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BOOK REVIEW

Social Movements and Systemic Alternatives



Social Movements and Radical Alternatives

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This is the 9th e-publication of the Global Tapestry of Alternatives (GTA) which attempts to explore narratives, reflections, debates and ruminations around systemic alternatives in the Social Movement spaces. What is the justification for this e-book? In the words of its Editors:

“We are today living in a world of profound crisis but also a world in profound flux, with major and sometimes dramatic movements erupting all over the world responding to the crises, and sometimes seeming to sweep history aside. With historical factors deeply embedded in these movements and processes across the world, they are trying to challenge the dominant systems of oppression and offer new politics ... or even sustain old but still relevant politics in a new context. These movements at some points are linear (emerging through a specific crisis), at others non-linear, spontaneous, often 'local' or regional but globally situated and impactful, manifested both in form of resistance and constructive alternatives at ground...”

GTA's attempt at putting this issue together emerges from its continued engagement in dialogues with other Social Movements and global mobilisation attempting systemic, fundamental transformations towards justice. In its experience, it is crucial to be in constant dialogue to find crucial paths in the long term, outside of the colonial mindset, towards systemic

alternatives. Its theme has a specific focus on alternatives, because for GTA, the role of Social Movements is as important in constructing alternatives as in resistance against systemic oppression.

Rather than offering 'a theory of change' to capitalism, anthropocentrism, patriarchy, statism, racism, among others, Social Movements need to offer a 'pluriverse' of alternatives to these crises. This could only be possible if Social Movements are self-reflecting in their process of emergence, change, internal democracy, and what new (or renewed) forms of politics they can offer by being grounded in everyday struggles. The contributions from Colombia, Argentina, India, Kurdistan, Thailand, Indonesia, and Timor Leste explore several questions relevant to the above.

The contributors explore the limitations of theoretical frameworks for Protest and Social Movements to deeply understand the emergent horizontal practices that are emerging from communities organising from below. They bring out the learnings emerging from the grassroots experiences of movements challenging the concentration of state power (or the notion of the state itself), patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism.

The publication highlights key insights emerging from the movement spaces engaging with state power such as Left governments in Latin America, and the need for Social Movements to strengthen their autonomous capacity to construct grassroots transformative processes. Its contributors explore the role of grounded movements on regionalism and transnationalism from below that can challenge the dominant elite-centered and oligarchic regionalism.

By highlighting the issues of old Socialist and Leftist theories that very often are dogmatic and see only one way while rejecting others, the contributors speak to the idea of being grounded in creating real alternatives. They raise deep questions like the following:

- What could be the process of common envisioning among these radical processes and transitional movements that can transform the systems from local to global level?
- How do we combine resistances and alternatives in Social Movement spaces to effectively challenge growing Fascism, and move towards emancipatory/radical democracy?
- What special role are women, youth, indigenous peoples, and other marginalised sections playing in such movements?

This periodical is put together with the collaborative efforts of Shrishtee Bajpai, Martin Aplaneta, Franco Augusto and Urvi Shah. The publishers invite readers to engage, reflect and dialogue on the ideas in the e-book. They see it as a start to a long-term process of engaging with ideas, facilitating collaborations and initiating co-writing, co-learning and dialogical processes, all of this helping in the mobilisation needed to transform our societies.

The editors acknowledge that Social Movements is a vast subject, and that they have not been able to cover all the relevant aspects, but they do hope that the contributions in this issue will serve as a starting point to dive deeper.