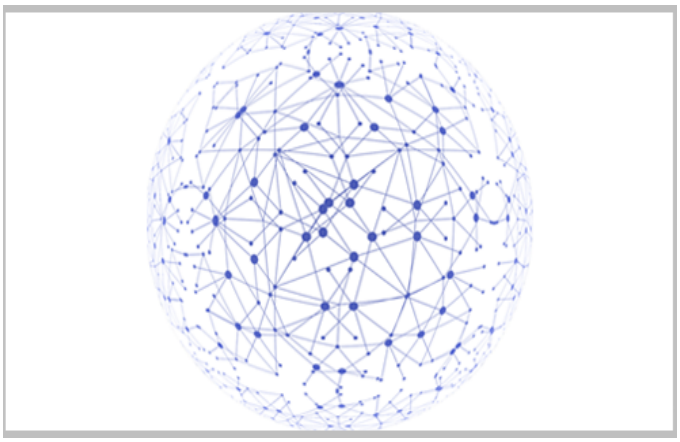
GREAT TRANSITION INITIATIVE
TOWARD A TRANSFORMATIVE VISION AND PRAXIS

# Time for a World Political Party?

## GTI Roundtable

## February 2019



In a world of shared global risks, we need transnational institutions and governance mechanisms for common action. To that end, Heikki Patomäki makes the case for building a world political party. Our panel discusses whether a political party is the best structure for aligning the myriad movements fighting for systemic change.

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GREAT TRANSITION INITIATIVE
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# A World Political Party: The Time Has Come

Heikki Patomäki

**Abstract:** Shared problems require shared action. The world economy and deepening global risks bind us together, but we lack the collective global agency required to address them. A sustainable global future will be impossible without a fundamental shift from the dominant national mythos to a global worldview, and the concomitant creation of institutions with transformative political agency. A world political party would be well-suited to bring about such a shift. Although such a party will not materialize overnight, it can emerge from the chrysalis of activism and experimentation already forming on the world stage. The transnational Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25) is a compelling experiment in this vein, providing useful lessons for a world political party proper. Although the challenges to forming a transformative world party are profound, the risks of inaction are grave—and the rewards of success momentous.

## Party Time

We now understand how small our planet has become. The local and global have become profoundly intertwined as our daily activities depend on the workings of the world economy. Common risks, like ecological crises and weapons of mass destruction, tie all our fates together.

Despite such interconnectedness, people's everyday experiences still differ greatly. For example, consider the contrasts between a day in the life of a high school teacher in Finland, a textile worker in China, a CEO of a multinational corporation in Brazil, and a janitor in Kenya—a case study in lateral and vertical diversity. Their lives' possibilities are interwoven and shaped by the global economy, but in sharply divergent ways.

Shared problems require shared action. But to achieve collective agency on the global level, disparate individuals must learn to see themselves (and their daily lives) as fundamentally connected to one another through common global structures, processes, and challenges. Such collective learning has the potential to politicize the world economy and the institutions that govern it. Rather than being treated as immutable, these institutions can and must become the subject of political contestation. Both radically reforming existing institutions and building new ones must be on the agenda. Seeing the world system as malleable goes hand in hand with the quest for globalized political agency, for advancing transformative visions of "another world."

Disparate individuals must learn to see themselves as fundamentally connected through global processes and challenges.

The roots of the contemporary quest go back to the formation of transnational political associations in the nineteenth century with the burgeoning peace and labor movements. A century later, in the 1960s and 1970s, new movements for gender and racial equality, nuclear disarmament, and environmental justice sparked global organizing and activism. In the 1980s, economic globalization became an era-defining issue. Then, as the walls of the Cold War came tumbling down and the Internet eroded barriers to communication, the concept of global civil society took hold. To this day, civil society carries the banner of transformative hope, expressed through pursuit of peace, justice, democracy, economic well-being, and ecological sustainability.

The growing organization and influence of global civil society can be seen in the human rights movement. For example, an international criminal court was first proposed in 1872 in response to the atrocities of the Franco-Prussian War. However, the NGO Coalition for an International Criminal Court (ICC), which featured prominent human rights organizations, was not founded until 1995. By the time the Rome Statute was adopted in July 1998, more than 800 organizations had joined the campaign; in the early 2000s, the number was more than one thousand. The ultimate creation of the ICC, though noteworthy, was an achievement tempered by the nonparticipation of China, Russia, and the US, among others, and by accusations,

especially by African states, that the court has been guilty of applying double standards.

In another arena, civil society became a prominent bulwark against corporate-driven globalization, challenging the "Washington Consensus" and its policy agenda of trade liberalization, deregulation, privatization, and fiscal austerity. Counter-summits, mass demonstrations, and targeted campaigns resisted the power asymmetries, injustices, and environmental impacts of the corporate-driven world economy. Global media made the protests of this "alter-globalization" movement visible to people around the world.

The turn of the new century saw the creation of a self-consciously political expression of global civil society in the form of the World Social Forum (WSF), inaugurated in June 2001 with an international meeting of 12,000 activists in Porto Alegre, Brazil. In the years that followed, such global meetings grew larger, and regional meetings were spawned, providing a rolling series of vital platforms for interchange and networking among diverse civil society actors. However, the WSF has suffered from an internal contradiction between its promise to facilitate the transition to a better world and its central organizing principle of simply providing an open space.

A world political party offers the most promise for fostering political coherence in civil society.

Political agency requires transformative capacity, which a mere open space for discourse lacks. Because the WSF has remained hesitant to move into the realm of action, interest has waned, leaving the WSF's future fragile and uncertain.

Without an overarching framework fostering solidarity, shared vision, and synergistic action, civil society remains fragmented across a plethora of organizations, issues, and places. Those who grasp the character and peril of planetary interconnectedness understand the need for new transnational agents and institutions that can tackle global ecological, economic, and security challenges. The times call for the creation of a world political party (WPP): an open ethico-political association in pursuit of a broad program of societal reorganization on a global scale. A WPP offers the most promise for fostering political coherence in civil society.

For many reasons, a detailed blueprint for a WPP is neither advisable nor possible. Yet, we can explore the broad contours of a diverse, democratic global political formation. Any process for advancing new institutional arrangements, to be legitimate, needs to be responsive to all significantly affected actors—and thus robustly democratic. Theory and practice must align. Transformative practice itself must thus embrace adaptive learning, seek democratic consensus, and have the capacity for collective decision-making. Meeting these desiderata takes us far beyond open space venues like the WSF and single-issue civil society arenas.

Skepticism about the feasibility of a world political party is understandable, especially in light of the discontent with political parties in national contexts. Across the world, major parties have become "post-democratic" as private money rules in politics and

power is increasingly concentrated in a narrow elite.[1] Often, the anti-elite backlash has been nationalist, xenophobic, and authoritarian. Many countries, especially in Eastern Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa, are sliding towards full-scale authoritarianism.[2] A viable WPP must be able to respond to the moral and political criticism of existing national parties, while cultivating a democratic ethos within global civil society and exercising effective political agency. Such broad-based political capability presupposes the emergence of public consciousness rooted in shared elements of a wider and deeper worldview. This evolution, in turn, fosters the willingness to engage in collective processes to build trust and commitment.

A world party cannot be created overnight, but rather can emerge out of today's activism and experimentation in the context of intensifying global crises. One instructive experiment is the Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25). DiEM25's successes and failures provide critical lessons for forging organs of collective agency beyond one continent.

A world party can emerge out of today's activism and experimentation.

## The Shape of a New Formation

The earliest analogues for a new world party are the socialist internationals of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Marx and Engels's declaration of "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" helped inspire the International Workingmen's Association, or "First International." In the years before World War I, socialist and labor parties joined together in the Second International. Then, after the Russian Revolution, the Soviet Union formed the Third International, or Comintern, as a vehicle for controlling communist parties worldwide. In parallel, organizations such as the Industrial Workers of the World saw themselves as part of a global organizing project, captured in the IWW's vision of the OBU ("One Big Union"). The reformist, postwar Socialist International—a descendent of the Second International—still exists, but its constituent social democratic parties lack the sense of solidarity and collective agency of their predecessors.

The top-down character of an organization like the Comintern would certainly meet strong opposition in a contemporary civil society culture skeptical of hierarchy. Recognition of equality is part and parcel of human collective learning. The prolific English writer H. G. Wells presaged a better way, exploring the idea of a WPP in essays and novels, with the 1928 *The Open Conspiracy* his most daring effort.[3] Rather than a centrally organized party, Wells's "open conspiracy" comprised a mass movement united by a humanistic faith and understanding of the world. The diverse set of actors in this movement-party could, he argued, collectively forge a rational and democratic world republic.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, amid lively discussions about the meaning and future of the alter-globalization movement, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri developed the idea of a "multitude," a complex network of a plurality of actors. In part

inspired by the experiences of the alter-globalization movements, in part a modern substitute for the Marxian working class, this concept bears some resemblance to Wells's open conspiracy (indeed, Wells, too, used the term multitude). Like Wells, Hardt and Negri developed these ideas in response to the global problem of war, arguing that the war on terror waged against a largely unspecified enemy served to justify and reinforce Great Power domination. However, the global governance reforms Hardt and Negri espouse are quite modest, with a global currency transaction tax the most far-reaching proposal.[4]

The war on terror in 2001, and the opposition to it, proved to be a turning point, sidelining the alter-globalization movement. Another turning point was the global financial crisis of 2008-9, which increased the socioeconomic insecurity and anxiety of people everywhere.[5] In the years since, wage stagnation, unemployment growth, and skyrocketing inequality have undermined social stability, while the concentration of capital has eroded democratic institutions, enabling a moneyed elite to rig economic and political systems. This inequality and instability, in turn, have fanned the flames of resurgent nationalist populism.

A nascent world party would spawn nodes at different levels and contexts within an overarching global perspective.

A far-sighted response to the contemporary crisis would be to build a world political party. Such a party would contribute to the process of constructing a global *demos*, best seen as a pluralist, evolving political community of world citizens exercising political rights in a globalized public sphere. A WPP would welcome a range of different ideological agendas concerning how common global institutions might best be organized. The party would constitute a transnational public sphere, where the sufficiently like-minded—i.e., members of the party—could freely debate issues and make collective decisions. The *raison d'être* of the party lies in advancing new institutional forms for organizing the planetary public realm.

A nascent world party would spawn nodes at different levels and contexts, each attuned to salient issues at its level within an overarching global perspective and strategy. The various chapters would share a core program while maintaining their autonomy, adopting additional planks into their platform as appropriate (provided that they resonate with the overall agenda). Within this complex transformative agency, balance would be sought between pluralism and unity. Cultivating a sense of mutuality, trust, and sensitivity among diverse participants is key to developing a viable global political community and public sphere.

## Collective Learning and Cosmopolitanism

Although ancient Greek city-states had cliques and parties of opinion, the contemporary understanding of political parties is rather recent. Until early European modernity, the metaphor of a "body politic" dominated the political imagination. In this view, a conflict or contradiction in one organism or body is not considered

healthy. Organized political parties emerged only when this metaphor was replaced by the more individualistic idea of the social contract.

Today, as a result of effectual collective learning processes, rules are no longer treated as external to individual actors, and thus sacred or unassailable, but rather as the product of free, mutual agreement of individuals endowed with autonomous conscience. This form of collective discourse first emerged in some ancient small city-states, typically among free males, but was repressed by large-scale military-agrarian empires. The demand for equality re-emerged in a more radical form in complex large-scale society with modern political revolutions.

In the context of modernity, new ideas such as human rights and the rule of law became part of social reality. Notably, the trial of Louis XVI marked a break with the mythological view of the monarchy's power, and the ascent of the understanding of citizens as autonomous actors with the right to revise prevailing rules and laws. For the Girondists, the king no longer embodied the law, but rather subject to it, just like any other citizen. All citizens are equally bound by the law.[6]

The historical process of collective learning points towards cosmopolitan moral sentiments.

The historical process of collective learning points towards cosmopolitan moral sentiments. In higher stages of reasoning, individuals gain an understanding that morality and ethico-political principles must have validity and application apart from both the authority of the groups or persons holding these principles, and the individual's own identification with particular groups or institutions. Such is the moral foundation of world citizenship.

Of course, the movement toward cosmopolitanism is hardly inevitable, and not all social learning is progressive. Past lessons can be forgotten, and change can be regressive, undermining future learning. Economic uncertainty can amplify existential insecurity and anxiety, triggering regressive learning. Religion and nationalism can provide channels for diverting resentment and angst originating in socioeconomic conditions. Asymmetric power relations can undermine the learning process as well, by steering public consciousness towards perspectives that serve particular identities, interests, or elites.

Pushing back against such tendencies, a central aim of a WPP would be to nurture positive learning that creates a public more receptive to pluralist cosmopolitanism. This requires strategies for shaping the economic and social conditions that support individual and collective learning, and improving the skills and knowledge required for effective participation in the learning process. Educating the public about global affairs is essential for developing a collective democratic culture and deeper engagement in the global public realm.

Much of our thinking is unconscious, which further complicates learning processes. Thinking is based on prototypes, framings, and metaphors that are seldom explicit. This background is the source of "common sense" views of how we connect and interact and what our expectations are of one another and outsiders. Underlying

normative ideas and images generate manifold stories about who we are, where we come from, and where we are heading. A problem for a global political party is that, compared to the rich poetics of national myths and narratives, cosmopolitan prototypes, metaphors, framings, and stories remain rather thin.

A promising way to counter parochial ideologies is to situate the contemporary problematique within a macro-view of cosmological, biological, and social evolution. This "Big History" approach expands both our understanding of "where we are" and visions of "where we want to go." A sweeping narrative can motivate transformative and progressive politics in the twenty-first century.[7] The point of departure of Big History is that our common human capacities have emerged from the evolution of life, itself an emergent layer of cosmological unfolding. A sweeping framework puts into context and underscores the import of the Anthropocene: the new geological age defined by the human impact on the whole Earth. Big History encourages narratives and values with a sense of global belonging—the Earth as our common home in the cosmos. This broad panorama suggests a new slogan:  think cosmically, act globally.

The broad panorama suggests a new slogan: think cosmically, act globally.

## DiEM25: A Seed Crystal?

Can we see rumblings of a WPP today? Perhaps future historians will look back to many precursors now in play. One promising contemporary initiative is the Democracy in Europe Movement 2025 (DiEM25). Established in early 2016 in the aftermath of the Euro crisis, DiEM25 has assumed many of the characteristics of a WPP. As such, it offers an invaluable testbed for cultivating transnational ethical and political consciousness, deploying new technologies to enable widespread participation, overcoming legal obstacles to a supranational political party, and transcending identity-political fragmentation.

Following the 2015 defeat of the Greek left-wing party Syriza in its struggle against the Troika (the International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank, and EU Commission), Greek Minister of Finance Yanis Varoufakis resigned. Subsequent political meetings in France and Germany convinced him of the need to "band together regardless of nationality and transcend the divide between debtor and creditor countries." The solution was clear: a new pan-European political movement to prevent a "descent into a post-modern 1930s."[8]

To advance this aim, DiEM25's strategy is to convene a constitutional assembly that would reflect a genuine European democracy. It intends to have a draft constitution prepared by 2025 that, if adopted, would replace all existing European treaties. Beyond this process, the movement strives to overcome austerity and harmful competition in Europe with concrete policy proposals, including the dedication of 500 billion euros per year to green investment and industrial conversion, a European anti-poverty plan, a universal basic income (financed by a "public" percentage of

companies' profits), and a common and humane migration policy.[9]

Rather than adhering to a single political ideology, DiEM25 is resolutely pluralistic, aiming to attract a broad spectrum of progressives, whether leftists, social democrats, greens, or liberals. Participants are united in their dissatisfaction with Europe's economic and political establishment, and in their advocacy for a government by the people of Europe. In contrast to the authoritarian, nationalistic populisms on the rise throughout Europe, DiEM25 exemplifies a form of democratic, transnational populism. Its concept of "we" is a pan-European *demos* that transcends national identity.

DiEM25's inclusionary transnationalism manifests in the common front it is building for political activism. But the movement enacts transnationalism in another sense: its commitment to helping the most vulnerable people in the global political economy, especially refugees.[10] As stated in its manifesto, DiEM25 aspires to "an Open Europe that is alive to ideas, people and inspiration from all over the world, recognizing fences and borders as signs of weakness spreading insecurity in the name of security."[11] The movement thus offers a clear alternative to Fortress Europe.

The DiEM25 movement could become a seed germinating future world political parties.

Not surprisingly, given DiEM25's expansive political philosophy, its participants are not exclusively European. Joining many well-known European intellectuals, are visible international figures such as Julian Assange and Noam Chomsky. The members of the Coordinating Collective that organizes and integrates DiEM25's actions have wide international experience, including in the peace movement, the ICC campaign, Occupy, and the World Social Forum.

DiEM25 has some 70,000 members, mostly in Europe but from other continents as well, along with eight national collectives and a hundred ad hoc collectives around the world. Although more a movement than a political party for now, it will be presenting a list for the 2019 European Parliament elections, dubbing the effort the "European spring." This "first progressive transnational list ever" includes both candidates directly chosen by DiEM25 and candidates nominated by DiEM25 to appear on the slates of conventional parties. This selection process, as with all DiEM25's work, relies on modern IT technology to facilitate discussion among dispersed members, in parallel with in-person meetings and events across Europe.

In spite of such mobilization, DiEM25 has yet to become a high-profile actor in European politics. Its membership and budget remain small compared to those of the major national political parties, and the mainstream media largely ignores its activities and positions. Even after years of decline, Germany's Christian Democratic Union, for instance, commands a budget of tens of millions of euros per year, while DiEM25's is less than a half-million. Given its limited resources, DiEM25's near-term electoral success will likely be modest at best. Nevertheless, as it evolves and grows, it could become a model or, beyond, a seed germinating future world political parties.

## Where We Are

While we live longer and value life more highly than ever, the world as a whole faces decades of unprecedented problems. The global economic crisis of 2008–2009 and the subsequent euro crisis are only one indication of how the fates of different countries and regions have become more and more intertwined. The conditions of everyday activities of all people are directly or indirectly affected by how the world economy works—or does not work. The next global crisis will have far-reaching consequences. The challenge then? How to reach the teacher, textile worker, and janitor, to name a few, with the vision and message to convey how a WPP can serve their needs and interests.

How can we reach the teacher, textile worker, and janitor with the vision and message of a world political party?

Perhaps the most serious immediate threat concerns the danger of global war, and especially nuclear war. Both the escalation of the conflict between Russia and the West and the confrontations in the South China Sea show that questions of global political economy and security have still not been answered on a sustainable footing. Similarly, climate change is a key part of a new geological era, the Anthropocene, in which human action is transforming the composition and processes of the biosphere. The expansion of human society has led, among other things, to the mass destruction of habitats, species, and whole ecosystems. This devolution continues at an accelerating pace, carrying threats to global civilization.

The concept of "world risk society" helps situate our task.[12] The current epoch, in this conceptualization, is the second phase of modernization, in which actors and movements begin to respond to the problems generated by the consequences of the first phase. The primary feature of this new phase is the emergence of a common world with no outside and no exit. Societal risks demand that we acknowledge the real dangers and threats we confront. At the same time, these risks contain a collective condition and power that creates new ethical, political, and technological opportunities for shaping futures to sustain us and new modernities to dream by.

As humankind is thrilled by scientific discoveries of new planets with the possibility of extraterrestrial life, we become increasingly aware of the peril our technological civilization poses for the future of life right here on Earth. Human curiosity about our place in the cosmos and the awareness of the great ethical-political choices before us demand a new phase of collective learning and promotion of practices and institutions matched to our common challenge.

Our ability to secure a sustainable global future depends on a fundamental shift from the currently dominant national mythos to a global imaginary. The mechanisms and processes of collective learning through institutional change differ from those of individual growth. Collective learning and institutional change require politically capable transformative actors. Practical and political problems can be overcome by building better common institutions.

The time has come to devote our efforts to building a world party.

The world political party envisaged in this essay embraces this grand task.[13] As Wells proclaimed almost a century ago, way ahead of his time, "the alternative before man now is either magnificence of spirit and magnificence of achievement or disaster." The choice could not be clearer today. The future we want is one that removes constraints on human well-being and enables human flourishing. Navigating history towards collective self-determination on this planet, and one day perhaps beyond it, will take bold, transformative practice.

In our troubled world, the need for global transformative agency is greater than ever. The future is not yet settled, and the path there depends on the choices we make. Our expectations become a feedback loop in the making of the future. Pessimists argue that a series of limited-scale crises or wars—or a full global catastrophe—must erupt before a significant force can coalesce for rational, peaceful, and democratic transformations of global governance.

However likely that view, we cannot stand passively by until crises explode before working for social transformation. If and when a window of opportunity opens, the capacity for such action must already have been established. The time has come, then, to devote our efforts to building a world party as an overarching organizational expression of global citizens' power.

## Endnotes

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## About the Author

Heikki Patomäki is a social scientist, activist, and professor of world politics at University of Helsinki. He has published over 20 books, 200 research papers, and hundreds of popular articles and blogs on such topics as the philosophy and methodology of social sciences, peace and futures studies, and global political economy, justice, and democracy. His books include *Disintegrative Tendencies in Global Political Economy: Exits and Conflicts*, *The Great Eurozone Disaster: From Crisis to Global New Deal*, *The Political Economy of Global Security: War, Future Crises and Changes in Global Governance*, and *A Possible World: Democratic Transformation of Global Institutions* (with T. Teivainen).

# Roundtable

# Vicki Assevero

When I first read Heikki Patomäki's essay, I felt like cheering. A call to action, instead of more words and analyses of our common predicament, about which those in this list-serv already know so much.

However, early on, Heikki pulled back: "For many reasons, a detailed blueprint for a WPP is neither advisable nor possible."

Without a blueprint, what then is this WPP? We do get some "contours": morality and ethics that can be validated independently of the authorities that promulgated them; positive collective learning, which requires improvements not only in knowledge dissemination about our global interconnections but also in pathways for effective transnational participation. Thank you very much for referencing the Big History Project, and thank you to David Christian for expanding on the utility of creating this type of comprehensive learning platform. Let us not forget one of the most important contours: "the fundamental shift from the currently dominant national mythos to a global imaginary."

I believe that a significant shift to a global consciousness is consistently manifesting—through the many transnational civil society movements—whether human rights, environment, inequalities, etc. Many progressives have been opposed to the globalization of recent decades (global capital movements, global trade increases, and expanded global telecommunications), not for spurring the consciousness of our interdependence and interconnectedness but for the exploitative and inequality-engendering effects.

Like it or not, we are in the planetary twenty-first century. We are indeed constrained by fears that the nefarious effects and ugly consequences of greedy oligopolists, cyber criminals, or just the sheer ineptitude to evolve a new economic and social model will derail the efforts towards

cohesion. But for things to cohere, we have to be able to tell a story based on a largely shared vision of inclusive prosperity for the CEO in Kenya, the janitor in Finland, the textile worker in India, the construction worker in China, and the unemployed factory worker in Kentucky, USA.

My conclusion is that the call for a WPP is perhaps misnamed. Conceivably, we need a World Political *Platform*, with a clear set of objectives. If we have such a platform, then local governments, advocacy groups, associations, and organizations can adhere to the platform and work to accomplish the goals articulated therein through the political structures extant where they find themselves. There could be some type of linkages transnationally highlighting who was accomplishing what within such a framework. Vivienne Ming, the neuroscientist and AI expert has said that you need to "solve the problem first," and then you figure out how the machines can help you. I think that the Sustainable Development Goals work is moving in this direction even if it was an inter-nation effort; many civil society organizations and businesses are using this framework to tackle poverty and inequalities and move to a green energy future.

Particularly useful to localized action under the WPP banner would be more and better methodologies for actually legislating, advancing policy reforms, and advocacy that would push the goals of a WPP to the top of many organizational agendas.

## About the Author

Vicki Assevero is an international lawyer with a longstanding interest in sustainable development. She represented multinational energy companies and international organizations early in her career with Duncan, Allen & Talmage in Cote d'Ivoire after working with The Commerce Department and the OECD in Paris. She shifted to representing developing countries in their negotiations with multilateral banks and investors as a partner at Holland & Knight, and she represented the Bar of the City of New York at Rio+20. She founded The Green Market in Santa Cruz, Trinidad, in 2012 as a practical experiment in community-based sustainable development concentrating on changing patterns of food consumption and production. She is a graduate of Yale University and Harvard Law School.

# Michel Bauwens

Thanks a lot to Heikki Patomäki for the stimulating proposal for a "World Political Party."

I am skeptical for a number of reasons but primarily because I do not see an organic connection with anything that is unfolding on the ground.

What I see unfolding is quite different, and I believe our solutions must be in harmony with these more grassroots trends.

My starting point is the famous double movement of Karl Polanyi, in which periods of market liberalization create social chaos and make way for counter-epochs when the market is re-embedded in society under social pressure. My conviction is that this dynamic is no longer functioning at the national scale.

We are now in the midst of such a Polanyian moment, in which the systemic crisis of 2008 has created a backlash of left- and right-wing populisms, which are destabilizing countries, but we do not seem capable of bringing about any real systemic change at the nation-state level.

The main reason seems to me to be that while Nation and State are operating at the national level, Capital is operating directly at the global level and can destabilize any local or national attempt at reform. There isn't any real form of internationalism at the level of political movements and institutions, and the Left remains deeply embedded in nation-state logics of neo-Keynesianism. The exceptions, such as Varoufakis's DiEM25 movement, with its pan-European outlook, have not yet proven to have any real traction, and the international system of cooperation is not strengthening, but weakening.

However, in civil society, we see an entirely different situation. Global open-source communities are characterized by the exponential growth of the numbers of code and coders, and a significant

share of their workers are transnationally neo-nomadic, creating entirely different sub-economic systems. There is a tenfold growth of urban commons in cities, which I have documented myself in Ghent, Belgium, but is confirmed for other places around the world including the Global South, as in the LabGov studies. Moreover, their practices are moving from the mere redistribution of products and services to actual cosmo-local production of energy and organic food, with transnationally shared, open-source code used to help revive production on the local level. Many of the exploding number of local projects are actually not local, but transnational in nature: as Enzio Manzini called them, they are "Small, Local, Open, Connected."

For the network of commons and P2P (peer-to-peer) researchers associated and partnering with the P2P Foundation, this means a changing focus, from the mere international, to the truly "transnational." What is happening in the world today is that overlaying the geographic nations, there is the emergence of true global neo-nomadic ecosystems of cooperation, in which digital commons are helping people to transcend borders, distance, and other previous barriers to collaboration in both knowledge and production.

So what I believe needs to happen is a change of focus. Of course, the national and the international remain powerful and will be so for the foreseeable future, but at the same time, we need to build transnational institutions and strategies.

Elsewhere, we have argued for new models, such as the Partner State (in which public authorities play a sustaining role in the creation of value by civil society, fostering peer production and the commons) and institutions for public-commons cooperation at the territorial level. But progressive forces should no longer see policymaking as focused only on market value, on their own nation-state, or on international political cooperation, but rather on the transnationalization of infrastructures. For example, right now, cities are coalescing to regulate the negative effects of Uber and Airbnb, but why not create, through city alliances, global open depositories for the "generative" transformation of all bioregional provisioning systems, i.e., supporting the infrastructure for mutualization (cooperative ownership) that is local but can benefit from global transnational knowledge sharing? Imagine having access to a global set of tools to develop FairBNBs and MuniRides. Imagine, like what is already happening in France, the building of Assemblies and Chambers of the Commons cooperating at a transnational scale.

So rather than a World Political Party that would continue the paradigm of competitive politics, endlessly fighting on what is the "right program," I would rather see the development of a global Commons Transition Coalition, rooted in actual reconstructive and prefigurative practice, but which can play a political role by representing the new forces of transformation, at the institutional level of internationalism. What we need is a new configuration between the territorial nations, weakening as we speak, and the emerging transnational nations, growing rapidly.

## About the Author

Michel Bauwens is the founding director of the P2P Foundation, which studies the impact of peer-to-peer technology on society. He is also research director of CommonsTransition.org and a founding member of the Commons Strategies Group. He has written a number of books and reports, including *Network Society* and *Future Scenarios for a Collaborative Economy* (with Vasilis Kostaki). He has crafted Commons Transition Plans for Ecuador and Ghent, Belgium, and advises SMart, a nonprofit that assists freelance workers in the creative industry.

# Andreas Bummel

Heikki Patomäki's article on a world political party sparked an interesting and far-reaching debate. I, too, believe that his starting point is valid. There is a need for stronger transformative political agency that pushes for radically reforming existing global institutions and building new ones from a planetary perspective. As Paul Raskin points out in *Journey to Earthland*, today's planetary civilization confronts twenty-first-century challenges hobbled by twentieth-century ideas and institutions. Overcoming the cultural lag between rapid technological development and slow sociopolitical adaptation is a key issue of our time.

Although he concedes that the challenges are profound, Patomäki argues that a WPP may be a key force to achieve a breakthrough. In my view, under certain assumptions, it is possible to imagine scenarios of this kind. However, his article raises many questions, and on some points more clarity is needed to continue the debate.

There is a distinction to be made between a political party, social movements, and civil society. It is not entirely clear what the WPP is supposed to be. Nevertheless, the definition of a political party is straightforward: an organized group of people who share common views and who come together to contest elections and hold power in the government.

If this is what a WPP is supposed to do, among other things, I doubt that it has the unifying potential that Patomäki is envisioning. As a partisan force, how exactly would it foster political coherence in civil society? One of the most successful recent efforts of civil society in the global realm that Patomäki mentions, the NGO Coalition for the International Criminal Court, had no distinct partisan nature. Institutions, groups, individuals, and governments across the political spectrum endorsed the ICC, and a civil society initiative with a partisan connection would have had much less significance. Even if new parties such as DiEM25 may transcend traditional party lines as Patomäki claims, the reality remains that they compete with other existing parties.

This vision of an overarching party may not be required in the first place as long as it can achieve some critical mass. One of the most important developments over the last decades that Patomäki does not mention is the continuing rise of Green parties in the wake of the global environmental movement. It certainly is an achievement of Green politics and the overall ecological movement, that in many countries political parties across the traditional spectrum adopted Green policies. Green parties may not have come to power, but often they had a strong influence on their political competition. In a similar way, a WPP may help shift mainstream politics into the direction of planetary perspectives, and other political parties would adopt this outlook. Eventually, there may not be one world political party, but many of them. A key question that remains is what social movement will help in the rise of a WPP.

Whether or not DiEM25 is a promising embryo of a WPP is difficult to say at this point. As Patomäki rightfully points out, leading figures and groups in the alter-globalization movement, with some notable exceptions, for a long time did not offer any sophisticated concepts about global governance reforms. They also did not necessarily have a planetary worldview. Quite the contrary. It is unfortunate, given Patomäki's expertise in this field, that he did not spell out what global governance reforms a WPP should pursue.

At this time, DiEM25's manifesto is entirely focused on Europe and does not include any global vision. There's no consideration of global institutions and reform in that document. The articles and speeches of Yanis Varoufakis, leader of DiEM25, and Bernie Sanders which they published to promote the establishment of their new Progressive International are delving into global matters and global policies. Unfortunately, however, they still seem to be stuck in a Westphalian mindset that takes the international system of nominally sovereign nation-states as a given that cannot be put into question. As far as I am concerned, I did not notice any proposals in terms of global institutional and systemic change. As I pointed out with my colleague Jo Leinen in our recent book *A World Parliament*, it is not sufficient to have the right policies. It is also a requirement to have the right political structures to implement them.

Insofar, Varoufakis and Sanders's new organization does not distinguish itself from others. Ironically, others already seem to have developed much more sophisticated thoughts long ago.

A discussion of a WPP should acknowledge that there are several international party networks in addition to the Socialist International—for instance, the Liberal International, the Centrist Democrat International, the Global Greens, and the Pirate Parties International. As an alternative to the Socialist International, the Progressive Alliance was formed in 2013. These umbrella organizations of national and regional parties and party networks in my view are all embryos of world political parties. Some of them do have standing policies on global institutional reform. For instance, meetings of the Socialist International, the Liberal International, the Global Greens, and the Pirate Parties International have endorsed the establishment of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA).

In our book, Jo Leinen and I provide a detailed overview of how this idea of a democratically elected world body developed from the French Revolution to the present day. It certainly is no accident that existing party networks are in favor of a UNPA. As in the European Parliament, members of the UNPA would not be organized by national origin but in transnational groups organized around common political orientations. We need to insist on this point. So in all probability there would be a conservative, a socialist, liberal, green, left, and other groups. International party associations certainly would cooperate with their equivalent group in the UNPA. To date, their political influence is very small. But this would change through cooperation with affiliated political groups in a global parliamentary body. Eventually, as the parliamentary body develops over time, they may transform into actual global political parties that contest global elections.

Finally, I would like to offer a reflection on another question that was brought up, namely whether a party presupposes the existence of a parliament. Following the definition above, the goal of a political party is to gain political power. In a democratic system, in my view this does indeed imply the existence of a parliament and elections. If such do not exist, a party devoted to democracy should be expected to fight for them. Here is where we are coming across a true revolutionary potential. As far as a WPP is concerned, it will operate at different levels. In most nation-states it will already be able to participate in the political process and in more or less free and fair elections. At the global level, this is not the case. Here it will be difficult to maintain political focus and achieve meaningful impact. In this regard, it would be interesting to study in how far centrists, socialists, liberals, and others who hold power in nation-states coordinate their action in intergovernmental bodies such as the UN along party lines. My thesis is that they hardly do. At the end, national and geopolitical considerations win the day. Why would this be different with a WPP?

All in all, I believe a WPP only makes sense if it pursues as a key goal the establishment of a democratic global parliament so it can gain influence by winning global elections once this goal was achieved, something that Patomäki did not spell out. Otherwise, it will only be another international network based on a Westphalian mindset and not a global political party in the strict sense. It's not a project for those who resist the idea of democratic global government in whatever shape or form (although it is possible to argue that an undemocratic transnational state apparatus based on a transnational capitalist class already exists).

## About the Author

Andreas Bummel is co-founder and global coordinator of the Campaign for a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly, which advocates democratic representation of the world's citizens at the UN and the institutions of global governance. The campaign has been endorsed by 1,500 sitting and former lawmakers from over 100 countries. He has been a council member of the World Federalist Movement–Institute for Global Policy, a fellow of the World Academy of Art and Science, and an honorary member of the Society for Threatened Peoples. He is co-author of such books as *A World Parliament: Governance and Democracy in the 21st Century* and *A United Nations Parliamentary Assembly: A Policy Review of Democracy Without Borders*.

# Kavita Byrd

The idea of a World Political Party definitely resonates. I particularly like that it has been framed in a cosmological context. That makes it not just a World Political Party, but a world evolutionary vision, so important at a time when "end of world" scenarios are likely to be self-fulfilling unless we can offer a wider, more inspiring vision for our future.

Why a global party, or a global governing body? Our crises won't go away on their own, or even through a random emergence of local movements. Unless we are looking to global interests, one nation's (or region's) interests will always be pitted against another's, even assuming the best of intentions of or for their own people. As we have seen, this does not work—divisiveness breeds divisiveness, as violence breeds more violence. We need to really grasp that only the good of the Whole (both people and planet) can serve the good of us all—and help put that into action. The reasons for this would be clearly expressed in the manifesto or platform.

In evolution, smaller, simpler units conglomerate into larger, more complex ones. We need to look at how this happens and, in the context of social systems particularly, how the new, larger conglomeration gains traction and legitimacy. We need to look back to past examples where the traction succeeded and the new potentials inherent in our present digitally interconnected context. Our high-tech capabilities exponentially heighten not only the dangers but also the positive possibilities of global interconnectedness.

Another related point. I hear the fear expressed again and again that a movement which starts off for the people will become rigid or dictatorial. This fear, like a bogeyman in the background, has effectively paralyzed any further large-scale experiments in cooperative systems since the Communist downfall. People fear the power of structures, so fragmentation feels safer, even at the cost of their own powerlessness. (Ironically, this over-fastidious fear of benevolent visions turning

self-serving and tyrannical has given free rein to the unabashedly power-hungry and self-serving to come into absolute power!)

In healthy social evolution, however, there is always a convergence of creative emergence and new structures, of spontaneity and planning. There is nothing wrong with either of those; in fact, the trick to healthy systems is to find the balance, the sweet spot between rigidity and too much randomness, chaos. To the extent that this balance is there, diverse forces can come together into new configurations of coherence, movements that materialize and take form. Structures for emergence, and the emergence of new structures, go together.

All of this is to say that we should not fear power, or structures, or coming together around large-scale visions; we need to step up to the plate, and learn to navigate them in new, evolving, self-aware, creative, and flexible ways. We need not repeat the mistakes of the past, if we learn its lessons well. And the present is always offering up new, unprecedented possibilities, new turns of evolution. It's up to us to take them.

## About the Author

Kavita Byrd works to bring together holistic consciousness, healing, and whole-systems change, with an emphasis on evolutionary spirituality and sacred activism. This has included research on ecology, climate change and new economics, integrating universal spiritual wisdom and radical social action for evolutionary global transformation. She is the author of the poetry collection Love Songs of the Undivided as well as the book Quantum Co-Creative Revolution: We Are All in This Together. She holds a BA in English Literature and Creative Writing from Princeton University.

# Joseph Camilleri

Heikki Patomäki's call for a "World Political Party" reflects the dire predicament we presently face and the absence of any platform or institutional framework that is in any sense equal to the challenge. The essay clearly offers much food for thought. Yet Patomäki's well-intentioned proposal for a global political formation is at best nebulous, highly problematic on several fronts, and quite possibly counterproductive.

It is nebulous in that it fails to address a number of critically important questions, answers to which must precede any proposed solutions. First, we need a much clearer, sharper, and more detailed diagnosis of the current multifaceted ailment that afflicts not just humanity but the planet. The ailment is simultaneously political, economic, ecological, social, and cultural. It is largely the expression of pathological forms of globalization, which have been in the making for well over a century.

Many have rightly pointed to the dynamic of exploitation as underlying much of contemporary social pathology. Here we have in mind both exploitation of people and of nature, be it inequitable patterns of production, trade and finance, fossil fuel profligacy, or nuclear deterrence. But there is more to this than the economics of exploitation. Exploitation, which has now assumed global proportions, is the inevitable outcome of the logic of exclusion. People and nature, and importantly future generations, are routinely excluded from the decisions likely to adversely affect them. They are excluded from decision-making processes and institutions because to include them would in all likelihood produce outcomes inconsistent with stark inequalities of wealth, income, and influence. The politics of exclusion rests then on a dual mechanism, simultaneously psychological and structural, of domination and indifference. The powerful and privileged are intent on dominating in order to preserve their power and privilege, while remaining indifferent to the harm such domination inevitably leaves in its train. It is this blend of domination and indifference, and its

technocratic manifestation in economy, warfare, and mass culture, which threatens future generations and risks producing, in Pope Francis's words a planet of "debris, desolation and filth."

The refugee, fleeing war, poverty, and environmental disaster, is in many ways the quintessential victim of exclusion, and its twin progenitors, domination and indifference. In his celebrated homily delivered in Lampedusa in July 2013, Pope Francis identified indifference as the key to the callous treatment of refugees and asylum seekers by the rich and comfortable—a much wider constituency than the numerically small corporate, political and military elites:

> The culture of comfort, which makes us think only of ourselves, makes us insensitive to the cries of other people, makes us live in soap bubbles which, however lovely, are insubstantial; they offer a fleeting and empty illusion which results in indifference to others; indeed, it even leads to the *globalization of indifference*. In this globalized world, we have fallen into globalized indifference (emphasis added).

Simply put, the mechanism of exclusion violently disrupts social and ecological systems. It is in its essence divisive, setting humanity against nature and fragmenting humanity into competing and warring classes, castes, communities, and nations.

We must therefore ask, how would the proposed World Political Party handle the politics of exclusion? It would not be unfair to say that the essay sheds little light on the subject, except for such fuzzy descriptions of the Party as "a pluralist, evolving community of global citizens."

Simpler, though equally basic, questions are also neglected. What would be the primary functions of the Party? Parties are normally regarded as political formations aiming to achieve control of the state apparatus, whether by electoral or other means. Is this what Patomäki has in mind for the world political party? If its national chapters are to contest elections in the so-called liberal democratic world of Europe, North America, and Australasia, how will they differ in either structure or policy from—and will they do battle with—the already considerable range of existing national parties that we associate with the socialist, social democratic, and green traditions? Why would yet another electoralist formation make much of a difference to the ideological, cultural, or organizational landscape?

If, on the other hand, electoral contestation at the national level is not to be the primary function of the new Party, then what is? It is easy to say advocacy, but what exactly does this amount to? Advocating what, to whom, how, and with what expectation of success? Assuming the World Political Party has done its homework and is able to generate complex, well-designed institutional and policy remedies to our current ills, who is likely to listen? Who would implement any of the Party's recommendations? What can we reasonably expect to be the sources of its influence?

One other weakness of the proposal merits attention. Given that we are dealing with an unholy mess that is of immense scale and complexity and multidimensional in both substance and form, how are opposing voices and conflicting interpretations, solutions, and strategies to be reconciled? Is it enough to speak of mutuality, trust and sensitivity? These are precious but scarce commodities. Is a World Political Party well placed to cultivate these qualities? Or, is it just as likely that this Party will fall prey to Robert Michels's "iron law of oligarchy"?

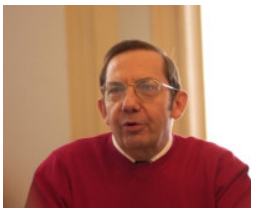
This brings us face-to-face with what is perhaps the proposal's fatal shortcoming. As one reads the essay, one is given the distinct impression that Patomäki's mindset is essentially that of a European, steeped in European history, speaking largely to a European audience. And even here, as the expanded European Union has shown us, Europe is an amalgam of contradictory historical experiences, interests, perspectives and aspirations. Can we reasonably expect that this Eurocentric idea will resonate with the North American and Australasian publics? And if this is to be a World Political Party, what are the chances that it will have much appeal or relevance for the societies of India or Indonesia, not to mention China, Brazil, Myanmar, or Fiji?

Perhaps a more promising route would be to explore, at least in the first instance, the much looser notion of an intercultural network of projects and initiatives that has no pretentions to a unitary political formation or to the articulation and advocacy of an identifiable political program.

The aim in this case would be to foster a transnational, transcivilizational dialogue that expressly seeks to build on the repositories of wisdom of the world's leading ethical, civilizational, and religious traditions and adapt them to the new circumstances of our epoch.

Attaching equal importance to both differences and commonalities, participants in such a dialogue would revisit the present and the past, engaged in a journey of self-discovery as well as discovery of the "other." This is a dialogue that would provoke profound soul-searching within as much as between faiths, cultures, and civilizations. It is a dialogue that would begin to inform the content and method of both formal and informal education. Over time, it would reshape how we communicate across national and cultural boundaries. It would help generate the fertile soil on which new ways of thinking, acting, and organizing can begin to take root. But this is another story for another time.

## About the Author



Joseph Camilleri is Emeritus Professor at La Trobe University, Melbourne, where he held the Chair in International Relations and was founding Director of the Centre for Dialogue. He is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Social Sciences, chair of the Editorial Committee of the scholarly journal Global Change, Peace and Security, and adviser to Ideapod, a new web-based platform aimed at harnessing the power of ideas. His recent publications include *The UN Alliance of Civilizations in Asia-South Pacific: Current Context and Future Pathways* (2014), *Culture, Religion and Conflict in Muslim Southeast Asia* (2013), and *Religion and Ethics in a Globalizing World: Conflict, Dialogue and Transformation* (2011). He has convened several international dialogues and conferences on global governance and conflict resolution.

# David Christian

The idea of mobilizing a world political party in support of sustainability makes a lot of sense, and I was pleased to see Heikki Patomäki link such a project to the Big History framework, which has been the center of my recent work.[1] But the ecological, technological, and political challenges we face today are so new that nineteenth- or twentieth-century models of political mobilization will often mislead us. So interconnected is today's world that mobilization for change will have to be global, as well as national and local. That is a given. But what should be the major goals of such a movement? And what possibilities are there for mobilizing globally behind these goals?

The main goals of such a movement will be defined by the contradictory legacy of the Anthropocene Epoch, the era in which we humans dominate change on the surface of Planet Earth. The vast flows of energy and resources released by the exploitation of fossil fuels have allowed billions of humans to live well above subsistence for the first time in human history. That is a huge and progressive achievement (the "Good Anthropocene") that can be measured in many ways, including the rapid extension of average life expectancies, increasing per capita energy use, and the rapid decline in extreme poverty.

These profound changes, most of which occurred in just the last 100 years, mean that today there exists a huge global middle-class constituency to be mobilized, a political force that did not exist in the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the vast flows of energy and resources that have allowed rising living standards are now undermining the ecological foundations for prosperity. (That's the "Bad Anthropocene.")

These seismic shifts in recent human and planetary history define the primary challenge we will face in the next few decades: Can the gains of the fossil fuels era be maintained without the fossil fuels whose use is undermining the ecological foundations for a prosperous world? We already have many of the technologies and much of the know-how to build a world of high

living standards that are not based on fossil fuels, and in which most material resources are recycled. Documents such as the Paris Accord or the UN Sustainable Development Goals also point us in roughly the right direction. What is missing is the vision, the understanding, and the will to mobilize enough of the global population in support of the necessary changes. We have the physical technologies needed for sustainability, but not the necessary political and intellectual technologies.

So the mobilizational task really is fundamental. What are the barriers to effective global mobilization behind the goal of global sustainability?

Certainly, there are powerful interests opposed to change. If, as some claim, those interests are powerful enough to block a transition to sustainability, then our prospects are indeed dire, because another major difference from the nineteenth century is that we now have weapons destructive enough to degrade the entire biosphere within twenty-four hours. That means that in the twenty-first century, a global class war will be many times more destructive than the revolutionary wars anticipated by nineteenth century revolutionaries, in which the most powerful weapons were cannons and rifles. Fortunately, there are good reasons to think that elite resistance to sustainability may prove weaker and less determined than is often assumed.

First, there now exists a massive global middle class that has benefited from rising living standards. The members of this class have a profound interest in maintaining those standards, and many are beginning to understand that this means building more sustainable societies.

Second, modern capitalist elites, too, have an interest in a sustainable future. And the most far-seeing among those elites understand that capitalism can adapt to a sustainable world order, just as it adapted successfully to rising wages and the consumer capitalism of the twentieth century. Profit-making does not have to depend on the consumption of virgin resources. Indeed, vast profits are already being made from recycling, from sustainable energy technologies, and from services that exert very little pressure on the global environment.

If this analysis is correct, it suggests that mobilizing a large and powerful global coalition in support of building a more sustainable world should not be an impossible challenge.

What are the remaining barriers to building such a party? One major barrier is the survival of outdated modes of thought. The dominant forms of education and thought today are short-term, local, and siloized. They teach history on scales too small to understand the planet-changing challenges we face, they teach politics as the study of short-term tribal and national interests, and they teach science through the disconnected lenses of separate disciplines. In the real world of the Anthropocene, everything is connected within a single, planetary system; in the siloized world of modern education, nothing is connected. That makes it impossible even to see clearly the primary challenge we face today, which is nothing less than the task of wisely managing the richly interconnected planetary system that James Lovelock called "Gaia."

There are no choices here; our impacts on the biosphere are already so profound that the only collective choice we have is to manage the biosphere well or manage it badly. That is a challenge that no species has faced in the four-billion-year history of Planet Earth. But seeing the task clearly and responding to it appropriately requires a breadth of vision, a capacity to think across many different disciplines, and a sense of change on geological time-scales, that we do not find in the educational and political institutions we have inherited from the early twentieth century. As they face these huge challenges, a younger generation will need to think in new ways.

As we face up to the challenges of the Anthropocene, we will need schools and universities that can help students see the many links between different forms of knowledge. To understand the many systems that keep our earth livable, you need some grasp of basic environmental science. And to understand the human impact on these systems, you need some understanding of how and why our species has acquired such colossal power over the plants and the animals with which we share the biosphere, and over the flows of energy and resources that sustain life on earth. Thinking discipline by discipline makes it impossible to understand problems that are chemical/meteorological/geological/biological/economic/political—problems like climate change or declining biodiversity.

Finally, we need some understanding of the history that we all share as humans, in order to understand both what unites us, and what it is that makes us so different, so powerful, and so dangerous. Awareness of the rich history that we share as humans, a history extending back for several hundred thousand years, can help generate the sense of planetary solidarity and shared

global citizenship that we will need as we tackle problems that can no longer be dealt with nation by nation. Yet most history teaching today is still about the histories of particular communities or nations. Mobilizing on a planetary scale will remain difficult as long as most people, most educators, and most governments are locked into the blinkered, siloized thought-world of the past.

My own work has been dedicated for many years to teaching courses that can help people acquire the broader vision—the "view from the mountaintop"—that will be needed to inspire a global movement for sustainability. Courses in "big history" teach about the history of humanity as a whole, a history as rich and engaging as any national history. This is the sort of historical thinking needed to generate a sense of shared membership in a "global community." Big history courses also show how human history is embedded in the history of an entire biosphere, an extraordinarily complex global system that has evolved over 4 billion years. Finally, they show how our home planet is part of an evolving universe that emerged in the "big bang", almost 14 billion years ago. Big history courses offer a modern, science-based origin story for the whole of humanity. By doing so, they can convey a sense of the momentous changes through which we are living right now, and the complex but inspiring challenges that will be faced by the next few generations of humans. They offer the broad vision of a better human future that will be needed to motivate and inspire a world political party dedicated to building a sustainable world.

It goes without saying that building such a broad vision of the past and future is just one part of the complex puzzles we all face today. But it may be quite an important part. After all, no effective political movements have gotten far without a sense of vision that is both believable and inspiring. And there are now many resources available to help teach the unifying vision of big history, in schools, in universities and more widely. There are many published materials on big history in a growing number of languages, and there exist at least two online courses in big history for schools, the "Big History Project" and the more recent "Big History School."

In conclusion, one of the major challenges faced by any global movement for sustainability will be the construction of a new and inspiring vision of where we humans are today, a vision that can inspire optimism and ambition about the planetary task of building a sustainable future. That is a task that will require new forms of thought and more interdisciplinary approaches to education.

## Endnotes

1. See, for example, David Christian, *Origin Story: A Big History of Everything* (New York: Little, Brown, and Co., 2018). Notably, the Big History Project (www.bighistoryproject.com/home) offers a unified and interdisciplinary curriculum for middle and high school levels.

## About the Author

David Christian is Professor of History and Director of the Big History Institute at Macquarie University in Sydney. By training a historian of Russia and the Soviet Union, he has become interested in world history on very large scales, or "Big History," since the 1980s. He taught at Macquarie University from 1975 to 2000, then at San Diego State University, before returning to Macquarie in 2009. He was founding president of the International Big History Association and co-founder, with Bill Gates, of the Big History Project. He is the author of *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*, among many other books and articles. He holds a PhD from Oxford University.

# Richard Falk

I have long admired the "visionary realism" that has been at the core of Heikki Patomäki's scholarly contributions to the struggle for a peaceful, democratic, sustainable, and just world order. It is "visionary" because Patomäki depicts a future for humanity that exceeds the limits of the *feasible*, and seems guided by what is *necessary* (in responses to challenges) and what is *desirable* (with respect to values and opportunities). In addition, he writes with lucidity, considers impediments, and takes seriously skeptical objections to what he proposes. It is a form of "realism" because Patomäki takes account of what is real by way of threats to human well-being, and makes use of experience with other radical global reformist projects as a basis for assessing the plausibility of his own conjectures and proposals. All of these positive qualities are present in this essay putting forward the case for taking steps now to establish the first ever world political party.

As I read Patomäki, his point of departure is to affirm as a world order imperative the urgent need for "a fundamental shift from the dominant national mythos to a global worldview." Without quibbling about choice of words, I think what he has in mind is less a "shift" than the emergence of a global worldview with the political traction needed to address the global-scale problems that he enunciates. The existential point of departure is the interconnectedness of every individual on the planet, no matter how diversely situated in relation to class, race, occupation, and political milieu in the face of such mounting global risks as are associated with "ecological crises and weapons of mass destruction." Patomäki attributes the dysfunctional response patterns to these shared risks to the prevailing national mythos and its political manifestations in a world order system dominated by territorial sovereign states. A world political party, generated by activist initiatives of civil society, could in Patomäki's view become the vehicle to facilitate a global transformation that would offer the peoples of the world a path toward risk reduction resulting from a more appropriate administration of planetary activity in all policy domains. Such a transformative process would become manifest in a more functionally and normatively appropriate institutionalization of political

life than the present reliance on the zombie national mythos, that is, a system that persists long after its functionality has deteriorated. Patomäki believes that a world political party would become a vital force in giving credibility to a global mythos responsive to the challenges and opportunities of planetary interconnectedness.

Even taking account of the limits of coverage in a short essay, I have some problems with the way in which the world political party is situated in the historical present. I would have liked to see some greater diagnostic emphasis on geopolitics and neoliberal capitalism as obstacles to global transformation and as oppositional to the formation of a politically relevant world political party. Geopolitics is important because hierarchies of power and wealth embedded in the established order suppress any realist risk assessment process, as well as make inequalities of benefits and burdens override the commonalities of human interconnectedness. Similarly, neoliberal capitalism operates according to a transnational logic that accentuates many dimensions of inequality, and is oriented in ways at odds with both the national and global mythic landscapes that understandably preoccupy Patomäki.

A further question I have is a matter of resonance and receptivity. I have the sense that Patomäki's version of visionary realism is at once too late and too early. It is too late in the sense that there existed greater fluidity with respect to world order arrangements either in 1945 at the end of World War II or in the early 1990s at the end of the Cold War. In 1945, there was a heightened sense of world risk due to the recent atomic attacks on Japanese cities and what that prefigured for future warfare. Civil society would have been receptive to bold initiatives by national governments, but it was dormant with respect to envisioning shaping the future by forming a world political party that embraced an agenda based on the survivability of the species and the benefits of a cooperative world order reflecting a global ethos. After the Cold War, there was a sigh of relief, but the absence of any relevant kind of transformative energy directed at dramatic risk reduction and globally oriented problem-solving. Political leaders missed this golden opportunity, and the multitudes were pacified by consumerism and materialist aspirations.

We are now experiencing a set of global realities that seems devoid of the missed opportunities of these two occasions in recent international history when the stars of destiny seemed more favorably aligned for the promotion of visionary realist undertakings, including the formation and rapid support

for a grassroots type of world political party. What the present conjuncture of forces most offers to those who share, as I do, Patomäki's insistence that we need a fundamental shift toward globality of consciousness and action is as yet difficult to grasp, let alone endow with transformative agency. I would emphasize two unheralded features of our global circumstance, perhaps in accord with "Big History" that Patomäki calls to our attention. First is the ease of communication and networking associated with the digital age where globally constituted projects of this sort can be interactively shaped without requiring physical face-to-face meetings. Second is the very adversity of circumstances and the severity of global risks is giving rise to a radical populist consciousness, which while still at the margins, contains the ingredients of a political platform that does justice to the needs and values that should inform a world political party from its inception. This radical consciousness can be thought of as an acknowledgement of the first bioethical crisis in human history, which raises questions about whether the species has a collective will to survive.

I find these kinds of general considerations of our human circumstances more illuminating than the sort of encouragement that is derived from the successful movement for the establishment of the International Criminal Court or the ongoing efforts of the Democracy in Europe Movement. It is true that these projects show that transnational political undertakings can work to some extent even in the face of resurgent nationalism, but I do not find such undertaking as having relevant transformative agency or potential.

I would like to end with an aside associated with the failures of the Arab Spring in 2011. Having been in Cairo just after the extraordinary mass nonviolent uprising that led to the downfall of a cruel, autocratic regime in Egypt, I witnessed the excitement and hope of the people at the time. I also witnessed the consequences of not having a clear agreed-upon vision of what needs to be done, a political platform that sets forth a program. My fear associated with promoting a world political party at this time is that it is ideologically premature. This is not a call for a blueprint, as I agree with Patomäki that such specificity would be shaped as the party took form, and in response to inputs from participants around the world. Yet there is a need for more concreteness regarding capitalism, geopolitics, international law, human rights, climate change, nuclear disarmament, and the UN than is contained either in Patomäki's fine essay or, more significantly, in the climate of progressive world opinion. Until that degree of clarification and consensus is present, I fear that disillusionment would

be the likely outcome of any present effort to move forward with the formation of a world political party. Our time can be better spent otherwise to satisfy the urgent challenges of a transformative global agenda, although putting the idea of a world political party in the progressive imaginary is a constructive contribution. What I find questionable at this point is any serious effort, given present realities around the world, to *actualize* the idea.

## About the Author

Richard Falk is Albert G. Milbank Professor Emeritus of International Law at Princeton University, Fellow of the Orfalea Center of Global Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Associate Fellow at Tellus Institute. He directs the project on Global Climate Change, Human Security, and Democracy at UCSB and formerly served as director of the North American group of the World Order Models Project and the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Occupied Palestine. He is the author of such books as *Power Shift: On the New Global Order*; *(Re)Imagining Humane Global Governance*; *Religion and Humane Global Governance*; and *Explorations at the Edge of Time*. He holds an SJD from Harvard University.

# Ashish Kothari

This is a very interesting proposal, based on very justified angst about the fractured state of civil society responses to global crises, and building on critical ethical principles of justice, sustainability, the balance between pluralism and unity, and so on.

However, a number of points remain unclear or are missing:

(1) Since there is no definition of "political party" in the essay, I am assuming it is in essence the same kind as political parties that stand for national elections, and by its nature an entity that will have other contesting parties (presumably of those who want to retain power in the current hegemonic ways bolstered by capitalism, militarism, etc.?). If so, how will it avoid the pitfalls of elections, including the hostile competitiveness that reduces issues of substance to slinging matches, the alienation between parties that take power and the "electorate" who vote them in, and so on? What is DiEM25's perspective on this, and does it have one which will enable it to avoid such pitfalls when it contests European Parliament elections? And if the model is not that of a party that contests elections, what is the model, and why is it called a political party?

(2) What is the relation between representative democracy, of which such a party would presumably be a result, and direct democracy, in which people on the ground are the ones taking decisions? Related to one of the above points, we are aware that even the most "revolutionary" party that has captured the state has failed on a number of counts to respect, and even more so to strengthen, the political power of the "ordinary" person, and have ended up consolidating and monopolizing power at "the top." When this happens at a relatively modest scale of a nation, can it be even more dangerous at a global level? Previous suggestions for a 'world parliament', for instance, have faced the same criticism. Any kind of global process needs to be grounded in, respect, and strengthen everyday ground struggles and initiatives towards alternatives for justice. How will a World Party do this, and what are the feedback mechanisms that may ensure this?

Many such questions need to be asked and explored, or else it is not clear how this is not subject to centralizing power hegemonies or why it is better than, for instance, a network model of thousands of interlinked movements for justice that don't have any single centralized institutional structure (see below on this). I do understand and appreciate Patomäki's stress on "cultivating a sense of mutuality, trust, and sensitivity amongst diverse participants." Let's call it an ethic of responsibility. Nevertheless, we need a clearer vision of what would be the institutional structure that would enable, rather than disable, a radical, participatory, deep democracy without which representative or delegated institutions become power centers.

(3) Related to this, the proposal seems to stem from a "Western" (or Global Northern) perspective, especially in its focus on individuals being part of such a process. Without denying the importance of individuals, a "Southern/Eastern" perspective would also ask, what is the role of "communities" (defined in many different ways), traditional and modern, in making a global process of transformation work? What aspects of the traditional glues of community remain relevant and, indeed, crucial, and what aspects (such as gender/caste inequities) need to be removed? How can a global formation enable this, rather than become a stronghold of what is regressive in both tradition and modernity?

(4) Without also a vision of a radically different economy (local to global), the vision of a World Party (or, indeed, of any global formation) is very incomplete. Who controls the economy, and how would a global formation enable its democratization?

(5) Finally, it is not clear why Patomäki prefers a political party as opposed to a non-party political movement (this distinction has been clearly articulated in Indian civil society). What is it that the latter cannot achieve that the former can? In principle, one can envision a powerful global networking movement of movements, that comes together for global decisions in various forums such as peoples' assemblies, where a process of economic localization and democratization reduces the need for global decision-making—not eliminating it, of course, for the global environment governance and social relations and some economic relations will continue to need harmonization, but where the WTOs and the World Banks can be sent packing. A tiny contribution towards this is in a new initiative just launched, called the Global Tapestry of Alternatives, an attempt at connecting myriad local to global initiatives at justice.

Somehow, I am not convinced that a global political party (if defined as given above) is the way to go for bringing revolutionary forces together, not from the material in this essay anyway; perhaps if Patomäki develops it further plugging many of missing or weakly articulated issues, one can reconsider.

## About the Author

Ashish Kothari is on the core team of the Global Tapestry of Alternatives, and a coordinator of Vikalp Sangam in India. He has taught at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, coordinated India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan process, and served on the boards of Greenpeace International and Greenpeace India. He is co-author of *Churning the Earth: Making of Global India* and co-editor of *Alternative Futures: India Unshackled* and *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary*.

# Valentine M. Moghadam

Is it time for a world political party, as Heikki Patomäki argues? I think it is, although I agree with some of the critiques, such as overreliance on the idea of global civil society, the need for more specificity, and absence of an analysis of capitalism. Not so long ago, many activists—including those of us with backgrounds in centralized political formations—found "horizontal" movements and networks refreshing in their diversity, nonviolence, and direct democracy. But they came and went, and the capitalist world-system remained the same. Worse, the hegemon and its allies were able to destabilize countries in the Middle East and North Africa, invade and occupy, and foment civil conflicts. While people across the globe suffer the ravages of neoliberal capitalism, war, and climate change, the political and economic elites continue to party annually at Davos.

In recent years, we have seen renewed calls for more concerted political action, coordination, and platforms. In a 2006 essay, and more recently before his passing in August 2018, Samir Amin called for a Fifth International. In a number of articles since at least 2009, Christopher Chase-Dunn and his colleagues have examined prospects for the World Revolution of 20xx spearheaded by the New Global Left—groups critical of neoliberal capitalist globalization and which include popular forces, social movements, and progressive political parties and national regimes. Like Chase-Dunn and others, including the "Group of Nineteen" who penned the 2005 Porto Alegre Manifesto, I felt that the World Social Forum constituted a site for such planning and coordination, if only it would revise its Charter of Principles and allow for the formulation of a political program and for cooperation with progressive political parties.[1] But many within the WSF prefer that it remain a forum for dialogue.

In his 2006 essay, Samir Amin asks, who will challenge the new imperialist order, and how? After criticizing those who "wish to maintain the WSF in a state of maximal impotence," he takes a look

back at the First, Second, and Third Internationals (he mentions in passing the Fourth, or Trotskyist, International), and concludes that it is time to move towards a Fifth International. I agree.

The record of the recent past, as well the rise and spread of right-wing populist movements, parties, and governments in Europe, the United States, and Global South, make the call for concerted political action and coordination all the more urgent. The new movements draw on the support of hardened right-wingers as well as citizens who have been left behind by decades of neoliberal economic policy, austerity, and neglect. Such citizens also are fearful of the economic and cultural effects of the massive wave of immigrants and refugees—in turn the result of neoliberal economic policies, state destabilizations, and wars. Such citizens blame the established parties for the migrant and refugee influx as well as the welfare cuts, and they trust that the new right-wing parties can turn the tide. All such parties and governments are decidedly and dangerously anti-feminist.

Parallel to the rise of the Global Right are progressive alternatives such as Bernie Sanders's Our Revolution in the US, the British Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn, Spain's Podemos, Portugal's Left Bloc, Tunisia's Front Populaire, and left-wing Green parties in many countries, including the US. What is missing is a coordinating mechanism for coalition-building with trade unions and feminist organizations to form a powerful alliance of transnational social movement organizations and progressive political parties that could challenge the powers that be. A starting place could be the recent call for a Progressive International, an initiative of the (Bernie) Sanders Institute in Vermont and DiEM25, co-founded by Yanis Varoufakis.[2]

Having missed recent opportunities to forge a sustained global movement against the ravages of neoliberal capitalist globalization and its many side effects, surely it is time for strategic movement-building and a united front. It is worth noting that many of the right-wing populist-nationalist parties and leaderships which have formed or won elections in recent years seem to be in some form of regular contact with each other, in part through that roving ambassador of the populist-nationalist Right, Steve Bannon. Similarly, the various Islamist parties and movements around the world, especially those of the Muslim Brotherhood variant, have ways of connecting and sharing. (Islamist parties are part of the Global Right. As Amin noted in his many critiques, Islamist movements are preoccupied with cultural issues rather than capitalism and do not offer plans to improve the people's socioeconomic conditions and rights.)

For our part, it must be possible to create a coordinating mechanism that would connect the many disparate struggles—such as the *gilets jaunes* protests in France—around a common goal of creating a world in which what matters most is the welfare of the people and planet and not the profits and power of businesses, elites, or self-serving political parties. That would mean something like a very clear, very coherent platform – one that could mobilize the largest number of adherents around core issues, even if some people might not agree on some of the accompanying issues and values.

Any new international would be different from past internationals, more inclusive and less dogmatic, and certainly with the participation of many more women than was the case before, but still with a definite structure, coherent platform, and leadership capable of taking "the movement" forward in a more strategic manner at national, regional, and global levels. Calls for a world political party or a Fifth International must be taken seriously. A return to a more formal organizing structure with clear political goals and a unified strategy is surely the path to take.

## Endnotes

1. Available at www.archive.is/20051112235616/http://www.zmag.org/sustainers/content/2005-02/20group_of_nineteen.cfm.

2. See https://progressive.international/.

## About the Author

Valentine M. Moghadam is Professor of Sociology and International Affairs at Northeastern University, where she researches globalization; transnational social movements and networks; economic citizenship; and gender, development, and women's movements in the Middle East and North Africa. Her books include *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, the award-winning *Globalizing Women: Transnational Feminist Networks*, and *Globalization and Social Movements: Islamism, Feminism, and the Global Justice Movement*. She holds a PhD in sociology from American University.

# William I. Robinson

Heikki Patomäki's call for a world political party is timely and urgent. He is, in my view, entirely correct in observing that we need to radically reform existing institutions and create new transnational ones that provide "transformative political agency." And he has important things to say about the nature of such a party, conceived, for instance, as a "movement-party," and about the precedent of the DiEM25 in Europe. But his essay fails to ask the crucial questions that would give political meaning to the call for such a party: who is "we," and what needs to be transformed?

Patomäki fails to put forth any analysis of the social and class forces in conflict in global society or a critique of the global capitalist order and the power structure that sustains the existing state of affairs. Yet this is precisely the critical analysis that must form the context for discussion of a world party. Liberal and pluralist approaches tend to assume that the crisis of humanity can be resolved without a confrontation with the powers that be in global society, and that groups and classes whose interests are fundamentally antagonistic can be brought together in some unified project on the basis of moral or ethical persuasion, or an appeal to reason. Indeed, this is the thrust of Patomäki's argument. The underlying assumption seems to be that those who rule over us need only be enlightened by an appeal to ethics and reason rather than a struggle to build counter-power from below and dethrone these rulers.

Certainly, such persuasion and recourse to reason is fundamental to any Great Transition. But to suggest—implicitly if not explicitly—that these are the bases for a project of transformation that could resolve the crisis of humanity is to turn a blind eye to the underlying causes of humanity's desperate plight and to the inevitable confrontation with global capitalism and its agents. Quite simply, it is capital's implacable drive to accumulate that leads it to plunder the environment, to expropriate land and resources, to waste and pillage communities everywhere, and to impose a global police state to contain the explosive contradictions of an out-of-control system.

It is not that Patomäki claims outright that global capitalism is not the problem. Rather, the elephant in the room is simply made invisible. A word search of the essay reveals that there are exactly zero references to capitalism. Socialism is mentioned three times not with regard to the need for a socialist project in the twenty-first century but in reference to the early twentieth-century internationals. How can we possibly talk about crisis and transformation without critiquing the system in which humanity lives? How can we imagine a liberatory world party that does not target this system and its agents? Instead, we get a teleological notion of a collective learning process driving history forward from ancient Greece (a "cosmological unfolding") and a call for a world party to now "cosmopolitanize" this process.

Conflict and confrontation is inevitable, whether we wish it or not; whether we will it or not. The question is, how do we intervene in the conflicts raging around the world, and in whose interests? We need a world political party precisely in order to articulate across nations and regions such intervention and coordinate a fight against the ravages of a predatory global capitalism. I agree with Patomäki that a detailed blueprint for a world party is "neither advisable nor possible," yet we can and should reject outright his classical notion of a liberal party.

There are opposing conceptions of global civil society. One is of a harmonious mass of humanity, and the other is of a battleground over hegemony and power—a site wracked by conflict and struggle. Part of the battle for a bottom-up Great Transition is the conquest of hegemony in global civil society by the global working and popular classes. In this endeavor, we need a world political party for and by these global working and popular classes that is not open to the transnational capitalist class (TCC) and its agents, that is explicitly opposed to global capitalism, that is predicated on system change, and that puts forth a minimum program (along the lines of DiEM25) and a renewed socialist vision.

If particular corporate groups (e.g., the solar energy industry) and reformist elements among the transnational elite can be brought on board, this is both welcome and necessary, but not at the expense of substituting an anti-capitalist and ecosocialist agenda with a liberal agenda of mild reform. This is not an argument against reform. Let us recall what history has taught us: meaningful reform of capitalism has come about as working and popular classes fight for fundamental transformation against elites and capitalism. The twentieth-century Fordist-Keynesian reform projects such as the New Deal in the United States, or social democracy in Europe, came about in the face of mass worker and socialist

struggles and not as a result of ethical persuasion, a learning process, or consensus-seeking among the exploited and the exploiters.

We must fight for any and every reform that helps people survive the depredations of global capitalism and that pushes forward democratic liberties. But given the depth and nature of the crisis, I am not convinced that this time around anything short of the overthrow of capitalism can prevent our destruction. For this, we certainly do need a world political party or a new international of parties and movements.

## About the Author

William I. Robinson is a Distinguished Professor of Sociology, Global and International Studies, and Latin American and Iberian Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara. His books include *The Global Police State*, *Global Capitalism and the Crisis of Humanity*, *Latin America and Global Capitalism*, and *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, US Intervention and Hegemony*. Previously, he was an investigative journalist in Central America and has lectured around the world on the global economy, international politics, and contemporary world affairs. He is active in several social justice movements, including immigrant rights in the United States and justice for Palestine. He holds a PhD in sociology from the University of New Mexico.

# Author's Response

# Response to Comments

In the future, we will see many world political parties (WPPs). The idea of a WPP is generic. While our capacity to envisage our common existence from a planetary perspective and to organize politics accordingly is valuable in itself, I am advocating a particular vision for the form such a party could take. This ambiguity has triggered a number of critical comments, so let me be clear: what I propose is that we establish a democratic socialist world party. At the same time, however, I believe that in a pluralistic and non-Eurocentric world, there will be other simultaneous and substantive ideals around which future politics revolve.

What could a democratic socialist world party do under the current institutional and political-economic conditions? As Karl Marx famously said, actors "make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past." Certainly, there have been better world-historical moments for global democratic ideas, such as the end of the two world wars and the 1990s. If anything, the world is now disintegrating, in part as a result of the rise of nationalist populism. This rise has been strongly fueled by the 2008–9 crisis and its consequences, but its deeper causes are related to the process of neoliberalization that started back in the 1970s. Moreover, in spite of many campaigns, it remains the case that there is still no world parliament (or government). Even if the idea of a United Nations Parliamentary Assembly (UNPA) was realized immediately, it would probably give greater voice to members of national parliaments, rather than creating space for anything resembling global political parties proper. No global elections are yet in sight.

It is reasonable, at least tentatively, to see the current situation in terms of Karl Polanyi's double movement, although clearly, history does not simply repeat itself. There is no pendulum of history. Moreover, we cannot go back to what Axel Honneth calls the intellectual fictions of the age of the

Industrial Revolution, namely that historical progress is necessary and that it will be carried forward by a particular class with fixed interests.[1] While the working-class movement in England and elsewhere emerged from a variety of real socioeconomic conditions, it was actively nurtured by socialists who believed in its world-historical role. The socioeconomic conditions are different in the twenty-first century. For instance, industrial workers form a declining share of the labor force across advanced industrial countries.

Changing realities require new ideas. The idea of transformative global agency is purported to make a wide rational appeal across different social classes: "This is what is reasonable for us to do!" As Richard Falk puts it, "The very adversity of circumstances and the severity of global risks is giving rise to a radical populist consciousness." In addition to these risks, and the acute sense of injustices and asymmetries of power, there must also be a positive direction. David Christian expresses the positive part of the idea eloquently: the challenge is to construct "a new and inspiring vision of where we humans are today, a vision that can inspire optimism and ambition about the planetary task of building a sustainable future." Indeed, this is the main aim of my call for a WPP.

The making of a collective agency is a process of active and reflexive engagement among the world's people. The nineteenth-century socialists, believing in their world-historical role, established trade unions, various associations and societies, and labor and socialist parties. The making of a working class shaped the development of industrial capitalism, and also, together with the twentieth-century catastrophes, led to the establishment of dictatorial and often violent single-party socialist regimes across the world. We need to learn from these historical experiences, both the negative and positive lessons they have to offer. We must avoid again being mired in the intellectual fictions of the age of the Industrial Revolution and must acknowledge the diversity of elements that fed into the process of forming the nineteenth-century working class. The majority of these associations, unions, and parties were struggling to democratize society, and often succeeded.

Similarly, we can see the emergence of global civil society, along with the possible coalescence of a world political party, as part of a broad process of global transformation. Citizens across the world are disillusioned by national politics. In response to the latest rounds of globalization, many national parties have become post-democratic. Consider the fate of Syriza in Greece, for instance. What happened was not simply an example of Michels's iron law of oligarchy (which posits that oligarchy is the inevitable

fate of all complex organizations). More importantly, the debacle of the summer of 2015 illustrated the power of creditors over debtors in the world economy and the lack of equitable rule of law in worldwide financial relations. During past decades, a large number of countries in the Global South went through similar experiences, instigating the emergence of global debt campaigns in the 1980s and 1990s.

Civil society is about associational life and public space. Since Hegel introduced the term into the modern discourse, several different conceptions of civil society have emerged, reflecting different ethical and political aims of public associations. Table 1 summarizes four of conceptions, each of which expresses particular historical discussions and developments. Variations 2 through 4 all contain ideas important for emancipation and increasing social freedom. It is, of course, true that many contemporary civil society organizations are financially dependent on the powers that be, and even those that are not, tend to focus on one or two limited issues. This does not negate the idea that civil society organizations can do important work and foster ideas of global justice and democracy. Moreover, in a good society, the freedom of association must prevail. As Roy Bhaskar puts it, despite the very real weaknesses of civil society, its social virtues remains "a domain of innovation, initiative and enterprise necessary to a dynamic, pluralistic socialist society."[2]

**Approaches to civil society**

Table 1: Approaches to civil society

| | Focus on property rights and market economy | Focus on moral or political civil society |
|---|---|---|
| Procedural democracy (liberalism) | 1. Lockean-Schumpeterian approach: primacy of stability in capitalist market economy | 2. Fair participation in political processes and similar ideas (often associated with Mill and Rawls) |
| Participatory democracy (republicanism) | 3. The idea of participatory democratized, economic organizations and systems | 4. Dissident ideas and "Green" political theory; the New Left; "postmaterial values" |

Broadly, a political party is best seen as an instance of public association. A typical national political party is an association that has achieved the right to nominate candidates in elections and thereby contest and claim the political power of the state. A party has to have a wide program covering multiple complex issues, for its aim is to take part in making laws and budgetary decisions.

As commenters point out, a world political party could not claim that role in a world state, simply because no such state exists. But the party itself would constitute a public sphere, and the existing international regimes, or systems of regional and global governance, would provide sites for a public sphere and political actions. The *raison d'être* of the world party must lie in furthering transformations and various new institutional forms in which the planetary public realm can be organized. For this purpose, largely shared opinions among participants will be forged into a program of change, which can also involve direct or indirect participation in elections in different countries and organizations. We can distinguish between three moments of transformative global democratic action:

MOMENT 1: Activities within the confines of established institutions.

MOMENT 2: Advocacy to transform global institutions and create new ones.

MOMENT 3: Participation in the newly formed global institutions.

These three moments form a logical order: activities within existing institutions can include advocacy of, and legislation for, global democratic institutions. A grouping of like-minded countries, supported by global civil society and WPPs, can suffice for establishing a new global system of governance. These systems can be functional and yet democratic. Successful attempts at creating institutions of planetary democracy make participation in them possible. Over time, new institutions will become established, and the cycle can continue from MOMENT 1 to MOMENT 2 to MOMENT 3. Each step in the process changes the constellation of forces in global politics and the ways the WPP strategy adapts. There is no end to history; and not all new institutions will have to be planetary in scope. Global institutions can, and in many cases should, increase the contextually overlapping, multi-layered autonomy and social freedom of actors, learning from experiences in an experimental spirit.

Since the 1990s, I have been involved in developing and advocating several specific global utopias (or *eutopias* as I prefer to call them), from a debt arbitration mechanism and global taxes (including a global greenhouse gas tax) to a twenty-first-century version of Keynes's clearing union. I particularly favor building support for workers' rights and trade unionization on a planetary scale, both out of solidarity and to increase global aggregate demand. Another key idea is to regulate and maintain aggregate efficient demand on a global scale, which presupposes the coordinated

institutionalization of economic policies between nation-states and functional international organizations, coordinated for example through a world parliament. These reforms would be critically important as well for global peace and security, since root causes of conflicts and securitization tend to lie in the sphere of political economy. We need to build a more cooperative and equitable world.

The rational tendency of world history is toward green global Keynesianism, which would enable us to achieve democratic control over the mechanisms and processes of the capitalist world economy. Nonetheless, how well any of the proposed institutional arrangements will work is contingent. There are also deeper aims, such as furthering human emancipation and the development of all on the thin layer of life on our fragile planet, all in the wider context of cosmic evolution. This generic aim should, in my view, constitute the key idea of a democratic socialist world party, thereby encouraging a diversity of emancipatory projects across scales from local to cosmic, focusing for instance on the idea of commons. It would be premature to write a detailed program for a WPP before the process leading to its creation has begun; at this point, we can only outline a broad direction. And, to reiterate, there will be many WPPs.

Let me conclude this response by outlining three scenarios about the future role of WPPs in global politics:

(A) A world political party—or a number of them—forms in the near future, proving decisively important in future transformations.

(B) Transformations emerge mainly from within the existing structures of power (global "gorbachevs" rise in response to crises, resonating with wider societal developments and new ideas); new democratic systems of global governance precipitate the formation of WPPs that assume important functions.

(C) Current developments lead to a global military and/or ecological catastrophe; a world party assumes leadership and establishes a democratic world state (this is the well-known scenario of W. Warren Wagar in his *A Short History of Future*); soon, the world party is then challenged by other world political parties, carrying the project of emancipation further, perhaps into new and hitherto unimagined directions.

My general anticipation is that WPPs will be in the center stage of future world politics, regardless of which scenario comes to pass. The current system is not sustainable economically, politically, militarily, or ecologically. Of course, I favor Scenario 1. To avoid a catastrophe, or an elite-led development, the time to establish a democratic world political party is indeed now!

Reflexively, the democratic socialist world party would recognize a widespread tendency towards post-democratic forms of governance. These oligarchic tendencies would have to be countered by cultivating the republican virtues and courageous participation of its constantly shifting groups of activist members. This is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for ensuring democratic responsiveness and learning. A WPP will be a continuing historical experiment.

## Endnotes

1. Axel Honneth, *The Idea of Socialism: Toward a Renewal* (New York: Wiley, 2016).

2. Roy Bhaskar, *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 235.