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Thinking Diagonally Forum: *Planetize the Movement!*

Christopher Chase-Dunn

Valentine Moghadam's [essay](#) offers important insights on the current state, and possible future, of the Global Left. The Social Forum process was a good run-up for the global justice movement, but it seems to have run its course! It is time for progressives to move toward a more systematic and organized approach. Last year, in a forum on Samir Amin's proposal for a Fifth International co-published by the *Journal of World-Systems Research*, *Globalizations*, and the *Pambazuka News*, Rebecca Alvarez and I proposed a single "diagonal" organization that would combine decentralized horizontalism with a degree of democratic coordination that should make for a greater degree of global political capability than that exhibited by the World Social Forum. Such a structure could both support and defend egalitarian projects and communities while also waging effective struggle against the power of reactionary states, firms, and populist movements.²

A resistance to formal organization is common among the Left, as we have seen not only in the World Social Forum but also in phenomena like Occupy and the Arab Spring. Activists sought to intentionally avoid the inherent conservatism of institutions, which can often fight to maintain their own self-interest and internal power structure.

But the avoidance of organization hampers any movement's ability to achieve its own goals. Organization need not entail a Leninist demand to "march in line." Virtual communications and democratic decision-making technologies can be harnessed to produce better integrated organizations. Rotating leadership can expand opportunities for participatory democracy, the degree of bureaucracy can and should vary according to the risks involved, and local groups should be able to adjust their organizational structure according to the context and nature of a

task. A movement of movements must be willing to organize and engage at every level, from the global to the local. And this must include engaging in electoral politics, for by taking power at the local level, a globally connected Left can begin to prefigure a better world.

Our idea of a diagonal organization is just one of many percolating. Sahan Savas Karatasli has argued for a moiety of two party-network organizations similar to that proposed by Moghadam.³ And Heikki Patomäki has advocated for a global political party, with DiEM25 an emergent example.⁴ The global justice focus of the Social Forum process that stressed the need for addressing global inequalities must continue to be a priority.

These are exciting times. Another World Revolution is happening. The Global Right and the Global Left are once again contending with each other and with centrist liberalism. It is different this time around, but imagination and perseverance will be rewarded, as they were in the World Revolution of 1917. As my old friend Andre Gunder Frank often said, *a luta continua*.

Endnotes

1. For my research on the World Social Forum, including surveys of attendees, please see <https://irows.ucr.edu/research/tsmstudy.htm> or Paul Almeida and my forthcoming *Global Struggles and Social Change: From Prehistory to World Revolution in the Twenty-First Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020). For an analysis of the response of the global right, see Christopher Chase-Dunn, Peter Grimes, and E.N. Anderson, "Cyclical Evolution of the Global Right," *Canadian Review of Sociology* 56, no. 4 (November 2019): 529–555.
2. Rebecca Álvarez and Christopher Chase-Dunn, "Forging a Diagonal Instrument for the Global Left: The Vessel," *Journal of World-Systems Research* 25, no. 2 (2019), <https://jwsr.pitt.edu/ojs/index.php/jwsr/article/view/947>.
3. Şahan S Karataşlı, "The Twenty-First Century Revolutions and Internationalism: A World-Historical Perspective," *Journal of World-Systems Research* 25, no. 2 (2019): 306–320, <https://doi.org/10.5195/jwsr.2019.951>.
4. Heikki Patomäki, "A World Political Party: The Time Has Come," *Great Transition Initiative* (February 2019), <https://www.greattransition.org/publication/world-political-party>.

About the Author



Christopher Chase-Dunn is Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Director of the Institute for Research on World-Systems at the University of California, Riverside. He is the author of *Rise and Demise: Comparing World-Systems* (with Thomas D. Hall), *The Wintu and Their Neighbors* (with Kelly Mann), *The Spiral of Capitalism and Socialism* (with Terry Boswell), and *Social Change: Globalization from the Stone Age to the Present* (with Bruce Lerro). He is the founder and former editor of the *Journal of World-Systems Research*. Chase-Dunn is currently doing research on transnational social movements

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