the failure of global capitalism to continue the expansion of middle-class jobs. These graduates can be considered part of Guy Standing's (2014) 'precariat', as they are increasingly forced to participate in the gig economy with little hope of future stable employment. Highly educated young people share an uncertain economic future with poor workers across the globe which could produce a transnational alliance of globalized precariats. Mason also points out that the urban poor, especially in the Global South, and workers in the Global North whose livelihoods have been attacked by globalization were important elements in the revolts that occurred in the Middle East, Spain, Greece and Turkey. Mason also stresses the importance of the Internet and social media for allowing disaffected young people to organize and coordinate large protests. He sees the 'freedom to tweet' as an important element in a new level of individual freedom that has been an important driver of these middle-class graduates who enjoy confronting the powers-that-be in mass demonstrations. This new individual freedom is cited as another reason why the activists in the global justice movement have been reticent to develop their own organizations and to participate in legitimate forms of political activity such as electoral politics.

But Mason and other participant/observers in the global justice movement somewhat overemphasize the extent to which the movement has been incoherent regarding goals and shared perspectives. Surveys of attendees at both world-level and national-level Social Forums have found a relatively stable multicentric network of movement themes in which a set of more central movements serve as links to all the other movements based on the reported identification of activists with movements (Chase-Dunn & Kaneshiro, 2009). All the twenty-seven movement themes used in the surveys were connected to the larger network by means of co-activism, so there was a single linked network without subcliques (Chase-Dunn & Kaneshiro, 2009, Figures 1–3). This multicentric network was quite

stable across venues.[7] This suggests that there has been a fairly similar structure of network connections among movements that is global in scope and that the global-level network of movements is also very similar to the network that exists among Social Forum activists from grassroots movements within the U.S. (Chase-Dunn, Fenelon, Hall, Breckenridge-Jackson, & Herrera, 2019). The central cluster of movement themes to which all the other movements were linked included human rights; anti-racism; environmentalism, feminism, peace/anti-war, anti-corporate and alternative globalization.

Whereas the Global Left contained both anti-globalizationists who advocated greater local autonomy (Amin, 1990; Bello, 2002) as well as those who favored an alternative and more egalitarian form of globalization (Pleyers, 2011); the whole issue of anti-globalization has taken a turn with the rise of right wing populism and hypernationalism supported to a great extent by some who were losers in the neoliberal globalization project.

Justice globalism as a discourse

An organizational structure that can gain the allegiance of large numbers of activists, especially young ones, will need to consider the culture of the Global Left that has emerged since the World Revolution of 1968 by reviewing the findings of two careful studies.

Manfred Steger, James Goodman, and Erin K. Wilson (2013) presented the results of a systematic study of the political ideas employed by forty-five NGOs and social movement organizations associated with the International Council of the World Social Forum. Using a modified form of morphological discourse analysis developed by Michael Freeden (2003) for studying political ideologies, Steger, Goodman and Wilson analyzed texts (web sites, press releases and declarations) and conducted interviews to examine the key concepts, secondary concepts and overall coherence of the political ideas expressed by these organizations as proponents of 'justice globalism'.

The key concepts of justice globalism extracted by Steger et al. (2013: Table 2.1 pp. 28–29) are:

- participatory democracy,
- transformative rather than incremental change,
- equality of access to resources and opportunities,
- social justice,
- universal human rights,
- global solidarity among workers, farmers and marginalized peoples, and
- ecological sustainability

More detailed meanings of each of these concepts have emerged in an on-going dialectical struggle with market globalism (neoliberalism). Steger et al. discuss each of these and evaluate how much consensus exists across the forty-five movement organizations they studied. They find a large degree of consensus, but their results also reveal a lot of on-going contestation among the activists in these organizations regarding the definitions and applications of these concepts.

For example, though most of the organizations seem to favor one or another form of participatory democracy, there was awareness of some of the problems produced by an overemphasis on horizontalist processes of participation and on-going debates about forms of representation and delegation.

Some of the organizations studied by Steger et al. eschew participation in established electoral processes, while others do not. Steger et al. highlight the importance of 'multiplicity' as an approach that values diversity rather than trying to find 'one size fits all' solutions. They note that the Charter

of the World Social Forum values inclusivity and the welcoming and empowerment of marginalized groups. Prefiguration has found wide support from most global justice activists social movement organizations. The Zapatistas, the occupy activists and many in the environmental movement have engaged in efforts to construct more egalitarian and sustainable local institutions and communities rather than mounting organized challenges to the global and national structures of power. The discussion of global solidarity in Steger et al. emphasizes the centrality of what Ruth Reitan (2007) has called 'altruistic solidarity' – identification with poor and marginalized peoples – without much consideration of solidarity based on common circumstances or identities. Steger et al. do, however, mention the important efforts to link groups that are operating at both local and global levels of contention.[8]

The Steger et al. study is a useful example of how to do research on political ideology and it provides valuable evidence about ideational stances and culture of the New Global Left. It and the movement network results summarized above imply that the New Global Left has a degree of coherence that can be the basis of greater articulation.

Transnational alternative policy think-tanks

William Carroll's (2016) thorough study of global justice transnational alternative policy groups examined the problem of how to build a transnational counter-hegemonic bloc of progressive social forces (Carroll, 2016, p. 23). Carroll's study examined sixteen progressive transnational think-tanks from both the Global North and the Global South.[9] Carroll's results agree with the findings of the Steger et al. study summarized above regarding the discursive content of the global justice movement. Carroll also notes that the progressive counter-hegemonic think tanks that he has studied have been trying to produce knowledge that is useful for prefigurative social change and a democratic and egalitarian forms of globalization in contrast to the neoliberal globalization project. Carroll critiques localist and anti-organizational approaches and proposes:

> counter-hegemonic globalization: a globally organized project of transformation aimed at replacing the dominant global regime with one that maximizes democratic political control and makes the equitable development of human capabilities and environmental stewardship its priorities. (Carroll, 2016, p. 30)

Arab Spring, Pink Tide, neo-fascism and structural deglobalization

The global political, economic, and demographic situation has evolved in ways that challenge some of the assumptions that were made during the rise of the global justice movement and that require adjustments in the analyses, strategies, and tactics of progressive social movements. The Arab Spring, the Latin American Pink Tide, the Indignados in Spain, and the rise of New Leftist social media-based parties in Spain (Podemos) Italy and in Greece and the spike in mass protests in 2011 and 2012 were interpreted as the heating up of a world revolution against neoliberal globalization that had started in the late 20th century with the rise of the Zapatistas (Chase-Dunn, Stäbler, Breckenridge-Jackson, & Herrera, 2014). But the outcomes of some of these movements have brought the tactics of the global justice movement into question. The left-wing Syriza Party, elected in Greece in 2015, was a debacle that was crushed by the European banks and the EU. They doubled down on austerity, threatening to bankrupt the pensioners of Greece unless the Syriza regime agreed to new structural adjustment policies, which it did. This was a case in which another world was possible

but did not happen. This disappointment was felt by the other new leftist social media parties in Italy and Spain as well as the global justice movement and the Social Forum process.

The huge spike in global protests in 2011–2012 was followed by a lull and then a renewed intensification of citizen revolts from 2015–2016 (Youngs, 2017). The Black Lives Matter movement, the Dakota Access Pipeline protest, the #MeToo movement, the global Women's Marches and the Antifa rising against neo-fascism showed that the World Revolution of 20xx was still happening. However, the mainly tragic outcomes of the Arab Spring and the decline of the Pink Tide progressive populist regimes in Latin America were bad blows for the global left.

The Social Forum process was late in coming to the Middle East and North Africa, but it eventually did arrive. The Arab Spring movements in the Middle East and North Africa were mainly rebellions of progressive students and young people using social media to mobilize mass protests against aging authoritarian regimes. The outcome in Tunisia, where the sequence of protests started, has been fairly good thus far. But the outcomes in Egypt, Syria and Bahrein were disasters (Moghadam, 2018).[10] Turkey and Iran should also be added to this list. The mass popular movements calling for democracy were defeated by Islamist movements that were better organized and by military coups and/or outside intervention. In Syria, parts of the movement were able to organize an armed struggle, but this was defeated by the old regime with Russian help. Extremist Muslim fundamentalists took over the fight from progressivists, and the Syrian civil war produced a huge wave of refugees that combined with economic migrants from Africa to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe. This added fuel to the already existing populist nationalist movements and political parties in Europe, propelling electoral victories inspired by xenophobic and racist anti-immigrant sentiment. In Iran, the green movement was repressed. In Turkey, Erdogan has prevailed, repressing the popular movement as well as the Kurds. All these developments, except Tunisia, have been major setbacks for the global left.

Right-wing populist politicians have exploited cleavages along cultural lines, rallying individuals against foreigners and minorities. Left-wing populist movements, on the other hand tended to garner support based on economic cleavages. They pointed to the wealthy 1% and large corporations as responsible for the economic crises and austerity policies of the 21st century (Rodrik, 2018). Thus, the neoliberal globalization project and the crises of late global capitalism have produced increasing political polarization as the context in which the New Global Left needs to reconsider its culture and attitudes toward organizational issues.

The unhappy outcome of the Arab Spring, the demise of the Pink Tide, the rise of populist right-wing and neo-fascist movements and parties and the possible arrival of another period of deglobalization are developments that suggest that the global left needs to devise strategies that can be more effective in confronting the crises of global capitalism and building a more egalitarian, democratic and sustainable world society. But this project also needs to be cognizant of the contemporary culture of the global left.

The vessel[11]: forging a diagonal instrument for the global left

A new discourse has emerged in the past few years regarding possibilities for greater articulation among the movements of the global left and around the ideas of united fronts and popular fronts and new forms of organization. The tendency of progressive social movements to form around single issues and identity politics is increasingly seen as a problem that stands in the way of mobilizing more effectively to both allow people to construct more egalitarian and sustainable projects and communities and to become a significant and consequential player in world politics. This has been

recognized and addressed in different ways by both activists and political theorists for the last twenty years. John Sanbonmatsu's (2004) defense of a global counter-hegemonic project of the Left locates the roots of horizontalism and the celebration of diversity in the rise of the new social movements and postmodern philosophy in the years following the world revolution of 1968. He contends that the post-modern emphasis on differences and diversity undercuts the ability of progressive forces to join together to struggle for social change. Post-modern critical sociology was a somewhat understandable reaction against Stalinism and the primary focus on workers' parties taking state power that was the *modis operandi* of the Old Left. But neo-Leninists such as Jodi Dean (2012, 2016) have pointed out the limitations of leaderless mass protests as a method for producing political change. Zeinab Tufeki's (2017) study of movements that have been enabled by social networking notes their fragility and susceptibility to disruption. Greg Sharzer (2012, 2017) recounts the fate of utopian communities over the past two centuries that are usually either die out for become reincorporated back in to capitalist business as usual.

Samir Amin (2008, 2018) proposed a new progressive international to serve as an instrument for the global justice movement in world politics. His proposed fifth international invokes the memory of the earlier socialist and communist internationals, raising fears of vanguardism among the horizontalists. But the organizational and issue foci of Amin's proposal have elements that are different from earlier internationals. The fifth international is an alliance of national entities but it would permit participation from more than one legitimate group per country. Amin's differs from many other global justice activists in seeing national progressive projects as the most important arena of struggle, raising the issue of the content of progressive nationalism.

The World Social Forum held in Salvador, Brazil in 2018 focused on how the Social Forum process could be reinvented to more effectively confront the rise of right-wing forces (Mestrum, 2017, 2018). The demise of the U.S. and European Social Forums may mean that the Social Forum process is winding down. If that is the case the question is: What can replace and improve upon the Social Forum? Given the numerous competing interest groups, all with legitimate claims, the puzzle is how to unite them in a global social justice movement that is inclusive but that also focusses on the main problems confronting humanity in the 21st century.

An integrated political movement would need to 'name the enemy' (Starr, 2000). The global right has been effective in large part because it has constructed its own enemies as 'the globalists', 'the establishment' and 'immigrants'. A capacious global social justice movement will need to name the predations of the transnational corporate class and the neo-fascist and populist Global Right as enemies and to make evident the connections between these enemies and the oppression and exploitation of the majority of the human population of both the Global South and the Global North.

The Amin and Dean versions of neo-Leninism differ in some respects regarding their notions of agency. Amin was a Third Worldist who saw the workers and peasants of the Global South as the main agents of progressive social change. Dean is more of a workerist who thinks that organized workers led by dedicated communists from the Global North and the Global South can unite to transform global capitalism. While Dean is enthused by the affective spirit shown by crowds in 2011, she contends that an organized party will be necessary to mobilize a progressive transformation of global capitalism. She says 'That perspective which gives body to the political subject is the party' (Dean, 2016, p. 19). Neither Dean nor Amin directly address the issue of vanguardism that was one of Lenin's most important contributions to the methodology and strategy of the communist movement.[12] Amin is sensitive to the charge of vanguardism, but contends that there are statutory structures that can be used ensure democratic control of a global political party. Amin (2018) says

> The aim should be to establish an *Organization* (the new Internationale) and not just a 'movement'. This involves moving beyond the concept of a discussion forum. It also involves analysing the inadequacies of the notion, still prevalent, that the 'movements' claim to be horizontal and are hostile to so-called vertical organizations on the pretext that the latter are by their very nature anti-democratic: that the organization is, in fact, the result of action which by itself generates 'leaders'. The latter can aspire to dominate, even manipulate the movements. But it is also possible to avoid this danger through appropriate statutes. This should be discussed.

We agree with Amin and Dean that the anti-organizational ideologies that have been a salient part of the culture of progressive movements since 1968 have been a major fetter restricting the capability of these movements to effectively realize their own goals. But these ideas and sentiments run deep and so any effort to construct organizational forms that can facilitate progressive collective action must be cognizant of this embedded culture. The Internet and social media, allowing cheap and effective mass communications, have been blamed for producing specialized single-issue movements. We suggest that virtual communications and democratic decision-making technologies can be harnessed to produce more sustained and integrated organizations and effective tools that can be used to contend for power in the streets and institutional halls of the world-system. We also think that the old reformist/revolutionary debate about whether to engage in electoral politics is a fetter on the ability of the global left to effectively contend.[13] We agree that changing the policies of states or taking power in them should not be the only goals of progressive social movements. States are not, and have never been, whole systems. They are organizations that exist in a larger world economy and interstate system. And while they should not be the sole target of progressive movements, their organizational resources can be used to facilitate the building of a postcapitalist global society. The autonomists correctly perceive that dependence on state resources and support, as well as on funding from mainstream foundations, often compromise the integrity and flexibility of social movement organizations in their ability to challenge existing power structures. But progressive transnational social movements should be prepared to work with progressive state governments in order to try to change the rules of the global economic order (Evans, 2009, 2010).[14] If social movement organizations become part of the problem rather than part of the solution new less dependent and compromised social movement organizations can take up the struggle. A multilevel movement of movements is needed that promotes within-country regions, national, world regions, global North, global South and whole global (Earth-wide) levels of organization and empowers all of them without unduly empowering the national level.

Progressive transnational social movements should also be willing to work at the local level with city governments to implement progressive goals such as a universal basic income, as these cities can then serve as progressive examples (Harvey, 2012; Lowrey, 2018; Van Parijs & Vanderborght, 2017; Wright, 2010). This includes learning from cities in the Global South and applying lessons learned in the Global North. For instance, a universal basic income has been piloted in the twenty-first century in Kenya and Brazil and is now being introduced in Stockton (California) and Chicago. While there is a legitimate critique that a nonlivable universal basic income that is used to supplement work is subject to control and thus potentially exploitative, a livable basic income which comes in addition to the social safety net instead of replacing it can be a radical tool for the redistribution and sharing of wealth. We agree with Paul Mason (2015) that the anti-utopianism of the Old Left and some in the New Left was somewhat misplaced.[15] Prefiguration is a good idea. Sharing networks, coops, community banks, zero emissions homes, farms and industries are worthwhile endeavours for activists of the global left (Wallerstein, 1998). But these local projects need to be linked and coordinated so that they can effectively contend in national and world politics. Explaining how to structure such a progressive

international effectively requires an understanding of horizontalism, verticalism, and our proposed synthesis, found in diagonalism. Only then can a party network (partnet) be strong and yet flexible enough to withstand the challenges of global organizing be constructed.

Diagonal organizational structure

The idea of leaderless movements and organizations is an anarchist trope that has been critiqued by both Marxists (Epstein, 2001) and feminists (Freeman, 1972–73). Political organizations need to have institutionalized procedures for making decisions and ways to hold leadership accountable so that mistakes can be rectified. These requisites are not so important when the world-system is humming along with business as usual, but when systemic crises erupt, and powerful popular right-wing social movements and regimes emerge, leaderlessness becomes an unacceptable luxury. An alternative to Leninist 'march-in-line' must be found. While the culture of the contemporary global left usually equates the idea of a political party with vanguard parties or electoral machines, there is a recent literature that argues that new forms of party organization are possible in the age of internet communication (Carroll, 2015; Dean, 2012, 2016).

Wiki farms[16] facilitate the formation of virtual organizations that combine the merits of open networks with leadership structures (data stewards) that allow groups to collectively author documents and to make group decisions. Horizontalism valorizes leaderlessness and informality, usually paired with consensual decision-making. Horizontalist organizations, also called 'self-organization' (Prehofer & Bettstetter, 2005) have several advantages: resilience (you can kill some of them but there is redundancy), flexibility and adaptability, individual entities interact directly with one another, and there is no larger hierarchy that can be disrupted. These desirable characteristics are those that are stressed by advocates of horizontalist networks. But critics of horizontality point out that structurelessness does not prevent the emergence of informal structures among groups of friends, and participants that are not linked to these friendship nets have no mechanisms for regulating the power of the informal networks (Freeman, 1972–73).

Diagonalism combines horizontalism with a semi-centralized formal organizational structure that is itself democratic and flexible.[17] A diagonal organization is a complex of horizontally connected individuals, small groups and larger regional organizations with a decision-making structure by which groups can discuss and adopt policies and implement them. Hierarchies are as flat as is possible consistent with organizational capacity and composite groups may report to more than one leadership group.[18] Leadership is rotational and maximizes opportunities for participatory democracy. Organizational bureaucracy is kept to a minimum, but legitimate representatives or delegates from horizontal groups make collective decisions and help to formulate policies and plan actions for the whole organization. Degrees of hierarchy can be flexible depending upon the nature of the task. High stakes, high risk tasks usually require more hierarchy. Local groups can adjust their organizational structures to the context and the nature of the task. The Vessel itself should maintain democratic and flexible decision-making and implementation structures.

The Vessel is a **diagonal network formed of project affinity groups and local communities that share the results of their experiments and constructions and coordinate with one another for political actions, including mass demonstrations, electoral campaigns and mobilizations of support and contention.** Diagonalism links horizontal networks of individuals and groups with a legitimate leadership structure composed of designated **delegates** who are empowered to carry out the decisions of the organization that appoint them. Delegates make group decisions by means of both consensus and voting. Multiple organizations can represent communities and nations. The

Council of the Vessel will be a compromise between horizontal leaderless and hierarchical command structures in which leadership is held by delegated individuals or groups. The Vessel will focus on the articulation of central issues and will formulate visions, strategies and tactics for the global left. It will promote communication and collaboration among transnational, national and local projects.[19] The Vessel should not be a political party in the old sense, but it should be allowed, unlike the World Social Forum, to adopt resolutions and to support candidates and campaigns. It should have a designated structure composed of a chosen facilitating delegate council to coordinate collective decision-making and to deal with problems of security and communications.[20] Existing progressive global organizations should be encouraged to join. Functions of the vessel and member organizations will vary depending upon circumstances, but the vessel level should specialize in the politics of international organizations and global issues, whereas the local, national and world regional organizations can focus on those issues which are salient in their contexts.

Issues

The main issues that we think should constitute the focus of the Vessel are:

- Climate justice,
- Human rights,
- Anti-racism, decolonization, and indigenous rights,
- Feminism and queer rights,
- Sharing networks,
- Peace/anti-war alliances,
- Local and city-based progressive grassroots activism,
- Anticorporate transnationalism (tax justice, etc.), and
- Democratic global governance.

The Vessel should also coordinate efforts to combat 21st century fascism and right-wing populism and should encouraged participation with and make alliances (united fronts; popular fronts) with NGOs and political parties that are willing to collaborate with these efforts.[21]

Human rights and anti-racism have been central in the network of movements participating in the social forum process. Global Indigenism (Chase-Dunn, Grimes, & Anderson, 2019; Hall & Fenelon, 2009) has been an increasingly important issue for the global left. The rights of colonized peoples, racial and ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples, and queer people are central to the inclusive concerns of the global left. The climate justice movement is already a collaborative project combining environmentalists with those who focus on the most vulnerable communities (Bond, 2012; Foran, 2018; Foran, Gray, & Grosse, 2017). Feminism has been one of the central movements in the social forum network of movements (Moghadam, 2018). Sharing networks are a potentially potent tool for organizing postcapitalist institutions that can transform the logic of global capitalism (Danaher & Gravitz, 2017; Mason, 2013). The peace/antiwar movements need local and national mobilization against militarism (Benjamin, 2013) as well as engagement with international governmental organizations in order to prevent the emergence of wars among core states in the coming multipolar world. The existing international political organizations are under attack from right-wing forces. The Vessel needs to advocate the strengthening and democratization of global governance institutions that can help keep the peace as humanity passes through the coming multipolar phase of interimperial rivalry and to move in the direction of an eventual democratic and collectively

rational form of global governance. Progressive nationalism is an important defensive tactic against the appropriation of nationalism by the right-wing populists and neo-fascists. The deglobalizing world is reinventing nationalism as a response to the crises produced by the neoliberal globalization process. In many cases, this nationalism has verged into neo-fascism. The global left has been resolutely cosmopolitan and internationalist, but how could it engage the rising wave of nationalism to propose more cooperative relations with peoples abroad and with the Global South? The Vessel also needs to provide support help to formulate analyses and strategies for movements at the local and national levels who are fighting against the rise of right-wing authoritarianism and the suppression of progressive popular movements.

Conclusion

Rather than giving way to cynicism and resignation, the global left needs to face up to the setbacks that have occurred and devise a new strategy for moving humanity in a better direction. One possible solution lies in the approach taken by the organizers of DiEM25, a movement organization that is already agitating for a progressive international. While at the moment it is limited to European nations and North America (including Mexico), its diagonalist approach is well-suited for a flexible organization that can take on the global right-wing movement and the transnational capitalist class. The next few decades will be chaotic, but the movements and institutions we build can make things better. Whether or not the big calamities all come at once or sequentially, we need to pursue a strategy of 'disaster postcapitalism'[22] that plants the seeds of the future during the chaos. It is not the end, just another dark age, and an opportunity for transition to a much better world-system. The vessel can take us there.

Notes

1. This is an update of an earlier essay that reviewed the sociological literature on coalition formation, the history of united and popular fronts in the 20th century, and considered which of the central tendencies of the new global left might be in contention for providing leadership and integration of the network of anti-systemic movements that have been participating in the World Social Forum process (Chase-Dunn et al., 2014).
2. The terminology of the world-system perspective divides the Global South into the periphery and the semiperiphery. This turns out to be an important distinction for comprehending political developments in the Global South. Activists from the semiperiphery have been far more likely to participate in the Social Forum process, and activists from the periphery have been much more critical of international political organizations than those from either the Global North or the semiperiphery (Chase-Dunn et al., 2008).
3. This was an early version of the call that this forum is addressing.
4. Waterman (2010) also criticized the vanguardism of the Bamako Appeal and other proposals for a new internationalism and championed the movement of movements structure of the global justice forces.
5. Paul Mason is a 59-year-old British journalist who is well-known to scholars of transnational social movements for his perceptive ethnographic coverage of the global justice movement (Mason, 2013). Mason is a former Trotskyist who is active in the British Labor Party. Mason is an intrepid protagonist of the precariat with a solid grounding in the history of progressive movements and ideas and political economy.
6. World revolutions are named after a symbolic year in which important events occurred that characterize the nature of the constellation of the rebellions designated: 1789, 1917, 1968 and now 20xx because it is still too soon to name the current world revolution.

7. The surveys were conducted at Social Forum meetings in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2005, Nairobi, Kenya and Atlanta, Georgia in 2007 and Detroit, Michigan in 2010.

8. While human rights is a very central movement theme in the network of movement of global justice movements, the indigenist rights movement contests the version of human rights that is enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. The indigenistas stress the importance of community rights over the rights of individuals and the idea that 'Mother Earth' has rights.[8] These contentions have been shared by the many activists who sympathize with, and identify with, indigenous peoples (Chase-Dunn, Fenelon, et al., 2019).

9. Some well-known examples are the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, the Third World Forum, the Centre for Civil Society, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era and Focus on the Global South.

10. Val Moghadam (2018) shows how gender relations and women's mobilizations prior to the protest outbreaks, along with differences in political institutions, civil society and international influences, explain most of the variance in the different outcomes of the Arab Spring.

11. The instrument should be named by those who do the work to create it. Our suggestion of 'Vessel' is meant to be inclusive and diagonal. Others have suggested the Fifth International (Amin, 2008), an International of Workers and Peoples (Amin, 2018); the Postmodern Prince (Gill, 2000; Sanbonmatsu, 2004) and the World Party (Wagar, 1999).

12. In 'What Is to Be Done' (Lenin, 1902) Lenin proposed that a dedicated cadre of professional revolutionaries was needed to lead the workers beyond trade unionism.

13. In November of 2018 Bernie Sanders and Yanis Varoufakis issued a call for a Progressive International to unite against the rise of neo-fascist and right-wing populist parties (Progressive International, 2018).

14. Paul Mason rightly contends that state organizations will be needed for dealing with the daunting global problems of the 21st century. The traditional and neo-anarchist rejection of all states as necessarily instruments of oppression obscures the extent to which states sometimes be democratic and can be instruments of the oppressed rather than of the oppressors. Marc Fleurbaey's (2018) concept of the possibility of an 'emancipatory state' is a helpful move in the right direction.

15. We doubt that Mason's (2015) transitional program to postcapitalism, a global society in which wage labor has been replaced by the provision of free goods produced by networked machines, is a possibility for the next few decades, but we agree that this is a desirable goal for humanity.

16. A wiki farm is a collection of wikis running on the same web server and sharing one parent wiki engine.

17. Keith Hayson (2014, pp. 48–520) outlines an agenda for building an organizational diagonalism that is intended to produce a useful compromise between anarchistic horizontalism and organizational hierarchy that makes leadership and accountability possible.

18. In management theory control structures with multiple reporting lines are called matrix organizations (Gottleib 2007).

19. Digital organizations and the discourse on net governance make new forms of network organizations possible. Organizations need to be able to make decisions. This can be done hierarchically or by means of group voting or discussions, or various combinations of these. The Vessel will recognize both horizontal authority structures and allow subgroups to adopt the structures that they need. Organizations also need to specify their boundaries and protect themselves against those who would like to disrupt them, or worse. These jobs are best done by all active members, but it may be found necessary to delegate security jobs to individuals or subgroups. The best practices can be developed as things progress.

20. Forging the Vessel should be started at a meeting held under the auspices of the World Social Forum in 2019 or 2020.

21. This is list is a proposal for discussion. The development of a set of central issues should be among the first matters of discussion at the forging meetings.

22. This is a play on Naomi Klein's (2007) idea of disaster capitalism.

Disclosure statement

Notes on contributors

Rebecca Álvarez is Assistant Professor of Sociology at New Mexico Highlands University. She received her doctorate in 2011 from the University of California, Riverside, where she became interested in global social movements and world-systems theory. Her current work focuses on the relationships between women's status and class inequality in a global context. In particular, she is interested in the structural factors that precipitate gender-based mob violence against women. She is the author of the forthcoming book *Vigilante gender violence: Class inequality, the gender bargain, and mob attacks on women worldwide* (Taylor & Francis, 2020).

Christopher Chase-Dunn is a Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Director of the Institute for Research on World-Systems at the University of California, Riverside, USA. He is the author of *The spiral of capitalism and socialism* (with Terry Boswell), *Rise and demise: Comparing world-systems* (with Thomas D. Hall), and *Social change: Globalization from the stone age to the present* (with Bruce Lerro). He is the founder and former editor of the *Journal of World-Systems Research*. Chase-Dunn is currently doing research on transnational social movements. He also studies the rise and fall of settlements and polities since the Stone Age and global state formation.

References

Amin, S. (1990). *Delinking: Towards a polycentric world*. London: Zed Books.

Amin, S. (2008). Towards the fifth international? In K. Sehm-Patomaki & M. Ulvila (Eds.), *Global political parties* (pp. 123–143). London: Zed Books.

Amin, S. (2018, July 3). Letter of intent for an inaugural meeting of the international of workers and peoples. *IDEAs Network*. Retrieved from http://www.networkideas.org/featured-articles/2018/07/it-is-imperative-to-reconstruct-the-internationale-of-workers-and-peoples/

Arrighi, G., Hopkins, T. K., & Wallerstein, I. (1989 [2012]). *Antisystemic movements*. London: Verso.

Bello, W. (2002). *Deglobalization*. London: Zed Books.

Benjamin, M. (2013). *Drone warfare*. London: Verso.

Bond, P. (2012). *The politics of climate justice: Paralysis above, movement below*. Durban, SA: University of Kwa-zulu Natal Press.

Carroll, W. K. (2015). Modes of cognitive praxis in transnational alternative policy groups. *Globalizations*, *12*(5), 710–727. doi:10.1080/14747731.2014.1001231

Carroll, W. K. (2016). *Expose, oppose, propose: Alternative policy groups and the struggle for global justice*. New York, NY: Zed.

Chase-Dunn, C., Fenelon, J., Hall, T. D., Breckenridge-Jackson, I., & Herrera, J. (2019). Global indigenism and the web of transnational social movements. In I. Rossi (Ed.), *New frontiers of globalization research: Theories, globalization processes, and perspectives from the global south*. Springer Verlag.

Chase-Dunn, C., Grimes, P., & Anderson, E. N. (2019). Cyclical evolution of the global right. *Canadian Sociological Review*.

Chase-Dunn, C., & Kaneshiro, M. (2009). Stability and change in the contours of alliances among movements in the social forum process. In D. Fasenfest (Ed.), *Engaging social justice* (pp. 119–133). Leiden: Brill.

Chase-Dunn, C., Morosin, A., & Álvarez, A. (2015). Social movements and progressive regimes in Latin America: World revolutions and semiperipheral development. In P. Almeida & A. Cordero Ulate (Eds.), *Handbook of social movements across Latin America* (pp. 13–24). Dordrecht, NL: Springer.

Chase-Dunn, C., Reese, E., Herkenrath, M., Giem, R., Gutierrez, E., Kim, L., & Petit, C. (2008). North-South contradictions and bridges at the world social forum. In R. Reuveny & W. R. Thompson (Eds.), *North and South in the world political economy* (pp. 341–366). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Chase-Dunn, C., Stäbler, A., Breckenridge-Jackson, I., & Herrera, J. (2014, July 17). Articulating the web of transnational social movements. Presented at the world congress of sociology in Yokohama. Retrieved from http://irows.ucr.edu/papers/irows84/irows84.htm

Danaher, K., & Gravitz, A. (Eds.). (2017). *The green festival reader*. London: Routledge.

Dean, J. (2012). *The communist horizon*. London: Verso.

Dean, J. (2016). *Crowds and party*. London: Verso.

Epstein, B. (2001). Anarchism and the anti-globalization movement. *Monthly Review*, *53*(4), 1–14.

Evans, P. B. (2009). From situations of dependency to globalized social democracy. *Studies in Comparative International Development*, *44*, 318–336.

Evans, P. B. (2010). Is it labor's turn to globalize? Twenty-first century opportunities and strategic responses. *Global Labour Journal*, *1*(3), 352–379. doi:10.15173/glj.v1i3.1082

Fleurbaey, M. (with Olivier Bouin, Marie-Laure Djelic, Ravi Kanbur, Helga Nowotny and Elisa Reis). (2018). *A manifesto for social progress. Ideas for a better society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Foran, J. (2018). *Taking or (re) making power?: The new movements for radical social change and global justice*. London: Zed Books.

Foran, J., Gray, S., & Grosse, C. (2017). 'Not yet the end of the world': Political cultures of opposition and creation in the global youth climate justice movement. *Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements*, *9*(2), 353–379.

Freeden, M. (2003). *Ideology: A very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Freeman, J. (1972–73). The tyranny of structuralessness. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, *17*, 151–165.

Gill, S. (2000). Toward a post-modern prince?: The battle of Seattle as a moment in the new politics of globalization. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, *29*(1), 131–140.

Gottleib, M. R. (2007). *The matrix organization reloaded*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

Hall, T. D., & Fenelon, J. V. (2009). *Indigenous peoples and globalization: Resistance and revitalization*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Press.

Harvey, D. (2012). *Rebel cities: From the right to the city to the urban revolution*. London: Verso.

Hayson, K. (2014). A brief for diagonalism – a dialectical take on David Graeber's the democracy project. Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/7289524/A_Brief_for_Diagonalism_-_A_Dialectical_Take_on_David_Graebers_The_Democracy_Project

Hobsbawm, E. J. (1994). *The age of extremes: A history of the world, 1914–1991*. New York, NY: Pantheon.

Klein, N. (2007). *The shock doctrine: The rise of disaster capitalism*. New York, NY: Henry Holt.

Lenin, V. (1902). What is to be done? Retrieved from https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/

Lowrey, A. (2018). *Give people money: How a universal basic income would end poverty, revolutionize work, and remake the world*. New York, NY: Crown.

Mason, P. (2013). *Why its still kicking off everywhere: The new global revolutions*. London: Verso.

Mason, P. (2015). *Postcapitalism*. New York, NY: Farrer, Straus and Giroux.

Mestrum, F. (2017). Reinventing the World Social Forum: How powerful an idea can be. *Open Democracy*. Retrieved from https://opendemocracy.net/francine-mestrum/reinventing-world-social-forum-how-powerful-idea-can-be

Mestrum, F. (2018). The World Social Forum is dead! Long live the World Social Forum? *Alternatives International*. Retrieved from http://www.alterinter.org/spip.php?article4654

Meyer, J. W. (2009). *World society: The writings of John W. Meyer*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Michels, R. (1968 [1915]). *Political parties*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Moghadam, V. M. (2005). *Globalizing women: Transnational feminist networks*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Moghadam, V. M. (2018). Feminism and the future of revolutions. *Socialism and Democracy*, *32*(1), 31–53. doi:10.1080/08854300.2018.1461749

Moghadam, V. M., & Kaftan, G. (2019). Right-wing populisms north and north: Varieties and gender dynamics. *Women's Studies International Forum*, *75*. doi:10.1016/j.wsif.2019.102244

Pleyers, G. (2011). *Alter-globalization*. Malden, MA: Polity Press.

Prehofer, C., & Bettstetter, C. (2005). Self-organization in communication networks: Principles and design paradigms. *IEEE Communications Magazine*, *43*(7), 78–85.

Progressive International. (2018). An open call to all progressive forces. Retrieved from https://www.progressive-international.org/open-call/

Reitan, R. (2007). *Global activism*. London: Routledge.

Rodrik, D. (2018). Populism and the economics of globalization. *Journal of International Business Policy*. doi:10.1057/s42214-018-001-4

Sanbonmatsu, J. (2004). *The postmodern prince*. New York, NY: Monthly Review Press.

Sen, J., Kumar, M., Bond, P., & Waterman, P. (2007). *A political programme for the world social forum?: Democracy, substance and debate in the Bamako appeal and the global justice movements*. Indian Institute for Critical Action: Centre in Movement (CACIM), New Delhi, India & the University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society (CCS), Durban, South Africa.

Sharzer, G. (2012). *Nolocal: Why small-scale alternatives will not change the world*. Aireford: Zero Books.

Sharzer, G. (2017). Cooperatives as transitional economics. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, *49*(3), 456–476. doi:10.1177/0486613415627154

Standing, G. (2014). *A precariat charter: From denizens to citizens*. London: Bloomsbury.

Starr, A. (2000). *Naming the enemy: Anti-corporate movements confront globalization*. London: Zed Books.

Steger, M., Goodman, J., & Wilson, E. K. (2013). *Justice globalism: Ideology, crises, policy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Van Parijs, P., & Vanderborght, Y. (2017). *Basic income: A radical proposal for a free society and a sane economy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wagar, W. W. (1999). *A short history of the future*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Wallerstein, I. (1998). *Utopistics: Or historical choices of the twenty-first century*. New York, NY: New Press.

Wallerstein, I. (2007). The World Social Forum: From defense to offense. Retrieved from http://www.sociologistswithoutborders.org/documents/WallersteinCommentary.pdf

Waterman, P. (2006). Toward a global labour charter for the 21st century. Retrieved from https://laborstrategies.blogs.com/global_labor_strategies/global_unionism/page/4/

Waterman, P. (2010). Five, six, many new internationalisms! (Nine reflections on a fifth international). Retrieved from http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?article16650

World Social Forum Charter of Principles. (2001). Retrieved from http://www.universidadepopular.org/site/media/documentos/WSF_-_charter_of_Principles.pdf

Wright, E. O. (2010). *Envisioning real Utopias*. London: Verso.

Youngs, R. (2017, October). What are the meanings behind the worldwide rise in protest? *Open Democracy*. Retrieved from https://www.opendemocracy.net/protest/multiple-meanings-global-protest