



Grass-root movements  
and trans-national solidarity

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

Committee for a Just World Peace  
Yokohama, 7 Dec. 86

MARIA DE LOURDES PINTASILGO

*Ambassadeur du Portugal*

*auprès de l'Unesco*

Fundação Cuidar o Futuro

# Grass-root movements and transnational solidarity

1. Grass-root: we are where action is, <sup>people getting out of natural conformism + passivity → Adolfo López</sup> where needs are acute, where human beings are ready to take their destiny in their own hands.

2. Grass-root movement / social move/

when the actual social practice is <sup>Fundação Cuidar o Futuro</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>at</sup> national or int'l level

2 weeks ago Ex. 700 w from rural areas who used to work in factories of textiles, dress-making, for export were fired. - ~~then~~ they form a cooperative of handicraft products + try their own self-employment

Portex 86

{ NL Switzerland

- why? they see the dependency of the Port. economy + possibility of finding new products, coming out of their <sup>own</sup> cultural identity

- beyond that: understanding that part of the textile/dress-making industry has gone to Southeast Asia, they feel corresponsable + say: we have to warn them



How can the State be put into its place?  
How can democracy express the will of  
the people?

Date

① Restoration of democracy: *people making history*  
*(basic equality of all)*

It took 2 forms:

- at the level of the State,  
steps towards establishment of parliamentary dem.

*dem. "participative democracy": (Adolfo)*

- in society at large,  
many issues emerged as vital  
and the people concerned took them in hand  
"social invention" - Richard Falk

This was the upsurge of social movements,

*Original solutions, dynamic interaction;  
sense of materializing aspirations of many other  
countries (flood of visitors) / another way of expressing  
democracy.*

② Gradually, the instruments of part. dem., namely  
the political parties,  
took everything as their own field,  
occupied all the political space; appropriated some of  
froze their programs at the level of very ideological  
the social movements  
nature.

At the same time,  
many of the social movements  
failed to link their goals with the new institutions  
because they had no form whatsoever of  
stable organization.

Often they were not able to relate  
their own specific cause  
with global issues.



Seen from outside the country, the social movements  
only arouse the interest of extreme-left political parties.

*The people outside*  
didn't see the meaning of what was happening.

It became a period where the action of the social movements was put in the background and the political institutions were in the limelight.

③ In 79, the social movements were taken seriously by the state authorities.

As a PM, I considered the social movements as social partners, essential in the process of decision-making for basic issues:

- indexing of prices / recitization of economy
- ~~measures~~ measures in terms of social security

e.g. consumers' groups, cooperatives of production of goods + services

A great vitality emerged from that dialogue but had a negative effect:

The political parties became felt threatened and reinforced Fundação para o Futuro international contacts, their impact on society.

Social movements don't necessarily mean unrest as some political leaders fear but can be a very stimulating element for the state itself.

④ In 80, an attempt to make a coalition of social movements

together with the most open political party was made.

But it met with failure - the political party withdrew...



Difficulty of soc. mov.: to get so taken by their specificity that a link among them is very fragile!

Though they may keep a kind of utopian language used inside, they must translate their perspectives into well-known categories.

⑤ 81-82 — Platform of social movements

- tipping who the groups were
- common strategy
- possibilities + difficulties

All the time, the connection to the power-structure, was a key-question.

Reaching out beyond national boundaries was a major challenge — but stagnation or decline of social movements in Europe prevented it.

Social movements are a barometer of actual dem. vitality.

⑥ 83-84 — The platform of social movements became Fundação Cuidar do Futuro movement: "Movement for Deepening democracy"

- Positive: direct + explicit link with the general politics of the country
- Negative: internally: power-at-play  
externally: target of political parties, with the fear that it would become another party

Other facts in Europe were showing that democracy in Europe was in need of new ingredients. Council of Europe in Delphi, Greece about: new social + cultural factors in democracy.



⑦ 85 — Reinforcement of social movement

external debt with preparation of presidential elections:  
 dependence (though the constitution places that election directly in the hands of the people and not on the hands of political parties, ~~not~~ all candidates, but one were ~~the~~ candidates of pol. parties.)  
 from foreign countries

— rallying of social moves  
 around that candidate  
 who was independent of political parties  
 and whose program gave room to new  
 social + political forces

— defeat of that candidate + what she represented

There are <sup>but they have to produce</sup> ~~many~~ <sup>moments when social moves ~~are~~ <sup>often</sup> put all their energies in the political struggle</sup> ~~making~~

⑧ 86 — Time of great ~~change~~ reshuffle of personnel in political parties

a) pol. part. recapture some of the themes of the soc. mov.

b) some people in social moves went to pol. part. → change in power

c) a few of the social moves went on in a ~~new~~ perspective of resistance + long-term building of alternatives

d) Coming to the conclusion that it is through the international/transnational connections that the soc. moves can have impact

