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SEPTEMBER 2022 | ISSUE 2

# FIGHT THE FIRE

ECOSOCIALIST MAGAZINE

— do not despair —

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# fight the fire

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# editorial note

At the end of the devastating last months, with epoch defining floods in Pakistan, an unparalleled drought in China that spreads through the entire northern hemisphere, massive wildfires and supercharged heatwaves, we need to be as realistic as possible. Global capitalism isn't flinching. Instead, they are doubling down on more fossil fuel projects than in the previous decade. The invasion of the Ukraine was used to once again bail out the oil companies, with a triumphant return of gas projects all around the world, under the guise of "energy security" for Europe and the US.

The skyrocketing prices and inflation have one cause: the ability of fossil companies to continue determining their output and prices of oil and gas. In a world economy intentionally

designed to be addicted to fossil fuels, these companies are choosing to set the world on fire through high prices and climate chaos. Capitalist governments are allowing them to do this without any questioning, often using public money or tax cuts to improve their business at the expense of workers and the general population. The media reflects this without hesitation, giving 10 day coverage to the funeral of a 96 year old imperialist relic while a third of one of the most populated countries in the world is under water, but some of the most famous rivers in history can be crossed on foot.

The cost of living crisis is in its first steps. Inflation, low wages and price increases in every sector allow us to



anticipate mass struggles in the upcoming months. Fascist governments and threats loom in Europe and Latin America. Fascism will try to respond to this crisis when and where the left fails.

The climate justice movement is radicalizing. Following the climate strike of the 23rd September, we are bound to see Scientist Rebellion, Leszte Generation and Debt for Climate prompting international days of action, as End Fossil Occupy looks to bring back students and the youth into the streets, occupying schools and universities. Just Stop Oil hasn't wavered in the last months and with the announcement of new gas and fracking projects in the UK, they are bound to intensify their efforts. XR is also hitting the streets in October. Yet, we need much more.

The cost of living crisis is not a paralel problem to the climate crisis. They are the same thing. The same people are responsible, the same agents - the fossil industry and the capitalist establishment. It must be addressed exactly as it is: a crisis brought on by the massive profits reaped by the fossil industry, over 100 billion dollars in the first quarter alone. Rather than the fossil industry being shut down, it has never been more profitable. Further, even in this very crisis, its social license is still

intact and responsibility isn't even put on them. It is the responsibility of every ecosocialist to scream to the world who created this crisis and organise their overthrow and dismantlement.

In the present number, Fight the Fire begins a cooperation with Earth Liberation Studio, which designed our cover. We used another illustration by them in the article by Jonathan Neale. We hope this partnership continues for many more numbers, as we love what they do. Our magazine is smaller than the first number (which was huge), with an article on End Fossil - Occupy, by Matilde Alvim from Portugal and Disha Ravi from India, an article on how to start thinking about a revolution in practical terms, and a reflection about reproductive struggles in North and South America by Susana Draper from the USA and Veronica Gago from Argentina. Sinan Eden contributes a second article on theories of change from Lenin until our time. Antonio Zambrano reflects on the possibilities and dangers in the shifts currently occurring in Latin America today. Jonathan Neale argues that ecosocialism in the age of climate change needs to stop being a niche, an abstract ideological program, and turn into a concrete, practical, non-dogmatic plan for the future.

# when do we call off the climate strikes?

WHY RADICALIZING THE YOUTH OPENS THE WAY FOR AN  
ECOSOCIALIST REVOLUTION

by Matilde Alvim and Disha A. Ravi

The recipe for a revolution has been written by those who came before us. It's quite simple, we need to mix a spoonful of organizing students, salaried workers, farmers, indigenous peoples, scientists, the working class and the academics together. After that, we need to gently remove the structures of injustice within us and combine our imperfect selves and let our differences unite together to create a perfectly balanced dish. This recipe will ensure that we dismantle capitalism, reduce our emissions, focus on degrowth and build a society that leaves no one behind. In the months to come, we will be cooking up this recipe and we will be occupying schools and universities around the world to scale up an ecosocialist

revolution. A radicalization within ourselves and our surroundings that will pave the way to an ecosocialist movement.

Since 2019, the youth around the world took to the streets in millions to mobilise for climate justice in every continent and almost every country around the world. This movement was called Fridays for Future or School Strike for Climate Action, where children skipped school on Fridays to strike for climate justice. They coordinated global climate action days where the whole globe stopped to watch as millions took the streets. The idea was simple, yet brilliant: if you go to school, you can strike and protest, and you are therefore now part of an



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international movement.

This movement soon grew to include people of all ages and people skipped their office or their daily work to fight for a better planet. Fridays for Future pushed mass international mobilization for climate justice at another level, creating a wave of media and cultural attention to the climate crisis, as well as organizing other sectors of society along with it: teachers, parents, scientists, etc. It helped push the leverage for more radical action from other parts of the movement, and it created youth organization hubs for climate justice all over the globe. Having its peak in September 2019, it then started to decrease its capacity and creativity as a core question arose: when do we call off strikes?

As the pandemic hit, the youth movement had to drastically decrease its mobilization capacity. With this, they had to switch to digital strikes, which didn't prove as effective. Post lockdown, the strikes resumed in some areas but it was no longer threatening to the status quo. And in some other areas, it became dangerous for students and people to skip school in certain authoritarian countries and the climate justice movement demanded the usage of other strategies that would urge world leaders to take climate action. Upon some reflection we realized that our

strikes were tailored for countries in the Global North and it lacked strategy, radical action and movement building that could adjust to the needs of the Global South.

Instead, we kept skating on the eternal loop of doing the same thing over and over again, with no coordinated escalation plans. Many organizers felt tired and hopeless. Some of the groups radicalized, others kept holding on to the belief we are on the right path and governments and institutions will eventually really listen to us. The result? A youth climate justice movement trapped in its own status-quo, not looking at the task directly in the eyes and, above all, not getting closer to victory.

We are now certain it is time to try something new for the youth, (re)transforming it into being an active part of the broader movement on the path of building an international mass ecosocialist revolution.

As the climate crisis continues to rage its violence on black, brown and indigenous children, we know we need to radicalize our tactics and our actions. Revolution is our task and radicalization is our duty. Radicalizing allows us to scale up the confrontation level with governments and institutions who, as we have been saying in the past years, have been doing nothing but more empty





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promises. Stepping away from the “cute children” narrative, we need to change the narrative to depict a threat to the status quo. Changing our narration, our tactics and our strategies can welcome new people in the movement and enable the existing people to practice hope on a regular basis. Our work should always factor in the masses and ensure that no one is left behind.

That’s why between September and December 2022, carefully following this strategical movement analysis, the youth all over the world will occupy schools and universities to demand the end of the fossil fuel era under the international action callout “End Fossil: Occupy!”. Why the fossil fuel industry? Well, we need to focus on what’s essential: keeping it in the ground and dismantling the pillars of the fossil industry, who takes away our present and our futures. All over the world, students will occupy their school and university buildings following only 3 principles:

- youth-led occupation;
- climate justice framework for the demands
- occupy until you win them

The concrete demands are locally built by each occupations (either at national, regional or state level), and depending on the context can vary between demanding the end of fossil extraction, fossil finance, fossil infrastructures, fossil funding, among others. This allows for 2 strategical advantages: in the first place, attacking the fossil fuel industry in its many shapes around the globe while at the same time mobilizing people for issues that locally make sense; and second, it allows for a call-off of the tactic: you only leave the occupation once you win your demand. We can now have concrete, strategical, and winnable demands that attack the same sector all at once, thus contributing to a stronger youth movement with ecosocialist demands. Besides this, we are shifting the way we see protest. We are no longer walking out of school, going to a march, and then returning home at the end of the day. As the crisis advances and institutions don't respond, we shall occupy and disrupt the same schools, disrupting the normal functioning of society at such a big scale that it's impossible to govern. We are taking over our spaces to say that the fossil fuel industry has to go, now.

As many movements before us, we need to reclaim and organize in our spaces – in our case, schools and universities. If we need a majority of sectors of society to build an

ecosocialist mass movement that can win, then we shall play our role by organizing students. In some cases, schools and universities have a direct stake on climate chaos, as it is the case of universities in Europe and the USA who have their money invested in fossil fuel companies. Other times, they are indirect stakeholders. They are preparing us for a future of fossil capitalism, acting as if all is normal and our house wasn't on fire. That's not the future we want; that future does not exist. We shall build our own.





It's not the first time a youth movement takes the lead and inspires all of society to come along. Examples include May of '68 in France, where students started a rebellion against bureaucracy, capitalism and imperialism in universities that spread to French workers and society, resulting in a social transformation and sexual revolution in the country; Primavera Secundarista in 2015 in Brazil, when high school students took over their buildings to protest against the shutting down of hundreds of schools; or Penguin Revolution in Chile in 2006, when students rose up against the educational system which maintained a lot of features from the far right dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet.

Inspiring ourselves in these historical examples, to name only a few, we understand that the youth can be a revolutionary subject and lead society to change. All these movements were addressing issues that have at its core the capitalist system and the way it is oriented towards profit, and not life and justice. Now, we face one of the biggest challenges humankind has ever seen: in less than 10 years, we need to build a mass movement that can cut more than half of global greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. And as the French students did in 1968, we need to start the sparkle that spreads to all of society. We have decided to take ourselves seriously and face up to the fact that we too are a revolutionary subject, that we can build a mass ecosocialist movement, and we have the power to smash the fossil fuel industry. With the "End Fossil: Occupy!" action callout we hope to bring

a new life to the climate justice movement, massively mobilizing and organizing thousands of students all around the world to occupy. The occupations will be beautiful spaces where we create pre-figurative moments of what the world without profit in the center may look like, and where we politicize ourselves and create the political agenda for a just transition in our schools, our regions and our countries. We aim at creating a wave even bigger than in 2019, creating a huge momentum of international articulation and solidarity with this simple-to-reproduce action.

The task of a climate justice revolution is in front of us, and we decided to take it. Our radicalization will open the way for a mass ecosocialist climate justice movement that will win.



**Matilde Alvim and Disha Ravi are climate justice activists in Portugal and India, organizing End Fossil - Occupy**





# **in the cauldron of revolution**

  
**BY JOÃO CAMARGO**

As there are confusing notions on what constitutes system change, there is further confusion on what a revolution actually is. If there is no broad common agreement on what constitutes a revolution, it becomes impossible to actually plan or organize one. If we don't have a relatively common understanding of how the system works, how it stands, replicates and perpetuates itself, the possibility of affecting it, let alone dismantling it, becomes null.

In the last decades, revolution has become growingly a protest chant. This is a consequence to the domination of non-revolutionary theories of change, directly connected to the overwhelming strength of the capitalist system and frailty of alternatives. Winning an election has become equated with making a revolution. Talking about revolution has become a tool of recruitment for progressive but non-ruptural movements and parties. By letting a revolution remain an abstract, undetermined and temporally uncertain prospect and event, we allow conformity in movements and parties. This gradually absorbs the idea of a revolution as an unreachable myth or, at least something to be made by others. This is so much so that many organisations, although agitating around revolution, become extremely hostile to the idea of advancing any escalation in social struggles, even

when facing massive upsurge from reactionary forces or a degrading social and environmental situation.

That is why we must reject the complacency of the idea that "The Struggle Continues". With the climate crisis we have a deadline that can't be ignored by relying on tradition and habit. Nothing is traditional or common about the time we are living in.

### Outlines of a revolution

It is a given fact that a revolution can't be perfectly outlined in advance. Unpredictability is a key aspect because the clash of forces, organisations, institutions and people in a rupture of normality will lead to new behaviours and actions. We must address this with openness and flexibility. We can't look at this unpredictability as a deterrent, but as another factor to be taken into account.

When we talk about revolution we are talking about a moment of absolute contradiction in society, frequently pushing one part of society against the other, in which there is a shift in power and the creation of a new hegemony in society. Some want power to ossify their position, others to break the old bones of society.

A revolution is a dialectical process of opposites: the sovereign, the state, the system, the government are the contrary



of the revolutionary movement, which develops an alternative theory on sovereignty, state, system and government, its objective enemies. The revolution is the confrontational moment between these opponents.

As such, a revolution isn't an uprising where the people, united, overthrow the system. It is also not an ecumenical moment of pure beauty that suddenly dissolves differences in society. The destruction of the oppression at the root of all revolutionary events must be an intended and methodical process, organised and planned. As such, a revolution is not something which "happens", but something that

is intentionally made.

The historical reasons for revolution have very often been connected to oppression and irreconcilable differences between classes or between groups within the same class. The issue of power and violence has always been at the core of revolution, which is why there is confusion between revolutions and mass protests, coups, civil wars, riots and rebellions. All of the previous can effectively occur (and often do occur) without the existence of a revolution. They do often accompany revolutions, yet they are not revolutions in and of themselves.



For a minimum outline, a set of at least five questions about revolution needs to be answered:

- **Who will make it?** The people, the class, the revolutionary party, the vanguard?
- **What for?** For power, to enact a regime change, to change the political system, to change the economic system?
- **How will they make it?** By accumulating more political strength than the system, through violence, through speed and surprise?
- **What will it be like?** Will they take over the state, create a new state, create a new organisational structure for society?
- **What will the result be?** Will it create a new space of sovereignty, a new nation, expel colonisers, distribute power, change the social order?

All of these need to be answered in the development of a revolutionary theory.

I will cut short the debate around political revolution and social revolution. In our context of climate crisis, a political revolution is unequivocally insufficient for the major shifts required, and as such I will use revolution as a synonym of social and political revolution combined.





## Broad schematics

Looking into the multiple factors that perpetuate the capitalist system and the social and political forces that hold or make it unstable, we can project a cauldron of revolution, allowing us a clearer if not perfect view on how to strategically think about system change and revolution.

There's a traditional Marxist division of objective and subjective conditions for revolutions, where the working class is the revolutionary agent:

- Productive forces must reach a certain level of development to permit socialism to replace capitalism (objective);
- The social position of the working class in the economy must allow it to launch a revolutionary process (objective);
- The working class must be prepared to carry out the revolution (subjective).

Retrospectively, this theory has been tried and failed, or is at least very incomplete. Many times objective conditions were and are still met, and often the subjective conditions were met, and there hasn't been an global workers' revolution. Often, these objective and subjective conditions led other classes to quash revolutions;

workers have more than once turned to reactionary politics and revolutionary situations have come and gone without revolutionary action. Instead, revolutionary situations, linked to the frequent crises in capitalism, have actually been taken up by other entities and classes, blocking the perspectives of a progressive world revolution to abolish the exploitation of labor. When the expected revolutionary subject wasn't ready or willing, others have always taken over the opportunities.

The "objective" and "subjective" conditions also account very little for the system's ability to receive, adapt and co-opt shocks and menaces. I propose a broader set of conditions, increasing their scope.





## The Cauldron of Revolution

Today, the stability of the system is based on cultural hegemony, institutional power and the repressive apparatus of the state and capital. All of these are strictly intertwined and are themselves an equilibrium of forces between local, national and multinational capital, institutions and repressive forces. Simplifying, they are the structure of the system, the base of the cauldron.

The ebullition of revolution has always had a base in the imbalances between this equilibrium. They can derive from:

- **social and economic shifts** (migrations, industrialisation, unemployment, poverty, austerity, war);
- **environmental degradation** (natural disasters, great destructions, famines);
- **political shifts** (perception of illegitimacy of the political actors, of the elites, of the institutions, outrageous episodes both within and internationally)

All of these, inside the cauldron of revolution, evolve over time, interacting and reacting among themselves. The system looks for ways to accommodate the contradictions with minor or major

adjustments to reestablish a capitalist equilibrium.

Outrageous episodes in society, in politics, and in institutions weaken the system. They create the conditions for an illegitimacy of the political regime (yet much less frequently of the economic system). The persistence of the episodes weakens the leadership of the regime, making it unstable and ripe for substitution. Yet, the cultural hegemonic apparatus serves as a permanent cushion, an inhibitor of a certain type of reactions against the *status quo*, and promoter of others. When there is a shift in the cultural hegemonic apparatus, the capability of containing instability is very low. It is in between these imbalances that social movements and revolutionary movements operate, increasing the temperature and promoting more interaction between the imbalances.



## Social movements and revolutionary movements

Historically, the plans and actions of social movements to increase their power can be grouped into three major grand strategies (you can look up the [Strategy Stuff videos](#) for more detailed descriptions):

- Spontaneous uprisings;
- Mass agitation;
- Ideological mobilisation.

**Spontaneous uprisings:** Here, the grand strategy focuses on themes, when movements choose to take position on a theme so strong that the population rises in an explosion of support. Yet, the movement has little control on how the participants act or what they will do afterwards. These are the famous “jumps” that also accelerate the responses from the system. The storming of the Bastille is a clear example.

The main idea is to either have more participants or increase the capacity of action of the current participants, reinforcing the organisation and its cadres. For this purpose, there is a choice made by movement, either conscious or unconsciously, between organisation or themes.



**Storming the Bastille: Spontaneous Uprising**



**Ideological mobilisation:** The grand strategy focuses on organisation and the movement doesn't expect the population to act spontaneously. People are recruited by the movement, and the recruitment is followed by an extensive ideological training on the themes. The movement generates actions against institutional power in a regular and permanent way, as well as when there are opportunities. The Chinese Revolution and the Irish Republican Army are examples of this.

**Mass agitation:** A combination of focus on organisation and themes. When there is a general discontentment but no organisation or possibility for an explosion of support for the movement, it creates a vanguard that radicalises using a strategy of themes, while organising effective actions. These vanguards provide examples of what the actions are, influencing masses to align with the movement. The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 is probably the most successful episode of mass agitation.



**Ideological mobilisation**



**Mass agitation**



These are obvious simplifications of what social and revolutionary movements do, as they often shift tactics, strategies and grand strategies. An excessive focus on any of them will lead to negative outcomes for success as all movements suffer the consequences of their purposeful or unintentional choice:

- A great focus on spontaneous uprisings can lead to explosions without consequence, to social and political decompression and to cynicism and hypocrisy in society.
- A great focus on mass agitation can lead to vanguardism and substitutionism (the idea that a small group can substitute the people in program and action).
- A great focus on ideological mobilisation can lead to isolation, self-sufficiency, alienation and sectarianism.

Social movements are the sectors of society which are already mobilised and in a “stable” society they are very close to the dominant cultural hegemony. They include movements, unions, parties and NGOs, and generally have strong and divergent cultures and practices among themselves.

Nowadays, social movements are not all revolutionary movements, although historically they are one of the main sources of revolutionary leaderships. As such, the grand strategies can and are mostly applied for non-revolutionary

purposes, such as promoting the change of a policy, the end of a repression or the removal of a government considered to be illegitimate.

For social movements to turn into revolutionary movements, there needs to be a radicalisation that is often accompanied by a revolutionary program. People argue through a revolutionary theory which tells the movement how to do the revolution itself and what should happen after the revolution. This theory tries to predict the equilibriums and imbalances within societies, the alliances, actions, mobilisations and reactions from power, creating different scenarios. People think about the stages of action (national, regional, global) and possible sequences of events to reach the outcome of a victorious revolution. To achieve the transformation of social movements into revolutionary movements, the grand strategies of **mass agitation**, but particularly **ideological mobilisation** must be taken.



## Grand Strategies and the Cauldron of Revolution

The imbalances within the system need to be acted upon, and not all grand strategies apply to all moments.

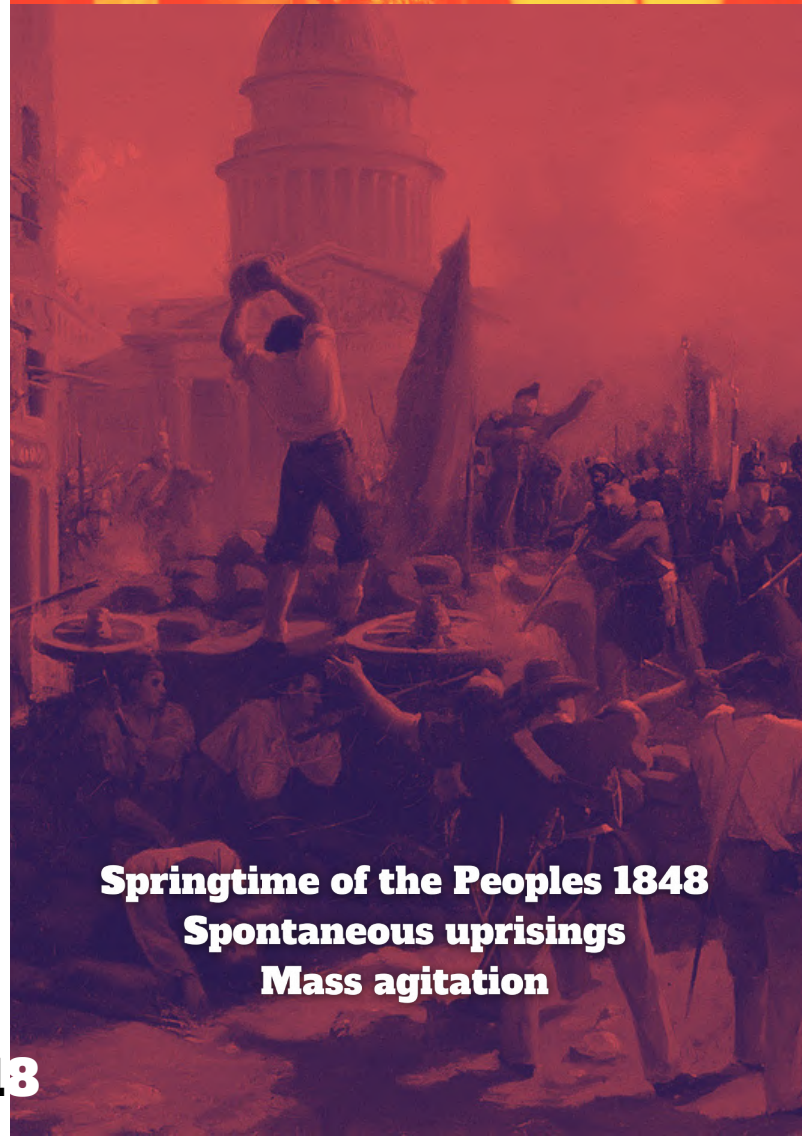
*Outrageous episodes* present short windows of opportunity, trigger events that facilitate **spontaneous uprisings**, increasing the instability of the regime, creating cultural impacts that shake the hegemony and radicalize the people or the class. Political shifts usually lead to outrageous episodes such as the attempt to steal the cannons from the Champ de Mars before the Paris Commune, or when new taxes were imposed on the American colonies after the war, or when the rise in the price of gas in France led to the Gillet Jaunes. Many outrageous episodes are fabricated and they are not a sufficient condition for a revolution.

The *illegitimacy of the regime* is often created by a succession of outrageous episodes or reiterated practices that destroy the social mandate of the elites - including violence and repression. As examples, we can look at most of the monarchies that were overthrown in Europe, Argentina's expulsion of the president Fernando de la Rúa or the protests against Aleksandr Lukashenko in Belarus. The illegitimacy of the regime is reinforced by grand strategies of mass agitation



**Gillet Jaunes**

**Spontaneous uprising**



**Springtime of the Peoples 1848**

**Spontaneous uprisings**

**Mass agitation**



and **spontaneous uprisings** and is constantly being created by all of those against the present equilibrium. It can break the cultural hegemony and it has cultural impact. It is not a sufficient but it is a necessary condition for a revolution.

A *frail or unstable regime* can be provoked by internal pressures (social, economic, political conflicts) or external pressures (wars, invasions). This is the case in which there is already illegitimacy of the regime, as the cultural hegemony is not overwhelming enough, so the imbalances are much more difficultly opposed. As examples, we can look at the case of Kerensky's Provisional Government in Russia in 1917, the social revolution in Spain against the elected government in 1936 or the Turkish revolution after the English troops entered Constantinople. **Mass agitation** is the key grand strategy in such a situation to advance towards a revolution.

*Cultural hegemony* is currently the biggest anchor of the capitalist system and its regimes. It provides a combination of alienation and conformity. It is exercised by the intellectual elites, that repeatedly show the dominant vision of the world, excluding alternative visions (by culture and repression). Cultural hegemony determines what is and is not acceptable for most people, being

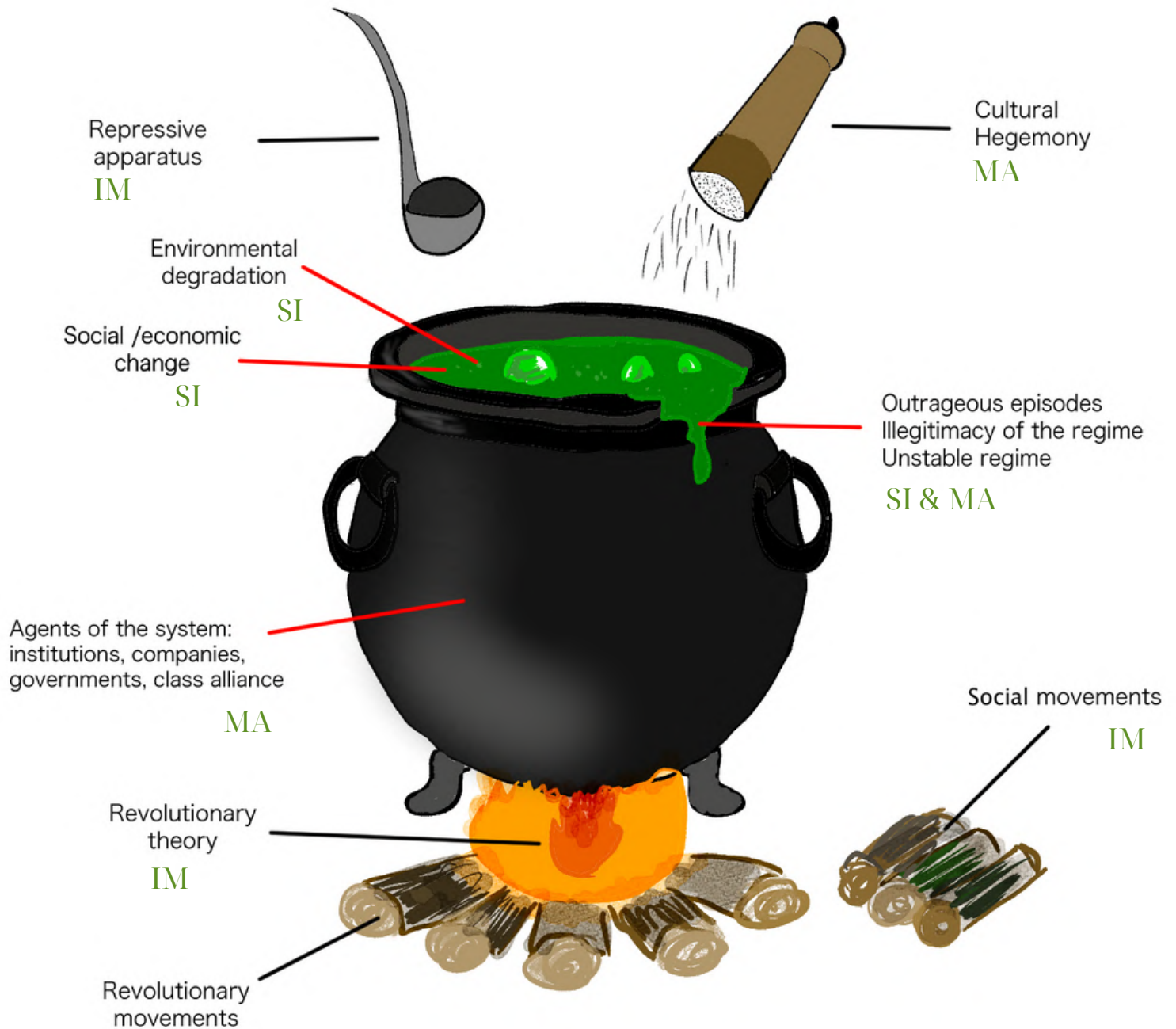


## Spanish social revolution Mass agitation





# a cauldron of revolution



## Grand Strategies

Spontaneous Insurrection (SI)

Mass Agitation (MA)

Ideological Mobilisation (IM)

guaranteed by institutions with many faces and agents: the press, social media, schools, and, in the case, the justice system. They have an overwhelming capacity of annulling imbalances and neutralising grand strategies for revolution and even for smaller changes. **Mass agitation** is the most effective way to counterbalance the cultural hegemony.

### The system strikes back

The first thing and the main way the system fights back always begins with the attempt of co-option of any social movement that displays capacity for power, no matter the grand strategy that it adopts or its final objective.

The movement coerces power by interrupting normality, and forces the system to act in order to reinstitute the equilibrium order. This interruption can be physical, political or cultural (or all combined). Many social movements try not only to measure up to institutional power, but also to reach to the whole of society.

The clashes with system power proceed, usually in the following sequence:

**Cultural clash:** in the media, social networks and cultural spaces, the system attacks the movement to reaffirm the hegemony;

**Political clash:** the government, the political forces of the regime, counter-revolutionary forces engage the movement, if the movement holds out against the cultural clash;

**Organizational clash:** the police, armed forces, the justice system try to achieve the annulment of the movement.

The repressive apparatus is usually the last resort, the ladle in the cauldron used to try and dissipate the contradictions by force (it also increases instability).

The system tries to block the action of the movement when it understands that the cost of suppressing it is smaller than the cost of conceding to demands. In the case of revolutionary movements, violent suppression is always the choice, leading to a necessary shift in the movement's strategies, towards ideological mobilisation and radicalisation.

### A clearer view

Understanding a broad schematic of revolution, the main grand strategies of social movements and how the system reacts is essential for us. The cauldron, can help provide a clearer view of what we are up against, what strategies we use to organise and what we and others need to do next - that will be the topic of an article in the next issue.



# An Ecofeminist System Change Not Climate Change

*Preamble to vital voices Susana Draper and Verónica Gago's on the international campaign for abortion rights by Julie Gorecki*

We need an ecofeminist system change not climate change. This means uprooting the major intersectionalist systems of racial, gender and class oppression, that together, compose capitalism.

Ecosocialism is founded in the understanding that global climate change is a symptom of the social, political and economic structure of global capitalism. A system founded in the historical labor exploitation of poor, working class and marginalized peoples. A system exported across borders through the brutality of colonialism and imperialism. A system that has unjustly divided the world into a Global North and a Global South.

Socialist Feminists have long shown how the deepest roots of this system are also inherently patriarchal and racial. How at its base, global capitalism was established in the gendered and racist subordination of women and the reproductive labor of their work and bodies.

These racial, gendered, and classed systems of oppressions are also interdependently entangled with extractivism—the operation of endlessly extracting finite natural resources to fuel the international neoliberal markets. Ecological feminists have explained how at the crux of these extractive industries sit Indigenous women, global southern women, women of color in the Global North,

and trans and gender non-conforming people. These are the people who are hit the “first and worst” by climate change as the transnational movement of Women and Feminists for Climate Justice has told us. Yet, while carrying the heaviest burdens of climate catastrophe, they are also spearheading the most innovative solutions towards a climate just world. They are the vanguards of the global climate justice movement. “Not victims but targets” as movement activists have put it.

There are direct links between the subordination of gender and the natural environment by what can be described as The Racial Capitalist Climate Patriarchy.

In 2022, this system has put us at an apex of multiple global crises. Global warming, global poverty, the global refugee crisis, and the global health crisis of COVID-19 (yes, it's still happening) are some examples of what we are up against.

From a feminist perspective, we have seen an escalation of attacks on reproductive rights and health worldwide, a cross-border crisis of femicide, and continuing worldwide subordination of all women's (cis and trans) bodies and power.

In the last several years there have been flagrant crackdowns on women's bodily autonomy through a draconian curtailing of reproductive rights transnationally. From the Polish constitutional court attempting to diminish already radically reduced abortion access in 2020, to the 2022 reversal of the almost 50 year old Roe vs. Wade ruling in the United States, the growing pattern of thrashing reproductive



justice rights shows that, across the planet, women are under direct attack. And just like with climate change, racialized, poor and gender marginalized women are disproportionately impacted.

Yet, every global crisis is met with a fierce global resistance. From the “Strajk Kobiet” in Poland to the groundbreaking “Green Wave” or “Green Tide” abortion rights movement across Latin America, the galvanization of the “Women’s Strike” has sparked an ambience of international feminist revolution. And there have been massive wins. In 2020, Green Tide activists celebrated the legalization of abortion in Argentina, while it was decriminalized in Mexico in 2021 and in Colombia in 2022. This Latin American movement has become emblematic of the feminist uprising and victories towards reproductive rights for all.

In this edition of Fight the Fire we are thrilled to republish the words of two central activists, thinkers and comrades on a cross-border dialogue between the Latin American reproductive justice movement and the fight for abortion rights in the United States at this crucial moment.

Originally published on Verso blog here is Susana Draper and Verónica Gago’s essential *Struggles as school: reproductive justice, a cross border reflection*. Vital voices and reading towards the preliminary groundwork needed towards the ecofeminist system change not climate change we aspire to.

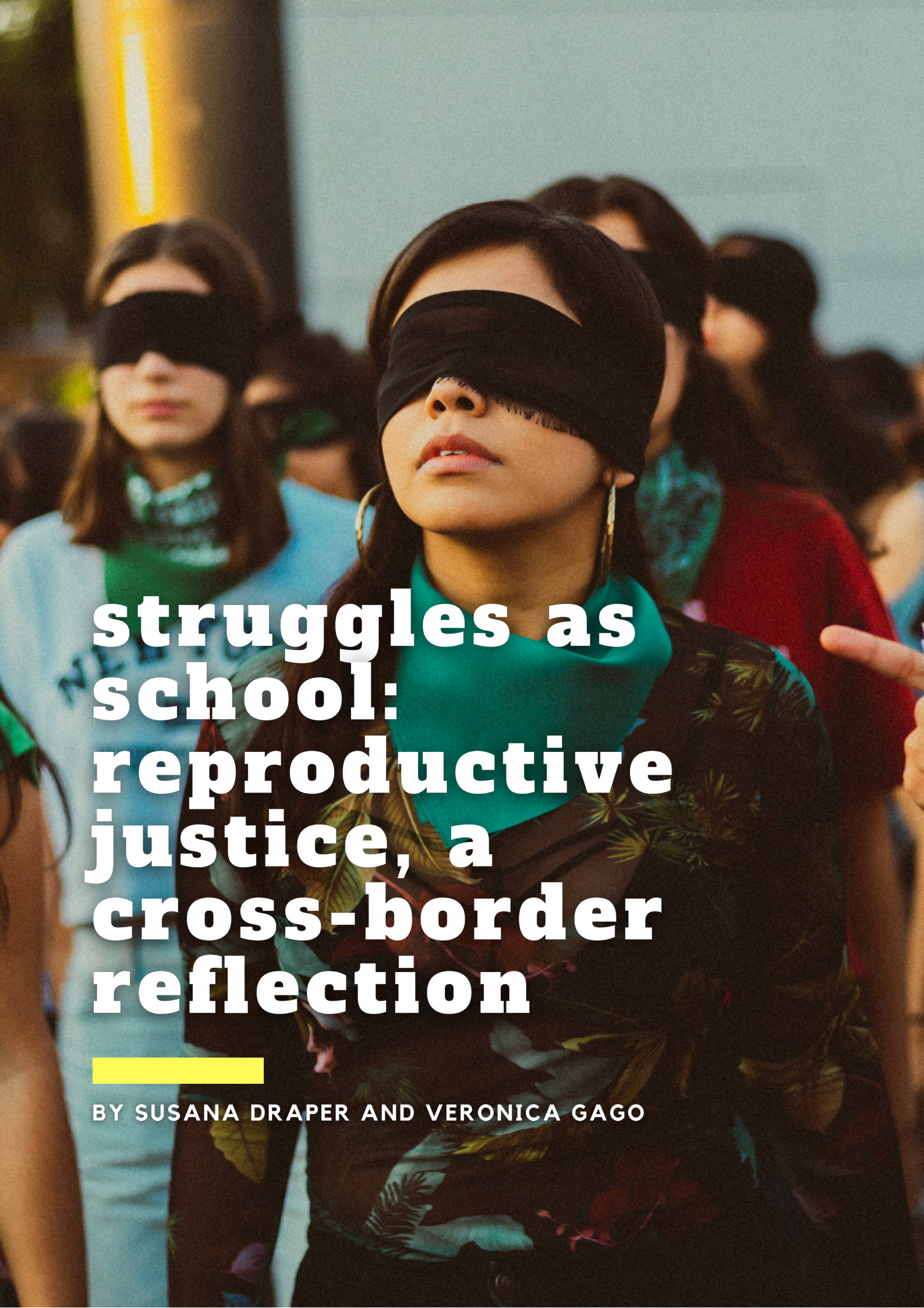


**Susana Draper** lives in New York and has been part of the Feminist research on violence, *Laboratoria. Espacio de investigación feminista*, *Ni Muertas Ni Presas*, and *Critical Resistance’s The Abolitionist* editorial collective. She teaches at Princeton and is author of *1968 Mexico* and *Afterlives of Confinement*.



**Verónica Gago** is a member of Argentina’s #NiUnaMenos movement (Not One More!), as both a theoretician and an activist. She is also a Professor of Social Sciences at the University of Buenos Aires, Professor at the Instituto de Altos Estudios, Universidad Nacional de San Martín, and Assistant Researcher at the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET).





# **struggles as school: reproductive justice, a cross-border reflection**

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BY SUSANA DRAPER AND VERONICA GAGO



"Legal abortion around the world!" That was the chant heard a few days ago outside the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires. The iconic green handkerchiefs, the symbol of support for reproductive rights, flooded the streets as green flares were lit and hand-written signs – "Abort capitalism! Abort the court!" – circulated throughout the Argentine capital, one of the beacons in today's global struggle for abortion rights.

The U.S. Supreme Court's decision to criminalize abortion – the same week that it upheld the right to bear arms in public – launched a cross-border dialogue over how the feminist movements of Latin America, riding high on a wave of victories, can come to the aid of other struggles amid a global onslaught of patriarchal, conservative and neoliberal reaction.

Back in the United States, the recent July 4 festivities were disrupted by protests against the criminalization of abortion. #BlackLivesMatter protests also spoiled the Independence Day celebrations in Akron, Ohio, after news about the murder of Jayland Walker was made public: a 25-year-old Black man who on June 27th last year ran a red light and was shot sixty times by eight police officers who "thought" he was carrying a gun. Later that day, following the Highland Park shooting that left six people dead and around twenty-four wounded, criticism of the Court's decision to

uphold the right to carry firearms was back front and center in the national media.

Feminist demonstrators in the United States made clear that this July 4th, they were not in a celebratory mood: "The 4th of July has been cancelled due to the lack of Independence. Best, women," read one sign. Another called on demonstrators to drown out the red, white and blue of the flag with green, the symbolic color of the international campaign for abortion rights. Everywhere, the emphasis was on street mobilizations: #TakeTheStreet #StayInTheStreet.

Among the slogans making the rounds in recent marches, the call of black feminists' that there is to be "No reproductive justice without an end to police violence" best captures the mood, one that cuts across national borders. Just as incidents of gun violence followed on the heels of the Supreme Court's decisions, it has become clear that legislation has immediate repercussions in the streets.

Notable in recent U.S. demonstrations is the visible legacy of Latin America's feminist movements. Increasingly ubiquitous in the U.S. has been the green scarves, a symbol born on the streets of Latin America, representing a desire to build coordinated actions and organizational strength at an international level.



All of which begs the question: how can a cross-border feminist movement help us to sharpen our collective analysis? and how can it help us, feminists in the U.S. and globally, to build strategies to reverse the Supreme Court's decision? How do we confront this global association – patriarchal, if ever it was – between the further deregulation of firearms, violence and the criminalization of abortion, when they point directly to the persecution of women and racialized people? And what are the ricochet effects of this advancement of the U.S. rightwing agenda in other regions?

Just a few weeks ago in Brazil, the website “Portal Catarinas” reported that a judge in the state of Santa Catarina not only tried to convince an 11-year-old rape victim to not have an abortion, she went as far as to forcibly place her in a “shelter” for minors in order to prevent her from receiving one. Public indignation rapidly spread, soon going viral and, despite President Bolsonaro calling the procedure “inadmissible”, the girl did eventually receive an abortion in accordance with Brazilian law.

Yet, the episode was later invoked by rightwing figures in public administrative hearings, where women were branded as “liars and murderers” who “gave birth while dancing baile funk”. Since the incident in late June, anti-abortion propaganda has only grown stronger in Brazil – no doubt encouraged by the events in the U.S.

The global scale of this rightwing counter-offensive is a challenge to deepen the internationalist dimensions of our organizing efforts. But what type of internationalism? Victories for abortion rights in Colombia, Argentina, Mexico, and, most recently, in Chile’s constitutional reform project, are more than just the achievement of women to exercise rights over their own bodies: they are a binding force, bringing together struggles in sometimes far-flung parts of the world.







Particularly where the feminist movement is concerned, recent years have seen something of an “epistemic inversion”: from southern geographies, there have emerged new kinds of organizational knowledge best displayed in the wave of victories for reproductive rights and in the growing mass appeal of feminism.

Much of which has been in evidence in the international women’s strikes, which began in Argentina but have since spread across the world. These mobilizations have included a diverse group of bodies, including trade unions, popular leaders, social movements, migrant collectives, and

more. Many more feminist struggles have also taken shape amid Latin America’s recent wave of social uprisings (not least in Chile, Colombia and Ecuador).

And Latin America’s feminist movement is just as noteworthy for its versatility as it is its combativeness. From the street to the legislature, from trade unions to the electoral arena, even the judiciary, feminism is disputing power in every corner of society and government. It is in such an expansive capacity of the feminist movement that we must look for explanations as to why a full-on assault on both rights and public resources has begun with women’s reproductive rights.



As Silvia Federici has said, about the current situation in the United States: "The war against women is at the nerve center of our current neoliberal moment. Whoever controls the process of reproduction, controls the forms of exploitation". In this context, her groundbreaking research on early modern witch hunts has gained a new salience. What once seemed like permanent progressive victories are being overturned across the globe. And in each, new technology, like fertility, ovulation and menstrual cycle apps, is being utilized to enact a culture of coercion, control and suspicion. Texas's anti-abortion legislation exposed a system of surveillance where it is not only abortion seekers that are persecuted but also a whole network of "accomplices".

Faced with growing precarity, popular feminism both in the Global South, and more broadly, has put social reproduction at the center of the political agenda. When we speak of "reproductive justice" rather than "reproductive rights", we are shifting the way we think about reproduction itself, connecting it with work (paid and unpaid), with migration, with precarity and myriad other forms of systemic violence. As Loretta Ross, one of the historical founders of SisterSong, explains, speaking of reproductive justice opens a new framework of analysis in which the

right to autonomy includes not only the right to have or not to have children, but also to be able to be a mother within sustainable and healthy communities.

Speaking of the struggle for abortion rights as reproductive framing allows us to move away from the liberal framing of abortion as an individual "choice" and an isolated right with no relation to other rights struggles. This has long been the position of different currents of black feminism, where the understanding of "reproduction" has long tended to be broader and more interconnected than the liberal understanding of individual rights.

Even in our current political climate, as the conservative right takes aim at the bodies of women, lesbians, trans and non-binary people, we believe that there are growing connections across far-flung territories. And these connections point to a growing internationalism present in everyday struggles. It is our hope that, by filling the streets of the world with green, and expressing a common feminist struggle, we can rise above our particular locales and sustain our movements in a web of international solidarity.

The white scarf of Argentina's Mothers of Plaza de Mayo was itself a worldwide symbol of the struggle

against state terrorism under a military-civilian-business-clerical dictatorship (1976-1983), a system in which the role of the CIA was fundamental. This simple garment, originally made from a cloth diaper, turned them into a global icon of resistance – not unlike the green handkerchief today.

As feminism has grown to become a mass movement, the Mothers and Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo have become a key source of inspiration. Through them, the feminist movement traces a genealogy of affiliations, affect and radicalism, and a tenacity to demand memory, truth and justice. In 2018, Argentina's National Campaign for the Right to Abortion saw the green handkerchief achieve a similar symbolic power.

Increasingly in Argentina, the connection between the two colors has taken on its own meaning, as the green handkerchief signifies not only the right to abortion but the idea that "motherhood will be desired or it will not be".

In the United States, the linking of white and green handkerchiefs is possible wherever mothers have mobilized against the murder of their children by police violence. Connecting reproductive justice with the struggle against police brutality shows how such violence, as Monica

Raye Simpson says, "destroys entire families and steals the children of Black families."

Simultaneous demonstrations against the criminalization of abortion and against Walker's murder by Akron police made this connection explicit. Within the framework of the reproductive justice struggle, it becomes all too clear that surveillance, criminalization and precarization of the lives of poor and racialized women is a direct attack on mothers and women in their ability to pursue a dignified life within healthy communities.

By linking the struggle abortion rights with other collective struggles, not least with over class, as has happened in Latin America, it becomes clear that economics severely constrains the possibility of motherhood for the most impoverished women.

"Feticide" laws prosecuted in U.S. conservative states amount to a systematic siege on the lives of thousands of women who, by simply miscarrying, could be sentenced to decades in prison. The pamphlet "The Criminalization of Pregnancy: A War on Reproduction" by Feminist Research on Violence, details an intensified legal campaign focused on the control and criminalization of the lives of millions of racialized women impoverished by neoliberalism.



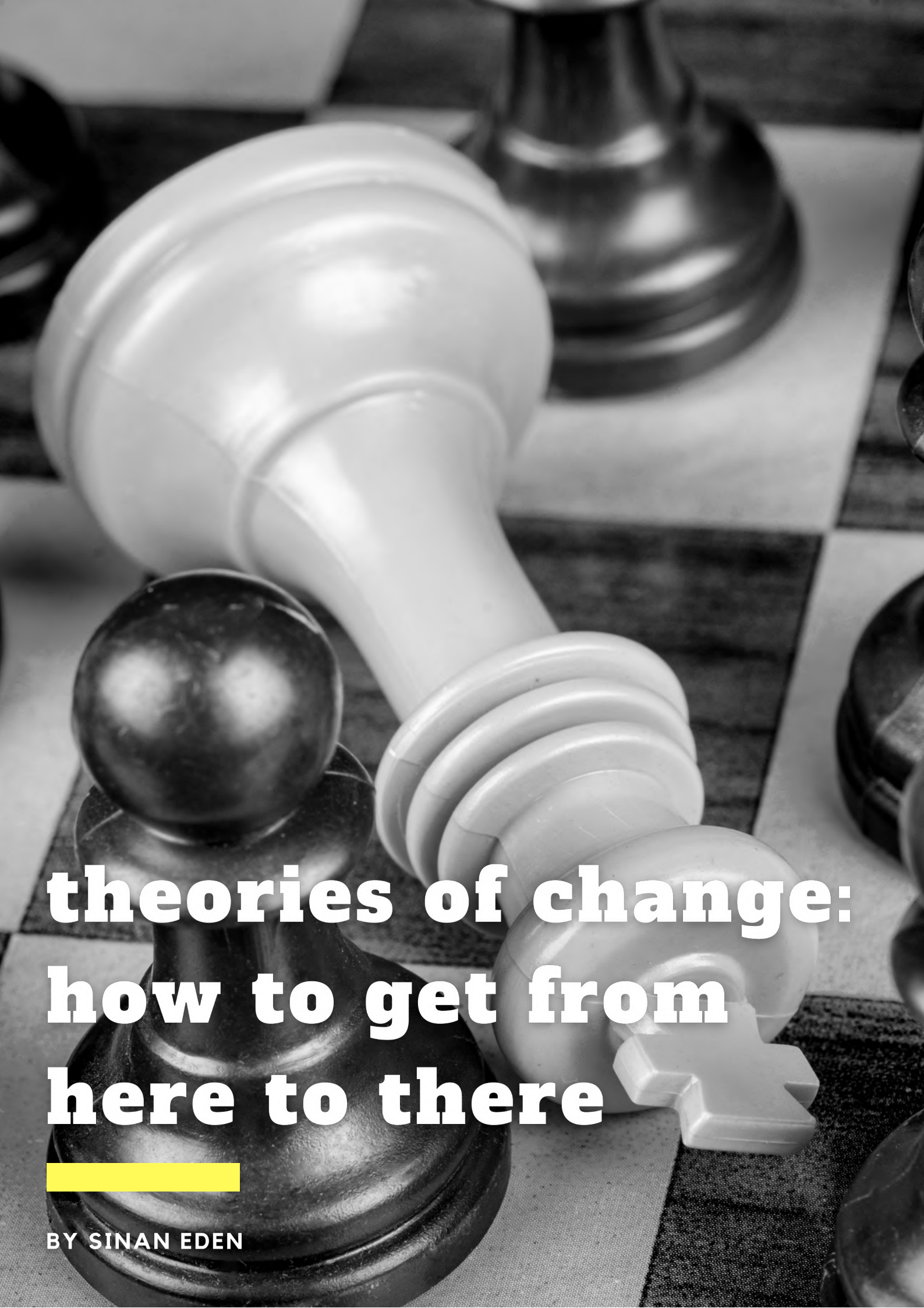
It is no coincidence that, among the protest actions scheduled for July 4, activists staged a demonstration outside immigration offices in New York, saying, "Reproductive Justice means Immigrant Rights." Speaking of reproductive justice and immigrant rights again puts the question of reproduction front and center: what kind of material conditions of reproduction make possible a system based not on the dispossession of territories and the denial of housing, food, shelter, medical care, etc.? How does the criminalization of abortion relate to the long history of forced sterilization of Black women and women of color in jails?

These connections need to be reinforced through the political practice of alliance building. Often, however, they are shunned by an NGO activism that focuses on fundraising galas, losing the link to the grassroots.

As Judith Butler has recently written, "If the right-wing brings us together as a target more effectively than we ourselves are brought together as a movement, then we are lost". We could also put it this way: if the patriarchal, conservative and neoliberal counter-offensive lumps us into one common "enemy" and "threat", we can claim that mantle as a subversion of a exploitative, racist and patriarchal order.

The movements of Latin American have shown that we have a capacity to articulate among diverse groups and sustain different levels of action simultaneously, all while recognizing that mobilization in the street and the grassroots work of organising are key to altering the balance of forces. Now is the time for a movement to take shape through concrete and transversal alliances.





# **theories of change: how to get from here to there**

BY SINAN EDEN



§1. There is a slogan: system change not climate change. It's a famous slogan... frequently used. Most of the time, people who use it don't pay attention to its meaning. It seems to me that many people use it as shortcut to "capitalism causes climate collapse" (descriptive) and not as "we will change the system in order to avoid climate collapse" (propositional). I'll follow the latter interpretation.

§2. So if we want to change the system, then we need a theory of how change happens in society. On that theory, we would build our transformative strategy.

If we are serious about system change, as in if we are serious that we claim to be the people who will change the system, then we need to discuss theories of change and transformative strategies explicitly.

History is filled with theories of change that worked pretty well, which makes the discussion a lot harder: our background, our preferences and our ideological predispositions jump in, and we read the past through them.

§3. When we think of changing the capitalist system *as an operational question*, the first essential example is the Leninist theory of change:

Working class organization + Vanguard organization

→ Economic struggle + Political struggle

→ Revolutionary conditions

→ Popular alliance

→ Seize power via revolution

→ Institute Socialism



The previous article "Theories of change: why we do what we do?" looked at the theories of change of the Jacobins, secret societies, utopian socialists, anarchists, communists and socialists. These historical examples from the 18th and 19th centuries are still being used, but the examples we will go through in this article are more widespread. The present article is self-contained in that you don't need the previous article to follow my argument.





Vladimir Lenin wrote about his strategy before, during and after the revolution. He identified the main function of the party to be mass agitation, guiding the political struggle and preparing the revolutionary conditions and preparing for the revolutionary conditions. It depended on a mix of soviets (popular organizations), trade unions (class organizations) and the communist party.

Lenin's theory of change had enormous impact on everything that followed: first of all, it was successful; second of all, it changed reality by introducing real socialism into life.

Hundreds if not thousands of political parties were formed following the party model idealized in Lenin's writings. None managed to replicate its success.





§4. The Bolshevik revolution started a brand new debate on what to do with limited power. Trotsky defended permanent revolution while Stalin adopted Bukharin's idea of socialism in one country. Trotsky's and Stalin's positions produced their corresponding -isms that disagreed on two aspects: what exactly happened in the October revolution, and what needs to happen now.

The Trotskyist theory of change was/is:

Mass organization

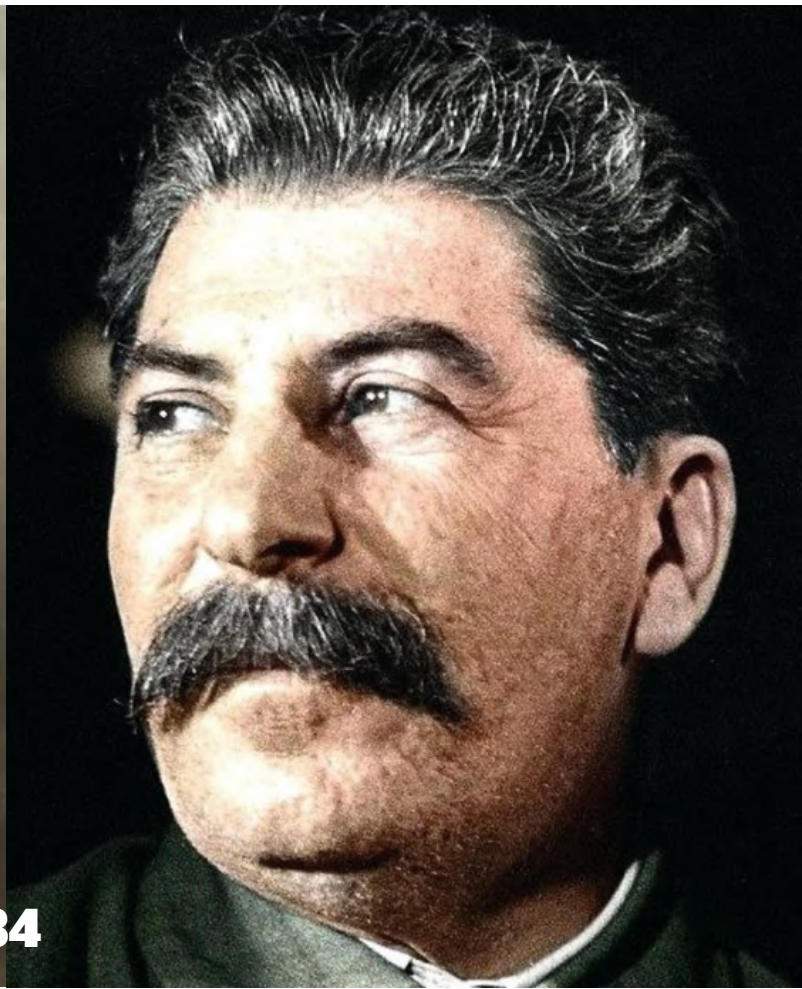
- Socialist revolution (led by the party)
- Intervention and agitation in other countries
- World revolution.

The Stalinist theory of change was/is:

Class party

- Socialist revolution (organized by the party)
- Institution of socialism
- International solidarity

The difference between “international movement” and “internationalism of national movements” marked the 20th century struggles. As revolutionary models, while being tested, the Stalinist model worked: the Soviet Union defeated the Nazis, emancipated Eastern Europe and supported other revolutions in Northern Africa, Palestine, Afghanistan, Korea, Cuba, Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. In a couple of decades half of the world had a socialist government of some kind.



§5. The anti-colonial struggles introduced their own perspectives.

The main problematic for Mao Zedong, leader of the Chinese revolution in 1949, was the historical dialectical process in the countries where capitalism did not develop naturally but was imposed by force. His understanding was that imperialism created a de-industrialization process and did not allow the urban industrial class to develop in the colonized countries. This negative integration of the Third World countries into the imperialist world order meant that in these countries the peasants would have a leadership role.

The **Maoist theory of change**, followed by so many organizations all across the world, was/is:

**Popular party organization**

→ Protracted People's War (mobile warfare + guerrilla warfare)

→ Seizure of popular power

→ Democratic revolution

→ Large cross-class alliance + Industrialization

→ Proletarianization of the society and of the party

→ Transition to socialism

Accordingly, the role of the communist party was not to be communist-as-such but rather lead the society to ripen the conditions for a communism to come. These organizations thus

relied on alliances with parts of the bourgeoisie that they considered progressive.

This theory of change worked, too (in fact, if you ask the Chinese Communist Party today, they would say they are still following it methodically).

§6. A variant of the Maoist theory of change was used by the guerrilla movements. Despite their ideological differences, the Việt Minh revolution (1945), the Cuban revolution (1953-1959), the Irish Republican Army (1919-1921) and Öcalan's Kurdish liberation party PKK (1978 onwards) all followed more or less the same theory of change:





Armed vanguard organization

→ Guerrilla breaks the “artificial equilibrium” (focism)

→ Mass mobilization

→ Mass organization

→ Revolution

Here, the causality is reversed. We would generally assume that mass mobilization would escalate into violence, while here violence is a precondition for mass movement. Organized violence against the oppressor is expected to negate the dehumanization of the colonized. By seeing the fragility of the regime, the people would wake up, build their agency and liberate themselves. (The textbook example of this theory of change is the Algerian revolution). This theory of change also worked. It is probably the only theory of change that worked in more than one country.

§7. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the decline of Third Worldism (in other words, the rise of neoliberalism) opened up new debates while also reducing the robustness of the new theories of change.

Discussions on class and on organization marked the last decades of the 20th century. The feminist movement insisted that the working class was much more than the industrial workers. The anti-colonial struggles insisted that indigenous movements didn't have to proletarianize



to be considered as historical agents. Much more attention was given to direct democracy and decentralized power.

Antonio Negri, John Holloway, Murray Bookchin and Silvia Federici all contributed to this exploration, while the Zapatista movement and the later stages of the Kurdish liberation movement experimented with autonomism and democratic confederalism.



Their theory of change is:

Armed vanguard organization of the class

- Seizing local power
- Self-management
- Mass organization
- More vanguard organizations in other places.

This theory of change is less tested than others, in the sense that their success is limited by design. The Zapatista movement and the Rojava revolution are shining examples of what is promised to be the showcases of an emancipated future for all.





§8. As capital globalized, it also created a more complex and more ambiguous reality. Urbanization accelerated throughout the world. The middle classes were integrated to the proletariat (or to the precariat, if you prefer). Financialization changed the nature of how markets operate. The ecological crisis became a pressing issue. Intersectionality was developed as a theoretical framework for oppressive systems.

Accompanying these discussions, the new social movements built their own theory of change:

Popular grassroots organizations

→ Movement ecosystem (mass organizations, vanguard organizations, thematic organizations, political organizations, etc.)

→ Trigger event (real or perceived, artificial or spontaneous, natural or social)

→ Mass mobilizations

→ Social and/or political change.

This is the dominant theory of change in which we all operate today. This theory of change worked in many parts of the world for a variety of issues. But it worked for what it aimed to achieve: social and/or political change. It is the only theory of change that we analyzed that does not aim at changing the socioeconomic system. In this sense, this theory of change is an offspring of the neoliberal worldview.





§9. So we reached a contradiction.

On one hand, we have a growing climate justice movement that gets more and more radical as the governments and corporations lead us to societal collapse. Even for the moderate flank of this movement, the need for system change is a pressing political reality.

On the other hand, this movement is strategizing under a framework that structurally blocks a system change perspective. The theory of change of even the most radical flank of the climate justice movement doesn't have a post-capitalistic society in its horizon. The result is reduced credibility: If we tell the public that something should happen and if we don't have any transformative strategy to get there, then the natural result is a mix of defeatism/submissiveness (for the public) and depression/burnout (for the activists).

§9.1 I open a parenthesis here to highlight the organizational materialism in this proposition. Firstly, climate justice organizations are concerned with "outreach". Organizers complain that people don't understand, that they don't care, etc.. So they try to find better ways of communication. Secondly, climate justice organizations are worried about "burnout". So they try to implement a regenerative culture and

focus on self-care and group-care. In both of these cases, they believe that the problems about growth and sustainable activism are caused by subjective conditions: they think there is something wrong in their practice and they should correct it. I think they are missing the point. The surrounding ideological framework is causing people (general public and the organizers themselves) to lose hope of the struggle. We cannot solve this by cosmetic operations like a better video or an organizational ritual to listen to our emotions. We should do better videos and we should listen to emotions. But that's not going to solve our credibility issue unless we address the contradiction between our political analysis and our theory of change. I close the parenthesis.





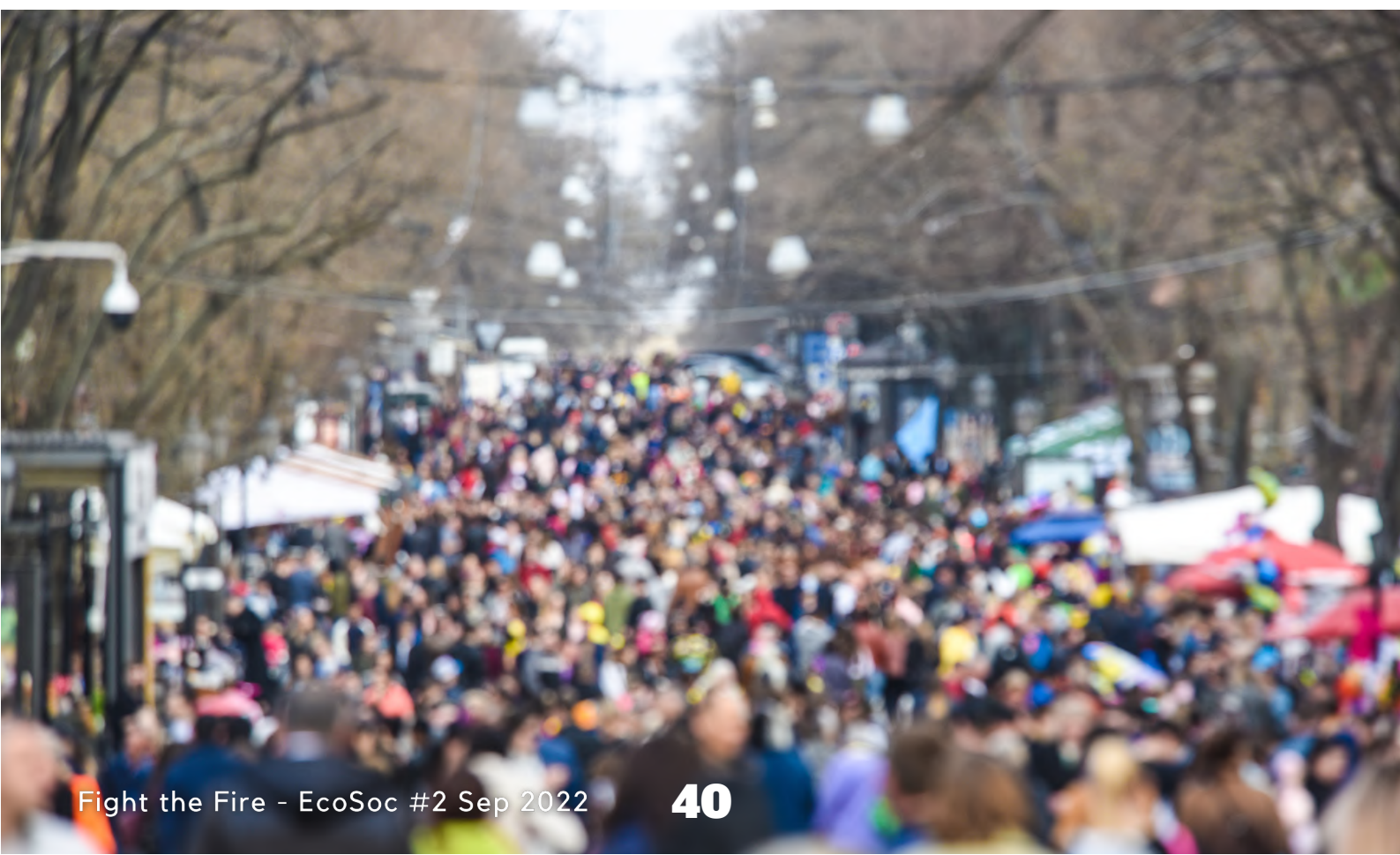
**§10.** A new theory of change (or perhaps new theories of change) must answer the burning organizational questions of today and cannot avoid the system change endgame.

**§10.1.** The ambiguous and uncertain state of globalized capital that wasn't accompanied by a globalized governance structure is paralyzing our vision. (Some groups focus on struggles within the border of the nation-state, while the reality is surpassing them via the feminist strikes and the global climate strikes). We need a clear understanding of what internationalism means for us in real-life terms. Like, what does internationalism mean to us on a Wednesday afternoon? What does it mean for a weekly meeting of the fundraising commission of our group? What does it mean for our strategy?

**§10.2.** As multinational corporations and financial institutions crossed borders that governments didn't, the distinction between social power, political power and economic power gets blurred. It is less and less clear where the Winter Palace is for us to take over.

**§10.3** Consequently, the party model that corresponds to this complex reality is unclear. What should a party look like today? What would its function be?

These are non-trivial questions. Living through the climate crisis is living in non-trivial times. We will either take up the task in front of us, or we will live in our own convoluted version of denial.







# **the latin american pendulum of the 21st century**

BY ANTONIO ZAMBRANO ALLENDE



The construction of democracy in Latin America has been deeply marked by the attempted formation of its republics, party systems and even its armed forces, under which its nations and popular classes have always remained trampled with little or no political representation.

This formation has been constructed or "guided" both by the local Creole aristocracies, daughters of the Iberian colonial heritage, and by the hegemonic American Monroe Doctrine, which has dominated regional geopolitics. The doctrine is summarized by the sadly famous phrase "America for the Americans", where the first America speaks of the continent and the second of the rulers of the United States, as well as the "backyard" of the northern power. In other words, it determined the face of its states in the world according to an initial subordination to the needs of the northern metropolis.

The 20th century, with numerous processes of insurgency and rebellion, with terrible dictatorships imposed and overthrown, transformed the face of the region into a space that at the end of the 1990s looked tired, poor and volatile. Although full of ideas from below.

The twenty-first century has taken advantage of the cracks of the crises and has learned to give a quite

different face to the region, although no less contradictory. First by bringing Hugo Chavez to power at the end of the last century (February 2, 1999) and by opening a wave of progressive governments born of popular discontent and, perhaps more importantly, of active listening to the progressive and anti-neoliberal popular movements.

Thus we had an Evo Morales in Bolivia, a Lula da Silva in Brazil, a Fernando Lugo in Paraguay, a Nestor Kirchner in Argentina, a Michelle Bachelet in Chile, a Rafael Correa in Ecuador, a Manuel Zelaya in Honduras and even the now controversial Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua, all of them generating a real earthquake in Latin American history and opening a century that showed it could contribute a little of its own to the future.



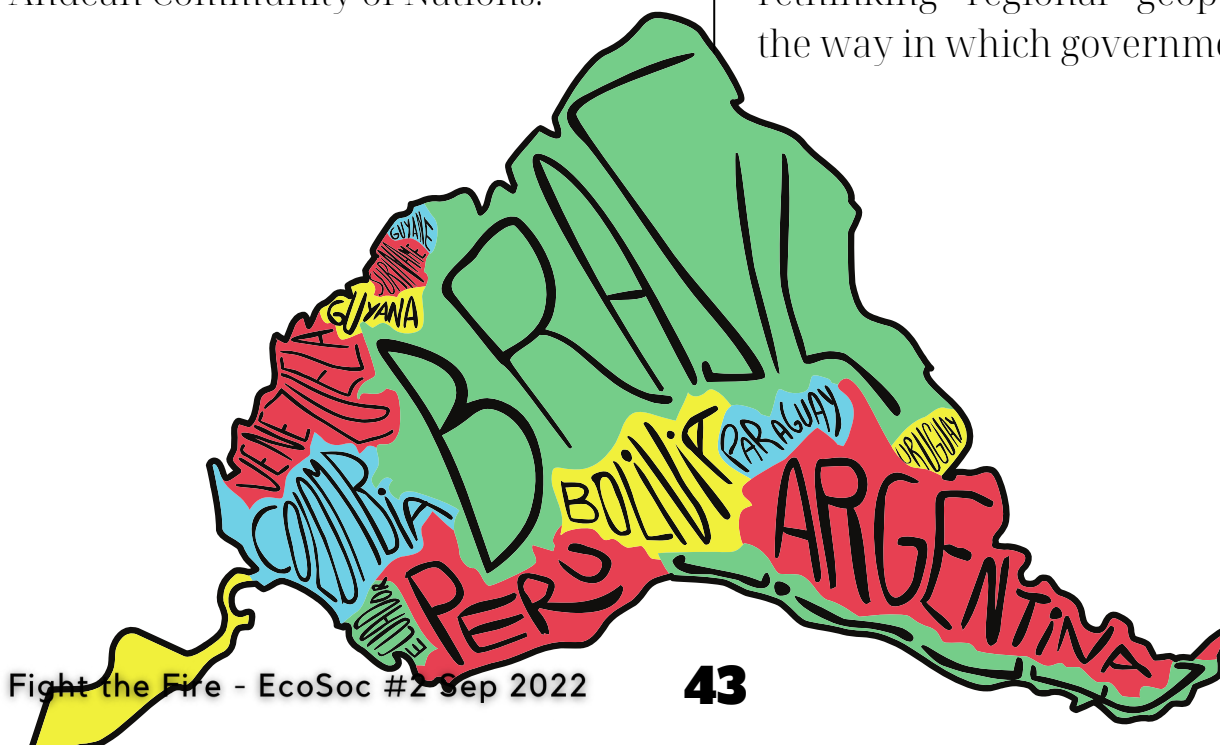
Deepening the region's weak democracies, solving deep poverty and improving the conditions in which Latin America is inserted in the global context were just a few of the challenges. The global context was perhaps the most complex, as it failed to achieve the regional debate and cohesion necessary to consolidate a common regional position vis-à-vis the global economic system.

The first Latin American Pink Wave or Progressive Wave proposed to put the brakes on neoliberal processes. This was done, however, without changing the primary export model for the economy. Instead, the Pink Wave changed the role of the State to improve people's lives, lifting millions of people out of poverty and misery, expanding rights and mobilizing popular spaces. The wave even formulated new constitutions that would open regional integration processes very different from those already existing, like Mercosur or the Andean Community of Nations.

The most ambitious regional formula that survived the period was the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. CELAC is the first 100% Latin American regional integration space, which encompasses the 33 free countries of the region and which in turn is based on a progressive logic and explicitly excludes the United States and Canada.

These processes involved intense and differentiated debates from below, and the contact and mobilization of academia, trade unions, unions, movements and organizations as a whole. But there was ferment in the street, neighborhoods, villages and nations within the stagnant republic. This was in a world convulsed by the "clash of civilizations" after September 11 and the "war on terror".

The legacy of this first decade and a half of the millennium does not escape controversies of all kinds. We should mention the role of Bolivarianism in rethinking regional geopolitics, and the way in which governments such as





Dilma Rousseff in Brazil, Fernando Lugo in Paraguay, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Manuel Zelaya in Honduras fell. Morales and Zelaya were victims to "soft coups" well orchestrated by a right wing more linked to the interests of Washington than to those of their nations. Then there was the transformation of the Nicaraguan process into an increasingly authoritarian government. And there was the unforeseen rise of the local ultra-right in different elections, also disputing part of the new popular sentiment and of the new middle classes in the region.

## The second wave

Well into the 2nd decade of this century, we are experiencing two macro- political phenomena on both sides of the spectrum. On the one hand, there is the unquestionable opening of a new progressive period marked by different governments in Honduras, Mexico, Colombia and Chile. And it is possible that Brazil will be the next in just a few weeks.

On the other hand, there is the fermentation of a far right with the power to mobilize the masses and radicalization of ideological, media and real violence. This appeals to hate speeches, racism, machismo, xenophobia and even terrorism or assassination.



It has had a most palpable expression in the assassination attempt against the Vice President and former President of Argentina Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner in early September. This was the first real and registered attack, although have already been political threats of this type against many others such as Evo Morales, Pedro Castillo, Francia Marquez or Gustavo Petro.



This opens multiple debates and questions for the immediate future. On the one hand, how to give a different character to the new Latin American progressive wave that overcomes the contradictions that ended it previously? How are the new governments reconnecting with the mass movement and the popular feeling of the majorities? What are the new urgent issues? And where to strengthen the regional bloc in the face of global geopolitical changes?

These and other questions must be weighed as we try to read the path of change of urban and rural movements in our countries, understanding that they have been growing towards platforms and programs much more sensitive to global debates, which put in context their struggles with the struggles in other territories, both for their rights and for the defense of life and along the way, valuing and valuing nature. In other words, it is necessary to identify how our peoples have changed "between waves".





In the case of Colombia, Chile and I would even dare to say Brazil, with the proximity of the PSOL to Lula's candidacy, the programs no longer stop only at the historical demands of the working classes for social justice. Now they penetrate into the rights of the peoples and slightly touch new debates in the face of the climate and environmental crisis, positioning the rights of nature as a concrete legal possibility.

### The planet and the pendulum

According to the estimation of the forces of nature that are being forced to provoke the global phenomenon of climate change, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) points out that we only have this decade to generate great changes in the way we interact with the Earth. However, the calculations to subdue the global political forces to achieve the necessary goals are not estimated by any scientist or political scientist, so for these rational or non-rational changes to be driven by human civilization is even more unpredictable than the transformations and shortages that we will experience during this century if we do not do something about it.

In this sense, in the evolution of global geopolitics, the role of Latin American progressivism in its second wave could contribute much more than expected

to redirect policies and agreements. The first test of fire is already being given, Colombia is proposing to promote a process of energy transition for which it intends to open an internal regional discussion that is projected to the world. This will soon be on display at international meetings, both at the United Nations General Assembly and at the Conference of the Parties - COP27 to be held in November in Egypt, as well as at the meetings of CELAC and its ministers in the coming months. It is too early to identify the evolution of progressive governments, but new collective voices in the world from this side of the Global South are anticipated.

### Land of opportunities

It must be said that during the 20th century Latin America moved permanently between weak democracies and dictatorships, making the region a bloodbath of blood, misery and frustrations. However, the 21st century threatens with new formulas among which there are possibilities of managing popular governments, but with even greater threats from the extreme right that promote deep setbacks with attacks not only on the lives of the people but also with the destruction of their territories and the destruction of everything in them. Jair Bolsonaro is perhaps one of the most palpable proofs of this and must remain in our memory to judge him and fight his followers.

The tension will be permanent and it is possible that the contradictions will test the mettle of the government coalitions. This has already happened with the hard setback of the overwhelming vote for the rejection of the progressive constitution in Chile, a blow that modifies and delegitimizes the struggle that led Boric himself to the presidency. However, that does not remove Boric from power, but puts him in the conduction of a new process for a new constitutional proposal. Chile is a different country after September 4. Internal questions must be asked about the serious mistakes in the conduction of the process and the weaknesses to represent the feelings of the people. But at the same time we have to weigh the intense activity of the right wing that seeks not only to overthrow the constituent process, but to strengthen itself to return later to the control of power. The 62% of the rejection has already generated the change of three ministers and it is still difficult to identify what other modifications can bring the continuity of the process.

In spite of this, we cannot deny that time is showing that, as in Colombia, the peace process was able to move forward despite the boycott and the bad electoral results. And that it is also possible for the left to recover space in progressive governments. The reality and the political context on which the constituent process is sitting in Chile





can still give a second chance to the popular government to establish a mass process that definitively buries the Pinochetist constitution.

Breaking the pendulum and deepening the democratic processes, building multiple ways of facing new party systems, of representations and national processes, could be a central element to be raised in the debates that are beginning to take shape in this new progressive and democratizing wave in the so-called Patria Grande to make it, as Martí would say, even more "Nuestra America" (Our America).



The background of the entire page is a vibrant red color. Overlaid on this red background are numerous white, expressive brushstrokes that create a sense of movement and texture. These strokes are most prominent on the right side and bottom, where they appear as if they were painted with a thick brush, creating a dynamic and somewhat abstract composition.

# **the ecosocialist project: climate changes everything**

A solid, bright yellow horizontal bar is positioned below the title, spanning approximately one-third of the width of the page.

**BY JONATHAN NEALE**



We need to make some serious changes in the ecosocialist project.

It's good that we have the idea of ecosocialism. Because the words stand for a basic idea that ecology and socialism go together. Linked, they are the hope of the world.

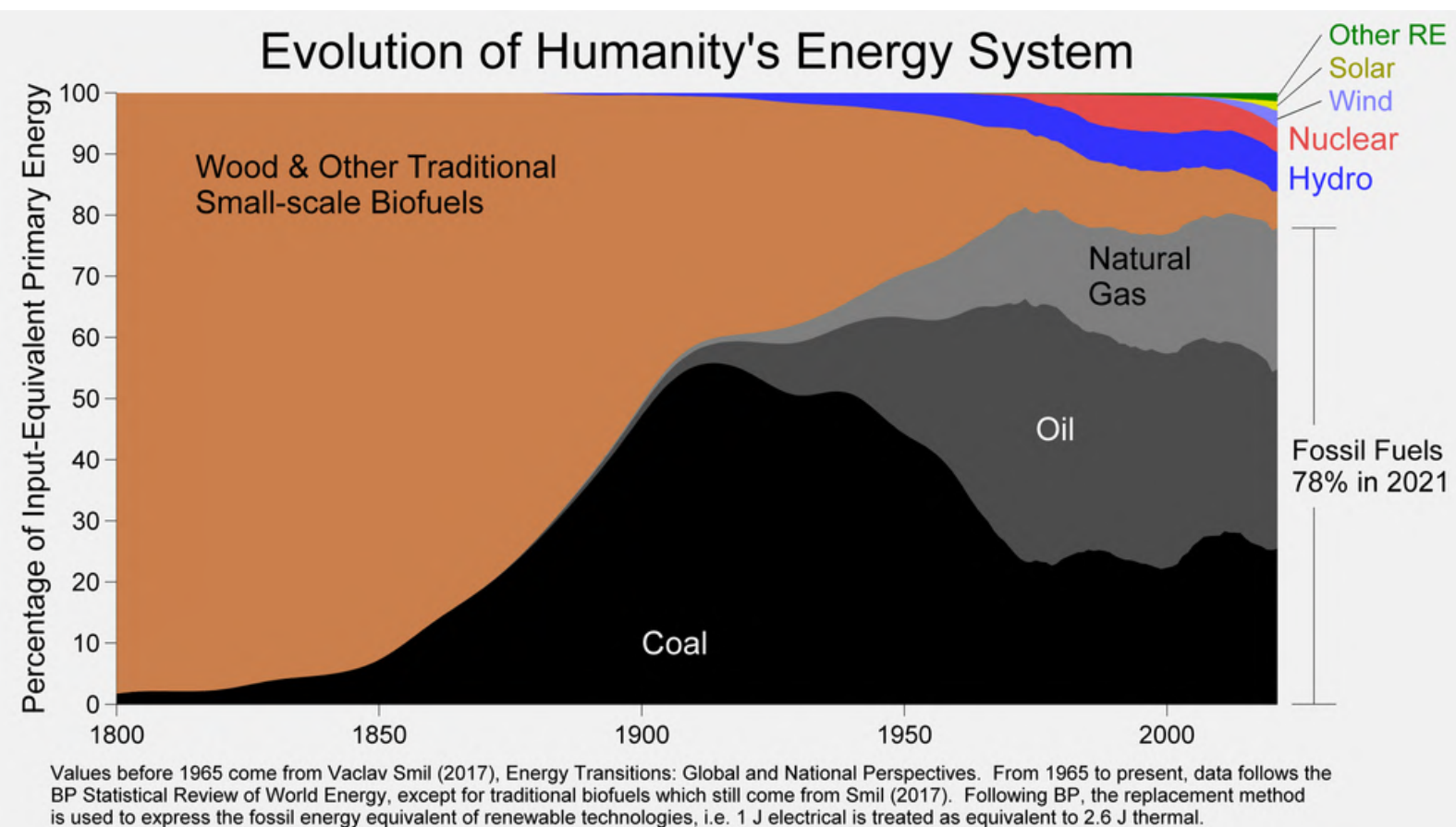
But we have to make some changes in the way that most of the left have been using the idea of ecosocialism. We need to redefine the ecosocialist project, because now climate changes everything.

We – humanity, not the left – have to stop climate change before we hit horrific consequences. That means a lot of things,

but mostly it means we have to replace all use of oil, coal and natural gas with renewable energy instead. So everything runs on electricity, and all of that electricity is produced with renewable energy.

There are some other things we need to do too. But stopping burning fossil fuels will make at least 70% of the difference. It looks like that is not going to happen in the kind of society we have now. So in the next generation we are going to have to build a new kind of society. That's the only definition of the ecosocialist project that makes any sense now.

Now, the eco in ecosocialism has to mean climate. Or we are all lost.



## No more niche ecosocialism

Many socialist or Marxist parties have used the idea of ecosocialism as a sort of niche part of party business.

The ecosocialist part of the party is given the task of arguing with the greens and the anarchists. In practice, this means producing propaganda saying nuclear power is not the answer, capitalism is the cause of the environmental crisis, and we are not in favour of growth.

In other words, tokenism and abstract argument. But not trying to build a mass movement to save the world here and now.

There are parties, socialist or Marxist, that do better than this. Many do not. I don't want to point fingers, but you know who you are. And I understand. I started out like that. In a lot of ways the climate crisis has snuck up on the left, and we are changing. We need to change more, and faster.

## Not the general environmental crisis

For some time many environmentalists have been saying that there is a general environmental crisis and we have to solve all of it. Some even say that there is no point in halting climate change if we do not solve all the other crises.

This is not true. From the point of view of humanity, the threat of climate change dwarfs the other environmental threats. To deny this is a form of climate denial for environmentalists. You can only say it if you have not taken on board what climate change will mean.

## Halting climate change means stopping greenhouse gas emissions

The only way we can halt climate change is to bring greenhouse gas emissions to a halt.

That means we stop almost all use of fossil fuels. It means destroying no new forests and covering the world with new forests. It means cutting emissions from agriculture, about 14% of the total, in half. It means cutting emissions from sewage and landfill by about half, and banning the use of CFC gases entirely.

I have written a book, *Fight the Fire*, showing in relentless detail how all this can be done. Many other studies confirm the same thing. It is not perfect, not 100% cuts, not net-zero, which is a fantasy, but it is good enough.

That is what ecosocialists have to fight for, because that is what all humanity needs.





We cannot do stop emissions without replacing all fossil fuel with electricity made from renewable sources.

That is a real world task. The only way that will happen is if mass movements put people into power who will hire the many millions of workers we need to rewire the world, and do all the other work that is needed to stop greenhouse gas emissions.

That is the eco part of ecosocialism now.

### Stop worrying about Marx

A ~~lot of the~~ intellectual work of the ecosocialist movement has been devoted to arguing that Marx understood a great deal about the environment. Much of this work is interesting to people interested in Marx and the development of his thought. It is useful in defending Marx against the charge that he did not understand the limits to society posed by nature. But that work is not useful in building a movement to save the world.

I will put this very strongly. I don't care what Marx said about the environment. This does not mean I don't care what Marx said. One of the two most important things he ever said was in the Communist Manifesto: "The history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles."

We won't be able to stop climate change

ecological struggle



without the mother of all class struggles. What Marx had to say about class struggle was his life's work, and is very useful in understanding the task ahead of us.

The other really important thing he said was, "Philosophers have only interpreted the world. The point is to change it."

That means ecosocialist organizing – and writing – about the environment should now focus how to stop climate change. Not just in theory, but where we are now.

It's no good proving that capitalism causes climate change.

The important question is not about the origins of the problem. Instead, start with the question of who stands in the way of climate action, why, and how do they do it.

Start asking those questions and you get into the mechanism of how capitalism works in these situations, and which capitalists do what.

## Growth

We also have to change how we think about growth, degrowth and ecosocialism.

Let's go back twenty years, to 2002, when Joel Kovel published *The Enemy of Nature*, and Kovel and Michael Lowy published a shorter *Ecosocialist International Manifesto*.

Kovel was a longstanding Marxist and anti-racist intellectual, one of the generation of 1968. By the end of the century, with the fall of the Soviet Union and peak neoliberalism in the United States, Kovel felt the dreams of his youth turning into ashes.

But then Kovel began reading about the environmental crisis, and about climate change. As he read, one strand of ecological thought began to seize his imagination. This strand said that the environment for living things on Earth could not tolerate endless growth. And in particular, stopping climate change necessitates a reversal of economic growth.

But Joel understood Marxist economics. He knew that competition and growth are the lifeblood of capitalism. Reversing the

logic of growth is incompatible with capitalism. That's just basic to the Marxist understanding of capitalism. It's actually basic to the understandings of most right-wing economists too.

The incompatibility of capitalism and degrowth is not a long-term matter. It kicks in almost immediately.

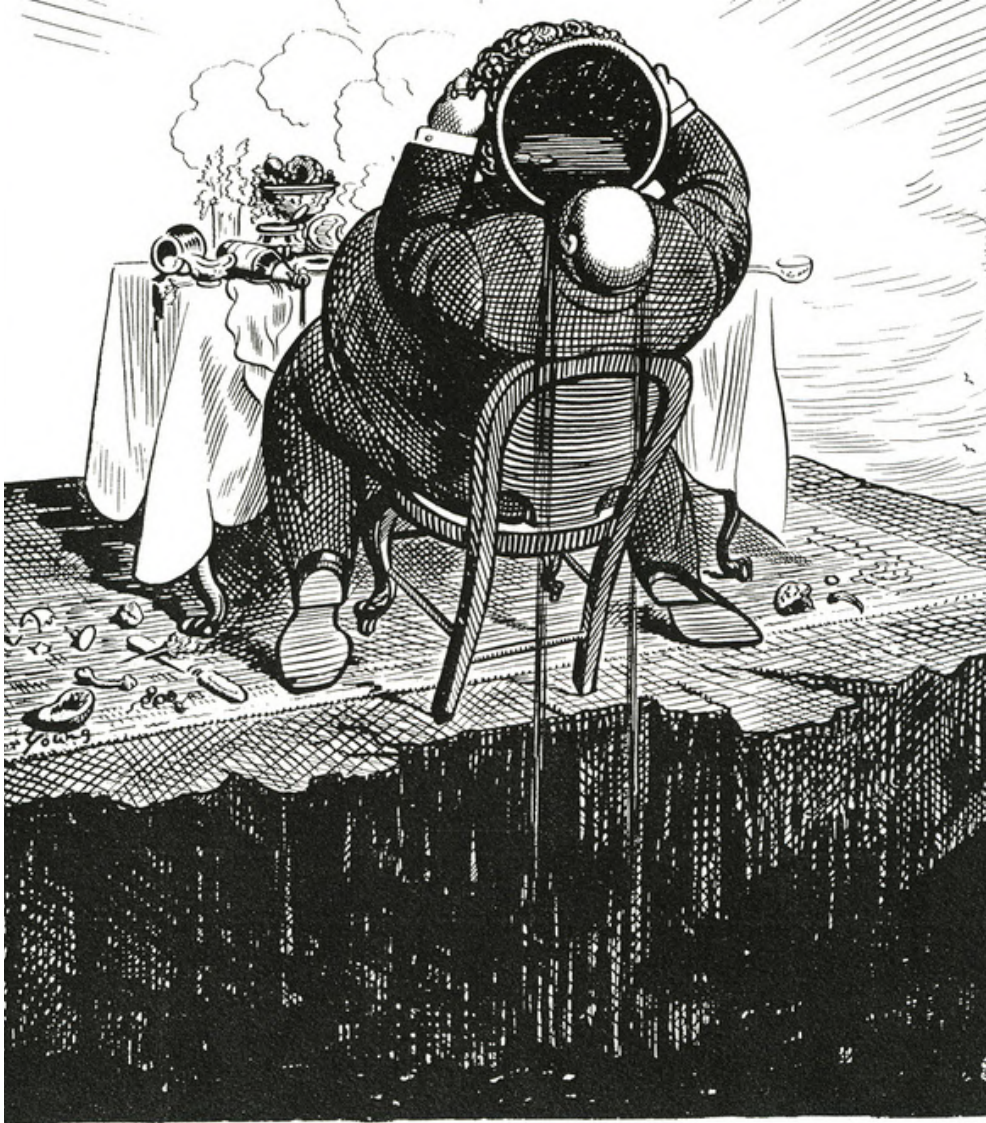
If a government decided to limit growth to a steady state, then in fact the country will go into recession, and stay there forever. Employment and incomes will fall – which is the point of degrowth. But so will investment. That national economy will be unable to compete with other national economies on the world market. Quite rapidly, the stock market and the job market will go into free fall.

On the surface it looks like most degrowth environmentalists don't know this. But on some level they sense it. That is why there are no political parties or candidates anywhere, in any country, campaigning for government to cut total national income and employment by 3% next year, or 4%, or 5%.

But Joel Kovel understood the issue very clearly. If the ecologists were right, and an end to growth was necessary, then there had to be a socialist revolution to end capitalism before we could stop growth.

So he proposed an ecosocialist movement to stop growth and stop environmental crisis. The idea appealed to many Marxists.





## CAPITALISM

The way it caught on reminds me of the way Marxists talked about the falling rate of profit more than a century ago.

Way back then, many Marxists used to say that there was a law of the falling rate of profit. And that law meant that capitalism was bound to enter terminal crisis and be replaced by socialism.

So the future was on our side. Capitalism would eventually collapse. Socialists just had to wait and clean up the morning after. The argument about growth and capitalism is like that. It says we are bound to win, and you don't need to fight now.

But the problem with Kovel's argument about growth is the same as the problem with the people who were waiting for the collapse of capitalism. It tells people nothing about what to do, or worse, it tells people not to do anything.

This is important. There are no detailed plans for stopping growth among degrowthers.

By contrast, there is now a very large literature on exactly what an almost 100% cut in greenhouse gases would look like. I have been associated with some of these studies, but there are thousands of people now working on them, and hundreds of

studies.

These studies are really detailed, for dozens of countries. They say which industries will have to be closed down, where, in how many years. They say how many new jobs will have to be created how quickly and where, doing what. They estimate how much cuts in greenhouse gases will result from their different proposals.

Of course the different experts disagree about their numbers. But the numbers are what they are arguing about. They are arguing about what can be done, and what has to be done.

There is a very large literature on degrowth. None of it deals with such numbers. There is no argument over which industries should be closed. Golf courses? Yachts? All sailing? Car manufacture? Jewelry? Fast fashion? More than one set of clothes per person per year? Trainers? Boots? Psychiatric medications? Graduate school? Personal laptops? Streaming videos? Table service? Fast food? Slow food? Bottled water? Social workers? All plastics? Weapons?

And where? How do we achieve 30% cuts in Britain each year for ten years. Which jobs go? Where? How do we do it in China, where per person emissions are higher than in Britain. What about South Africa, or Brazil, or Russia. No cuts in employment. Stand still?

There is no detailed debate about these numbers anywhere in the literature, not even the beginnings of an agreement on what has to be cut, much less a more general and international plan. This is because everyone involved actually knows that no political party bigger than a tiny sect is going to fight for such detailed proposals. Because everyone actually knows that no one can win an election on such a basis.

And no one can create a revolution on such a basis either.

No one can win an election in Britain. Or Canada. Or Brazil. Bolivia. Nigeria, France, Poland, India, Bangladesh. Or anywhere. No majority will vote for this.

That's why plans for degrowth remain abstract, and no one fights to make them happen in the real world.

And also, degrowth will not halt climate change. If you reduce the gross product of the world by 50% in the next twenty years, and you don't stop burning fossil fuels, we are all utterly lost. If the gross product of the world grows by 50% in the next twenty years and we stop all burning of fossil fuels, we will have stopped climate change.

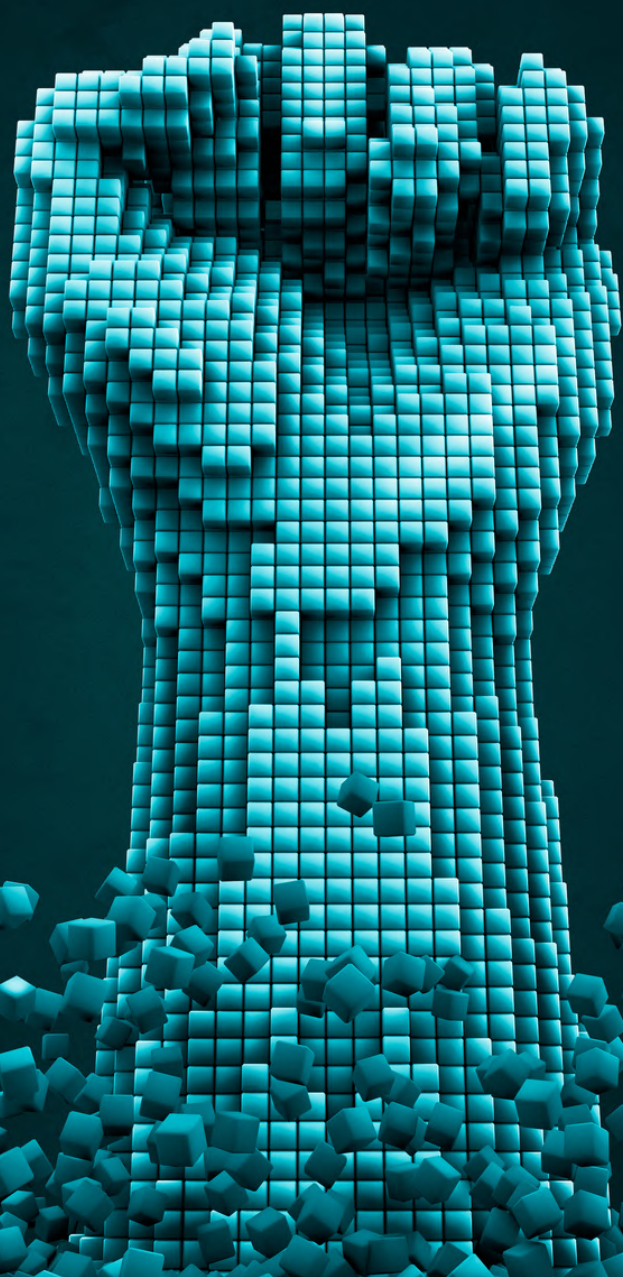
I have been harsh in this article. But reality is harsh. We must change.





# WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Fight the Fire, Ecosocialist Magazine is a militant project led by the work and good will of activists, militants and academics. There are costs, though. Servers, social networks and graphic design, among others, are costs we need to cover at all times to keep the magazine going.



We thank everyone that has contributed so far to our effort. We have received precious financial contributions that have improved our situation and guarantee the short term continuation of Fight the Fire.

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# Issue number 3 will be out in November!

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