

booklets

HOW TO THINK ABOUT CHANGE TODAY



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Jesús Sanz

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COMMENTS AND PROPOSALS FOR COMMITMENT

Jesús Sanz

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*“For Luna,
who will come into this world at the same time
as this booklet sees the light of day.
With the hope that she will live in a better world.”*

“To Anna, for her patience and affection.”

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PROLOGUE: DIARY OF CHANGE IN EPOCH OF CHANGE

October 15, 2011, just months after the bombing of the 15th of May (15-M). Hundreds of thousands of persons are demonstrating in almost a thousand cities in eighty countries on five continents under the slogan, “United for global change.” The manifesto of the mass mobilization urges citizens to carry out protests in order to “defend their rights and demand true democracy.” At the same time it denounces the “established powers who act for the benefit of only a few, ignore the will of the great majority, and care nothing about the human and ecological costs.”¹

December of 2013. The journalist Juan Luis Sánchez publishes his book, *Las diez mareas del cambio*,² [The Ten Waves of Change], which reconstructs the history of the diverse waves and citizens’ movements that have emerged from the 15-M event. In his book, which straddles the genres of essay and reporting, Sánchez describes the diverse social mobilizations that arose after 2011 in defense of public services such as health, education, and water supply. He considers that these waves of protest indicate a dramatic growth in the number of people who demand greater participation in society: no longer satisfied with being mere spectators, they want to be protagonists on the political stage.

January of 2014. Dozens of citizens publish a manifesto titled, “Make a Move: Converting Indignation into Political Change.” The manifesto gives birth to the political party Podemos [We Can], which successfully makes its mark in the European elections. This same political force will also convoke, in January of 2015, the so-called “March for Change,” which amasses tens of thousands of demonstrators in Madrid.

May of 2015. Diverse forces and electoral coalitions win the municipal elections in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, and A Coruña, sometimes appealing during the campaign for an expansion of the “wave of change and popular mobilization.” In many of these cities, and in others later on, they will set up the so-called “governments of change.”

Second half of 2015. During much of the pre-campaign for the general elections of December 2015, political forces like the PSOE and Ciudadanos are constantly waving the banner of “change.” They are obviously interested in connecting with the social sectors searching for new horizons, the sectors that are suffering most the consequences of economic crisis and austerity politics and have lost confidence in institutions plagued by corruption. During the pre-campaign, Ciudadanos continually presents itself as the

party of “peaceful change” while the PSOE, after the March 2016 elections, speaks of the need to form a “government for change.”

June of 2016. British voters decide in a referendum to begin the process for leaving the European Union (EU). The next day the front pages of Spanish newspapers discuss the repercussions of the British vote while a few, like *El País*, see it as forcing the EU to undertake a “change of direction.” But it is not only the British referendum that makes it necessary to rethink the European project. In recent years we have also seen how movements advocating independence, such as the Scottish referendum in September 2014 and the Catalanian process that began in 2010, have torn at the seams of the present socio-political structures.

January of 2017. In his speech when he is inaugurated president of the United States of America, Donald Trump states that with his mandate begins “a very special movement for change.”

“Global change,” “waves of change,” “political change,” “governments of change,” “peaceful change,” “change of direction,” ... As can be seen, the word “change” has been one of the most repeated words in the social and political debate of recent years. And as is evident from what is said above, this word is invoked by very different actors, all of whom capitalize on people’s discontent with the present state of affairs, but the social and political paths they propose can be very different and even opposed to one another.

We consequently find ourselves with a situation in which general discontent serves as fuel for action and provides energy for social transformation.³ Many people who have suffered economically have become indignant, and they throw their support to whatever collective project offers them hope and/or security and promises them that things will change.

Social transformation and change –which we approach from a polyhedral perspective– are the central themes on which we wish to reflect in this booklet. We do so at a time when it seems that the course of history is accelerating. In the pages that follow we propose to approach this notion from three different perspectives. First, we will reflect on the present moment by examining at different levels some of the most relevant political events of recent years.

Second, we will consider the different types of action that are being undertaken to bring about “change” and “transformation,” and we will try to ascertain the meaning these words have in contemporary society.

Finally, we will investigate some of the spaces that make it possible for people to work for change and social transformation. We will try to do this while keeping an optimistic perspective, though at times that is not easy. Written in a more personal tone, this final part of the booklet will seek to inspire and encourage people to work for change from their everyday situations, to do so both as individuals and as part of a collective, and in this way to contribute to the birth of a new reality that is more worthy of all of us.⁴

1. WINDS OF CHANGE IN A WORLD BEING TRANSFORMED

In recent years we have been witnessing many important socio-political transformations, changes that have rearranged the coordinates that order our lives on different levels. Even if some of the processes began in earlier years, it is clear that the financial crisis of 2008, viewed from a certain perspective, was a point of inflection and an unavoidable date of reference for understanding many things that have happened since then at the national, European, and global levels.

1.1. Context for change

Considering some of the most outstanding events of recent years, we can see that the various national elections held in 2016 seem to have concluded, for the moment at least, a long political cycle whose beginning we can situate in 2008. In the Spanish context, the crisis of the financial system, the inequitable way in which the crisis was resolved,⁵ and the “austerity politics” imposed by the so-called “European troika” resulted in a marked increase in unemployment and inequality, and these in turn led to growing discontent among

the many sectors of the population that ended up impoverished, even as huge quantities of public funds were devoted to rescuing the banking system.⁶

The accumulated discontent exploded socially on 15 May 2011 with a demonstration at the Plaza del Sol in Madrid. The main targets of the protest were the global financial system and Spain’s ineffective democracy. The movement consequently decentralized, with local assemblies forming in many places. Other social movements were strengthened by the movement, such

as the Platform for Mortgage Holders, which fights to keep people from being evicted from their homes. And in the following months successive waves of citizen protests, such as “Marches for Dignity,” rose up to defend public services.⁷

This widespread discontent and the resulting mobilizations made themselves felt at the polls during the European elections of 2014. In Spain the general election saw the emergence of a new force, Podemos, and the electoral retreat of both the PP and the PSOE. In 2015 the municipal and autonomous elections brought about major changes in the political map of many large cities, where budding progressive forces interested in local affairs came to power. These developments, along with the decline in two-party dominance, give evidence of the desire for political change on the part of broad sectors of society. The first general ballot, which saw a weakening of the two main parties, was followed by a run-off election and months of gridlock. The government that was finally formed at the end of 2016 put an end to the long electoral cycle begun in 2014 and to the process of social mobilization that began in 2011. Nevertheless, most people have experienced neither an end to the crisis nor any real recovery; social fragmentation appears to have become the norm and shows no signs of remission. To the contrary, poverty is becoming chronic, the few jobs created are precarious, and young people face a future devoid of opportunity.⁸

In Europe as a whole, as in Spain, many outstanding events of recent years also had their origin in the financial crisis of 2008 and in its economic

and social consequences. That crisis caused a strong recession in the EU countries, which were consequently obliged to come to the aid of the banking system. This action in turn greatly increased their levels of debt.

The crisis and the subsequent imposition of austerity measures have had other repercussions in Europe. First, the crisis revealed the flaws of the euro’s institutional design, even to the point of endangering its existence. Second, the crisis increased the socioeconomic gap between northern and southern Europe. As a result, the political divergence between these two zones has increased; their interests are at cross purposes. At the same time, the EU has shown itself incapable of responding to the financial crisis in a coordinated way consonant with solidarity.

Moreover, the efforts to deal with the crisis have caused the community project to lose much of its legitimacy. This loss has found different forms of expression, such as Great Britain’s exit from the EU and the appearance of anti-European and Euro-skeptic parties in many countries.

Finally, the EU has shown itself incapable of dealing effectively with the refugee crisis and of providing institutional responses that are based on the values of solidarity and respect for human rights, which are very much a part of the Union’s foundational mission.

As a result, the process of European construction has been widely questioned and the very future of the EU is called into doubt more than ever before.

On the world scene we are witnessing an increase in nationalism, one of whose principal exponents is the new

U.S. president, Donald Trump. But other countries (such as Great Britain, Russia, China, and Turkey) have also seen the rise of leaders who promote aggressive nationalism and appeal to the people with populist rhetoric. Their main concerns are defending the rights of the nation, shoring up ethnic identity, and defending the borders.

Many analysts think that the success of these leaders is based fundamentally on their ability to connect with the frustrations and fears of broad sectors of the population, especially the declining middle class and others who blame neoliberal globalization as the principal cause of their deteriorated situation. These sectors also believe that immigration is endangering their national identity and their traditional values.⁹ Given these popular sentiments, right-wing leaders with authoritarian tendencies have known how to take advantage of the discontent: presenting themselves as opposed to the elites, they foment fear (of terrorism or of foreigners, for example), and they claim to offer protection and security to the citizens whom they consider part of their national community.¹⁰ In this way they seek to capitalize on people's repudiation of the elite governing classes, who are perceived as disconnected from their everyday problems.

Although it is still too early to evaluate the medium-term repercussions of this phenomenon, the first measures taken by Donald Trump allow us to conclude that we are witnessing momentous changes in the political panorama. Among the most important developments we can mention the resurgence of protectionist trade policies, the reconfiguration of political allian-

ces and the international order,¹¹ and the implementation of extreme xenophobic and anti-immigrant measures that makes us wonder whether we are not perhaps witnessing the emergence of some form of neo-fascism.

However that may be, these recent events need to be seen in the context of globalization and other far-reaching transformations that have taken place since the seventies, especially as a result of the petroleum crisis and the latest technological revolution. These new developments have substantially altered the coordinates that used to orient our society and our daily life.

As we pointed out in an earlier work,¹² we are presently witnessing a "change of epoch," one in which we experience sharp discontinuities with respect to what we experienced before but are quite unable to discern the coordinates of the future.

1.2. Traits that characterize this "change of epoch"

First, we want to call attention to the effective ending of the "social contract," that is, the tacit pact between industrial capitalism and labor which gave birth to the so-called "welfare state." The social contract made it possible for the state to redistribute income and correct the inequalities generated by the free-market economy. The state did this through a redistributive fiscal system and the enactment of policies designed to establish and protect a series of universal social rights. This framework, which constituted the state as a type of "counter-power," has progressively deteriorated, especially

since 2008, into a process marked by reduced social spending, the privatization and mercantilization of previously public sectors, and the imposition of austerity measures.

Second, recent decades have seen a “divorce between power and politics,” to use the phrase of Zygmunt Bauman. With the onset of globalization, the nation-state has been unable to control and regulate the financial activity of global markets, an arena in which credit and debt are used as instruments for disciplining countries. There is a growing asymmetry between the regulatory sphere of the state and the field within which financial power operates—or to put it differently, between the politics which continues to be played out on the obsolete map of the nation-states and the shift of power toward financial spheres that operate on the global plane. Bauman puts it this way: “Today we have power which has freed itself from politics, and politics which has been robbed of power. Power now is global; politics continues to be regrettably local.”¹³ What we see is precisely the crisis of institutions which are trapped in a territorial or national context. It is this entrapment that has caused the emergence of phenomena like the abovementioned identity politics and nationalist discourse.

Third, globalization has increased the mobility of capital so that giant cor-

porations are able to seek the cheapest labor and thus lower their costs of production. The relocation of industries has resulted in a process of industrialization in the countries of the South; at the same time it has brought about an at least partial deindustrialization of the North. The consequence has been a de facto “international division of labor.”¹⁴ This whole process has led to increased unemployment and a globalization of inequality, as well as to a constant lowering of wages, diminishment of purchasing power, and worsening of social conditions in the emerging economies as compared to the Western countries.

Finally, it is important to stress that all these processes have been accompanied by the triumph of neoliberal thought,¹⁵ which can be summed up in a few words: individualism, free market, and minimal state. Neoliberal thought was popularized by Margaret Thatcher, whose slogan was “There is no alternative” (known by its acronym, TINA). She declared that the market, capitalism, and globalization were absolute necessary phenomena and that there was no alternative to this stubborn reality.

In recent decades these ideas have been widely diffused in academia and in the media, making them the predominant way of thinking on the ideological level.

2. CHANGE, BUT ... WHAT CHANGE? REFLECTING ON SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION AND THE MODES OF CHANGE TODAY

Confronted with the statement that “there is no alternative” and the general belief that there is no way of changing the current state of affairs, we undertake to reflect on the ways in which we can conceive of change and social transformation in our present-day context.

2.1. Reflecting on change in the midst of the crisis of utopias

In addressing the question of social change, we need first of all to observe that the fall of the Berlin Wall and the failure of so-called “real socialism” produced a crisis in the utopian models of emancipation.¹⁶ Such models, as Paul Ricoeur¹⁷ points out, have a “constitutive” function, serving as an external vantage point from which our cultural system can be observed and as a free space in which we can contemplate not only the existing route but infinite possible alternative routes.

With regard to the crisis of utopian models, it is clear that in recent dec-

ades we have lacked an alternative narrative, one that inspires transformative action, as socialism once did, for example, during most of the 20th century. Evidence of this lack of an inspiring vision can be seen in the social movements that reject neoliberal globalization and in the various world social forums that have been held since the end of the nineties: they declare that “another world is possible” but fail to show what that other world will look like. We should notice, however, that the financial crisis of 2008 and its consequences have given new life to the debate about possible alternatives to the present system and have made it more pertinent than ever.

Second, as regards the question of how to generate new processes of social transformation, we observe that there has been a certain shift in the way these processes are conceived. For the Taifa Seminar¹⁸ at the beginning of the 21st century, social transformation should be seen as something dynamic, flexible, and open to permanent construction.

This conception is quite different from the one that previously existed in industrial societies. During most of the 20th century, people thought that the construction of an alternative should start out with a completely elaborated, compact, and coherent design for change; the political parties and the labor unions were seen as the agents that should lead the way in the transformation efforts, which were to be directed according to the plans and directives established by them.

In contrast to this rigid model, the new conception of bringing about change is flexible and seeks to follow “unmapped roads,”¹⁹ giving the same importance to the procedures for advancing as to the final result. The creation of alternatives is seen not so much as conforming to a previously formulated design but rather as a process in continual construction. It is elaborated from the bottom up by the whole social body, relying on the interconnection and amalgamation of diverse initiatives. It engages in experiment, and it explores new forms of the confluence of forces joining together in pursuit of shared objectives. Emilio Santiago Muiño insists that social transformation should start out from “a lively and very diverse network which interweaves the confluences and alli-

ances of a variety of social actors and collectives of the most diverse sort.”²⁰

Third, there has also been a shift in thinking about the kind of subject that should be the protagonist of social change. The more “classical,” orthodox visions of social change, influenced as they were by the ideas of modernity and by belief in constant progress as the motor of history, often linked social transformation to the conviction that a “new man” would appear to instigate the process of change. This vision, however, is increasingly rejected as belief fades in the fabled figure of the “new man.” Rather, social transformation is now seen as arising from our openness to processes of empowerment that are collective, democratic, and inspired by the bases. Such processes are initiated by groups, by collectives, and by cooperating individuals, and they are guided by non-hegemonic values that allow personal change and global change to come about in complementary fashion. Fourth and last, we want to point out four major labor-related themes as a way of concretizing the elements that should be present in this tentative proposal for social emancipation:

- *The option for a society that moves toward equality and social justice.* In a world in which inequality is reaching scandalous levels,²¹ it is imperative to make a decisive option for the establishment of mechanisms for social redistribution, such as fair taxation, elimination of offshore “tax havens,” universalization of public services, minimum and maximum salaries, etc. At the same time, as authors like Fraser²²

propose, the search for social justice should be two-dimensional, incorporating 1) the redistributive dimension associated with more just distribution of resources and wealth and 2) the pluralist dimension related to the acceptance and acknowledgement of differences and diverse identities in a world that is every day more complex.²³

- *A proposal that is founded on democracy and citizen participation.* In recent years we have seen democracies being reduced more and more to the merely procedural plane: we elect representatives whose ability to influence the real future of society is minimal, given the subordination of politics to financial power. Thus, we are witnessing the increasing incapacity of citizens to influence politics in any way apart from the ballot box, and this powerlessness has in turn increased their alienation from politics.

Given this situation, there is a need to move from a “low-intensity democracy” to a “high-intensity democracy,”²⁴ one which goes way beyond holding elections. It must open up “processes of participation and self-government on the basis of common goods and social rights reinforced by the social institutions.”²⁵ In such a democracy, the logic of representation is combined with the creation of spaces for deliberation, so that to speak about politics is to speak about the people’s ability to respond to collective problems.

- *The need to respond to the ecological calamity and the crisis of civi-*

lization in which we find ourselves. Our world has inherited from modernity an anthropocentric conception of reality, one which conceives of nature as something external to human beings and subservient to them. This utilitarian and instrumentalist conception of nature has given birth to various disciplines, including economics.²⁶ However, the prevailing economic conception starts off from the false premise that unlimited growth is possible, thus ignoring the material and human limits of the planet. This misconception has been aggravated by the logic of capitalist accumulation, by the economic expansion resulting from unrestrained consumerism, and by a predatory economic system which in order to grow must extract ever more natural resources, manufacture ever more goods, consume ever more electricity, and generate ever more waste products.

Given this situation, in which the risk of ecological and social collapse appears to be ever more probable, the success of any proposal for social transformation assumes that human society will respect the limits of the planet and aspire to an ideal of a shared existence; it assumes that people will forego the ceaseless accumulation of material goods and instead adopt a simpler, more communitarian lifestyle.²⁷

This represents a tremendous challenge which will inevitably require deep cultural changes and a sharp break with the dominant mentality. People will need to envision other forms of happiness, forms that are not defined simply

by possessions and do not require excessive use of natural resources.²⁸

- *Any proposal for social transformation must be based on an economy which is at the service of people, enabling them to develop all their abilities, enjoy a decent standard of living, and have full participation.* The creation of this alternative requires: a) developing an economy in which work is organized according to people's real needs and not according to the needs of capital accumulation, as is now the case; b) guaranteeing a basic minimum income that allows people to live with dignity; and c) promoting an economy which is adjusted to the limits imposed by the planet and which assumes that environmental justice and social justice are inseparable aspirations.

With regard to the question about how to create a truly different economy, we need to ask whether such an effort is possible within a capitalist system. Given the harsh reality of a system that is incapable of satisfying the basic needs of all persons and preserving the essential environmental conditions of Earth, we can only be pessimistic about whether a different economy is possible. We have already seen the failure of some earlier initiatives which were aimed at "refounding capitalism"²⁹ on a solid ethical foundation.

What seems to be necessary instead is advancing to another mode of production that is more just, more democratic, and more sustainable. This new mode of production will certainly be

born from within the bosom of capitalism,³⁰ perhaps as the end result of thousands of social initiatives that arise in the many realms whose functioning does not depend directly on the logic of capitalist accumulation.

Only a post-capitalist society premised on cooperation, equality, and commitment to the environment will be able to provide collective responses to the enormous challenges we are facing as a society. Even though we still do not have a well-defined alternative narrative with which to counteract the crisis of utopian ideals and the claim that "there is no alternative," there does exist a growing consciousness that things are not going well, and there are more and more people who are convinced of the need to travel along different paths, given the seriousness of the present situation.³¹

2.2. Possible paths of change

Going a step further in our argument, we can ask what type of action is necessary to advance toward that hypothetical social transformation. In general terms, we can identify three possible paths of action: the path of social counterforces, the institutional path, and the option for non-violent mass mobilization.³²

2.2.1. The path of social counterforces

The path of social counterforces seeks to create diverse autonomous spaces that follow a logic based on the principles of solidarity, cooperation, and collaboration in the various aspects of

daily life. This path encourages initiatives that thrive on non-capitalist ways of acting: they start out as “islands” which then keep expanding as they progressively develop connections among themselves.

This path opts for the “method of opening up cracks,”³³ which means “creating quite ordinary spaces or moments wherein we affirm a different way of acting”³⁴ and so apply here and now a logic different from that of capitalism. To achieve this, action is carried out in the interstitial spaces of capitalism (the cracks), and such action creates diverse initiatives to cover needs arising out of collective organizing, with the more or less explicit objective of “widening the crack” and “changing the world without taking power.”³⁵ We can find this type of logic in many areas, such as the social economies of solidarity, renewable energy cooperatives, consumer groups, community gardens, and self-managed social centers. All of these have arisen in large part as a result of the 15-M movement, which encouraged many collectives to move from protesting present conditions to proposing alternatives.

Even though it is presented as a long-term project, this path has definite advantages. Its main advantage is that it does not require waiting for the transformation of the whole society before undertaking small experiments of change. Such experiments become laboratories that can anticipate and test methods of doing things that are different from the dominant methods.

Moreover, experiences of this type have an important “moralizing” component since they become spaces

where alternative values can be socialized and where the persons participating in them can be transformed. We should not underestimate the pedagogical importance and the emancipatory potential of this type of spaces, since they demonstrate by practical example that change is possible.

Nevertheless, this path is also subject to limitations and criticisms, mainly having to do with the difficulty of replicating this kind of initiative and with the possible limitations on growth that such initiatives may have beyond a certain threshold.

Moreover, opting for initiatives of this type should not make us fall into a kind of “social delusion”³⁶ which makes us believe that they can be protected by institutional structures or electoral processes. We should be aware that those important frameworks can be either favorable or detrimental to the success of projects of this type.

Finally, even if such social initiatives can be useful for resolving collective needs, they seem to have serious limitations as regards their ability to achieve structural changes or redistribute wealth effectively beyond a certain degree. For all these reasons, we need to ask whether having recourse solely to this path of counterforces will make it more difficult to bring about the comprehensive changes achievable only by an “assault on the institutions.”³⁷

2.2.2. The path of the institutions

The second path is better known; it is the one that has most widely prevailed during the 20th century. We refer to the attempt to change society through in-

stitutional means, with the understanding that control of the institutions can be gained by elections and the working of political parties.

This path maintains that certain changes can be achieved only through institutions. Think, for example, of the type of legislation and fiscal accountability that would permit a more equitable redistribution of wealth. Those who advocate this path also consider that institutional control is able to accelerate the process of change and social transformation.

However, opting exclusively for this path is not risk-free. Counting on electoral participation and political involvement in institutions as a way of effecting social transformation brings with it the risk of subordinating collective action to electoral logic, and such a strategy can result in social demobilization and estrangement from the social base that supports change. Moreover, we should not underestimate the risk of bureaucratization that comes with choosing the institutional path. We should be wary, therefore, of falling into what Daniel Bensaid calls the “statist illusion,”³⁸ which reduces all political efforts to activities of the state at the institutional level.

2.2.3. The path of non-violent mass mobilization

Since political action must not be confined to the institutional level, let us complete this survey by examining a third path, that of non-violent mass mobilization.

This path seeks change through sustained mobilization of people for

the sake of disruption, and the hope is that the movement will keep expanding. According to those who have studied collective action, three things are necessary in order for it to be useful: 1) those involved in it must see themselves as suffering because of a situation which they attribute to a system or a government; 2) they must believe that collective action can relieve the situation better than individual efforts can; and 3) they must see the process as a “we” acting in opposition to a “they” who are responsible for the situation.

Often this path allows new themes to be introduced into the political agenda and focuses social action on those themes. For it to be effective, collective action must normally begin with campaigns whose goals are attainable in the short run. Thus, the action is more readily perceived as something useful, the participants are motivated to continue to work in a joint effort, and they grow in their awareness of the ultimate aims of the struggle.

Mass mobilization is frequently accompanied by the strategy of non-violence, which relies on moral persuasion, pedagogical efforts, and social pressure. According to García Jané,³⁹ non-violence is founded on three principles:

- the principle of non-cooperation, which stresses that idea that the great weakness of the adversary is that he must depend on us;
- the principle of coherence, which holds that the means are part of the end, so that violence in all its forms is totally rejected as a method;
- the principle of isolation, which aims to isolate the opponent and

gain the support of both the social majority and persons who are “neutral” in the conflict.

By using this type of strategy, the people try out new forms of action which disorient the dominant powers, while at the same time they create broad social alliances that increase participation in protests. The phenomenon of the encampments following 15-M is a good example of this development, and there are many other historical examples.⁴⁰

Finally, among the limitations of this path of mass mobilization, we should point out the difficulties of keeping people active and mobilized for any great length of time. Moreover, mass mobilization is often not enough to force a change. We must therefore ask whether relying solely on this path does not come up against a type of glass ceiling which can be breached only by other paths.

2.2.4. The need to think of change and its paths as interconnected

As we just saw, there are risks and limitations in opting exclusively for any one of the proposed strategies. It is important, therefore, to be aware that the three paths described above obey different logics and different rhythms, although they can also be complementary and interrelated with each other. If we consider, for instance, the types of action undertaken by environmental movements, we see that difficulties arise when measures are taken on the institutional level which are not supported by the social majority. Examples might include restrictions on the use of

private vehicles and the obligatory collection of certain waste products.⁴¹

Another important question concerns the interconnections between different levels of activity: local, national, and international. Consider the small margin for maneuvering that local governments have in Spain, or consider the difficulty the Syriza government had in Greece in carrying out its program due to the strict impositions of the EU. These are two good examples of the interrelations and potential difficulties that can exist between different levels of activity.

Similarly, we can point to the difficulties that many social initiatives have in expanding beyond a certain threshold if they fail to gain institutional support.

For these reasons we reaffirm that any process of social change must be conceived in a manner that allows for the interconnection of the different levels of action, always keeping in mind the various ways in which the different paths can complement one another.

We therefore propose that institutional change is necessary but not sufficient, especially if we consider that the role of the state as the main backbone of social and economic relations is greatly weakened at the present time. A profound transformation can come about only with the help of social processes that go beyond the institutional realm, and this for two reasons.

The first reason is that only the organization of civil society—with strong support from the institutional level—is able to generate the kind of initiatives that will counteract the power possessed by private agents as a result of the heavy market concentration in stra-

tegic sectors such as energy, finance,⁴² pharmaceuticals, and food (remember that seven companies control 75% of food distribution in Spain).⁴³

The second reason is that changes in the values and the routines that affect our daily behaviors come about mainly in social spaces that are distant from the halls of representative government and institutional power. As Della Porta y Diani points out, “the more intense the socialization in a particular vision of the world, the more impetuous will be the action.”⁴⁴ It is at this level of action that the newly forged spaces of autonomy allow for the creation, the testing, and the spreading of other ways of life as alternatives to the prevailing set of values.

By way of hypothesis, then, we state that any process of emancipatory change should be conceived in terms of action that is coordinated and complementary in at least five different dimensions:

- in the *sphere of political institutions*, linked to spaces for citizen representation;
- in the *labor-related sphere*, not only as regards paid labor, ade-

quate social protection, and decent labor conditions, but also as regards the need for a more equitable social distribution of personal care;⁴⁵

- in the creation of a *more just economy*, one that is truly democratic and not controlled by the logic of accumulation; one that seeks collective solutions to shared problems, while respecting environmental limits;
- in the *sphere of mobilization and civil disobedience* against laws considered unjust because they are incompatible with human rights;⁴⁶
- in *work carried out in autonomous spaces* that seek to revive and empower social bonds and community spirit through small-scale initiatives (social centers, community gardens, etc.) which in turn create collective mechanisms of solidarity.

Only collaborative labor –interrelated at various levels and linking together the structural, communal, and personal spheres– can hope to build a more just society, one that is in harmony with the environment and that produces a counter-power capable of challenging the neoliberal hegemony in all spheres of daily life.

3. WHAT TO DO? A STROLL THROUGH SOME POSSIBLE SPACES FOR WORKING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

In presenting the conception of change outlined in the previous section, we stressed the importance of lessening the role played by the institutional realm and the need to work in different spheres in an interconnected way. We pointed out that many of the spaces where people can work for change are associated with people's everyday, personal lives.

We live a world that is undergoing profound transformations, a world whose suffering sometimes leaves us feeling overwhelmed and discouraged. For this reason we need to offer some points of reflection that will motivate us to work for the creation of a more hopeful reality.

3.1. The personal dimension

Neoliberalism has grown to the point where even the cultural sphere is pervaded by an economistic vision of the world. Such a vision is characterized by an exaggerated individualism, the exaltation of hyper-consumerism, and the subordination of politics to economics.

This reality presents itself to us in a way that negates the existence of any other possibilities: "There is no alternative." In view of this, how can we situate ourselves, and what can we do to extend the limits of what is possible? We need to look at reality critically but hopefully, following the counsel of the poet Miquel Martí i Pol: "Everything is yet to be done, and everything is possible."⁴⁷ In what follows, therefore, we offer a series of points for reflection.

3.1.1. Cultivating a critical view of reality

We see a need to develop a critical consciousness concerning our world. We need to see the interconnections

between the global dimension and what is happening more locally and immediately. And when analyzing social phenomena, we also need to have a vision that is globalizing, not fragmented.

If we watch the newscast of any network, we are presented with a succession of fleeting items that talk about disconnected events, many of which contain an element of the spectacular or the morbid. What results from this way of presenting the “news” is a fragmented, dispersed view which banalizes reality, impedes serious analysis of the causes of events, and fails to establish interrelations between different phenomena. For example, the massive flow of refugees into Europe is presented without any serious understanding of the conflicts in the Middle East and the geopolitical interests that are behind those conflicts.

Besides giving us a fragmented view of reality, the mass media rarely present news about important topics such as the trafficking of arms, the distribution of wealth in the world, the tax havens, the volume of the underground economy, or the relations between big business and the public treasury.

Thus, a first step toward developing a more informed and critical awareness involves seeking information other than that provided by the mass media which are controlled by major power groups.⁴⁸ Fortunately, more and more attempts are being made to produce a different type of journalism, one whose editorial line is decided not by power groups but by the working journalists themselves. In some cases these efforts take on a cooperative or collective form.⁴⁹ Many of these me-

dia are digital, and some specialize in particular areas. They provide us with critical information which is often hidden or submerged by the mass media. They tell us, for example, about forgotten conflicts or about labor and environmental conditions in some manufacturing businesses.⁵⁰ They also call attention to problems that society tends to “normalize,” such as the countless deaths of persons trying to cross the Mediterranean.⁵¹ These journalistic initiatives attempt to get a closer view and a more profound understanding of the causes of events, but without yielding to the logic of immediacy. They seek another way to approach reality.

3.1.2. Advancing toward more responsible consuming

Our consumption of goods and services is an excellent tool for understanding how our behavior is connected with other more global social questions, such as labor and the environment. It is important, therefore that when we go shopping, we not think only of the price of goods; we should also be informed about the social, labor, and environmental conditions that underlie each product.

We should realize that each time we buy something, we are opting in some way for a particular social, economic, and environmental model. Such awareness helps us to understand that our everyday choices make a difference.⁵² By means of our purchases we can either penalize businesses whose practices are not in accord with our values or support those whose practices agree with our values.

Seen from this perspective, our consuming is a useful tool for social transformation. By making us conscious of the importance of our habits, it helps us advance toward a simpler and more modest way of life that is coherent with our values. There are various actions we can take toward that end, such as reducing our consumption to what is necessary, recycling and reusing objects, or limiting as much as possible the waste of food and other materials.⁵³ Another possibility is using our purchases to support projects that conform to the criteria of conscientious consuming. Thus in consuming we should keep in mind sound ethical values such as solidarity with those excluded by the “invisible hand of the market” and prevention of harm to the environment. Fortunately in recent years there has been a strong increase in this type of initiative.⁵⁴

Still another line of action is seeking out and testing other forms of provisioning that go beyond the market. After all, when people supply their own products or services (clothes, food, or other goods), not only are there economic savings, but the people discover and develop their own talents, and they make progress toward voluntary simplicity. Finally, we need to ask also about what steps we can take to extend some of these practices to our work environment.

3.1.3. Acting responsibly at the level of taxes

Since the 1980s the international political economy has seen extensive deregulation of the financial markets,

thus increasing the strength of finance capitalism. From the perspective of public finance, this process has resulted in increased tax evasion, the proliferation of tax havens, and an ever more regressive tax policy, as has been made clear in various reports. In Spain alone, according to the union of government treasury technicians, tax evasion and fiscal fraud total around 60 billion Euros. Some 72% of this amount (about 43 billion) corresponds to taxes evaded by huge businesses and private fortunes.

The reduced government revenues, the concentration of tax evasion in major fortunes, and the existence of regressive tax policy have together not only eroded the mechanisms of equality and cohesion, but they have also increased inequality, thus creating tax-collection problems for the governments.⁵⁵

All these factors should make us aware of how important it is for us to pay our taxes in order to finance basic public services; they should make us reflect on the need for a more just fiscal model, one that is based on progressive criteria.

3.1.4. Cultivating an empathetic regard for the other

We live in a society that worships hedonism and possessive individualism, as is clear from our advertising and the way we consume. At the same time there is a crisis in our utopian ideals and a certain feeling of emptiness.⁵⁶ As the philosopher Guy Debord points out,⁵⁷ we live in a society in which reality is often presented to us a spec-

tacle; it is a society that banalizes the pain and suffering of others so that we live in a time when social bonds have become notably weaker and social fragmentation extends ever further.

Such a situation tempts us to become merely indifferent spectators, so that we tend to normalize poverty, social exclusion, and other unconscionable situations. We run the risk of viewing them without sympathy. To avoid such an attitude, we must cultivate an empathetic regard for the other; we need what Jorge Riechmann calls an “ethics of compassion as a step toward creating a society that is humane and just.”⁵⁸ Such an empathetic regard for the other—combined with a profound critique of injustice, impoverishment, and suffering—invites us to divest ourselves and to examine our lifestyles and our commitments. Very useful in this regard is the education of what Rafael Díaz-Salazar calls the “interior self” as a basic step for creating closer bonds between the interior dimension and the political dimension of human life.⁵⁹ As he points out, “indifference and insensitivity in the face of social and ecological distress constitute the cement of passive consensus that facilitates the reproduction of the existing disorder.”⁶⁰

3.2. The community dimension

Besides the individual actions we have already mentioned, the fostering of collective initiatives based on cooperation is essential for bringing about social transformation.

In recent years, and especially after the emergence of the 15-M movement,

we have witnessed a proliferation of projects of a communitarian nature. These projects have arisen partly as a result of civil society’s reaction to the financial crisis and its lack of confidence in institutions generally, but also as a response to the cutbacks in the benefits of the welfare state. Many of these initiatives have been promoted by diverse social movements; this represents, according to Subirats,⁶¹ a shift in the movements’ strategies. The social movements are no longer simply presenting demands to the institutions; rather, they are seeking to respond directly to people’s needs by undertaking initiatives and actions that in many cases have a strong element of social innovation.

Initiatives of this type, besides being concrete and useful, have a threefold value: 1) they create a spaces which allow people to realize, in practice, that it is possible to do things differently; 2) they have an important educational value in themselves; and 3) they involve participants in a process of pre-political socialization,⁶² instilling values at variance with those of the dominant individualism, and they do so at a time when there is a lack of such spaces for anti-hegemonic socialization.

If we take a glance at some communitarian initiatives, we can first distinguish those which attempt to use collective responses and cooperative methods to meet the concrete needs of vulnerable persons, and to do so by relying on self-organization and mutual assistance. Such initiatives take a variety of forms: associations of unemployed persons, assistance for evicted persons, soup kitchens, solidarity clin-

ics, people's assemblies, and the so-called "social work of the Platform for Mortgage Holders."

A second line of work, perhaps more common than the first, consists of those projects which directly attempt to provide alternatives; they are often characterized by their creativity and innovation. We find an enormous variety of communitarian initiatives which struggle against social exclusion; they are often inspired by the social economy of solidarity, the cooperative spirit, and the so-called "collaborative economy." Such initiatives are exemplified by practices such as complementary social currencies, community gardens, free-clothing stores,⁶³ and networks for the exchange of services. We also find infrastructural initiatives such as co-housing, housing cooperatives, community production of renewable energy, and community-controlled communications media. Many of these initiatives thrive on collective processes of solidarity which are true "engines of collective production,"⁶⁴ according to Ecologists in Action, which has made an interesting registry of such efforts.

A third force worthy of mention is the role often played by neighborhood groups, cultural organizations, and sporting clubs, as well as by some parishes and associations of parents of students. Many of these spaces are essential to promoting social cohesion and inclusion; they are privileged spaces for fostering community and strengthening the social fabric. Interesting examples are the following: the Los Dragones football club in the Lavapiés neighborhood of Madrid, whose teams include youths of more than 21 nationalities; the "Rices of the World" festi-

val in the San Francisco neighborhood of Bilbao; the inclusive "Marathon of Stories" in Guadalajara"; the recycling exchange of the Miguel Hernández de Getafe public school; and the "field hospital" of Santa Anna parish in Barcelona, which was originally planned as a night shelter for homeless people during cold spells but has evolved into a "welcoming sanctuary" that is open 24 hours a day.

3.2.1. The role of education in social transformation

We want to reflect, even if only briefly, on the contribution that education can make to social change. In recent years we have heard occasional debates about the need to make changes in the educational system. When that question is raised in the public arena, however, it is usually linked to matters like the use of new technologies or the learning of foreign languages rather than to debate about the basic aims of education in contemporary society.

Among the many questions raised, we want to dwell especially on two important aspects of education. First, the present educational system in general promotes the logic of competition much more than it does the logic of cooperation. We need only think of the constant external evaluations that are carried out with the aim of classifying the schools and the students, even while there is a failure to dedicate resources and time to developing the individual and collective potentialities of the students as persons.

Second, there is a clear disconnect between the conventional curriculum

and the reality of today's world. The educational system fails to address many social problems and difficult situations, and there is a serious lack⁶⁵ of the subject matter essential for dealing with the ecological crisis in which we find ourselves. As Rafael Díaz-Salazar states, "Identifying educational renewal with didactic innovation is a huge trap. Certainly we have to radically transform the forms of teaching and learning, but the decisive game is being played on a different field: it is about what is taught, what is learnt, for what purpose, and in service to whom."⁶⁶

What is needed, then, are schools that link personal development with the challenges of our present-day reality and with the need for social change. Education is one of the main instruments for shaping young people's understanding of the world, and as such it can either serve the interests of the capitalist system or contribute to the transformation of society.

Finally, apart from schools, we want to call attention to the importance of creating non-formal educational spaces adapted to the free time of children and young people. Such spaces are ideal for fostering socialization patterns that move in the direction of eco-social change, and they are certainly an interesting area of work for promoting social transformation.

3.3. From the community dimension to the sociopolitical dimension

As we have pointed out, the communitarian initiatives are vital spaces for helping to socialize people in values

that are different from those of the prevailing individualism. However, this dimension is insufficient for bringing about structural changes. For that we need to organize different spaces and institutions that do the work of sociopolitical mediation, and we need to do this despite the defects and imperfections that these institutions, like any institutions, may have. Participating in such spaces can often be a demonstration of commitment and citizenly love.

3.3.1. The social movements

In recent years several social movements and a few more or less institutionalized initiatives have increased their protagonism by repoliticizing the public debate about the social, political, and economic causes of the crisis. At the same time they have used political action and advocacy to address questions related to a guaranteed basic minimum income, social justice, or effective respect for human rights.

In this regard we can mention movements like the campaign for a Basic Income, the mobilizations organized by the so-called Marches for Dignity, and the Popular Legislative Initiative, whose goal is a Guaranteed Minimal Income. Among the platforms working for a redistribution of wealth, we find groups like ATTAC, which is seeking a tax on financial transactions of a speculative nature. There is also the work being done by the Platform for a Just Tax Policy. A final arena of action is made up of those initiatives which denounce the violations of human rights or of any social rights. Among the groups doing

this type of work are the already mentioned Platform for Mortgage Holders, which defends the right to a dwelling; the campaign to close the Immigration Detention Centers; and the Yes Me! Universal Health movement, which is working for the repeal of Royal Decree 16/2012, a law that deprives hundreds of thousands of persons of the right to receive health care.

3.3.2. *The political parties*

This review of the different spaces for transformative action brings us to the more classic forms of sociopolitical involvement, such as the political parties. No doubt they continue to be useful tools for effecting social transformation, even though in recent years their intermediary role on the political level has been called into question. The 15-M movement, for example, has popularized the slogan, “They do not represent us!”

There is no question that the political parties have often been a vital force for social transformation, and their importance should be recognized even now, but they need to work hard to adapt themselves to the present situation. Traditionally, using a logic based on representation and delegation, they served as vehicles for the demands that civil society made on institutional power. More recently, however, the appearance of the internet, along with other factors, has eroded this traditional function by making new forms of participation available to citizens. As a result, the parties’ customary modes of action have been called into question. Citizens have become progressively

alienated from the parties, and they are demanding more horizontal forms of political mobilization. Given this situation, new forms of organization have emerged that work on the basis of deliberation rather than of representation, and more participative structures have arisen both within organizations and without. Of course, there is always a need for persons who will promote change within these structures; such person should have a vocation of service and should earnestly seek the common good.

3.3.3. *The unions*

In recent years the unions have also been criticized for their lack of representativity, and their role as intermediaries in labor relations has been called into question. Some of the reasons for their weakened position are intense wage competition at the global level, dislocation processes in the North, and changes in the productive system that have led to a more vigorous service sector and a reduced industrial sector. which is where the unions once had their greatest strength.

Two additional factors have weakened the unions’ capacity for negotiation and pressuring employers. First, there has been a weakening of class identity: labor has lost the central place it once had in establishing working-class identity. What we have seen, instead, is an increasing dichotomization of the labor market, with one group of workers maintaining a certain degree of social protection while a growing proportion of workers experiences workplace deregulation, low

wages, and irregular employment, all of which make collective action for common objectives extremely difficult.

Given this situation, tremendous commitment is required of the organizations that struggle for the improvement of labor conditions, especially in those sectors where working conditions are more precarious or where workers are less organized.⁶⁷ Such an effort is all the more important considering the general deterioration of labor rights and the dearth of new labor developments in recent years compared to what has happened in other spheres such as the political parties and the social movements.⁶⁸

Finally, we want to suggest how our commitment to the world of labor can be extended to at least three other dimensions: 1) to sustaining, accompanying, and supporting the self-organization of the unemployed; 2) to supporting initiatives, basically inspired by the feminist movement, which seek a more equitable social distribution of caring responsibilities and due recognition of the unpaid forms of labor that are essential for the reproduction of life; and 3) to promoting initiatives such as cooperative enterprise or the economy of social solidarity, which seek to create a more equitable labor environment and an economic system that prizes persons over profits.

3.3.4. The non-governmental organizations

To round off our review of the different forms of sociopolitical mediation, we want to mention the role played by some NGOs, especially those which

include among their objectives political advocacy in areas such as human rights, migrants, refugees, ecology, or eradication of poverty.

It is true that the panorama of NGOs is very diverse; it is difficult to describe it completely. Their activities vary enormously, and their interests range from uncritical, depoliticized assistance all the way to personal development, critique of structural situations, and direct political advocacy. But if we center our analysis on the sociopolitical dimension, apart from the concrete value of particular projects and activities, we can address two important issues with regard to their work, among the many dilemmas and contradictions they face.⁶⁹ First, collaboration with some of these NGOs can often be an excellent way to sensitize people regarding a concrete reality. A certain type of pre-political socialization can help people understand the causes of a particular situation and move them toward further commitment. Many people have made firm commitments to social justice as the result of their questioning of the causes of structural injustice while they were serving as volunteers with NGOs.

Second, we should point out that these organizations play a role that is essential because they deal with certain topics absent in general political debate and because they stress themes that are of little benefit from an electoral perspective but that are important for social and environmental justice. For example, North-South relations are widely discussed by the NGOs, but they are rarely part of mainstream political discourse. Nor are North-South relations the focus of the activities of

the new social movements, for these are mostly concerned with an essentially “West-centric” crisis or with topics such as migrants, refugees, and environmental justice.

In any case, participation in the abovementioned forms of mediation requires a progressive integration with other concrete commitments within

the project of life. To this end we need to avoid “watertight compartments” in our lives; rather, we need to attempt to advance progressively in coordination with different sectors. And this we must do by keeping a humble and hopeful view of reality and not burdening ourselves with our day-to-day contradictions.⁷⁰

4. CONCLUSIONS AND FINAL COMMENTS

In the preceding pages we have attempted to reflect on how best to understand the notion of “change” today. Our approach has been polyhedral. We began by reflecting on the convulsive times in which we live and by examining the profound transformations taking place; we then presented some ideas about ways to think about change today; and finally we analyzed several avenues of social transformation that are open to us. On the basis of this analysis we have explored some possible ways of working for social transformation while keeping in mind the close relation between the personal and the global dimensions.

But more than anything, this reflection hopes to counteract the growing climate of fatalism and resignation. At this moment of profound turmoil, our proposals are an invitation to action and to personal commitment on any one of the multiple levels we have presented.

Some may consider the proposals ingenuous and innocent, given the enormous challenges we face. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties in this age marked by a crisis of meaning and an absence of great emancipatory narratives, we need to embrace a hopeful vision that declares that another world is possible. We must not yield to the

pessimistic discourses which proclaim that disaster and collapse are inevitable given the present crisis of civilization.

We therefore take heart in the conviction that history is not predetermined; it is a process open to the course of events. History itself provides us numerous examples of situations where change that was thought impossible actually happened, such as the end of slavery and racial segregation, the eight-hour work day, and the right of women to vote. History also shows us that what made these achievements possible was social mobilization and collective organization.

From his critical perspective Boaventura de Sousa asserts that reality is not reducible simply to that which exists; rather, “the function of emancipatory thought and practice consists in broadening the spectrum of the possible by experimenting and reflecting on propositions that put forward forms of society that are more just.” By going beyond the existing coordinates, “these forms of thought and practice call into question the separation of the real and the ideal; they formulate proposals that are utopian enough to represent a challenge to the status quo but are also realistic enough to avoid being easily discarded as unviable.”⁷¹ Committing ourselves to some of these practices is the first step toward affirming that we can truly build another reality and demonstrating with small deeds that

“another world is possible” right here and right now.

Certainly the challenge we have before us is not easy, but as Pedro Casaldáliga reminds us:

It is late
but the hour is ours

It is late
but it is all the time
we have at hand
for making the future.

It is late
but it is we who *are*
this belated hour

It is late
but it is dawn
if only we insist a little.⁷²

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How do you think the notion of change should be understood at the present moment? What would you add or what would you criticize in the notion of change proposed in this booklet?
2. What spaces and avenues of action do you think should be given priority in sociopolitical work which promotes social transformation? What possible contradictions and complementarities do you see in opting for each one of these paths of action?
3. What concrete practices and experiences promoting social change do you know of in your own immediate environment? What is your analysis and judgment of the practices that you are most familiar with?
4. What contribution do you think Christian spirituality can make at the present time toward a liberating form of social transformation?

1. Manifiesto, “We are not merchandise in the hands of politicians and bankers,” ¡Democracia Real YA!
2. SÁNCHEZ, Juan Luis (2013). *Las diez mareas del cambio*. Madrid: Roca Editorial.
3. FERNÁNDEZ-SAVATER, Amador (2017). “Una fuerza vulnerable: el malestar como energía de transformación social.” *Eldiario.es*, 27 January 2017.
4. To a certain extent this booklet is indebted to other booklets published by Cristianisme i Justícia that point in the same direction. We mention specifically the text, *¿No hay nada que hacer?... A la escucha del Espíritu* (Cuadernos, no. 69, 1995), and above all the text of Lourdes Zambrana, *Nuevas militancias para nuevos tiempos* (Cuadernos, no. 110, 2001). The present booklet aims to deepen the search for proposals that evoke commitment and action on the part of individuals and groups. It does so by following up on some reflections offered in those texts and by describing other interesting initiatives that have appeared in the midst of the great creativity and social innovation of recent years.
5. For a good monograph summarizing the social and economic effects of the financial crisis and the politics of austerity, see “83 gráficos para comprender la crisis y sus efectos” in *Revista Alternativas Económicas*, 2015.
6. According to date of the Bank of Spain, the government dedicated 61.495 billion Euros to efforts to save the financial system. In September 2016 the same institution stated that it had recovered only 2.866 billion Euros of those invested funds.
7. See for example the manifiesto at their website, Marchas de la Dignidad.
8. The reports of many different organizations have demonstrated the increase in inequality caused by the crisis, the ways in which its costs have been apportioned, and the noxious effects of austerity politics. Consult on the internet, for example, the report of the OCDE, *Income inequality remains high in the face of weak recovery*.
9. Besides these two factors, other authors have linked the emergence of these leaders with phenomena such as the crisis of the welfare state, the growing disenchantment with representative democracy, and the fear that the new technologies will destroy many jobs. A more in-depth study of these factors can be found in Otero, Miguel and Steinberg, Federico (2016). *Causas del rechazo a la globalización: más allá de la desigualdad y la xenofobia*.
10. Amador Fernández-Savater, in the work cited in note 3, points out that this phenomenon involves several paradoxes since these discourses critical of the establishment are formulated by an “anti-establishment establishment” or an “anti-elitist elite,” and they present an “anti-liberal neoliberalism.”
11. The friendly relationship between Trump and Putin is a good example.
12. MATEOS, Oscar and SANZ, Jesús (2013). *Cambio de época ¿cambio de rumbo? Aportaciones y propuestas desde los movimientos sociales*. Barcelona. Cristianisme i Justícia, Cuadernos, no. 186.
13. BAUMAN, Zygmunt. (2011). *Daños colaterales. Desigualdades sociales en la era global*. Madrid: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
14. STANDING, Guy. (2013). *El precariado. Una nueva clase social*. Barcelona: Pasado y Presente.
15. An explanation of how this process has developed can be found in KLEIN, Naomi (2007). *La doctrina del shock. El auge del capitalismo del desastre*. Madrid: Paidós.
16. In mentioning this word, we should remind readers that the year 2016 was the 500th anniversary of Thomas More’s *Utopía*.
17. RICOEUR, Paul (2009). *Ideología y utopía*. Barcelona: Gedisa.
18. Seminario de Economía Crítica Taifa (2013). *Reflexionando sobre las alternativas. Seminario de Economía Crítica Taifa*.

19. I take my lead here from the suggestive book by SANTIAGO MUIÑO, Emilio (2016). *Rutas sin mapa. Horizontes de transición ecosocial*. Madrid: La Catarata.
20. *Ibidem*, p. 125.
21. There are many reports that warn about the growing inequality at the national and global levels. See for example INTERMON OXFAM (2014), “Gobernar para las élites. Secuestro democrático y desigualdad económica.” Oxfam Report 178.
22. FRASER, Nancy (2006). *¿Redistribución o Re-conocimiento? Un debate Político-filosófico*. Madrid: Morata.
23. For example, many claims of feminists, native peoples, or the LGBTI movement can be seen as demands for recognition. An inspiring film that illustrates this quite well is *Pride*, which narrates the alliance established in the 1980s, when Margaret Thatcher was in power, between miners fighting for redistribution and homosexuals fighting for recognition.
24. DE SOUSA SANTOS, Boaventura (2006). “Para una democracia de alta intensidad,” in DE SOUSA SANTOS, Boaventura. (2006). *Renovar la teoría crítica y reinventar la emancipación social*, pp. 71-108.
25. CALLE, Ángel (2013) *La transición inaplazable. Salir de la crisis desde los nuevos sujetos políticos*. Barcelona: Icaria.
26. A fuller explanation of the implications of this conception of the environment and its relation to the economy can be found in NAREDO, José Manuel (2006). *Raíces económicas del deterioro ecológico y social. Más allá de los dogmas*. Madrid: Siglo XXI.
27. SANTIAGO MUIÑO, Emilio (2016). *Op. cit.*
28. Some interesting examples that point in this direction can be found in the inspiring documentary, *Mañana*, produced by Melanie Laurent and Cyril Don.
29. Proposals and declarations of Nicolas Sarkozy after the financial crisis of 2008. See for example the article “Sarkozy propone refundar sobre bases éticas el capitalismo.” *El País*. 26 September 2008.
30. We can recall the words of the Taifa Seminar: “The transition to capitalism was born in the bosom of feudalism, and the alternative to capitalism can be born only in the bosom of capitalism itself” (Seminario de Economía, 2013:9).
31. It is noteworthy that, according to a recent study of Harvard University, 51% of young Americans between 18 and 29 years of age stated that they did not have confidence in the capitalist system. Good commentary on that survey can be found in the article by José Luis Sánchez, “¿Qué viene después del capitalismo?”
32. I follow the classification proposed in GARCÍA JANÉ, Jordi (2012). *Adiós, capitalismo. 15M-2031*. Barcelona: Icaria.
33. The strategy of widening the cracks in the system is presented in HOLLOWAY, John (2010). *Crack Capitalism*. New York: Pluto.
34. *Ibidem*, p. 24.
35. This expression is taken from HOLLOWAY, John (2003). *Cambiar el mundo sin tomar el poder: el significado de la revolución hoy*. Barcelona: El Viejo Topo.
36. ZUBERO, Imanol (2014). “Las alternativas ya están aquí.” In “¿Qué sociedad saldrá de la actual crisis? ¿Qué salida de la crisis impulsará esta sociedad?” in LORENZO, F. (coord.) *VII Informe sobre Exclusión y Desarrollo Social en España*. Madrid: Fundación Foessa, Madrid, pp. 433-441.
37. I cite here an expression used in recent years in many municipal initiatives, which have been energized by an abundance of activists coming from other social initiatives.
38. BENSALD, Daniel (2009). *Elogio de la política profana*. Barcelona: Península.
39. GARCÍA JANÉ, Jordi (2012). *Op. cit.*, pp. 56-59.
40. For example, the civil rights movement in the U.S.A. or the struggle for independence in India.
41. Two good examples of such measures are the restrictions on the use of private vehicles and the obligatory collection of certain waste products. Even though such measures favor the environment, they may encounter considerable resistance on the part of citizens and therefore be of doubtful benefit from an electoral viewpoint.
42. Another significant example is that of agricultural supplies: three companies control almost 60% of the seeds and 70% of the pesticides and other chemical products for food production (*Eldiario.es*, 2 October 2016).
43. GARCÍA, Ferrán (2016). “Dos menos uno, dos. Quién decide el precio de los alimentos.” *Bo-*

- letín Ecos*, Fuhem Ecosocial, no. 35, June-August 2016.
44. DELLA PORTA, Donatella and DIANI, Mario (2011). *Los movimientos sociales*. Madrid: Editorial Complutense and CIS, p. 98.
 45. CRESPO, Teresa (ed.) (2016). *El trabajo: presente y futuro*. Barcelona: Cristianisme i Justícia. Cuadernos, no. 198.
 46. Some examples of movement in this direction are Yes Me! Universal Health, which works against the exclusion those with irregular migratory status from health care, and the Platform for Mortgage Holders, which fights against evictions.
 47. Verses of the poem “Ara mateix” of Miquel Martí i Pol: “...I via fora!, que tot està per fer i tot és possible.”
 48. Information about the concentrated ownership of mass media in Spain can be found in the article, “Grupos de comunicación en España: una propiedad tan concentrada como el negocio.”
 49. Examples of this type of media are *Economic Alternatives* or *The Tide*.
 50. Critical media of this type are *Economic Alternatives* in the area of economics, *Options* in the area of consumerism, and *Saltamos, Diagonal*, and *The Tide* in the area of information. There are also organizations like Oxfam, Setem, and Foessa, which periodically undertake studies and issue reports on questions such as inequality or the workings of the financial world, the textile industry, or the military-industrial complex. Also noteworthy is the work of initiatives which familiarize us with geographic zones that are mostly neglected in the mass media; an example is *Mundo Negro* and the information it supplies on Africa.
 51. According to the UN, approximately 5000 persons died in the Mediterranean while trying to migrate to Europe in 2016. See the article, “5.000 muertos en naufragios en 2016 en el Mediterráneo.” *El País*, 23 December 2016.
 52. Information about the amount of waste produced in the manufacture of goods is supplied by indicators such the “ecological backpack” or the “water footprint.” More information can be found in the article, “Mirando más allá del precio.” *Entreprenèntesis*, 31 October 2016.
 53. It is estimated that 30% of all the food produced in the world is wasted. In Spain, the Ministry of Agriculture reports that every year 1.325 billion kilos of food ends up as garbage. Of that amount, 42% represents food waste in the home, 39% represents waste in the processing, 14% represents waste in the reconstitution, and 5% represents waste in the distribution.
 54. A very complete review of the initiatives in different spheres can be found in the monograph of *Alternativas Económicas*, “33 alternativas para vivir de otra manera.” For the environmental sphere, see another monograph of *Alternativas Económicas*, “32 ideas para vivir de forma más ecológica.” Among the many other resources on this topic, we especially highlight the webpage of Mecambio.
 55. CASANOVAS, Xavi and MATEU, Francesc (2014). *Fútbol, desigualdad e impuestos*. Barcelona, Cristianisme i Justícia, Papeles, no.189.
 56. RIECHMANN, Jorge (2015). *Autoconstrucción. La transformación cultural que necesitamos*. Madrid: La Catarata.
 57. DEBORD, Guy (2005). *La sociedad del espectáculo*. Madrid: Pre-textos.
 58. RIECHMANN, Jorge (2014). “Crisis de sentido y ecosocialismo.” *Revista El Ecologista*, no. 83.
 59. DÍAZ-SALAZAR (2016). *Educación y cambio ecosocial. Del yo interior al activismo ciudadano*. Madrid: Editorial PPC. This text offers suggestions about an interesting educational and pedagogical proposal which seeks to develop the inner person by drawing on different religious traditions; the author refers to it as “lay meditation.”
 60. LÓPEZ ARNAL, Salvador (2016). “Educación y cambio ecosocial. Entrevista a Rafael Díaz-Salazar”, *Papeles de relaciones ecosociales y cambio global*, no 135, pp 169-176.
 61. SUBIRATS, Joan (2014). “¿Reivindicar o ser?” *El País*, 16 February 2014.
 62. Pre-politics refers to the process by which one’s personal moral convictions are formed.
 63. An excellent summary of many of these initiatives can be found on the website of Vivero de Iniciativas Ciudadanas.
 64. At the website of Alternativas de Consumo the reader can find more information about this interesting project, Ingenios de Producción Colectiva de Ecologistas en Acción.
 65. Among the few proposals dealing with this reality, we highlight the project, “99 pregun-

tas y 99 experiencias para aprender a vivir en un mundo justo y sostenible,” which has been developed by Ecologists in Action and the working group of the Federación de MRPs de Madrid.

66. LÓPEZ ARNAL, Salvador (2016), “Educación y cambio ecosocial. Entrevista a Rafael Díaz-Salazar.” *Papeles de relaciones ecosociales y cambio global*, no. 135, p. 172.
67. The “Kelly girls” in the area of hotel maids and “Territorio Doméstico” in the area of household maids are two inspiring examples of new forms of collective action that have emerged in sectors that have little tradition of labor organization.
68. On this point we should recall the words of César Rendueles: “We are obsessed with the idea of forming a party, but what really need right now is a union.”
69. Perhaps the main dilemma faced by many of these organizations is their economic dependence on institutions and businesses and the limitations imposed by such dependence when doing political advocacy or denouncing injustice.
70. The booklet of Lourdes Zambrana cited in note 4 contains some interesting observations about what militancy should mean.
71. DE SOUSA SANTOS, Boaventura (coord.) (2011). *Producir para vivir. Los caminos de la producción no capitalistas*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, p. 17.
72. CASALDÁLIGA, Pedro (2006). “Es tarde.” *Antología Personal*. Madrid: Trotta.

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