



Newsletter, February 2017

An update from Porto Alegre

Last January, Porto Alegre hosted a *Forum for social résistance*. The forum, backed by Brazil's popular movements, included a two-day seminar organized by *Ação educativa* (Brazil) in collaboration with the *Transnational Institute*, *Systemic Alternatives*, *Intercoll*, *Alternative Information & Development Centre* and *People's Dialogue*, among others. The WSF's International Council later took stock of the forum's results. Here are a few of the discussions that emerged.

Pierre Beaudet

The assault

Governments have launched an offensive against middle and working classes. It's an assault that targets wages and working conditions and has resulted in mass unemployment, the privatization of resources, deregulation and mass debt. This assault comes in the name of growth and profit, but has resulted in a shameful mismanagement of our environment to the point where, according to Geneviève Azam, the future of life itself is at stake. Now that American imperialism has lost its monopoly of power, Donald Trump has become the face of this aggressive offensive.

A shift to the right

When confronted with chaos, dominant groups propose a return to "Neo-Keynesian economics" (or "green capitalism"). To make matters worse, recently developed forms of neo-authoritarianism are undermining traditional institutions of liberal democracy. We see the political right being "revamped" and an emerging "new" extremism that rides the ideological wave of everyone against everyone. This form of unabashed racism, xenophobia and "raw" imperialism is visible in cultural shifts that transcend political and economic divisions.

Shifts in Brazil and Argentina

Brazil's "constitutional coup" in 2016 marked a return to hardline neoliberalism, with a government overwhelmed by corruption scandals as well as a return to criminalizing popular movements. In Argentina, the right presides over a country in decline, with rising costs of services, 40% inflation and a million people unemployed. The so-called answer has been to point an accusatory finger at immigrants from Bolivia and Paraguay, in the same way Trump is in the United States. In the words of Boaventura Sousa Santos, this is a form of "social fascism."

As Pablo Solon explains, our world today is like a strange hybrid animal that is part unbridled globalization and part identitarian and reactionary nationalism.

Chaos in the Crescent of Crisis

In this vast region that crosses Asia and Africa via the Middle East, imperialist aggression and a reactionary jihadist movement fuel forces of destruction. They both trap people and block any democratic aspiration. Jihadist forces that fight external aggressions practice a form of sectarianism while defending the neoliberal economic status quo ("halal" capitalism), which is at the very root of the current dislocation.

Why this regression?

This restructuring would not have taken its current forms had it not been for the development of a counter-hegemonic project. In Porto Alegre, Olivier Dutra, one of the most endearing personalities of the Brazilian left, emphasized the importance of self-critical observations. Social democracy has forgotten social reforms. And in countries where true socialism exists, the original project has been undermined by the implosion of the Soviet Union and liberal economic shifts in China.

The pink wave: contradictions in South Africa

Large popular movements have given rise to unique political and social coalitions on this vast continent. New governments have launched ambitious programs to improve the conditions of the working class. Even if there have been undeniable successes, the power structure has not allowed for a genuine takeover by the people. Moreover, progressive governments have not gotten out of their extractivist straitjacket that limit the country's economy and exploits its natural resources at the expense of the people and the environment. The return of the traditional right to power only illustrates the left's disarray when confronted with its own obstacles.

Nothing is certain

Have we arrived at what neoconservatives call the "end of history?" Persistent clashes are either blocked literally or done so through anti-popular and anti-environmental restructuring. Occasionally, electoral consultations allow people and governments to connect on likeminded issues. And movements are evolving in such a way that one is led to believe the Arab and African Springs, for example, are still in their early stages. Current protests in the United States also indicate a deeper movement. This brings us back to Gramsci's point that a war of position is necessary.

The importance of taking the initiative

Popular movements know they are facing a hard and dangerous road ahead. Some resist better than others. The environmental movement, for example, makes more progress on the intellectual

battlefield than in the real world where reforms are either blocked or postponed. Indigenous nations are more apt to stand up for their rights, partly due to a newfound identity that unites them. Alliances that oblige popular movements to look beyond divisions have become indispensable for identifying meeting and rallying points. And many of today's growing movements are driven by women, youth, immigrants or indigenous peoples to accommodate diversity.

Building alternatives

We are starting to see younger generations mobilize without any hierarchical chains of command. Popular movements are now studying how they too can plan and execute actions faster and with fewer restrictions. This is not research confined to universities. Rather, organizers are looking inward (à la Gramsci). Movements are at the crossroads between theories and practices where ancestral knowledge and skills are being applied to create new strategies. Most popular movements now understand that there won't be a "big night" where the seat of power is suddenly taken over and transformed. In fact, small battles are no longer considered small. We're also seeing new coalitions emerge, especially between environmentalists and indigenous peoples, as we saw recently at Standing Rock at the site of the Dakota Access pipeline in the United States. While there is a genuine attempt to reconcile a constructive alternative with resistance, the question of restructuring remains. The aspiration for democracy may be there, but the thinking is based on the paradigm that "man" is the owner of the world and that progress is measured by economics.

Getting it together/Organize

We're seeing a new identity and social subjectivity that is also changing the links between the social and political. Using the eminently important principle that movements must remain autonomous, many movements have chosen to intervene more as pressure groups than as protagonists. As a result, it ends up being the political parties that initiate changes. This can deepen the divide between social and political struggles. Another point of view is that of seeing the political arena as a trap. Certain aspects of this thinking can be fascinating — such as extreme horizontalism, the rejection of theoretical work or imagining people as a homogeneous group as opposed to a bundle of social contradictions. Yet, this approach can lead to a dead end or to political paralysis and isolation. Of course, the left cannot remain stuck in the past. These new movements are still the main testing grounds for change. New dialogues come out of trying to make movements more democratic, struggling against dogmatism and sectarianism, or welcoming the new paradigms that feminism and environmentalism present. Moving forward, we must assume the hard job of convergence. Catching up must go beyond, but not hide, the cleavages that separate people into advocates and adversaries. We must understand the intersectionality of struggles and their movements. Some popular movements have decided to enter the political field, not to complement their cause but as a transformative nodal point. We must, as feminist activist Lilian Celiberti explains, "decolonize our thinking."

Looking towards a World Social Forum 2.0

Movements have benefited from international exchanges within large coalitions such as Via Campesina, the World March of Women as well as intergovernmental organizations such as ALBA under the Venezuelan initiative. The WSF has at times reflected, or even been an incubator for these coalitions. Fifteen years down the road, the content and forms of these

international partnerships must evolve. Movements are facing new landscapes and intellectual challenges such as neo-authoritarianism and their "monsters." By extension, movements must reflect on their relationship to power and how alliances can block sharp turns to the right now that we are seeing a decline of progressive governments. Transnational strategies need to be readdressed.

Pathways

- Look at how the current crisis impacts civilization as a whole.
- Assemble a thorough report on what in the past has had a transformational impact.
- Dismantle vehicles of violent, reactionary ideologies and authoritarian identities.
- Look at change in the context of class restructuring, the decline of traditional players and the emergence of a new social and environmental resistance.
- Work on aspects that directly strengthen democracy, self-management, appropriation and other mechanisms used in recent years.
- Make a strong argument against the model of extractivism. What is the democratic and popular pathway out of an extractivist economy?
- Think in terms of decolonization.
- Build counter-hegemonic means of communication.

The WSF doesn't need to reinvent itself. It simply needs to allow movements to develop the tools they need. According to Raphael Canet, "it's critical to provide common ground, bringing together all the struggles currently in progress, and to increase the conversations in order to anchor the analysis on what is happening now and on the social demands that come out of protests. And not on theoretical frameworks."

Looking Ahead

To move in this direction, we need to think about, for example:

- The creation of transnational focal points for strategic debates that continue the discussion between forums. These centres could "decolonize" our overall thinking and propose new hypotheses and alternatives to capitalism.
- Defining priority issues that encourage (not impose) convergences that can be addressed at the next forum.
- Developing a user-friendly platform for citizen movements looking for support.
- Envisioning less scattered and better articulated forums. Putting an emphasis on regional forums, while organizing a global gathering every 2 to 3 years.

In the United States, the Center Cannot Hold

Jennifer Cox and Activists from the US Social Forum

The 2016 U.S. election was a referendum on the level of anxiety, anger and frustration that the majority of the American people feel about a political and economic system controlled by billionaires and Wall Street. In a country without an independent Labor Party, and in an electoral system dominated by two corporate parties, in both primaries the greatest enthusiasm was for the candidates who criticized a political and economic system “rigged” in favor of the elites and of capital. The election also exposed a white nationalist impulse which is rooted in the long history of racism in the U.S. Lost status and downward mobility are a dangerous brew for the white population because of being ideologically primed to expect the higher “wages of whiteness.”

While Bernie Sanders captured the imagination of millions of voters disaffected from a Democratic party - which since the Clinton Administration has accelerated its move toward capital and away from any semblance of representing its historic base in organized labor, the industrial working class, and marginalized communities of every color - the Democratic Party chose a deeply unpopular “establishment” candidate with close ties to Wall Street, a history of anti-worker, anti-immigrant and racist policies, and a reprehensible foreign policy record. In an election which was a clarion call for political and economic change from large segments of the American electorate, Hillary Clinton represented in her core the status quo - the Democratic party of NAFTA, of welfare reform, of mass incarceration, of hawkish foreign policy and mass deportations.

And in a country with a weak Left, low levels of political consciousness, and the historic use of race to divide the working class, Donald Trump’s nationalist populism appealed to segments of the white working class who feel left out by the supposed recovery of the Obama years. The election of Trump represented a toxic brew / perfect storm of the economic crisis, and the reality that there is no way out for white (or any) workers – combined with the pull to right wing populism for white workers.

On the alienation of American workers

From the organization Rally¹

Millions were mobilized to vote for one or the other candidates, feeling as if they had been set adrift, unable to trust or believe in the candidates they were given, with nowhere else to turn. Faced with voting for one of the “twin evils” as one worker remarked, they either stayed home, threw their lot with the third party candidate, or held their noses and voted for one of the two main party candidates. American workers are angry, confused and deeply divided about what the problem is and how to go forward. Donald Trump won the electoral vote and is the president-elect, but Hillary Clinton won the popular vote. Thousands across the country are in the streets protesting against Trump; thousands would also have been in the streets if Clinton had

¹ <http://rallycomrades.lma.org/2016/11/inside-fight-for-a-new-america-underway>

won. Some have characterized the elections as a “cultural civil war.” One observer said the elections were like a family going through a bitterly contested divorce, where the judge tells the child to choose which one she wants to live with, and the kid doesn’t want to live with either one. In the coming weeks and months, the Trump administration will reveal its agenda, but as with his opponent, we can be sure it will not include redressing the grievances of the American working class².

Trump appealed to a social base among working and middle classes pulled to Trump by the ideology of right populism (anti-elites/anti-Washington), nationalism and white supremacy. The historic strategy of white supremacy was used by the ruling class since the era of indigenous genocide and chattel slavery.

Building multi-racial Class Unity and political independence for the working class

This post-electoral period is a powerful & important teachable moment – though it is also of course very dangerous. Neither political party of the ruling class – neither Republicans nor Democrats – will name capitalism as the overarching global system of oppression, exploitation and dispossession and ecocide that affects huge swathes of the multiracial, multinational & multi-gendered working class in the US & globally. And seeing no solution to their pain offered by either party, roughly 100 million Americans who could vote did not. Social movement and working class forces for the long haul (strategy) have to develop an independent workers / labor party that contends for electoral power and street power and represents the full interests and needs of the vast multiracial, multinational & multi-gendered working class in this society (& globally). This means a clear break from the Democratic (and Republican) parties which represent the interests of the corporate capitalist class & it’s operatives in every sphere of society.

Our fight today is between fascism in defense of private property, and the creation of a society organized by the working class, for workers, for social control of the wealth of society. In this time of epochal change in the system of production, caused by the automation and the advent of labor replacing technology, the struggle we are facing today is fundamentally different from previous periods of struggle in US and global history. Automation means that workers of all races in the United States, like workers internationally, have no future in capitalism, even as exploited and/or enslaved labor. Labor replacing technology and the crisis it has caused in capitalism has meant that, for the first time in generations, millions of workers are searching for something new - outside of the capitalism - to provide answers and solutions to their problems. The objective circumstances have thrown tens of millions of workers in the United States - employed, unemployed and underemployed, and of every race and ethnicity - white, African American, Indigenous, Latino, Arab, Asian - into the ranks of the poor and dispossessed, a new class of permanently unemployed made superfluous to the capitalist economy. For the first time in the history of the United States, we are seeing the development of the objective grounds for unity between workers of EVERY color in the United States - and with the poor and working class - as workers of every race, ethnicity and nationality face a similar present and future of poverty, dispossession, massive debt, environmental injustice, dislocation and violence committed by the state.

² <http://rallycomrades.lma.org/2016/11/after-the-elections-which-way-forward>

This economic disruption has paved the way for real class unity between workers of every race in the United States, as well as for unprecedented connections between the dispossessed of the US of every color - including poor whites - and the dispossessed globally. In the face of this, the 2016 U.S. election has exemplified on both sides - white nationalist and xenophobic forces on the Right and “progressive” and social democratic forces on the Left - the determination of capital and of both of its corporate parties - to preempt and prevent a multiracial, internationalist, working class consciousness from developing. Our task therefore in the U.S. is to fight for this multi-racial class unity, and to build it into a massive social movement and independent, anti-capitalist political party to fight for the political power of the working class in the U.S., in unity with Left and social movement forces around the world.

Europe Facing the Abyss

Walter Baier³

The ruling classes’ inability to offer sustainable solutions to capitalism’s systemic crisis is undermining the political legitimacy of the European Union. This once more has been revealed by the failure of the EU to provide viable and inclusive solutions for the migrant and refugee population seeking refuge in Europe. It is also evident from the EU commission in the in-transparent consultations and ratifications of International Trade Agreements (TTIP, CETA and TISA). Despite immense problems of cohesion within the Union, its member states once more ignored the massive resistance by civil societies. The terrorist attacks that shocked France and Belgium were taken as a pretext for enhancing repression by proclaiming the “state of emergency” which objectively aim at repressing civil protest and trade union mobilization against anti-labor laws and regressive policies. The anti-Islamic hysteria promoted by powerful media outlets and supported even by centrist parties has cultivated a climate of fear which led and leads to the rise of far right nationalist populist parties in many countries.

Chaos, Dislocation and the Ultra-Right

- **Greece.** The *Syriza* government has been forced to implement the austerity policies of the EU. At the same time the country continues to face a humanitarian crisis both in regard to its own population and the 60 000 refugees trapped within its borders.
- **Britain.** The majority vote in favor of leaving the EU highlighted the depth of the territorial and social fault lines, following more than thirty years of austerity and capitalist globalization.
- **Austria.** The radical *Freedom Party* although its defeat in the presidential elections still is country’s strongest party.
- **Germany.** The radical right *Alternative für Deutschland (AfD)* in is a phenomenon not seen since 1945.
- **France.** The *Front National (FN)* is preparing confidently for the 2017 elections.

³ Walter is the political coordinator of *transform!europe*

- **Belgium.** *Vlaamse Beweging*, with close ties to the extreme right, is part of the government.
- **Scandinavia.** In Denmark, *Dansk Folkeparti* has been successful in getting implemented the most xenophobic immigration policies ever seen. In Sweden, *Sverigedemokraterna*, with its origins in the neo-Nazi movement, is getting stronger.
- **Central and Eastern Europe.** Living standards and wages remain far lower than in other European countries. Almost all banks have been privatised. The productive systems have been dismantled, leading to mass unemployment and the emigration of hundreds of thousands of people. Ultranationalist, authoritarian and clerical governments are rising in Warsaw, Budapest and Bratislava. The Baltic governments are heading in the same direction.
- **Ukraine.** The civil war (more than 10,000 lives since April 2014) is creating deep rifts in Europe, which recall those of the Cold War.

This multifaceted crisis forms part of the new global imbalances which are exacerbating. Despite many warnings, the ecological crisis has worsened. Instead of coping with these challenges European elites have chosen a course of confrontation. The European Commission envisages a further militarization of EU foreign policy and the involvement of European military forces in external operations, in coordination with the US and NATO, particularly in Eastern Europe. All of this constitutes a growing threat for peace and security in Europe.

Popular political struggles

The upcoming European political calendar is full of important electoral debates, including the presidential elections in France and the Bundestag elections in Germany.

- **In Greece,** the movement of solidarity towards migrants shows that the spirit of welcome is still alive in Europe and it is not a “luxury” for rich countries. This solidarity movement is acting as a brake on and a focus of resistance against societies tipping into xenophobia.
- **Austria** successfully managed to avoid an electoral victory of the far-right FPÖ in the presidential election. In Italy the “NO” vote, although also supported by the far-right, was a loud rejection of the “there is no alternative” doctrine to austerity and a powerful message for the defense of democracy.
- **In Poland,** women had a victory against an attempt to further worsen the already reactionary abortion law.
- **In Spain,** the Parliamentary election and the regional elections in 2015 and 2016 confirmed the erosion of Spain’s bipartisan system and brought the different forces of radical left and the Spanish movements in leading positions of the local governments and provided it a strong position in the parliament in Madrid.
- **In Romania and Moldova,** the peoples are mobilising against the corruption of the ruling classes and the political deadlock. The overthrow of the Romanian Government in November 2015 and the mass anti-corruption demonstrations in Republic of Moldova are clear signs of that.

In one word, the struggle continues still at both national and the European levels, inside and outside the European Union. There are still political, social and civic forces that reject the dilemma. The peoples still can force Europe to step back from the brink.

Africa South of the Sahara

Firoze Manji

The history of Africa over the last 500 years has been a history of contestation between those who have sought to dehumanise its people to better exploit them through enslavement, slavery, colonisation, genocide and mass killings, torture and repression and the struggle of the peoples to assert and invent their own humanity. Despite the achievement of independence in most countries (Western Sahara and Diego Garcia being the remaining exceptions), there is a continuity of those contestations albeit in new forms. The rise of neoliberalism, with the associated reversal of the gains of independence, continues the tradition of restricting progress, privilege, autonomy, democracy to an increasing small membership of the sacred space while expanding the size of what it conceives of as the barbarians, the uncivilised, the ‘under developed’ that occupy the profane space. In contrast to earlier periods, however, the sacred space is no longer restricted to whites alone, but allows into its hallowed halls those sections of the elites of Africa who have become part of the transnational class. The majority of the people, who are considered less than human and discarded and effectively disenfranchised, have not remained silent, but continually give expression to their discontent and engage in struggles wherein they gain glimpses of the potentials of their own humanity.

The Era of Discontent

Thus, in the last few years we have witnessed protests and uprisings, the most marked of which we have seen in Tunisia and Egypt, and more recently in Senegal, Burkina Faso, and DRC and in South Africa. But as we have shown elsewhere⁴ the evidence of discontent has not been limited to these countries. In practice, there is probably no country on the continent that has not manifested such protests to greater or lesser degrees. Discontent, protest or even ‘uprisings’, do not necessarily result the transformation of the prevailing political and economic conditions, but they are a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for social transformation. The protests and uprisings occur in the context of growing impoverishment of the majority, reversal of the gains of independence, privatisation of public spaces, declining social infrastructure, massive unemployment and never-employment, widespread disposessions of livelihoods and of land, growing insecurity, declining value of wages, escalating inflation, while a minority accumulates unprecedented wealth. In every country, governments have become more accountable to the transnational corporations, banks and financial institutions than they are to the citizens who elected them. The cult and culture of neoliberalism has become normalised. These are generations that have not only no direct knowledge or experience of the liberation struggles, but whose education has excluded them gaining any knowledge (let

⁴ Firoze Manji and Sokari Ekine (eds): *African Awakenings: The Emerging Revolutions*. Oxford, Pambazuka Press, 2011

alone information) about the experiences of liberation across the continent. That said, there are many of these generations who are exposed to information available on the internet, and there is a strong identity with radical ideas that are expressed in short-form via social media. As a general rule, understanding of their own histories, analyses of the underlying causes of impoverishment is limited.

Dangers Ahead

Whereas once national identity was fired by the ideas of freedom and emancipation, today such identities are mere taxonomic terms, emptied of any association with liberty. Instead, there is a growing politicisation of ethnicity and in some cases the establishment of ethnic militias. Political mobilisations are based on appeals to so-called tribal affiliation. Faced with growing disenchantment resulting in the failure of the nationalist politicians to deliver on their promises, the only basis for political support has become playing the ethnic card – appeals to ‘tribe’. Often the definition of the tribe coincides with the definitions prescribed by the former colonial powers in their attempt, as Mamdani puts it, to ‘define and rule’.

Politics has been reduced to who gets access to the state as the source for ensuring accumulation. Political parties are almost indistinguishable from each other. Elections are opportunities for ethnic mobilisations and widespread corruption in an attempt to buy votes. The ruling elites are closely allied with transnationals and finance capital. With growing inequality, declining productive investment, and growing impoverishment, the legitimacy of the ruling classes is increasingly called into question. To maintain their rule, there has been a disorganic growth of the repressive arms of the state to deal with protest and political opponents. Disappearances, torture, and killings of political opponents have become increasingly common. There is a growing criminalisation of social protest and the equation of political opposition with ‘terrorism’. For example, so-called Somalis who have for generations lived in Kenya are arbitrarily considered as potential terrorists, part of the Al-Shabab network. Despite being Kenyan, many are sent to refugee camps or deported to Somalia.

Arbitrary arrests, imprisonment, torture and killings of unarmed civilians by police who operate with almost total impunity is common. Frequently it is members of social movements who have engaged in social protests who are targeted by the police. There has been a growing militarisation of police and the expansion of security apparatuses, most of whom are trained by the US, Israeli and European powers. The penetration of imperial security forces including Mossad, CIA, MI6 and a vast array of security personnel that operate with the support of the state is common.

There has been widespread use of military forces to invade neighbouring countries where there are potentials for accumulation. The DRC has become the target of almost all of its neighbours, with senior members of the armed forces enriching themselves and thereby increasing their powers domestically. The illegal and unconstitutional invasion of Somalia by Kenya, with the support of the US and France (and which has now been incorporated into the AU forces, is also a case in point. It is believed that there is a permanent balkanisation of the southern part of Somalia which provides Kenya with lucrative access to the port of Kismayu where, it is said, the illicit trade in drugs, arms and other materials is rife. Balkanisation of states as Somalia, in the disastrous creation of South Sudan.

US inspired interventions in Africa have led to the creation of fragile states and even to the complete dismantlement of states as in Somalia and Libya. Military intervention to ensure compliance with the interests of empire have become increasingly common – Somalia, Libya, Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Niger. The destabilisation of states has resulted in massive outflows of refugees into neighbouring countries. With few exceptions, such people are usually interned in camps where they are subject to harassment both by the state as well as by political factions that seek to control the camps. In recent years the U.S. military has, in fact, developed an extensive network of more than 60 outposts and access points in Africa. Most of these are situated across a band of countries stretching from East to West that are the major oil producing countries of the region.

Climate change is already having a serious impact across Africa affecting health, livelihoods, food security, and water availability. Serious flooding in Algeria, Mozambique have caused widespread economic losses, deaths of hundreds and affected millions of people. There have been severe droughts in the East Africa region exacerbating conflicts between nomadic and settled people as in Darfur. There have been severe droughts over the last few years with water levels of rivers dropping e.g. In the Volta and Niger Rivers. The crisis of water is exacerbated by the competition from the extractive, horticultural and agricultural industries receive preferential access to water, and while at the same time are one of the principal polluters of the water tables. East Africa is facing the worst food crisis with some 12 million people in dire need of food.

Fighting Back

Many popular movements that have arisen across the continent, some being spontaneous eruptions, others more organized. In Nigeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, the trade union movements have been relatively strong, but not always connected with the social struggles that occur beyond the workplace. A series of popular movements have arisen in opposition to environmental destruction especially of the extractive industries, but also in relation to the actions of corporations seeking to appropriate land. Movements of family farmers have also emerged around food sovereignty, with connections developing with La Via Campesina. These have yet to develop sufficiently to be able to take on the power of the agro-industrial complex. There are popular movements organizing around climate change. The most well know and ‘successful’ movements that have emerged in the recent past have been those that have sought to protest against the attempts by presidents to extend their rule – as in Senegal, Burkina Faso, DRC, Burundi — and less successfully in Uganda and Cameroon. Slum-dwellers around most cities have witnessed young people organizing against the regular attacks of the state. Some, such as Bunge la Mwananchi in Kenya have organized successful campaigns to prevent increases in price of basic foods. The growth of the women’s movement and the LGBTI movements have been important especially in challenging patriarchal violence.

There are clearly a multitude of popular movements that have emerged, but there appears to be relatively little convergence or collaboration across sectoral interests. In part I think this is because such movements are often organized to protest *against* a particular issue faced by that constituency, for rather few of them have a more explicit perspective about what they might be fighting *for*. Deep analysis of the underlying causes of the issues that they face is relatively rare. There is much rhetoric about neocolonialism, pan-Africanism, and imperialism, but there are few movements that are explicitly anti-

capitalist and who have an appreciation of the nature of capital in its current state. There is a tendency of many movements to limit their critique only of corruption. That said, there are explicitly political movements of significance, such as Polisario whose agenda is part of the tradition of freedom, emancipation and self-determination that was manifested across the continent in the post second world war period.

One of the threats to the integrity of many movements comes from the influence of money: the US State Department has a keen nose for the threat that many social movements can pose, and have responded by offering considerable funds to some of the more organised movements (Senegal, Burkina, Burundi, DRC are examples where this has happened). This inevitably results in the achievement of the purpose for which these funds are provided – that is, to split the movements and render them less effective. A similar threat has come from the INGOs who, through the way in which grants are provided, gradually transform social movements into NGOs (the ngo-isation process).

What Next for the WSF?

For many of these movements, WSF may theoretically offer an opportunity to share ideas with others, but more often than not, the movements are unable to afford to attend. When a few do, they are often a minority voice and come away unconvinced that the effort was necessarily worthwhile. This reflects the problem with most WSFs whereby the well-endowed – and often the INGOs and their ‘partners’ – are over-represented at the WSF meetings. While to some extent that may be overcome through a greater institutionalisation at the regional level, even intra-regional flights tend to be as expensive as international travel, and so out of the reach of many movements. WSF has achieved a great deal during its existence, but there are limitations to what this form of organising can do in relation to popular movements. It may be time for other forms of collective actions to emerge such as, for example, the way in which La Via Campesina organises meetings that are restricted to members of the movement rather than the more liberal approach of WSF where anyone and everyone is invited into the tent. This approach has allowed many advances in the dialogues between different sectors and regions, but may not necessarily be what is needed today where coordinated political actions of solidarity are required. For example, the struggles at Standing Rock in North Dakota reflect the organic convergence of so many important issues: indigenous movements, the history of genocide, the environmental destruction caused by extractive industries, oil as a contributor to climate change, the role of the state in defending the interests of capital, the role of veterans, etc. An international response in defence of the Water Protectors is urgently needed, but the WSF as presently constituted is not in a position to mobilise the solidarity support required, at least not as WSF. The North Dakota events are likely to be the pattern that will be repeated over the coming years as capital undergoes its *effondrement*.