

# Next week in Buenos Aires



DICIEMBRE 2017 BUENOS AIRES

Since its beginnings in 1995 as derivative of General Agreement on Tariff and Trade (GATTs), the World Trade Organization has promoted the most brutal form of capitalism, better known as trade liberalization. At successive Ministerial Conferences, the WTO has set out to globalise the liberalisation of national markets, promising economic prosperity at the cost of sovereignty. In more or less the same terms, by its “liberalization, deregulation and privatization”, which is called Package of Neoliberalism, WTO has encouraged the multiplication of free trade agreements (FTAs) between countries and regional blocs, etc. On this basis and by making use of governments that have been co-opted, the world’s largest transnational corporations (TNCs) are seeking to undermine democracy and all of the institutional instruments for defending the lives, the territories, and the food and agricultural ecosystems of the world’s peoples.

This year, with Macri Inc. in the Casa Rosada (Government House in Argentina), the coup leader Michel Temer in the Palacio del Planalto (the official workplace of the president of Brazil), and Brazilian Roberto Azevedo as its Director General, the WTO wants to try to impose the interests of capital at the cost of Planet Earth, of the democratic aspirations of the world’s peoples, and of life itself.

During these 20+ years of struggle against the WTO, the world’s peoples have resisted its attempt to globalize everything, including the food and agricultural systems, for the benefit of the TNCs. Our struggles have been the biggest impediment to the advance of the WTO. Our resistance to market liberalisation under this neo-liberal regime has continued since the Uruguay round conducted within the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

From December 10 to 13, we are all welcome to the Peoples’ Summit “**WTO, Out! – Building Alternatives**“. We will denounce the WTO as the criminal organization. We will denounce all governments, which, after having understood that the WTO had been weakened, resorted to mega free trade agreements, bilateral and regional, that threaten to annihilate our food systems, just as the WTO has done in the last two decades.

*A preliminary agenda of the summit is available [here](#). As you may note, this is currently only available in Spanish. The English version will be made available shortly.*

# Catalonia

## The Question of Democracy



David Companyon <sup>1</sup>

Catalonia is a nation with more than 1,000 years of history and its own culture and language that, above all, it sees as being treated unfairly by the Spanish State and with little respect. The current conflict arose when the leftist government suggested the need for a new Statute of Autonomy in 2003. The Catalan Parliament and the Spanish Courts reached an agreement, and put it to a referendum in 2006. A majority approved it, but it never came into effect. The Partido Popular – then the opposition party – kicked off a campaign across Spain in opposition to the Catalan Statute, and lodged an appeal with the Constitutional Court. The Constitutional Court’s ruling came in 2010, and suspended a good deal of the Statute. By breaking the territorial pact forged by the 1978 Constitution, legal experts classified the ruling as a “coup d’état”, and did so with an essentially political ruling against the people's sovereignty expressed in the 2006 referendum.

### Massive protests

The popular reaction against the ruling was massive, and was followed by seven consecutive years of well-attended protests. The refusal of Mariano Rajoy’s government to open a dialogue has led the situation into deadlock: in Catalonia, this meant an increase in pro-independence sentiments, and in Spain, a recentralisation of the State. This has always been the PP's stance, and with the support of Ciudadanos, both liberal right parties with a taste for Spanish nationalism, as well as some of PSOE's more authoritarian-leaning delegates with similar economic politics, followed in the wake of Spanish Central Bank and Troika mandates. This move has exponentially increased poverty and uncertainty in a society that has already been severely punished by an unemployment rate much higher than the European average.

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from a text published by Transform!, 23 November 2017, <[www.transform-network.net/focus/overview/article//a-question-of-true-democracy-1/](http://www.transform-network.net/focus/overview/article//a-question-of-true-democracy-1/)>

### **Strategic debates**

Faced with Rajoy's constant "niet", the Catalan independence movement took the option of going up against the State. Despite Rajoy having declared it illegal, 2.3 million people showed up to vote in a referendum October 1st referendum. However, the divisive thought of "first independence, and then everything will be worked out" did not work for the portion of the population that is struggling to make ends meet, and for whom independence is not a priority. Instead of strengthening affinities with other regions like the Basque Country or Galicia, the Catalan independence movement stepped on the gas, believing that they had enough strength to defeat a Spanish State supported by the European Commission. The EU chose to look the other way based on two principles: States have no friends, they have interests, and the "Catalan issue" could be contagious for other Stateless nations that may also aspire for their own independence.

### **The role of the alternative left is key**

The role of the alternative left, rallied around Catalunya en Comú and Barcelona mayor Ada Calau's party, will be key. Despite distancing themselves from the pro-independence movement, they are supporting a confederated State that recognises Catalonia as a sovereign nation that can decide on its independence through an agreed-upon referendum, which alienates them from the constitutionalist block. This means that it is possible that the only real alternative to a new pro-independence Government is one of left-wing sovereigntist political forces. The referendum will continue to be on the table no matter what, all while challenging the liberal economic model.

## **The Sahel under the French Flag**

We hear many different reasons for the increased foreign military presence in Mali and its neighbors: terrorism, controlling migration to Europe, stability, war on drugs. However, it is hard to believe these arguments suffice to explain it. For while [Operation Serval](#) (2013-2014) did roll back the terrorists and prevent Mali from splitting into two, the one that followed in 2014, Operation Barkhane, which officially extended its surveillance to Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso and Chad has brought no good results. Moreover, the Malian and Nigerien populations increasingly resent the presence of foreign troops. In Niger, people wonder a great deal about the endless rounds of troops, NGOs and diplomats. And with good reason! From Agadez to Niamey by way of Madama, Diffou or Zinder, foreign bases are mushrooming everywhere in Niger. Nor are Malians very comfortable with the increasing visibility of Western military forces at the very gates of Bamako. To which must be added the brutalities inflicted on civilians by African troops with French back up or such "tragic incidents" as that child killed in November 2016 during Operation Barkhane.

### **"Whoever Controls Mali Controls West Africa"**

For the moment, the clomping of soldiers' boots drowns out the rumors and other signs of discontent among the populations of the Sahel. However, while the military may not hear or comprehend what the Malians and Nigeriens are whispering, the latter can see many

things being concocted before their eyes in their own countries. Though they may not grasp all the ultimate implications, they pose a great many questions. The Fulani say: “*feram boni*” i.e. there is no strategy, no strategic vision. Yet what the countries of the region need far more than all those foreign military bases and soldiers is just that: a common strategy, endogenous and regional. Otherwise, neither Mali nor any of its neighbors can ensure the security and stability needed for the economic development of the region.



As the Malian Doulaye Konate of the Association of African Historians puts it in the documentary *Guerre de l'ombre au Sahara*<sup>3</sup>, “*whoever controls Mali controls West Africa, if not all of Africa.*” No doubt that this is where the response to those endless rounds of soldiers and diplomats can be found.

Abdelkader Abderrahmane<sup>1</sup>

## Goodbye Mugabe

Throughout the 1980s, and with “Britain’s willful blindness,” Mugabe sought to build a one-party dictatorship in the mold of the Kims’ North Korea. In fact, he invited North Korean military supervisors to help him create a private army brigade that hounded the opposition and committed one of the worst atrocities against African people in independent Africa. In the end, the Gukurahundi massacres left an estimated twenty thousand civilians, most of them isiNdebele-speaking black men, women, and children, dead in unmarked mass graves. Mugabe’s politics were a bizarre populism that relied on force rather than the support of the masses. While this aided his self-interested political ambitions, it was simply unsustainable; his hold began faltering as early as the 1990s. Faced with a fast-changing global political economy and louder demands for change at home, Mugabe’s ostensible socialism was exposed as the clumsy fraud that it

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<sup>1</sup> Extracted from an article published by Orient XXI, 24 November 2017.

was. Those who managed to skip the border to escape the hellhole that our country had become made for lovely, smiling, articulate butlers and waiters that attended to tourists in places like Dubai and Cape Town. Zimbabweans could, of course, read and cram the menu, enough to explain food recipes to visitors in impeccable English. They also made for the best implementers of NGO projects — whether or not they believed in their employers’ philosophies (most of the times they did not). They became the best foremen and machine operators on farms in South Africa’s Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces — because they could read and follow instructions on seed and pesticide packages. Most never uttered any criticism, come rain come sunshine.

Melusi Nkomo<sup>1</sup>

## Reinventing the World Social Forum



Francine Mestrum<sup>2</sup>

It has often been said that the main problem of the WSF is the opposition between NGOs and social movements. NGOs are said to be reformist with little or no contact with their social base, whereas social movements are supposed to be revolutionary and very popular. I do not believe this. Some NGOs are very revolutionary and some social movements know perfectly well how to keep their members in line.

### So what’s up?

A first real problem is the failing and vague definition of the ‘open space’, including its intrinsic ‘horizontality’. These are attractive principles but they do need a concrete meaning. In any place where people are gathering, in small or less small groups, power relations will exist and these have to be monitored in a democratic way. If the ‘horizontality’ means that the existing hierarchy remains hidden behind a non-defined principle, problems with accountability and transparency will necessarily arise. If structures are so complex that no one knows who has to do what, misunderstandings are inevitable. A small group within the international council continued to request a light structure with clear responsibilities and transparency, to no avail. Those who have power,

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<sup>1</sup> Extracted from an article published in. <http://africasacountry.com/2017/11/mugabe-was-no-revolutionary-he-was-obsessed-with-power-and-control/>

<sup>2</sup> Extracted from an article published by Open Movements, November 2017, <<https://www.opendemocracy.net/openmovements>>

especially if it remains invisible, will not accept any changes. In Europe as well as in Latin America, Asia and Africa, democracy is threatened. The differences are often smaller than they seem to be at first sight.

A second problem is that some of the Brazilian ‘fathers’ of the Forum fear political positions. Even if the first Forum was organised just before the elections that made Lula president of the country – and promoting his candidacy – today, there is a tremendous fear of touching anything political. This obviously is very absurd when one wants to shape ‘another world’, but it does lead to a permanent struggle between a small club of ‘fathers’ and the many dynamic and younger members of the international council. The former do not want to organise general forums any more and instead focus on thematic forums, such as on water, migration or nuclear matters. They keep focusing on diversity and the idea of ‘convergence’ makes them shiver.



The third problem, finally, is purely material: a lack of resources. A meeting of the international council will easily cost around 100,000 euros, except if all pay their own ticket. The budget for the forum in Salvador is around 2.5 million Euro, a very modest amount compared to previous forums. The fact that the international council paid tickets for many of its members made it very easy to make alliances. Now that this has stopped, it is only the more autonomous members who remain and can put the ‘old guard’ in a minority position. Financial constraints, all over the world, make it very difficult for many movements to make long trips. It explains why the last forums may have been a success but were not ‘global’ forums any more. The participation of Africa has dwindled, Asian participation has almost disappeared.

### **A new beginning**

The international council meeting in Porto Alegre in January 2017 was a real turning point. Two and a half days long, discussions were serious and calm, everyone fearing to repeat the clash of Montreal, where even in spite of a consensus, it was not possible to condemn the ‘coup’ in Brazil. However, the last half day, the old guard flatly refused to envisage a

next Forum in Salvador in spring 2018. They were defeated ...Now, in October 2017, another meeting of the international council took place in Salvador in order to concretely prepare the Forum. It was a very positive and constructive meeting, without any conflicts. The movements in Salvador are very dynamic, all are very optimistic about the chances for the next Forum. A very interesting cooperation with the Federal University of Bahia, a public establishment with more than 200,000 students, is very promising. After the international council meeting, we had an international conference with activists and academics, with very good results. For the rector of the University, this is a unique opportunity for reaching out to society. The opening ceremony was particularly moving, with, obviously, many discourses, but also lots of music, theatre and poetry, and lots, lots of politics.

These are politically difficult times for Brazil, the memory of the military dictatorship remains vivid and in the same way as in other parts of the world, a struggle needs to be organised against budgetary cuts in education and research.

The collective in Salvador has succeeded in bringing together thousands of organisations for preparing the Forum, trade unions will be massively participating, the slogan is 'to resist is to create, to resist is to transform'. In the same way as in the past, the Forums offered an opportunity to directly listen to Chavez, Lula, Correa and Morales; the proposal now is to invite Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders. All are very optimistic about the chances of the next Forum. The movements are very dynamic and the international council can take a new start. From the one hundred and fifty movements on the list, fifty have confirmed they believe in its future.

**Intercoll** is an open space for the development and confrontation of social and citizen movements. It is managed by individuals linked to those movements, and by anyone who is involved in social struggles and mobilizations. Intercoll aims to contribute to the gradual emergence of a new "international collective intellectual" from the reflection of movements and networks of research and public education. Intercoll aims to create an international and multicultural space. The website operates in six languages.

<http://intercoll.net/?lang=en>

# Meanwhile on the Alter Planet ...

## **WSF 2018 Salvador March 13-17**

*To resist is to create; to resist is to transform*

In this grave moment of social, political and economic setbacks, more than ever, the space and the process of the World Social Forum are strategic and unique in the struggle of peoples against conservative and neoliberal advances in our region and on the whole planet. Salvador in Bahia, the most African city outside of Africa, will host the next edition of the WSF. Former President Lula, former President Mujica, Henryane de Chaponay, sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos, among other leaders, have already been confirmed. All these adhesions demonstrate that we must gather more than 60 thousand people (conservative estimate), militants of the most varied causes and social movements of the world, transforming Salvador and Bahia into the political center of the world struggle for another possible world.



CUT-Brasil has already reserved 2000 beds in the hotel chain of the capital of Bahia to facilitate our lodging. Please confirm the interest, as soon as possible, directly at [UNISOLI.com.br](mailto:karen@unisoli.com.br), [karen@unisoli.com.br](mailto:karen@unisoli.com.br), [bruno@unisoli.com.br](mailto:bruno@unisoli.com.br), [wallace@unisoli.com.br](mailto:wallace@unisoli.com.br), +55 11 3330-3656.

See you in Salvador!

Vagner Freitas Antonio Lisboa President Secretary of International Relations CUT-Brasil

## **The VII World Social Forum on Health and Social Security**

In Salvador de Bahia from 10th to 13th of march 2018, immediately before the 11th World Social Forum.

Contact [armandodenecri@yahoo.com](mailto:armandodenecri@yahoo.com)

Please look at the invitation video: [https://youtu.be/DU\\_ODDLLaYQ](https://youtu.be/DU_ODDLLaYQ)

**January 23, 2018**

**GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION**

The organizations, networks, platforms and social movements gathered at the Meeting of the WSF International Council in Salvador, on October 15 and 16, 2018, call on all and all to hold on January 23, 2018, a great Global Action Anti-World Economic Forum in Davos,

We incite everyone to organize marches, acts-shows, artistic activities, mobilizations, occupations of public spaces and any form of demonstration that demonstrates to the world leaders and, mainly, to the economic power, that humanity does not accept the financialization the life of people and the planet.



Following the economic crisis of the 2008 World Financial System, the large capitalist corporations protected by the G20 countries have made a new impetus for centralization and concentration of capital, initiating a new neoliberal offensive against the rights of workers and workers, national states and life in Planet.

The World Economic Forum, held annually in Davos, Switzerland, represents and organizes the thinking of the minority that holds economic power in the world to the detriment of billions of human beings. Manifesting our indignation and revolt at the current situation in the world is a way of demonstrating that we have the capacity to say a sufficient one and to unite to construct joint alternatives in defense of life, equality and peace.

## Working Group "Initiatives & Agora"

On the occasion of WSF 2018, we propose to complement, in the WSF methodology, the notion of "activity" (moment of dialogue in the forum space, organized by one or several participating entities), with the notion of "initiative" (description of a set of actions, with specific purpose of resistance, creation, transformation in society/country/territory, for another possible world, taken up by several impulsive participant entities).

Initiatives can be existing, seeking reinforcement in WSF 2018, or be projected, looking for launch in WSF 2018. The visibility of initiatives is an element that stimulates the participating entities to think about their participation in the WSF process in terms of concrete actions, in the post-forum period in the medium term. The evolution of the descriptive content and list of signatories of each initiative reflects the dynamics of articulations, alliances and convergences between WSF 2018 participating entities that are built through formal and informal communications.

The set of initiatives shows the actions that the WSF participant entities project/announce, up to about 18 months after the event. This is visualized on the WSF 2018 website with various lists -by scale, by territory, by theme, etc.-, and with a calendar of dates-stages/actions.

Antonio (Mocic / FOSPA Péru) - Carminda (CTSM / CI Canada) - Catia (Caritas / CI / CFB Brazil) - Chico (CBJP / CI Brazil) - Fatima (RMM / CFB Brazil) - Gilberto (CONEN / CFB Brazil) - Gilio (CIDSE / CI Canada) - Hamouda (FMAS / CI Marueccos) - Mandela (Caritas / CI / CFB Brazil) - Pierre (Caritas / CI - France) - Rachel (RMM / CFB Brazil) - Rita (Ciranda / CI Brazil) - Ricardo (Cultural Frontiers Brazil) - Salete (CLACSO / CI Brazil)

## 3rd International Marxist-Feminist Conference

Lund University (Sweden), from 6 to 7 October 2018

The main experience haunting feminist Marxists today (and not only them) is the experience of crisis. Forced migration and widening inequality across and within countries in the north and south are the most palatable manifestations of a human crisis. The crisis of nature is visible in an ever-increasing number of natural catastrophes, which hit predominantly poor and vulnerable populations. The related economic crisis is analysed under the notion of 'financialisation', which aims to emphasise intensified profiteering and inequality during this phase of neo-liberal capitalism. The legacy of the economic crisis is one of 'permanent austerity'. While vulnerabilities abound, the possibilities to care for those who are most vulnerable are decreasing, rather than broadening – a process analysed by feminists as the crisis of care. Whether these crises have different causes and feed off each other, or whether they are seen as different facets of the same crisis is an open debate. What we can observe though, is that they lead to the strengthening of conservative, nationalist, racist, and misogynist movements across the globe.

This broad call can be broken down into a wide number of sub (and related)-themes, of which we name but a few:

- Social Reproduction and the Relations of Production.
- Nature, Capitalism and Gender.
- The Crisis of Care – A Feminist Issue – or Gender Relations as Relations of Production?
- The Critique of Everyday Life: a Form of Reproducing the Structures of Capitalism or a Source of Resistance?
- Transnational Feminist Struggles. Working Agendas.
- A Marxist-Feminist Frame for Understanding the Crisis of Solidarity in Europe.
- Conceptualising and Learning from Resistance. Epistemological and Practical Challenges.
- Feminist Collective Work towards Real Utopias.

#### Information

- Diana Mulinari ([Diana.mulinari@genus.lu.se](mailto:Diana.mulinari@genus.lu.se))
- Rebecca Selberg ([Rebecca.Selberg@genus.lu.se](mailto:Rebecca.Selberg@genus.lu.se))
- Catia Gregoratti ([catia.gregoratti@svet.lu.se](mailto:catia.gregoratti@svet.lu.se))

Website: <https://marxfemconference.net/>

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# Something is coming

Sister Sant-Ahk-Laas, the general secretary of the Inter Galactic Organization (IGO), will announce in our next general assembly the new coordinator for the Southern section. The name is still unknown, but WikiLeaks has published a photo already. The rumour is that he is very tough, although keen on a humanist approach. If some of our readers know the name, please send us an urgent notice.



WikiLeaks has also published a text, which is attributed to that person, although we cannot confirm this.

We all know great controversies around the world now fighting for freedom; no one can hide it.

We also know that they have reached such intensity that the possibility of dialogue and reconciliation seems difficult. It is a useless task to search for means and ways to propitiate a dialogue, which the hostile parties avoid. However, the enemy is there; it strikes every day, and threatens us with new blows and these blows will unite us, today and tomorrow. Whoever understands this first, and prepares for this necessary union, shall have the people's gratitude.

Owing to the intransigence with which each cause is defended, we, the dispossessed, cannot take sides for one form or the other of these discrepancies, even though sometimes we coincide with the contentions of one party or the other. In time of war, the expression of current differences constitutes a weakness; but at this stage, it is an illusion to attempt to settle them by means of words. History shall erode them or shall give them their true meaning. In our struggling world every discrepancy regarding tactics & methods of action should be analyzed with due respect to another man's opinions.

Let us sum up our hopes for victory: total destruction of imperialism by eliminating its firmest bulwark: the oppression exercised by the United States of America. To carry out, as a tactical method, the people's gradual liberation, one by one or in groups: driving the enemy into a difficult fight away from its own territory; dismantling all its sustenance bases, that is, its dependent territories.