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Environment

“There should be agitation such that the ruling class will have to choose”

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Daniel Tanuro was recently invited to give lectures in French-speaking Switzerland on the climate crisis, and to meet young people active in mobilization. At the end of this tour, he answered questions from *SolidaritéS*.

How do you analyse the COP process as a whole?

Since Rio in 1992, the COPs (“Conference of the Parties” under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) have revolved around three issues: 1) the level of danger not to be exceeded; 2) North-South climate justice; 3) squaring the circle, or avoiding a climatic cataclysm without questioning the accumulation of capital. It was not until COP21 that a level of danger was defined. A sham of climate justice was staged during COP3 (Kyoto), then COP15 (Copenhagen) turned the page. As for squaring the circle, two figures suffice: annual CO₂ emissions are 60% higher than in 1990, and atmospheric CO₂ concentration has been unprecedented for 1.5 million years. At the time, ocean levels were 20 to 30 meters higher than today.

What is at stake in COP25 which is currently taking place in Madrid?

The climate commitments by the states mean a warming of 3.3Å° C by the end of the century, twice as much as the Paris target. Given the maximum urgency, one would think that COP25 would endeavour to bridge this gap, but this is not the case. It is trying to give concrete shape to the market mechanism decided in Paris (Article 6) to allow states to “collaborate” in the fight against global warming.

This new device should take over from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) created by the Kyoto Protocol. As a reminder, this CDM allowed companies, states or other Northern entities to replace their emission reductions with purchases of “emission credits” generated by so-called green investments in the countries of the South. In 2016, a scientific study concluded that 73% of credits were largely fictitious, barely 2% having strong probabilities of corresponding to effective emission reductions. In addition, this CDM was supplemented by REDD programs and REDD + thanks to which emission credits can also be generated by planting trees, and also by protecting existing forests.

These “carbon offset” systems are in reality a sleight of hand aimed at replacing emission reductions with false reductions or with uncertain and ephemeral removals. But this is precisely what the capitalists and the governments at their service want: a scam to pretend that they are saving the planet while they continue to destroy it. Therefore, bridging the gap between 3.3Å° C and 1.5Å° C is not on the agenda in Madrid. Before tackling it, these ladies and gentlemen want to know the amount of cheating that will be allowed to them in the next round. If this volume is set in Madrid, COP26 in Glasgow may try to create the illusion that the gap is closing. Otherwise, too bad for the emergency: the illusionism session will be postponed to COP27.

The major challenge of COP 25 is therefore whether the rules of the scam can be fixed now. This is not certain because Brazil, in particular, wants its stock of dummy credits from the CDM to be sold under the new mechanism. (being a climate-negationist and profiting from the pseudo climate policy is by no means incompatible!)

Many have understood that the Paris agreement would not change anything because it is too loose. If we add to that the withdrawal of the USA, the picture is bleak. The COP process seems to lose the legitimacy it had with climate movements. Yet the climate strike, Friday for Future and Extinction Rebellion largely

continue to demand respect for the Paris agreement. Do you think that is a problem?

We must demand compliance with the danger threshold decided in Paris, but the agreement itself is not sustainable. In addition to being non-binding, this agreement - without saying so - paved the way for senseless scenarios of “temporarily exceeding” the danger threshold with subsequent cooling of the planet thanks to “negative emission technologies” (and by boosting the nuclear industry!). These are the scenarios that underpin the promises of “carbon neutrality in 2050” made today. Governments are thus trying to fool public opinion when they are not doing the right thing to reduce emissions. As for the danger threshold, it is important not to remain trapped in the ambiguity of Paris (below 2 °C or 1.5 °C?). The IPCC leaves no doubt: the climate movement must demand to stay below 1.5 °C.

Not only is the US withdrawing, but China is also reviving coal. It's obvious: the solution is on the street, not in the COPs. There should be agitation such that the ruling class will have to choose either it begins to act, or it will no longer be able to dominate. By scoring partial points (for example the extension of public transport and making it free, or a proactive and public program of building insulation – it doesn't matter what), the social movement will gain confidence to go further. Thus, the idea will progress that the anti-capitalist policy necessary to stop the disaster is good and desirable for the working classes.

You have highlighted the key role of women in the three sectors at the forefront of the ecological struggle - peasants, indigenous peoples and youth.

I agree with the (eco) feminists: the destruction of nature and the oppression of women are two manifestations of patriarchal-capitalist domination. Women, because they are oppressed, are more impacted. They are specifically so, because patriarchy imposes most of the work of social reproduction on them. This reality tends to make them more aware of the gravity of the situation and the absurdity of the responses of green capitalism.

How do you see the youth climate movement? What limits does it show? How do you think it can overcome them?

The biggest challenge for young people is to last over time by resisting the sirens of recuperation and the threats of repression. The best way is to develop democratic self-organization on a mass scale, and the Swiss experience is exemplary from this point of view. Radicalism cannot be decreed, it must be built step by step around concrete issues: 1.5 °C maximum, no temporary overshoot, no negative emission technologies, no nuclear, no carbon offsetting: stop fossils and fossil investments, the solution is to produce less/transport less/share more, and for those responsible to pay the bill.

In Lausanne, you replied to someone that striking seemed to you a more powerful form of civil disobedience than blocking crossroads. Can you come back on that?

I am obviously not against crossroads blockades, or the Zones to Defend! But I object to the idea that blocking a street on a Saturday would be more radical or more “disobedient” than going on strike on Friday. Going on strike is a very powerful form of disobedience, it creates something collective in the places of life and work, and echoes with the traditions of the popular classes. The active strike increases this subversive potential tenfold.

In Switzerland, the Climate Strike is in the process of turning to society as a whole. How can the movements of young people be linked to workers beyond some episodic convergences?

The bottom line is that the movement is asking workers about the future the system holds for their children. The

impact of this inquiry is immense. It can favour the workers' movement breaking with productivism. This is a decisive issue: without this break, there will be no victory in the fight for the climate. Coupling this inquiry with a general discourse in favour of social justice will open breaches. Once on the move, employees will develop their own class demands for climate rescue - their “Via Obrera”. No one can do it for them.

In trade union circles, the idea of a Green New Deal is starting to gain momentum. What do you think of it?

The Green New Deal of Sanders and Ocasio-Cortez is an economic recovery plan that does not integrate the need to drastically reduce production. It is therefore not an adequate alternative. But the GND has two merits: it is a plan, and this plan aims to resolve both the social crisis and the ecological crisis from the use of neoliberal revenues. Therefore, the European Commission hastened to recuperate the idea, in order to distort it.

*Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Gauche Anticapitaliste](#)'s republication from [SolidaritéS](#).*

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