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Let's reinvent the world

**Group of Reflection and Support to
the WSF Process (GRAP-FSM)**

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Porto Alegre e Região Metropolitana

1. We are experiencing, in this year of 2011, the launch of popular struggles that are much more original, diffuse and vigorous than any others we have seen in the last decades, including the post-Seattle period, between 1999 and 2001. People's mobilizations have swept the Arab World, deposing governments, remaining in many countries. Protesters are taking the streets in Spain and in many other European countries. *Occupy Wall Street* is spreading across the United States, and is already starting to change the country's political scene- a research conducted by Times, from October 13th, shows that the movement is supported by 54% of Americans, while the Tea Party is only popular among 27%. Protests and movements of the indigenous people, which have been going on for longer, produce great effervescence in the usually tempestuous Andean Region, rising against nationalist governments. An unusual level of mass activities is ALSO reaching countries like Chile (with the student protests for public education), Israel (manifestations for social justice) and the conservative Japan (against nuclear energy). The global action day on October 15th, with demonstrations in almost one thousand cities, around 82 countries, has shown the strength and the capacity of the actions carried on by these movements. The almost immediate analogy that rises is with 1968.

2. The uprising against inequality and political and social injustice seems to be the common line between the majority of these movements, which have joined around diffuse demands; these demands question "the system" and "the power", confront their destructiveness and break open the passivity and the inertia of the neoliberal decades. The austerity policies promise more misery for the following years, and cause young people to mobilize for guaranteeing their futures. In all continents, sectors who were apathetic before are putting themselves in motion in a quite democratic way, which is, at the same time, pluralistic, unified and autonomous in relation to power. The diversity of demands and of viewpoints is one of the strengths of these movements. Great suspicion of economic and political institutions (and, also, of political parties) has marked the protests, almost always driven by young people who find themselves without perspective or revolted against the current state of affairs. The large media groups are already

labeling these movements anti-capitalistic, although this definition is far from being shared among all of the participants in this course of action. The diffusion of group mobilization, in the end, contributes to boost the protest dynamics which rise from specific local elements (like in Japan, or in Bolivia...)

3. These movements and protests are a milestone in a process of significant change in the world's situation, following the 2007/2008 crises and contributing to deepen geopolitical, socioeconomic and political transformation (more evident in the Arab World). They are democratic and popular movements that stem from the needs and the aspirations of present times, after three decades of neoliberal globalization. They are movements which sustain a profound rupture with the past, its organizations and its traditions; movements which refuse to enter the divisions and the framings originated in the cleavages of the established left. They are movements whose development is based on the use of information and of communication technologies, and on the digital practices of new generations - this helps us understand the connections they have with a broader audience, their world synchrony and their quick global spread. They are movements of young people, of a new political generation that has not carried the burden of the failure endured by older generations, and that are often affected by these distant experiences. They are mobilizations that channel essential human values, lost in the neoliberal years, such as empathy for others' sufferings, solidarity, defense of equality, pursuit of justice, recognition of diversity, criticism of the capitalistic homogenization of the world, appreciation of nature; these values are critical in rebuilding an anti-hegemonic project. Finally, they are movements that refute the knowingly failed geopolitical cleavages inherited from the pre-1991 bipolar world.

4. There is similarity between that what is going on in the social field and what is happening inside the relationship between states, in the geopolitical sphere. The crisis of capitalist economy in the USA, in the European Union and in Japan is structural; the maintenance of certain growth levels in the emerging countries seems to indicate the relative decline of the north-American empire and a growing protagonism, headed by China, of all BRIC countries. In the old imperialistic

centers, if austerity nurtures the revived social contrariety, decay liberates reactionary, racist and xenophobic forces. However, as a whole, the passage from George Bush's authoritarianism and market globalism to a multilateral order, with different shades, opens doors to the reenactment of social transformation processes. The maintenance of imperial power relations and the reactions of capitalistic poles occur – as we have perceived in the Arab World- against the social and political progressist movements. It is also unquestionable that in South America, in Africa and in Asia, China's trawling capacity still gives some oxygen to certain forms of developmentalism - generally supported by the exports of primary products. Though essentially predatory of the biosphere, economic growth reinforces the legitimacy of many of these governments with their populations. On the other hand, no country can remain immune to a world mobilization of such magnitude, and, sooner or later, the economic "landing" shall ease the dynamism of emergent countries.

5. Nothing, in the visible horizon, indicates that the impulse of these movements will be held back. Their roots are in the crisis and in the governments' responses to the crisis, socializing the losses of the financial system and bailing out banks and speculators (austerity policies, decrease in government spending, etc). In the case of the United States, Occupy Wall Street rises also, objectively, as a counterpoint to the Tea Party, and tends to be stimulated by the left-wing groups of the Democratic Party. The Arab Spring movements are just starting their fights- some have reached important objectives; others are suffering violent repression of the dominant power; some, yet, have degenerated or tend to stray into civil wars. Plus, the movements have only touched the surface of the Saudi society. The same can be said of indigenous fights in South America: Chinese demand for commodities stimulates the invasion of territories belonging to native populations, leading to the private appropriation of common goods and to the theft of the region's natural wealth. It all indicates that we are just at the beginning of the first half of a situation in which, after the neoliberal decades, different societies will put themselves back into movement.

6. No effective answer seems to be emerging from the established power. The environmental crisis that is winding up, especially in climatic terms, is being ignored by the UN and by the great powers, will not be solved in Durban and is driving humanity to a catastrophic scenario, paving the way for delusional geo-engineering projects. The commoditization of life and the privatization of a growing part of the planet's biomass exert growing pressure over the different ecosystems and quickly reduce biodiversity. The worsening of the social crisis in central economies and general agitation against inequality and against the socialization of the losses in the financial system have not found any answer but that of more privatizations, more neoliberalism and more interventions in favor of finance, and a fiercer defense of the privileges owned by the "lords of the world", whose most visible face is the fascist ideology of the Tea Party. The advance of mineral extraction in South America and in Africa, as well as the increase in the sales of land belonging to traditional populations, will continue to nurture resistance fights for the protection of nature, of common goods and of native lifestyles. All of this shows that, for a growing number of people, it is impossible to face these questions apart from a global answer for a global system whose collapse affects individuals globally. The Copenhagen protesters, during the frustrated COP-15, said it is all about "changing the system in order not to change the climate"; we may now say it is about changing the system to protect the 99% upon whom the privileged 1% wish to throw their crises.

7. This seems to be a unique moment for rescuing the original sense of alterworldism and of the World Social Forum. From the message that "another world is possible", focused on counterpointing the institutions that govern neoliberal globalization, we have advanced, in Belém, in 2009, to the search for alternatives to development and to consumerism on socio-environmental bases (thanks, in most ways, to the contributions of the traditional *Abya Yala* populations). However, at the present moment, social fight is revitalized and enriched by the movements for autonomy and power takeover in the Arab World (that is claiming to hold the 2013 edition of the World Social Forum), and by the vast expressions of indignation against financial capitalism and against corporations in Europe and in the United States. If in 1968 one was able to speak

of a world revolution – as a convergence of the fights in the central countries, in the dependent countries and in the bureaucratized societies of Eastern Europe-, now we are able to state that, if another world is possible, it will be built by the convergence of these apparently different actors, stimulating the encounter of these political subjects, favoring the creation of a common sense of purpose, identity and future visions – as, a decade ago, alter-globalization proposed (more than actually offered). And this encounter will be even richer if it is able to establish dialogue with the political experience of previous leftist generations, in the form of horizontal interaction, without prejudice and without impositions.

8. Since the WSF in Belém, we have characterized the world's situation as a convergence between crises and civilization crises. We shall not, here, return to this debate. We must only highlight that an important portion of the current movements put into question nothing more than the system, neoliberal globalization and capitalist organization of economy, society and power. These movements demand not only the abstract possibility of a different world, but also the positive definition of its characteristics and of the transition strategies which may lead us towards a new global order, suggesting concrete actions and immediate responses to the current crisis. In Europe, many global citizenship movements are speaking of “deglobalization”, that is, of smaller dependence on the global market, resisting to the escape of productive enterprises to Asia; hence, we can see the escalation of protectionism or, at least, the review of liberalizing tendencies. There is also general demand, among the movements, for reducing the role of finance and going back to a definition of markets and of corporate power inside politics, strongly taxing the rich and the powerful. There is equally a feeling of broad suspicion towards political representation and towards political parties, in favor of the direct participation of the bases, of horizontal practices, of the use of new information technologies and of democratic deliberation. The understanding that these changes are urgent and that they must be sustainable, socially and environmentally, are growing, altering the relationship between economy and nature: capitalism and its intrinsic greed are devastating the world. And an idea is growing, of a dynamic economy, nationally or regionally focused, sustained on great income distribution (today, income is much more concentrated than in any other

historical moment). All this is insufficient as a society alternative, but it is a more than enough practical starting point for those who are now putting themselves into movement. This alternative can and should be enriched through the connection with the proposals which have been debated and proposed in WSF spaces and in many other spaces, until a new political language, able to articulate a new social model, is finally reached.

9. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20), in May/June 2012, is a moment that offers unique opportunities for global citizenship to expose the global aspects of the world's dramas, placing them in the center of global politics. However, we must not shallow the horizon of civil society in Rio +20, working upon a view that is restricted to resistance and denounce. The more it is inspired by a utopic aspiration for change, the more the gathering of civil society on the occasion of the event will bring effective results. From the message of the Rio +20 articulation group, the invitation to “come change the world at Rio +20” appeared. We shall reinforce this motto, building the civil society meeting in Rio de Janeiro, in May and June, as a meeting of the nonconformists, of the expression of the original peoples and of the anti-systemic movements of all quadrants of the world, capable of affirming an exit to the crisis, and building, from there, global lines of actions and global campaigns. But we know that, after more than two decades of general global crises of socialism, that this will only be effective if we build a common vocabulary, capable of articulating the diffuse demands of high percentages of the world's population. To prepare this more strategic and programmatic reflection for Rio +20 must be – together with more tactical process-building- the task of the Thematic Social Forum “Capitalist crisis, social and environmental justice”, that will meet in Porto Alegre between January 24th and 29th, 2012.

10. This process may leave, in the specific case of Brazil, the host country for this process, a legacy – that will become more concrete, the more we are able to combine global demands with local struggles. The condition of host country imposes to the Brazilian government, willing to develop international protagonism in the newcoming multipolar world, the obligation to do some “homework”, opening

more spaces in which the pressure exerted by movements and social organizations, from Brazil and from neighboring countries, can fructify.

11. Our core challenge today is to strengthen and increase the activity of these new actors who are placing themselves in action, and this can only be effective inside a more open, extensive and unitary process. This provides unity, understood as something that does not eliminate essential differences. However, the meetings of left groups have, on the contrary of what has happened among the protesters, resulted in sterile decisions in almost all international forums. We must resist to the centrifuge tendencies that lay upon many movements and organizations. We must affirm the centrality of unity in all the points from which we intend to march together, in order to move towards a new social force correlation. It is by having an extremely renewed, massive and inspiring movement that the preservation of its advances will become extremely useful to the Left- which will seek support for their positions in broader political spectrum. We remind you that the unity points are, today, much more than the differences between us (in social, environmental, legal and political terms). The cleavage that has emerged until now, throughout this year, has been the subject of green economy, especially in Latin America; it is a strategic point, although of difficult understanding for most of the leading movements in this conjuncture. However, when we consider the common international scenario, the unity points between us are immeasurably more abundant than the divergences. They are the bases that allow us to strengthen a broad movement of societies. Porto Alegre will be, doubtlessly, a moment to deepen the discussion and to clarify deals and divergence. Debates that have been stimulated in the most possibly articulate way in France, during G20, in Durban, during COP-17. We hope that both Porto Alegre and Rio welcome the protesters of the world, and are spaces to amplify our common fights. **Let's reinvent the world!**