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World Social Forum in Belem

Radicalise the alternatives

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The World Social Forum (WSF) held in Belem is a very significant one. It's the first WSF held after the outburst of the 2008 economic crisis. This crisis made evident the total failure of neo-liberalism and the destructive character of global capitalism. Besides, Brazilian Amazon is a privileged place to highlight the link between social and ecological crisis.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/wsf.jpg>]

This Forum was celebrated after a long period of time in which the "antiglobalization" movement lost momentum and political prominence. In spite of this, social resistances have been growing all over the world but in a context of more fragmentation and more dispersion. In this scenario it would seem that the WSF relevance may have decreased as well as its concrete results. Nonetheless, the WSF continues to be the most distinctive reference for the "antiglobalization" movement. The latter needs to simultaneously boost the development of social movements from below and their general coordination.

The crisis poses the challenge to renew strategic perspectives and give an answer to the present moment, marked by an increasing, but vague, refusal of the actual economic system. A mere "anti-neo-liberalism" approach is not enough. To shift towards consequent "anti-capitalism" seems to be a necessary strategic development that must be accomplished in order to attain this "other possible world" praised by the forum.

It's time to deepen the alternatives and radicalize their contents. We must set higher the bar for criticism and propose an agenda for breaking-off the neo-liberal paradigm from an anti-capitalist perspective. To the "classic" demands and proposals set forth during the past years (the Tobin tax, the debt cancellation, the suppression of tax havens...) one must add new proposals which until now were "out of catalogue" such as putting the banking and financial system under democratic public control, among others.

It's too soon to know what will be the result of the Forum at Belem. Social forums are not by themselves the goal. They are useful as if they appear as an expression of struggles and resistances and if enable the coordination of social movements and encourage strategic discussion and debate. Five years ago, at the WSF held in Mumbai the Indian writer Arundhati Roy pointed out: "What we need to discuss urgently is strategies of resistance. We need to aim at real targets, wage real battles and inflict real damage". And this is the thought that we have to keep in mind in our present time.

(Article published in Spanish in the newspaper P blico 27/01/09)