

NCS People's University 2017

Turbulent Times

AUGUST 17 – 19, 2017

UQÀM Pavillon J.-A.-DeSève - 320, rue Sainte-Catherine Est Montréal H2X 1L7

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BETWEEN PROGRESS AND STAGNATION

“The old world is dying, and the new world struggles to be born; now is the time of monsters.”

Antonio Gramsci

When Donald Trump won the US presidential election, the world entered a new era. The politics of austerity in a variety of forms appears to be a growing trend all over the world. Neo-liberal policies (privatization, deregulation, unbridled financialization, etc.) put the planet on a path to environmental destruction and accumulation for accumulation's sake. However, this course is no longer tenable and to maintain it the 1% imposes violent measures, which have their cultural counterpart in the hateful, racist and xenophobic messages spread by the media and right wing commentators.

This is an ideology of each against all that leads to an endless cycle of militarization and war. Faced with this rise of the right, the old Keynesian approach to government is on the ropes. It was transformed into social-liberalism years ago. Political parties campaign left and govern right, expressing sympathy with the plight of the poor but doing to change the set-up or challenge the class interests at the root of the problem.

This programmed destruction cannot crush humanity, however. Mass protests continue to emerge, from the Arab and African Springs to the huge demonstrations in Barcelona, Istanbul, Buenos Aires, Athens, Washington, Standing Rock and elsewhere. In Québec, in the wake of the 2012 mobilization of students and citizens, new waves of resistance arise, especially against environmental threats. And there is a new development: the resurgence of Indigenous resistance. Today the “invisible peoples” (Richard Desjardins) are saying “No more” and are sending us a powerful message: struggle together!

Humankind's vast creative and technological capabilities could be harnessed to allow us to work less, establish a new relationship with Mother Earth, unchain the imaginations of our children and young people, and build bridges between the peoples of the world. Everything is possible!

And so people resist; they stand against the system. They organize, mobilize, debate, think critically, and reflect on what they can do better. They experiment, on a small scale, with creating a more egalitarian and ecologically sustainable world. They struggle to occupy space in the political realm under adverse conditions. To paraphrase the great Cuban poet José Martí, with the world in flames we need to focus on the light.

The program

1. Canada, past and present: capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism – August 17-18-19

Canada is celebrating its 150th birthday this year. It has the distinction of being the only nation in the Americas which did not fight for its independence, which never adopted a republican system and which has had a history of conquests from its inception until today. This is not our State and we have nothing to celebrate. Still, this is an opportunity for us to arrive at a better understanding of political entity that has remained in power through a shrewd combination of oppression and violence, with a patriarchal and capitalist system ensuring its hegemony. Time and again, this power system was shaken by popular uprisings. This is the starting point for mapping contemporary movements and struggles.

2. What does the digital revolution mean for the 99% – August 18

The dominant take on the digital revolution announces both disaster, with the loss of millions of jobs, and Shangri-la, with the disappearance of dangerous, dirty and routine work. All over the world, social movements are affected by automation, uberization, and new means of social control threatening our rights. What can we do? What are the alternatives? How can we conceive of an inclusive and progressive program for putting technology in the service of the 99%?

Schedule at a glance

Thursday, August 17

7:00 PM	Opening session Turbulent Times AM-050
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Friday, August 18

	Theme 1 Canada, past and present: capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism		Theme 2 The digital revolution: what does it mean for the 99%?
9:30-11:30 AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The political economy of Canadian capitalism DS-M440 Canadian colonialism: from dispossession to apartheid DS-M445 Canada against the Québécois DS-M465 Radical movements, from Winnipeg to Montreal via Valleyfield DS-M320 	9:30-10:45 AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rights and democracy in the shadow of the digital revolution (plenary session) DS-R510
1:00 - 3:30 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systemic racism, systematic discrimination DS-M240 The future of the antiglobalization movement DS-M340 Left convergence Canada-Québec AM-050 	11:00 AM-12:30 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The changing world of work DS-1540 The impact of the digital revolution on education DS-1580 Mass media and the digital revolution DS-R515 Should we fight uberization? DS-R520
4:00-6:00 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada and environmental destruction: how can we resist? (plenary session) AM-050 	2:00-3:30 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anti-globalization and digital technologies DS-M440 Liberating computer technology DS-M445 Putting innovation in the service of the 99% DS-M460
6:00 PM	NCS Cocktail and Launch of No. 18 Indigenous Peoples and Québec. Fighting together Bar le LAB - 279, rue Sainte-Catherine Est,		

Saturday, August 19

9:00-11:30 AM	<p>Theme 1: Canada, past and present: capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women against the Canadian State DS-M220 Workers against the Canadian State DS-M440 Decolonizing critical thinking DS-M460 Canada: a weak link in the imperialist chain AM-050 Socialism 100 years on DS-445
1:00-3:00 PM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new republican project (plenary session) AM-050

Workshop and plenary session descriptions

Thursday, August 17, 7 PM

Opening session - Turbulent Times, room AM-050

From Alaska to the Gaspésie and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, North America is facing the exhaustion of the predatory, financialized capitalist system. Besides what Gramsci called the “morbid symptoms” (Trump!), movements are regrouping to organize resistance, such as the protest at Standing Rock against pipelines, the anti-racist mobilizations in the United States, and the citizens movements everywhere working for liberation in various guises. With Kanahus Manuel (Indigenous activist involved in the Standing Rock protest and the fight against the Kinder Morgan pipeline), Rose Brewer (Black Lives Matter activist) and Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois (member of the National Assembly and co-spokesperson for Québec Solidaire)

Friday August 19

Theme 1 Canada, past and present: capitalism, patriarchy and colonialism

The political economy of Canadian capitalism (in collaboration with IRIS)

9:30-11:30 AM, room DS-M440

This session organized by IRIS we examine the evolution and structure of Canadian capitalism as one link in the chain globalized capitalism. Built on the pillage and financialization of Canada’s natural resources, this capitalism is at the root of an economic and political system in the service of the 1%. This workshop will offer a theoretical discussion as well as a case study of the phenomenon of land grabbing in Lac-Saint-Jean with special attention to the concerns of agricultural producers in the region. With Paul Kellogg (Athabasca University), Mathieu Dufour (economist, associate professor at UQO, researcher with IRIS) and Arianne Gobeil (researcher and doctoral student working on extractivism and land appropriation).

Canadian colonialism: from dispossession to apartheid

9:30-11:30 AM, room DS-M445

From the Indian Act to the reserves, the power structure in Canada has been based on colonial policies practices that produce misery and violence and racism and against which Indigenous peoples are rising up. With Pierre Trudel (anthropologist, UQAM), Julien Vadeboncoeur (professor at Kiuna First Nations college), Shannon Chief (activist from the Anishinabe nation), Michel Thusky (community spokesperson, for the Algonquin community of Barrière Lake).

Canada against the Québécois

9:30-11:30 AM, room DS-M465

After the failure of the 1837 Rebellions, the colonial power in cooperation with the Anglo-Canadian elite set out to subordinate the French-speaking population. It began with the so-called Act of Union in 1840 and was followed by Confederation in 1867 and the attacks against the Western Métis. A hundred years later, the government of Pierre Trudeau, with the help of Great-Britain, repatriated the Canadian Constitution to turn it into one more tool against the right to self-determination. With Stéphane Chalifour (sociologist, Cégep Lionel-Groulx), Robert Comeau (historian, UQAM) and Frédéric Bastien (historian, Cégep Dawson).

Radical movements, from Winnipeg to Montreal via Valleyfield

1:00-3:30 PM, room AM-050

After the Russian Revolution in 1917, anti-capitalist movements emerged all over the world. In 1919, thousands of workers went on a general strike in Winnipeg. In the 1920s, under the influence of the Communist Party, unemployed people started organizing in Montreal and several other cities across the country. Later on in the 1940s, activist trade unions fought against repression in Valleyfield with the help of the legendary Madeleine Parent. With Andrée Lévesque (historian, McGill), Benoit Marsan (historian, UQAM), Bryan Palmer (historian, Trent University) and Pierre Lagrenade (community and union activist from Valleyfield).

Systemic racism, systematic discrimination

1:00-3:30 PM, room DS-M240

Generations of immigrants built the country and the economy by the sweat of their brows. They were subjected to and continue to face all sorts of discrimination that the federal State hides behind the banner of multiculturalism. With Chantal Ismé (Concertation des luttes contre l'exploitation sexuelle), Will Prosper (Hoodstock, Sommet noir), Safa Chebbi (Table de concertation sur le racisme systémique) and Cheolki Yoon (Centre des travailleurs et travailleuses immigrants).

The future of anti-globalization (organized with ATTAC)

1:00-3:30 PM, room DS-M340

Organizing a World Social Forum is becoming more challenging today in view of an unfavourable international situation. Does the anti-globalization movement have a future? Has the WSF become obsolete? How can we bring about renewal? This is a participatory discussion with Carminda Mac Lorin (Organizing committee of the 2016 WSF in Montreal and co-founder of Collectif pour une Transition Sociale Mondiale), Christophe Aguiton (International Commission of ATTAC France), Emilio Taddei (associate professor at Buenos Aires University and host of the coalition *Argentina mejor sin TLC* -A better Argentina with no free-trade agreements), Pascale Dufour (political scientist, Université de Montréal), Ronald Cameron (ATTAC-Québec), Sebastian Vielmas (Conseil international d'éducation des adultes), Wedad Antonius (mathematician and teacher, member of ATTAC).

Canada-Québec: How can we bring about a convergence of forces on the left?

1:00-3:30 PM, room AM-050

The Canadian State is a common obstacle faced by progressive forces in Québec and Canada that makes the creation of alliances as much a necessity as a virtue. However, both in Québec and Canada, the left is mired in narrow ideological perspectives and lacking real involvement in day-to-day struggles. The growing resistance of Indigenous peoples is a game changer for both sides as it calls into question the very foundations of the Canadian State. This session proposes to look at how we might build toward a new convergence of forces. - How can the Canadian left support the struggle for national and social emancipation in Québec? - What are the weak points in the Canadian State and among the elites seeking to maintain power. What sorts of struggles can we engage in jointly? - How can progressive organizations in Canada and Québec develop a common strategy of interational solidarity with Indigenous peoples in Canada? - What means can we use to fulfill these aims? Avec Andrea Levy (*Canadian Dimension* magazine), Richard Fidler (social and political activist), André Frappier (Québec solidaire), Abigail Bakan (University of Toronto), Alain Savard (PhD student, York University).

Canada and environmental destruction: paths of resistance

4:00-6:00 PM, room AM-050

The Canadian State and the 1% crave oil and natural resources, which are the pillars of predatory capitalism. Bitumen extraction from the Alberta tar sands is a nodal point in the program, as is the plan to ship it throughout Canada via a vast network of pipelines. However, with the emergence of an unprecedented coalition of Indigenous peoples, ecological activists and local communities, we may be witnessing the beginning of a great convergence of forces for the defence of humankind and *Pachamama*. With Alyssa Symons-Bélangier (Marche des peuples pour la Terre-Mère), Kanahus Manuel (Standing Rock and the Coalition against the Kinder Morgan pipeline), Patrick Bonin (Greenpeace) and Roger Rashi (Alternatives).

Friday, August 18

Theme 2: What does the digital revolution mean for the 99%

Rights and democracy in the shadow of the digital revolution

9:30-11:00 AM, room DS-R510

The digital revolution is unfolding rapidly and changing the way we communicate, produce, think and behave. Where it is all leading remains unclear. However, looking at various developments in areas such as medical records, money and payment public administration, taxi service and telecommunications, we can shed some light on the relationship between computer technology, rights and the law and gain insight into new modes of social regulation. With Hervé Fisher (artist, director of the Observatoire international du numérique at UQAM), Pierrot Péladeau (visiting researcher at Communautique) and Isabelle Bouchard (philosopher, Cégep de Jonquière and member of the *À Bâbord!* magazine collective).

The changing world of work

11:00 AM-12:30 PM, room DS-1540

The ongoing fourth industrial revolution aims to use big data to transform processes that link production, technology, marketing, research and so on. 3D printing and robotization herald the loss of thousands of jobs notwithstanding assurances of a transition period and consideration for the interests of workers and consumers. In face of these momentous changes, the labour movement is developing new strategies. With Christian Cyr (coordinator of the CSN's comité interfédéral du secteur privé).

The impact of the digital revolution on education

11:00 AM-12:30 PM, room DS-1580

The Québec government has promised a far-reaching action plan to digitalize the education system but has failed to involve teachers' unions in the process in spite of its potentially major impact on teaching. How can we prevent digital technologies from being used as a tool to debase education and degrade the teaching profession and enlist them instead to revitalize education. With Yannick Delbecque (mathematician, cégep St-Laurent and member of the *À Bâbord!* magazine collective) and Stéphane Couture (researcher with IRIS and York University).

Mass media and the digital revolution

11:00 AM-12:30 pm, room DS-R515

Digitalization's devastating impact on the mass media is well known: it has meant the disappearance of thousands of jobs in North America, the standardization and dumbing down of content, and the reduction of communication to marketing. At the same time, new technologies are being used increasingly by activists to express and organize resistance to existing power relations. With Pierre Roger (Secretary of the Fédération nationale des communications CSN) and Normand Landry (professor at TÉLUQ).

Should we fight uberization?

11:00 AM-12:30 PM, room DS-R520

Platforms such as Uber and AirBnB are not merely a new technology that we need to get used to: they entail a very specific form of work organization based on job insecurity, constant assessment and circumventing regulation. However, resistance can be fertile especially with the help of cooperative platforms. With Philippe de Grosbois (sociologist, cégep Ahuntsic and member of the À bâbord! magazine collective) and Laurence Audette-Lagueux (Ouishare, collaborative economy).

Anti-globalization and digital technologies

2:00- 3:30 PM, room DS-M440

The World Social Forum and other major citizens' movements endeavour to use new technologies to improve their capacity to organize, exchange ideas, and develop new strategies, as do groups involved in the social and solidarity economy seeking to increase their impact and build international networks. With Christophe Aguiton (member of the World Social Forum International Council) and Josée Lamoureux (economist with the CSN).

Liberating computer technology

2:00-3:30 PM, room DS-M445

Working in the back alleys and interstices of the big systems controlled by "GAFA" (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon), activist networks resist the monopolization of information and technology by producing and distributing of open-source software. They fight against State control and restriction of the internet and for the right to make information available online. With Mathieu Gauthier-Pilote (FACIL, an association promoting open source software) and Luc Lefebvre (*Crypto.Québec*, digital media).

Putting innovation in the service of the 99%

2:00-3:30 PM, room DS-M465

This session displays the Fab-Labs experiment, its development from innovation to digital manufacturing and the current and future applications developed by and for community and citizen organizations. With Geoffroi Garon-Épaulé (Communautique)

Plenary session

Humanizing the digital system

4:00-6:00 PM, room DS-R510

A world-renowned researcher reflects on the social impact of science and technology. Can scientific advances be made within an ethical framework? Why should researchers care about child labour, the growth of inequality, national oppression, and persecution of

people for their ideas? Can we prevent digital technology from being used for nefarious military purposes? How can advances in artificial intelligence contribute to liberating work and the production of knowledge? With Yoshua Bengio (Professor at the Université de Montréal, department of computer science and operations research) and Nathalie Guay (CSN).

Saturday, August 19

Women against the Canadian State

9:30-11:30 AM, room DS-M220

An overview of women's struggles from the fight for basic rights to current struggles against violence and poverty through intersectional resistance movements. With Ariane L'Italien (feminist activist and student at McGill University), Mélanie Lemay (feminist activist and student at Université Sherbrooke), Véronique De Sève (vice-president CSN), Alexa Conradi (ex-president of the Fédération des femmes du Québec), Chantal Isme (CLES) and Rosa Pires (feminist activist).

Workers against the Canadian State

9:30-11:30 AM, room DS-M440

Canada has dealt with social conflict in ways designed to protect the interests of the 1%, while making concessions from time to time, applying Keynesian-style policies to maintain social stability. In the current age of austerity however the State is abandoning the old approach in an effort to weaken unions and undermine the public sector. The result is ongoing struggles by unions in the federal public and para-public service sector.

With Dominique Daigneault (president of the Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain de la CSN) and representatives from the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, from Syndicat des communications de Radio-Canada (Kamel Bouzeboudjen), the Syndicat des travailleurs et travailleuses des Postes (Marc-Édouard Joubert) and the Syndicat des employés-ées du Vieux-Port de Montréal.

Decolonizing critical thinking

9:30-11:30 AM, room DS-M460

To what extent were traditional ways of knowing silenced by European colonialism? What is the relation between knowledge, learning, education, science and the power of peoples' to shape their destinies? How can knowledge liberate people? This session seeks to explore the relationship between knowledge and liberation. With Dalie Giroux (professor of political theory at the University of Ottawa), Thomas Hervé Mboa (public communication, Université Laval and president of Association pour la promotion de la science ouverte en Haïti et en Afrique francophone), Emilio Taddei (professor of political science at the Universidad Nacional de Lanús in Buenos Aires) and Sebastián Vielmas (researcher with the International Council for Adult Education).

Canada: a weak link in the imperialist chain

9:30-11:30 AM, room AM-050

This session will discuss the particular ways in which the Canadian State functions as a link in the imperialist chain, under US command. It will examine Canada's role as a junior partner of Empire, paying special attention to imperialist practices in protecting Canadian-based mining companies and Canada's evolution as a tax haven serving the interests of financial imperialism. With Marcelo Solervicens (researcher and organizer of international solidarity projects), Thomas Chiasson-LeBel (sociologist specializing in Latin America), Marie-Ève Marleau (Comité pour les droits humains en Amérique latine) and Alain Deneault (independent scholar).

Socialism 100 years on

9:30-11:30 AM, room DS-M445

In 1917, the soviets sought to take over the machinery of the State and bring about the utopia envisioned by the Paris Commune. Subsequent social movements of the 20th century had to contend with the rise of a statist, bureaucratic and authoritarian socialism. A century on, the socialist project is being reborn in the *barrios* of Bolivia, the assemblies in Spain, and the social struggles in Québec and in other countries where the quest for “power to the people” is germinating anew here and there. What would a 21st century socialism look like? How do we fight both within and against the State? With Colette St-Hilaire (sociologist), Jonathan Durand-Folco (professor at the Université Saint-Paul and municipal activist), Emanuel Guay (master's student at McGill University and activist with the Front d'action socialiste and Fanny Theurillat-Cloutier (sociologist, cégep Marie-Victorin and trade union activist).

Plenary session

The new republican project

1:00-3:00 PM, room AM-050

180 years ago, the people raised the green, red and white Patriot flag as the symbol of a great republican movement demanding an end to colonial power. In practice that meant the abolition of the seigneurial system, the separation of church and state and equal rights for Indigenous peoples. Today, a new republican vision is emerging from the encounter between national liberation and social justice and it is finding expression in various social movements and political currents. How can this new project come to fruition? With Emiliano Arpin-Simonetti (editor at *Relations* magazine), Nora Loreto (union and community activist), Niki Ashton (NDP MP and leadership candidate), André Frappier (Québec solidaire) , Ronald Cameron (anti-globalization activist) and Sébastien Rivard (community activist).

Partners and friends of the NCS People's University

- CSN
- CSQ
- Conseil central du Montréal métropolitain (CCMM-CSN)
- La Fédération nationale des enseignantes et des enseignants du Québec (FNEEQ-CSN)
- La Fédération des enseignantes et enseignants de cégep (FEC-CSQ)
- Le Syndicat des chargées et des chargés de cours de l'UQAM (SCCUQ)
- Le Syndicat des chargés de cours de l'Université de Montréal
- L'Association des professeurs de l'Université du Québec en Outaouais
- Le Groupe de recherche d'intérêt public ontarien (GRIPO)
- ATTAC
- L'Institut de recherche et d'informations socio-économiques (IRIS)
- Syndicat des enseignantes et des enseignants du Collège Lionel-Groulx
- Syndicat des professeur-es du Collège Marie-Victorin
- Syndicat des enseignantes et des enseignants du cégep Montmorency (SEECM)
- Syndicat des travailleuses et travailleurs de la CSN (STT-CSN)
- Peoples' Social Forum
- À Bâbord!
- La revue Relations

And the Université du Québec à Montréal

Coordinating Committee (in alphabetical order)

Flavie Achard, Pierre Beudet, Marie-Josée Béliveau, Donald Cuccioletta, Édouard Lavallière, Ghislaine Raymond, Sébastien Vielmas.