

Facing An Unequal World

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Facing An Unequal World

Challenges for Global Sociology

Edited by **Raquel Sosa Elízaga**

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Introduction

Raquel Sosa Elizaga

In July 2014, more than 4000 sociologists met at Yokohama to exchange views and research findings on the crucial challenge of the 21st century – the confrontation and eventual elimination of the processes of structural inequality that affect millions of human beings today.

According to the proceedings of this Congress, we have been able to confirm that the instability and uncertainty that characterize the world today can be roughly explained by the existence of an immense and vertiginous accumulation of wealth by a few, which in turn has precipitated the dispossession, impoverishment and exclusion of millions of human beings in all latitudes of our planet.

Even though it is true that not a single society has ever been free of the burden of this ballast, vast evidence confirms that throughout the 20th century, particularly in its last three decades, as well as from the beginning of the 21st century, deterioration in life's conditions for nearly a third of the world's inhabitants has been aggravated by a tragic combination of new forms of accumulation and dispossession, war, all sorts of violence, massive population displacements and migration, socio/natural disasters associated to climatic change, and the neglect, relegation or even dismantling of models of social organization centered on the value and defence of common and public services and institutions. In this context, the accumulation and overlap of all types of injustice not only complicates or impedes the realization of legitimate aspirations and rights of the inhabitants of the earth to live in a dignified manner, but it also condemns thousands of defenceless human beings to death.

It thus becomes clear that these years' international scenario is an image of violence, power struggles, intolerance, unlimited greed and unimaginable lacks. And then, if we are aware of the destruction and devastation of natural resources, essential to life, by water contamination, wasteful use and confrontation over the control of oil and minerals, the overcrowding of urban settlements, massive migration, the destruction of important cultural

resources and of the world's heritage, we cannot but be alarmed and feel obliged to contribute not only with explanations, but also with as much as we can to surmount a human crisis that threatens every living being on Earth.

The inequality in the recognition of ethnic or gender differences, preferences or orientations, access to indispensable goods and services for the existence of a dignified human life, as well as the constraints in the access to symbolic assets, generate violence and deepen social conflicts. At the same time, survival in extreme situations and war increases the exclusion of vulnerable groups and, consequently, adds to inequality. It also appears that the mechanisms used to apply new global designs, such as multi-lateral and bilateral agreements for free trade have greatly contributed to inequality, as they grant benefits to capital, but limit the rights of the people. When capital can move freely, while people are repressed if they attempt to do likewise, the correlation between forces is radically altered in favour of capital, and workers cease to be able to negotiate collectively; thus, greater inequality is generated.

To make an accurate diagnosis of the present phenomenon of inequality, as well as the oppression and the risks that contemporary societies face, is an urgent collective task, way beyond the scope of academic sociology. The contribution of experts, wherever they may be found (in academia, governments, civil and social organizations), is required, but above all, it is also equally urgent that we manage to listen to the voice of citizens and communities. In a certain sense, the knowledge of the difficulties being faced by millions of human beings today should lay the foundations of an ethical crusade, in order to reach a common understanding of the true, present and future meaning of sustainable life, with the restoration and prevention of further destruction of natural resources and common goods; equal distribution of wealth; respect, inclusion and tolerance for diversity; exercise of individual and collective basic rights; recognition of community and people's autonomy and rights; the respect for identity, liberty, creativity and the principle of solidarity as the basis of alternative forms of coexistence.

Aware of the risks produced by the destruction of the social fabric, the state of neglect suffered by millions of human beings that barely survive, and the magnitude of the deficiencies that prevent most of the human beings from realizing their imagination, intelligence and sensitivity potential in order to achieve an improvement in their living conditions, their families and their communities, the United Nations issued a statement in the year 2000. Supported by 147 governments, it established the Millennium Goals, which

were meant to be fulfilled by the year 2015 (UN, 2000). Although this initiative has drawn criticism because it is considered to be the *minimal point* of departure for governments, since it only deals with the consequences – extreme poverty, childbirth mortality, the spread of HIV/AIDS, to mention but a few of its objectives – and not the deeper roots of inequality, it has really contributed to make a larger public aware of some of the more alarming aspects of this phenomenon. Specifically, the Millennium Goals have proved to be an inspiration for sectors that, one way or the other, have the power to determine the future of their countries through governing the processes of decision making and the design of public policies. Additionally, in recent years, we have witnessed important initiatives that share the concern about the need to transform and radically improve life on the planet. Among other valuable contributions to this debate, we must recognize that of the World Social Forum, which gathered nearly 60,000 people in 2011 in Dakar, in order to discuss and confront possibilities and alternatives for a better life on Earth (WSF, 2011). On the other side of the planet, the World People’s Conference on Climatic Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, held in Cochabamba, Bolivia in early 2010 (Acuerdo de los Pueblos, 2010) also constituted a milestone in the promotion of alternatives that can guarantee both the continuity and dignity of human beings, and the respect and care of nature.

This is the context in which the latest International Sociological Association’s contribution has taken place. An incredibly sensitive community of academics and professionals such as the International Sociological Association, aware of these social transformations in the world, could not be absent from this debate. The great tradition of multi, inter and transdisciplinary works in which the most complex problems of the present-day world are addressed; its unique condition of being academically, scientifically, regionally, institutionally and organically plural have made our Association ideally qualified to face the challenge of contributing to this international debate.

Out of the enormous effort made by the Program Committee during the years 2010 and 2014¹ both the plenaries and this book were originally organized in five major topics:

The dimensions of inequality: Configurations of structural inequalities and structures of power

Inequality in the world includes multiple dimensions and appears as an increasingly complex phenomenon, one which is difficult to unravel.

It can be measured in terms of gender, family, community or generation; distribution of income or human development; gender preferences or orientations, cultural diversity, ethnic origin, national or regional; migratory status, displacement or refuge; dispossession, deterritorialization or impoverishment; access to goods, services or resources; vulnerability due to situations of natural disaster, war or violence; the double pain suffered by women, indigenous people, the youth, migrants and displaced, among many others, caused by violence and exclusion; deprivation from the exercise of the rights of citizenship and sovereignty. It is a fact that inequalities overlap and aggravate in the world, while experts find it increasingly difficult to identify and name the links among its different dimensions and dynamics. In this sense, for example, we cannot obviate that racism has become a device for the naturalization of inequalities, as for the unequal, hierarchical construction of different forms of knowledge, so that knowledge proceeding from the more favoured members in today's unequal society is considered privileged or superior. Similarly, if we refer to *dispossession* to give but two examples, we cannot ignore the seriousness of the deeply unequal appropriation/use/exploitation of the natural resources of a planet with limited load capacity, where the abundance of some is only made possible by the deficiency of others.

Conceptions of justice in different historical and cultural traditions

We are at a stage of human history where the accumulation of knowledge on different expressions of social and institutional organization, the formulation of concepts, categories and models must face the great challenge of explaining and contributing to the solution of crises in practically all aspects of social life. The scopes and consequences of such crises are unpredictable, but they undoubtedly test our capacity to sustain, question, propose and imagine different paradigms of civilization.

These paradigms allow us to analyze the development of different ways of territorialization of social life, based on the recognition and inclusion of those who have been excluded from the main streams of development; as well as to set principles and values conducive to a more harmonious and sustainable reproduction of our communities. This is the direction in which the analysis and proposals formulated by a significant group of authors (Esping-Anderson, 1990; Quijano, 1990; Wallerstein, 1996; Bourdieu, 2003; De Souza Santos, 2006; Harvey, 2006; Therborn, 2006; Sen, 2010; Amin, 2011) have established strong bases for contemporary debates,

and so illuminate our hopes of contributing to propose conditions for the survival in dignity and peace to the human beings who inhabit our planet.

But such paradigms must also cast a view on recent developments that may force us to reconsider concepts associated to an integrated society, social development, and a universal understanding of justice.

Conflicts on environmental justice and sustainable future

In a world where different perspectives of organization, the availability and distribution of the work force, ways and means of production, distribution and exchange of goods and services, ideologies and knowledge are articulated and/or confronted; where millions of human beings suffer from conflicts where their integrity is threatened, or are forced to abandon their homes in disaster zones; in which young people, women, migrants and members of ordinary peoples suffer a double pain caused by exclusion and violence; in a world where strategies for power, resistance and search for alternatives are formulated and practiced at all levels, the knowledge of the processes through which inequality is generated, reproduced or intensified is both complex and intriguing. It presupposes the identification of spatialities and temporalities in order to understand the scope of conflicts, confrontations, ruptures and discontinuities. The fields in which inequality is expressed are also meaningful, as they include science and law, as well as art and culture. Inequality also presupposes the organization of resistance, the formation and consolidation of social movements, the creation of languages and networks, building imaginary scenarios. True and deep knowledge of the processes of construction and possible deconstruction of inequalities, as well as of the individual and collective actors that produce or confront them, is urgent in order to prevent policies and practices that have either generated or aggravated them.

Social injuries of inequality

The fulfillment of the Millennium Goals – or at least some of them – has become a common interest shared by a great number of governments, academics and social organizations around the world. However, the repetition and aggravation of social crises, the renewal and creation of different forms of inequality and exclusion, out of the ones considered in the Goals, as well as in the traditional conceptual framework, force us to make the same and

other questions we might probably not have thought of to truly understand the nature and scope of the human crisis we are living at present.

Overcoming inequalities: Actors and experiences

We must recognize that contemporary societies embrace important historical and contemporary struggles against inequality and in favour of the recognition of individual and collective rights, the results of which are stimulating, although they may not be considered definitive. The pressure exerted by important mobilized sectors of society has allowed the opening of a wide spectrum in which legality and legitimacy for the reversion of inequality is based: from human rights to public policies for *equalization*. Sociology is obliged to recognize the existing links among basic social demands, the requirement for the establishment of human rights, the recognition of peoples', women's, youths' and others' rights, the enforceability of these rights, social empowerment and the building of new forms of citizenship. The guidelines for debate, proposed to the participants in the semi plenaries, allowed both a fruitful debate and enlightening contributions.

The active participation of the authors of each and every one of the texts in this book has gone through deep reflections, revisions and reconstruction, with the contribution of our SSIS reviewers, coordinated by Sujata Patel, and later, by Chaime Marcuello. After nearly two years of very hard work, we have finally arrived at a point where the original kaleidoscope we presented at the Yokohama Congress has taken its own shape, been remodelled and come to be expressed, I believe, in its true value and dimension: that of a synthetic view of contemporary inequality in the world, where all perspectives, all research experiences come together as a clear, critical understanding of the way in which capitalism has been reorganized to favour accumulation, luxury, excessive expenses of a few, and poverty, lack of access to basic goods, services and rights, frailty, dispossession and instability, of a growing and significant part of the world's population.

Exclusion, the extreme to inequality or expulsion, as the strategic decision to expel/discard others from whatever circuits capital and market may conduct, is achieved through a series of complex operations that include physical segregation – to the point of seclusion or invisibilization – appropriation of land, water, natural and strategic resources, like mining, but also, making use of whatever instruments and mechanisms available to ensure that those excluded/expelled will never stand in a position to

claim anything but what is conditionally offered to them at the acceptance of their inferiority, ignorance and deficiency. Discrimination, violence, war, and of course, economic and financial concentration and its social, cultural, symbolic and political consequences have become the living stamps of this era.

In Part One of our book, *Capitalism and Inequality: Globalized Economies and Fractured Societies*, the authors have achieved the very difficult task of presenting a general frame in which it is visible that capitalism has built deep polarizations, in which finance and extraction form the perfect combination for wild accumulation, while ‘the poor, of the displaced in poor countries ... are warehoused in formal and informal refugee camps; minoritized and persecuted in rich countries, ... warehoused in prisons; workers whose bodies are destroyed on the job and rendered useless, ... warehoused in ghettos and slums’ (Sassen, in Chapter 2 of this book).

In this ‘epochal transition on this shrinking planet’, Ari Sitas, in Chapter 3, considers that it is nevertheless possible to identify the obsession of economic growth, though ‘growth for growth’s sake is the philosophy of cancer cells and mutinous viruses’. If thought about as a new phase of international division of labour, it seems to him that manufacturing has shifted South and East, while symbolic values remain in the North. Rather than a de-industrialization, we are thus witnessing a re-location of capital production of commodities, which has exerted an immense pressure on working class standards everywhere. Contrary to what Marx imagined for an advanced capitalist era, accumulation has not led to socialization of production and empowerment of workers, but the fragmentation, dispersal, insecurity, vulnerability, overwork and weakening of labourers and their unions. Explosive forms of resistance, disconnection and discontent have turned out to be the signs and symbols of struggles of the dispossessed.

Up to this second decade of our new century, sociological debate had focused on social differences as forms of social stratification. As Göran Therborn proposes in Chapter 4 of this book, this view has turned to be completely insufficient to understand what can only be called *vital inequalities*, that is, an ‘historical social construction by which the possibilities of realizing human capability are allocated unequally’. Parental and social milieu, seen through intergenerational lenses, have an enormous importance in perpetuating the basic mechanisms of inequality (detachment, exclusion, hierarchization and exploitation). Once again, the content and scope of relations of power are determinant in the continuity or rupture of all social disadvantages.

In Part Two, *Economic, Territorial and Social Dimensions of Inequality*, the authors give us a broad panorama of the dimensions of inequality in our world today. First, they look upon diverse explanations of the relation between globalization, with periods of noticeable economic growth, and the increase of inequality. Harold Kerbo's case study of the differences between Thailand and Cambodia, finds that historical trends and contemporary government policies can account for differences in growth, poverty reduction and population wellbeing, though in an authoritarian State in Thailand; while corruption, unsupervised reception of international aid and general government disorder may broadly explain the increase of income inequality, unemployment and unrest, in Cambodia.

Habibul Khondker makes full use of Göran Therborn's conception on vital, income and resource inequality while analyzing the Middle Eastern and North African countries. He explains the reasons for paradoxical findings of poverty reduction and inequality increase in the experiences of political instability, wars, violence and economic crises due to variations in oil prices, which have caused, among other things, wide young unemployment, aggravated gender inequality and destabilized families and rural communities, many of whom have been forcefully displaced.

Carlos Walter Porto-Gonçalves in Chapter 7 of this book, portrays a critical understanding of the risks posed to the world's most biodiverse region, the Amazon, after the continuation of predatory, colonial and developmental plans to conquer and submit nature (forests, water, land), while ignoring or despising the peoples who have inhabited it for more than 17,000 years. He affirms that 'prevailing views are *about* the Amazon, and not visions *of* the Amazon'. 'To consider Amazon in an anthropocentric way, as in the Eurocentric tradition, authorizes "domination of nature" as it would supposedly exist for the service of men. And as we know, this means men, and to a lesser extent women, not in a generic way, but meaning white and bourgeois men.' Porto-Gonçalves explains the damages caused by recent huge investment projects launched by public and private alliances, in which transnational corporations disown and displace populations to freely destroy valuable resources, with the compliance of the governments of the region. He proposes a different integration of the Amazon, in which people and nature are included and considered as part of a human, cultural and live patrimony that cannot continue to be wildly, irrationally and with impunity exploited and vanished.

Keng-Ming Hsu and Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao warn us in Chapter 8 of this book, of the prevailing views of natural disasters as a matter that

has been dealt with by elaborating risk maps, organizing general prevention and intervention programmes after disasters and, mainly, considering only the so-called scientific perspective, which frequently ignores social vulnerabilities, crucial in truly facing the aggravation of inequalities and risks of death for millions of human beings. They quote the *2015 Global Assessment Report on Disaster Reduction* released by the United Nations to report that ‘average annual losses worldwide resulting from disasters like earthquakes, tsunamis, tropical cyclones and floods are US \$134 billion, and it is predicted that such disaster losses will increase year after year’. They also quote the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), which calculates 165 million people were affected by flood in 2007, 74.8% of these being Asian inhabitants. Their research proves the high-risk potential suffered by high social vulnerable populations, and considers that their prolonged suffering is not limited to the immediate consequences of disasters, but to the aggravating and endangering inequalities they suffer due to their ‘class, occupation, race, gender, disability status, health status, age, immigration status and social networks, as well as to the degree of impact on people’s lives after a catastrophe’. It is particularly to these questions that governments should pay real attention in order to reduce risk and loss of lives.

One of the main characteristics of this book is that it recognizes particular expressions of inequality that must be attended, if we not only aim at understanding how capitalist trends determine new forms of work exploitation or obtaining more profits, but also seek an adequate inclusion of new needs in order to incorporate them into our general knowledge of social problems resulting in significant proposals of new social policies.

Chizuko Ueno in Chapter 9 of this book introduces the picture of a hurt and disintegrated Japanese society. For example, after the Fukushima disaster, the surrounding community were again victimized by evacuation, where youth and parents, ‘especially mothers with young children’, were likely to be evacuated, leaving husbands and old parents behind. In a time of low fertility in the country, with population decrease, the government has not ceased to deregulate employment, increasing irregular workers. Sixty per cent of women employed have irregular work, and this again impacts on fertility, as pregnant women can easily lose their jobs on giving birth. The most dramatic situation, though, is that of the new condition of women available for the reserve army of labour force after the absence of foreign workers: ‘gender serves as a functional equivalent with race and ethnicity in other developed countries’.

In Chapter 10, Susan McDaniel analyzes the growth of paid caring, which has become part of the ‘public sphere of paid work’, creating a particular relationship (duel, she calls it) of production and reproduction spaces, ‘in which labour relationships are taking place largely, but not exclusively, between women who are increasingly unequal. It is a gendered encounter intertwining production and reproduction. This is a space for construction and maintenance of social hierarchies/social inequalities that are widening within most countries and growing globally.’

In a brief essay, Hiroyuki Torigoe (Chapter 11 of this book) shows the experience of the Taketomi Island in Okinawa Prefecture, on the southwestern border of Japan, where the community has basically been saved by appealing to its historical and cultural traditions, resisting the pressures of developers with the premise that ‘money is for one generation but land is for future generations’, and recreating their economy according to their own rules, the *Taketomi Chapter*, which has allowed the very small population of the island to get rid of inequality.

Jean-Michel Bonvin, in Chapter 12, contributes to the discussion of what has been left behind in public policies with a reconstruction of Amartya Sen’s thought by looking into the limits of plans and programmes intended to overcome inequalities. He emphasizes that equality cannot mean forceful unification of social needs, nor does equality of resources ensure equality of capabilities. He proposes that ‘equalization of capabilities requires adjusting the scope of public intervention to the specific circumstances of people: the more they are deprived or negatively affected in their living conditions and capacity to act autonomously, ... the more they need to be provided with extensive resources and interventions ...’. ‘Human rights’, Bonvin concludes, ‘should not be conceived in such a way to promote specific modes of being or doing over others, ... but they should be designed so as to open for all human beings opportunities of choosing life trajectories they have reason to value’. Complementing some of Yuval-Davis’ ideas, Bonvin considers that ‘the requirements of social justice do not derive from a “view from nowhere”, but are to be situated and contextualized’.

Digging deep into the philosophical roots of social actions, Ana Esther Ceceña, in Chapter 13 of this book, deconstructs the Monsanto project of unifying and universalizing crops and the grain market all over the world. With its infrastructure in 66 countries and its 32,000 employees, this transnational corporation – just being sold to another giant, Bayer – has made the most dramatic effort to regularize, patent, objectify and transform genetically modified seeds into dependent seeds (*terminator seeds*).

By breaking up and preventing natural interaction in agriculture, Monsanto deconstructs social relationships and hierarchies, establishing them as simple subject–object relations. Ceceña stipulates, ‘A voiding of concrete, distinct, inequippable substance is operated, in order to place everything in conditions of comparison and exchangeability. Universal, abstract and epistemologically committed to the modern vision referents are built, and they prevent the recognition of diversity, while tending to displace it to the level of abnormality or insufficiency.’ Dramatic image of what has been proposed as a universal, homogeneous, exchangeable world of human beings and commodities in a world increasingly dominated by the enterprise order.

Sarah El Jamal and Sari Hanafi, in Chapter 14, close this section by demonstrating that social studies in the Arab region have become unified and a closed circle, basically dominated by closed clusters in which very few authors are forced to consider and cite one another, and where almost every one of them has worked in the World Bank’s research teams. Unfortunately, the lack of originality, of the opening of new trends is an extremely delicate question – overcoming inequality and reducing poverty has sometimes led to the aggravation of a problem that certainly needs more and critical views. In a way, these two papers that close our Part Two are extremely significant: they have dared to be critical about the way in which diversity has not been considered in certain social studies, giving way to a presumed, arbitrary, forced homogeneity, and not, to problematize and enrich, situate, contextualize and find alternatives to the most important social problems in our world.

Finally, Part Three of our book, *Reforms, Resistance and Alternatives: New Ways Towards Social Justice* begins by presenting the insightful works of the distinguished scholars and politically experienced Walden Bello and Edgardo Lander. Bello, in Chapter 15, explores the limits and possibilities of reforms within the neoliberal hegemony in Southeast Asia, particularly Thailand and the Philippines. He analyzes risks and alternatives in dealing with reforms such as health care, agriculture and the fight against corruption. All these involve the risk of intervention of manipulative threatened elites who will try to derail all progressive transformations. He values even the minimal steps forward in the worst scenarios, but puts forward the proposal of the combination of both representative and direct democracy, with a strong civil society, vigilance in parliament and constant participation as counterbalances to the intervention of conservative forces against all reforms.

Edgardo Lander begins reminding us in Chapter 16 that Latin America is ‘by far, the most unequal continent’ and further explaining that ‘the current inequities in the continent are the result of five centuries of colonial racist history characterized by the systematic subjugation, extermination, exploitation and exclusion of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants’. The combination of *exporters-of-nature* economies, the use of the *civilization and barbarism* logic and a monocultural conception that privileged conditioned cash transfers to any option of reform has led to perpetuate all sorts of colonial forms of integration within the international division of ‘labor and nature’. As alternatives, Lander proposes that the dimension of ‘intergenerational justice’ be established through the recognition and reorganization of States and citizens through the inclusion of a multinational and pluricultural perspective: ‘this implies the recognition of the multiplicity of languages, the diverse forms of property, juridical regimes, modalities of production, as well as the plurality of knowledges and forms of relating to the rest of the web of life.’

The South African experience has motivated Grace Khunou (in Chapter 17) to discuss the efficacy and depth of social reforms by arguing the need for a new conception of gender in order to guarantee true access to citizenship rights: ‘the constitution that protects your right is insignificant if you are unable to access these rights through employment and access to social services like health’. Khunou considers that by forcing homogeneous and unilateral approaches to social justice, the State can only reinforce and aggravate inequality. She proposes the adoption of a multiple gender view (she refers in particular to masculinities) in order to prevent true exclusion.

In Chapter 18, Paulo Henrique Martins develops the notion of wellbeing proposed and enacted by the Bolivian Government after the proclamation of its new Constitution in 2009. Inspired by Cohen and Honnuth, Martins claims that a true democracy should be based on ‘social liberty, mediated by mutual recognition inspiring intersubjectivity equality’. Nurtured by the *Pacha Mama* (Mother Earth) Aymara cosmovision, Martins rejects the modern colonial perspective, based exclusively on economic growth, and proposes a new ethical principle ‘structuring another modernity that values the plurality, deepening the renewal of the economic, cultural and political thinking’.

Chih-Jou Jay Chen has made an intensive and extensive case study on the development of social protests during the past ten years in China. Although he recognizes different economic motivations both in urban

and rural communities (wages, living conditions, resistance against land seizures, etc.), he opens the scope in Chapter 19 of this book to clearly perceive the way in which protests have more and more turned towards rights defence, struggles against governmental misdeeds (corruption) and critique of authoritarian rule. Violence has also been a significant component in these protests, particularly in small localities, either rural or urban. Chen concludes that ‘China’s current political system lacks effective channels for citizens to express genuine grievances, and to seek redress from the misdemeanors of local officials, and therefore social unrest is on the rise’.

In Chapter 20, Peter Alexander draws complex conclusions following the mining crisis in South Africa, after the Marikana Massacre. He proves with abundant documents and testimonies that the core of the conflict is not a mere labour case (although wages and working conditions were definitely part of the initial stages of the struggle), but one that involves the resistance against the interference of multinational corporations in the laws and practice of the democratic State. He underlines, arguing against Piketty’s comments on the case, that academics should go beyond their scholar and theoretical views and seek to comprehend social reality in its multidimensional configurations.

Aylin Topal, in Chapter 21, refers to the broad consequences of the civil resistance initiated by the Tekel workers on strike in Turkey. The way they faced the State, the repression they were submitted to, but most of all, their clarity of objectives and understanding of what was at the bottom of a capital–labour contradiction, transformed their movement into a global social and civic resistance, in which different grievances were included, and a new rights movement emerged – ‘There is a need for new, creative forms of organization with an ability to initiate collective action on a long-lasting basis.’

Finally, in Chapter 22, Esteban Castro strongly stands in favour of present and future international forms of organization and integration in order to regulate the production and exchange of goods and services needed by the population, and not only favouring the sole accumulation of wealth in the hands of very few. He uses Latin American experiences such as Mercosur, ALBA, CELAC and UNASUR and demands that these crucial organisms favour not only economic growth and increasing international exchange (in an extractivist view), but reorient their views to include ecological, as well as social justice and equality.

On behalf of my colleagues, to whom I wish to express my appreciation and admiration, I sincerely wish that the readers of this volume will keep

a broader and more complex view of the inequalities our world suffers today, and also feel the urge to actively work on rethinking, proposing and, as much as they can, enact changes in their lives and lives of others to ensure a dignified life for everyone on earth.

Note

1 The committee was chaired by Raquel Sosa Elizaga, and its members were: Michael Burawoy, Margaret Abraham, Tina Uys, Koichi Hasegawa, Sari Hanafi, Chin Chun, Markus Schulz, Esteban Castro, Edgardo Lander, Göran Therborn, Kalpana Kannabiran and Benjamín Tejerina.

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