

João Morais Mourato (ICS-ULisboa), Adrien Kreuz (Université Paris-Ouest Nanterre La Défense), Mónica Truninger (ICS-ULisboa) | *Framing the Alternative: transformative discourses, social movements and the mobilization of active minorities*

Since the beginning of the XX century the world has witnessed a deepening confluence of crisis. The magnification of a set of tightly intertwined migratory, social, economic and ecological crises have brought to the fore the inaptitude of contemporary institutions and political arenas to effectively address its underlying causes.

Adding to, or as a result of, neo-liberal economic development hegemony, the rise of political volatility and populist movements we have seen a widespread growth of global social instability and often-violent conflict. In the background looms an unpredictable climate-regime change that may impact the Planet's liveability on a permanent basis. We reached what is nowadays conceptually identified as the Anthropocene.

As a reaction to this capitalistic, productivity and growth-led hegemonic worldview there is a growing call for structural transition that catalyses societal transformations towards sustainability. In hindsight, few great societal changes that we now perceive as transformations were 'steered' or 'driven' from above. Quite the opposite, they evolved bottom up, through dispersed actions and changes by various people and groups.

In this sense, transition gives way to other understandings of social transformation, taking distance from revolution, reform or top-down steering. The way it is mobilized in the literature and practices is based upon a more progressive vision of change, operating by a cultural shift, by dissemination of new values using the influence of so-called active minorities. In place of transforming society from the core, from its institutions, or by taking up state power, there is another logic at stake, based on what Moscovici (1979) called "active minorities", on building up equivalence between social demands to build new hegemonies (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985).

In this chapter we systematize the current debates on transition and transformative dynamics from the standpoint of the ethos underpinning its driving social movements and active minorities. We will discuss whether such transformations to sustainability can in fact be instigated and accelerated and how institutions resist or assist such processes. In sum, we attempt at framing the Alternative to the World as we know it today.