



‘A Global History of Humanity’: a high school textbook to change the world

Claudia Bernardi

University of Roma Tre

Eric Vanhaute

University of Ghent

Abstract

This paper aims at presenting the forthcoming school textbook ‘A Global History of Humanity’ that spans from 70.000 BCE till the 21st century and narrates a global history of our world assuming a non-Eurocentric and non-nationalist perspective. The textbook covers the history of humanity through three volumes, combining a chronological and a thematic approach. Each volume is divided into three chronological chapters. Each chapter presents the four themes in which the textbook is structured: humans change nature; humans on the move; social organization and inequality; worldviews. The last part of this paper ties the long history of humanity narrated through the textbook to today’s central questions, discussing the conditions in which we find ourselves today and the challenges we are facing in the coming years.

Keywords: History; Education; Didactic; Global Citizenship; Textbook

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INTRODUCTION

The school textbook 'A Global History of Humanity' comes out from a long process of thinking, production, organization, networking, and many other activities of different actors. It narrates a global history of our world, assuming a non-Eurocentric and non-nationalist perspective, that spans from 70.000 BCE till the 21st century. It tells a story about the planet on which we are born and live, about the humans who have inhabited it, and above all about their fascinating and often troublesome relation. The textbook is available in twelve languages, so it means that it narrates history as a global tale of humanity independently from specific regional or national history and school system¹.

The idea of the textbook originated from several factors. First and foremost, scientific developments in world and global history generated new perspectives on the human's common past. Secondly, this initiative has been promoted in meetings between researchers, activists, teachers, educational experts, cultural associations, thinkers from all over the world, all facilitated by NGOs (Non-Governmental-Organizations) committed with Global Citizenship Education (GCE). Finally the long series of European partnerships on projects of GCE² shaped the desire to combine the scientific merit and clarity of innovative historical research with a narrative whose subject is the whole of humanity and its millenary interconnections. The textbook aims at overcoming the nationalistic and Eurocentric approaches that historical teaching in schools still suffers from, promoting a narrative that speaks to a non-academic public, students and teachers in schools.

In this paper we present (1) the central concepts and perspectives that guide our historical narrative, (2) each of the four themes into which the textbook is structured, (3) the urgent questions and problems that our global history presents us today.

¹ All textbook translations will be available by October 2020 on the website www.getupandgoals.eu/resources/textbook.

² These objectives have been translated into practice thanks to the European project "Get up and goals", a GCE project led by the NGO CISP in Rome. The project involves the production and experimentation in twelve European countries of innovative teaching materials capable of addressing the major issues of climate change, inequalities and international migration within school curricula. So this textbook is intended as an instrument of a broader programme aimed at combining the methods and principles of Global Citizenship Education with the contents of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in school curricula.

1. A CONCEPTUAL APPROACH: CENTRAL PERSPECTIVES AND CONCEPTS OF THE TEXTBOOK

The textbook moves from the idea that history is just a list of events occurred in some specific place and time. It is not a collection of old facts from the past, usually from the past of a nation. It is not the story of emperors and kings, their death, descendants and reigns. We prefer to think history as a narration of our past as humans who have forged our life on planet Earth, and who's existence has been forged by the web-of-life we live in. History is a vision about the transformations of humans' life, from the first traces we are able to identify on planet Earth, till the accounts of an imagined future that have sprinkled across times.

History is true, and as such it narrates something that has happened. At the same time, history is an act of imagination, and brings a story of what might have happened. Such a history is an adventurous journey into foreign lands, often unknown and far away. But history is also the story of what is now, what we have become today. We should learn it to better decide who we want to be tomorrow, and how to change things on our planet. We like to think history as a compass: for sailing across the ocean of time, we need the compass to set the direction for our planetary ship, run by that motley crew of around 100 billion humans who have lived on our planet in its whole past.

Humans make their own history, but they do it under circumstances, given and transmitted from the past. Did all humans make this history in the same way? Do we think that all humans had the chance to decide in an equal way on how they lived and how society would be? Of course, not. A small part of humanity has most of the time decided over the majority of humans. We think that this was not meant to be, nor natural or given. Our textbook explains the history of this unequal relationship between rulers and ruled. It includes decisions of a small part of humanity that has shaped the world as such. But it also narrates the actions of most part of humanity that created new worlds by refusing, resisting or rebelling to domination. All these actions and reactions make up history, forge processes of change and transformation, that happened over time and are reconstructed or remembered centuries or millennia later. The world we live in has been created in tens of thousands of years by myriads of human actions and uncountable acts of imagination that have shaped historical processes.

1.1. A history of humans

It could sound pretty weird to refer to an Italian as a human of southern Europe, or to a Chinese as a human of Asia, and so on. We are so used to think about ourselves as defined by our nationality that we erase the fact that nationality is a social construction, and actually a very young one. But by doing it, we also erase our common condition on planet Earth: we are all humans after all. Human beings (re)produce their lives, and this (re)production is the outcome of a long past. Before any kind of belonging (kinship, national, etc.), all humans have one thing in common: to be descendants of these African migrants. Homo sapiens is a migratory species, always was and always will be despite any imposed border.

The textbook aims at narrating how humanity as a single species has created different modes of living, different economic systems, cultures, political and social formations, ideas, beliefs and worldviews. These systems organized humans in common organizations and around common ideas, but they also highlighted differences between humans. These differences originated over time, they have been created by humans themselves. Beyond these differences, we share the common condition and responsibility of being human and live on the same planet.

In the textbook, we refer to humans as a common condition for our existence on planet Earth, and we embrace the idea to “stay human”. We are all humans, despite differences, and the social and cultural construction that made “peoples”. Any other further hierarchy and distinction is the outcome of historical processes that have also created inequalities. For this reason, we have highlighted those historical times in which a group of humans has recognized themselves in a specific way – like Argentinians, or women, or workers – and not to consider some elements of distinction, and also identity, as innate, natural or necessary.

1.2. A history of human and extra-human nature

A history of humans is a history of nature. Humans have always been part of nature, and they still are. Nature is not given; it is the outcome of the manipulation and conscious intervention of humans since their appearance on planet Earth. Indeed, the idea of an uncontaminated and pure nature is ahistorical. From the start, humans have shaped, manipulated, controlled and destroyed nature that has been gradually changed by human activities.

Humans have been producing life and nature. This happens as an interaction of

human beings with their environment, changing what nature is. At the same time, humans have changed their body and brains through their interaction with nature: it is only in these relationships that we can grasp the history of humanity. We are the outcome of a complex and still largely unknown transformation of the system we have called planet earth. Over time, as humans, we have made greater distinction between us and other living creatures on our planet. At the same time, humans developed a defining power over non-human life, a power that non-humans have not over humans. An animal or a plant cannot build a society, nor a bridge or a space shuttle. This difference in power does not give humans a license to unlimited exploitation or destruction of nature, plants or animals alike. Quite the contrary, this difference in power implies the enormous responsibility of our actions and consequences to the planet, to all its creatures and life forms living on it. Humans are part of nature and, at the same time, are responsible for nature's life.

The shifting relationships of humans with each other and with other forms of life create varying zones of contact, or frontiers. Frontiers connect different spaces of organic and non-organic life. They originate via the interaction between ecological and social systems with their own characteristics; they disappear when the interaction ends or when one system is taken over by another system. They play a first-rate role in human social change: they build walls as well as bridges; they determine exclusion and inclusion; they enforce new rules but also give space for resistance. In the world of today, frontiers have not disappeared. They have been redefined with global networks of money and communication, but also with new regional identities, national walls against migration and immense zones of poverty. This makes our world: connection and interaction, assimilation, conflicts and resistance, in a space that is big but not equal.

1.3. A global history of humanity

Global history is the history of humans making, defining, and reorganizing their worlds. We use worlds in plural, because humans have made many worlds. A human world is not an object, it is the outcome of the interaction and struggle between human activity and other forces. Humans changed nature, nature changed humans. Humans created machines that changed their lives; machines changed humans' bodies and social organizations. Humans made, and remade many worlds, small and large. They all are the outcome of cooperation and conflict, of connections and networks.

In the textbook, we do not give preference to a specific space, be it a region, or a state, or a culture, or a continent. Usually, history books are largely the history of Europe and its relationship with “the rest of the world”. This book takes a firm non-Eurocentric perspective: our centre is not Europe. This book considers the history of humanity as the outcome of the interactions and connections at different levels, without privileging one point of view as history textbooks often do. At the centre of this textbook we have placed humans in their relationship with planet Earth and not a specific area where they live in it.

The textbook looks at the ways in which worlds have been created and imposed through time, by human groups, empires, states, or companies. Networks held a world together and connected its different parts: this connection created dependences and entanglements. After 1500 CE, the mode of production we call capitalism has increased immensely these connections through the imposition of new hierarchies and unbalances. From then, we moved to a global world, one that encompasses for the first time Planet Earth in which local transformations were linked and interconnected to broader ones, regional, intercontinental and global. These connections and interactions between regions have been created and fostered by the making of new frontiers and the movement of existing frontiers. Frontiers have crossed and connected worlds, have reshaped and destroyed organic and non-organic life, have exploited humans to sustain its movement, and made and continuously remade our world.

Seeing a global history of humanity as a history of human worlds means to reconsider spatial scales and the ways in which they are created, connected, and disconnected. They include the scales from small to large, that go from the body to the planet. Spatial scales are also related to time. Social processes take place at very different speed. History is made up by several time scales. The scale of the universe is 13 billion years; the scale of Earth is 4.5 billion years; the scale of mammals is 70 million years; the scale of hominids is 4 million years; the scale of human history is 200,000 years; the scale of agrarian and urban civilizations is 5,000 years; the scale of ‘national history’ is few centuries long; the scale of human life is one hundred years at the most. This textbook narrates a story of just 70.000 years.

Times and spaces are not considered and thought in a single-way, but are related to different perceptions of time and space; to the different scales they produced at each step; to the processes of expansion, connection and entanglement produced in space and time, and the resultant making of territories and worlds. In this view, places – or worlds – are defined by the perceptions, imaginations, activities and institutions of

the humans inhabiting them, as much as they are defined simply by material arrangements. The first step to change our idea of time and space is to consider the notation system of time: Before Christ (BC) and Anno Domini (AD). Conversely, we highlight the Eurocentric perception of these notions and, in the textbook, readers will also find the story of how one single global time was imposed upon many time's perceptions and calendars. We use the notation system of Before the Common Era (BCE) and Common Era (CE) to avoid a single religious reference, and also to underline the commonality of time and calendar that has been assumed, largely through imposition, at the global level.

2. A CHRONOLOGICAL AND THEMATIC APPROACH: THE STRUCTURE OF THE TEXTBOOK

The textbook covers the history of humanity, from the move of *homo sapiens* out of Africa till the 21st century, through three volumes. Volume 1 spans from 70.000 BCE to 1000 CE; Volume 2 spans from 1000 CE to 1870 CE; Volume 3 spans from 1870 CE to the 21st century. The first volume focuses on the expansion of frontiers, especially the agricultural one, that created empires and cities. The second volume narrates the story of the connection of different frontiers, and the creation of the first intercontinental trade system. The third volume looks at the intensified intervention of an ever-complex system of frontiers on our planet.

Each volume is divided into three chronological chapters. Each chapter starts with an overview, then there are the four themes in which the book is structured. In this textbook, relevance is given to comparisons, systems, connections and networks. Instead of reading historical transformations as single topics, we have chosen to present issues organized in four themes and to look at the different transformations occurred in the world regarding it. The four themes are: 1) humans change nature; 2) humans on the move; 3) social organization and inequality; 4) worldviews. Each chapter, except the very last one of the Third Volume, is divided into these four themes. In this way, readers will go through the same historical period four times, analysing four different sets of themes, issues and problems.

In each chapter readers will also find a timeline. As this textbook does not follow a classic chronological approach, the timeline is not a collection of dates and facts you already read in the text. The timeline is a simple line that allows readers to remember easily some major transformations underwent by the planet and humanity, as climate change and global processes. It also entails those major political and social

formations that had global ambitions, like empires and colonial powers.

2.1 Theme one: Humans change nature

This theme highlights the outcomes produced by the actions of humans within nature: the ways in which nature is used, transformed and exploited, and how this affected humans and human history. The extraction, use and consumption of resources implied a long process of knowledge-making and invention of technology.

This theme narrates the many ways in which human societies originated, expanded, thrived and perished through the use and production of extra-human nature. In various regions of the world and in different ways, humans remade nature through social formations: they exploited it, transformed it, reconfigured it, and destroyed it. It is a central human ability to reinvent, reconstruct, interact, create, destroy.

In each period of history, humans forged different relations and sets of action within nature. When foragers, humans passed and crossed forests and lands; took and gathered food and resources; hunted large mammals contributing to their extinction. It was an extensive way of extraction. In village societies and empires, humans have cut, dug, and mined, extracting resources in an intensive way. Under capitalism, a completely different relation was forged with nature. Some humans created bordered infrastructures, and appropriated extra human nature through agriculture and extraction, but also through analysing, interpreting, categorizing, mapping, and naming the elements of planet Earth. Humans transformed extra-human nature into profit. More than before, humans also destroyed human and extra-human nature, from the body scale to the global one, becoming geological agents. This includes climate change – as a natural phenomenon, but above all as a result of humans’ intervention – and increasing frontiers of extraction and exploitation. Natural elements are turned into resources that are grabbed and consumed through frontiers, that spanned across the world and that we follow in the textbook.

2.2 Theme two: Humans on the move

The second theme highlights the expansion and abridgment of human population. In the first place, it refers to secular population growth that is regulated by birth control, mortality and life expectancy. The expansion is also a spatial one, and it is

hence related to human movements. Migration is the most consistent activity in human's history. The whole history of humanity is a history of immeasurable numbers of migrations. Humans have always been mobile beings living out from what nature provides. Many forms of mobility have made our planet. Humans moved for establishing trading networks. In addition, colonization triggered the movement of humans over large distances.

Migration is the movement of humans who leave their place of origin. This movement can envisage elements of autonomy, so it is a choice driven by their desires, curiosity, search for a different life, better working conditions or food availability; and also elements of coercion, it means humans are forced to move by political issues, persecution, climate change or enslavement. Migration can be a temporary, seasonal or permanent movement. The reasons for which humans move differ broadly, but one common element of every migration is that it is always the outcome of a collective effort and it is very rare, almost impossible, that one single human is able to migrate without any help, support, or interference of other humans in their movement. Thanks to the first human traces found by archaeologists, we know that migrations have existed for hundreds of thousands of years, since the very beginning of human species. Through the textbook the reader will understand the historical context in which migrations took place.

2.3 Theme three: Social organization and inequality

This theme focuses on societies, and the ways in which they have been built, organized, managed, controlled, governed. This is the history of how social hierarchies have been moulded so that a small part of humanity was able to decide upon the large majority. These hierarchies have been constructed along lines of gender, class, and race, but also through inclusion versus exclusion. In this theme, we do not assume these hierarchies and differentiations as given or even necessary. We tell the story of how these hierarchies have been socially and culturally constructed.

This theme also pays much attention to the issue of work. Workers have created societies, infrastructures, transports, buildings, commodities, knowledge, other humans, etc. Work can be performed under different conditions. In slave work, humans are forced to provide some tasks and labour force and are not free to refuse or break the bond with masters; slave workers are property of another human who exploit them to his preference. In wage labour, workers sell their labour force under some conditions

that are established by a contract. Workers can refuse to work and are often guaranteed some rights, also social rights. Indentured labour, like labour performed by coolies, is provided by a worker upon a contract, but this is effectively unbreakable for a period of time. This form of labour is then considered as an in-between condition: the indentured worker is not a slave, but still cannot break the contract or refuse to work.

This theme also deals with forms of social reproduction like family structures and child rearing. A strong and continuous attention is paid to the role of females, and the ways in which they have been subjugated into family structures and the reproduction of life. The textbook focuses also on the different working conditions between males and females within single political formations.

The theme narrates the construction of inequality, the ways in which differences in status, in wealth, in life conditions have been created. Through the analysis of social organization, we will point at regional differences, processes of integration (failed or successful), and processes of fragmentation and bordering that produce inequality. These inequalities were contested in many forms by different social groups. The theme highlights the elements of control on labour and on humans' activity and the resistances to it. It traces the long story of inequality and its origins, and the struggles that emerged from it. It entails humans' actions in terms of protests, conflicts, revolutions; it includes social movements that envisaged new conditions of existence beyond inequality.

2.4 Theme four: Worldviews

Theme four deals with the acts of imagination, with beliefs, views of the world, ideals that humans have created through history. Human groups created religions, followed myths, and felt spirits. They shared the same ideas and beliefs, and these ideas and beliefs brought them to places of worship, or drove them to fight and die for their group, King or Nation, or inspired them to talk to plants to be cured. They collectively believed in something, and shaped their world around these beliefs. These beliefs have not been given, they have been socially constructed.

The theme will pay attention especially to those ideas and beliefs that have shaped the world as such, first of all dealing with relationships between organic and non-organic life. It also presents representations of the world from specific points of view to explain how some populations in various times and space thought and imagined their world or the whole world.

The textbook also presents understandings of the world through maps,

cartographies and graphics that expand readers' knowledge about historical processes.

Humans have created worldviews, and so we keep doing. We believe that it is important to reimagine the world we are living in, that we can create imaginary spaces for legitimation, action, interaction or resistance. We question existing worldviews, that are rooted in the relationship between humans and powers, and that show the complexity of both the past and present worlds. We can make claims about the way in which the world functions today and how it could function tomorrow. Since differences and diversity are basic components of the human story, a global historical perspective shows that understanding and handling differences is an important ethical skill. Claims, interpretations and evaluations cannot be made solely in the framework of our own, small and known world; they must reflect the complexity of human history.

3. LEARNING THE PAST TO CHANGE THE PRESENT

The educational goal of the textbook is to analyze, criticize, compare, test and broaden our views on the history of humans and the planet they inhabit. It should help readers in putting themselves in other human's life, as it is a fundamental practice of knowledge to understand our world and others' worldviews. This practice is also fundamental for changing planet earth toward a sustainable, equal and save haven for all humans, nature and creatures living on it. Readers also can use the text as a logbook, that is a notebook of our travels across times that we can rewrite and change at every step. Indeed, we hope this book will help readers in improving our lives and the world of humans on this planet. To conclude, we go through some of the central features in human's global history. They remain main issues in the 21st century that we should be willing to discuss and change through critical understanding and collective action.

3.1. Populations and inequalities

The world we will live in will add another two billion humans to this already populous planet, bringing the population to about ten billion in 2050. Demographics will profoundly change global relations. Urban areas are expected to absorb virtually all of the future growth in the world's population. Rapid urban growth presents important opportunities and challenges, including the implementation of an ambitious agenda that seeks to make cities and human settlements inclusive and ecologically sustainable.

Ever since the creation of regional social systems, humans have institutionalised forms of inequality, mainly through differences in status, wealth, and living conditions. These inequalities have been contested in many ways by different social groups. Although it is richer than ever, the world currently stimulates material inequalities based on income and wealth. The income share of the global top one per cent has increased in the last decades to more than 20 per cent, and is, under unchanged circumstances, expected to grow to almost 30 per cent in 2050. Other inequalities also persist, and significant gaps remain between countries and social groups. Differences in gender, class, culture and ethnicity are emphasised in order to preserve existing hierarchies. These inequalities are not natural or necessary; they are the outcome of choices made by ruling elites that are only a small part of humanity. Since we shared knowledge for hundreds of thousands of years, we could share the wealth that is concentrated in a few human hands. Our way of producing tools and goods is destroying the planet, and the largest part of humanity is paying the price for the wealth of the few: our political choices decide whether inequality rises or declines.

3.2. Frontiers

More humans will increase the need for new resources, food, energy and other commodities, pressing the question of the ecological and social costs of the current capitalist mode of production. As we have seen, frontiers have always been part of human history. Humans' shifting relationships with each other and with other forms of life created varying zones of contact or frontiers. While frontiers fuelled human expansion, and crossed and connected worlds, they also reshaped and destroyed organic and non-organic life.

Over the past 600 years, under capitalism, frontiers have moved at ever accelerating speeds; they have intensified action across vast areas of the globe and incorporated increasing amounts of land, labour, resources, and lives. Flatlands, valleys, forests, marine spaces and mountains have been farmed, logged, fished, and quarried to provide raw materials and food for a rapidly urbanising and industrialising global capitalist economy. Workers have been employed, depleted, exploited and moved - forcefully or voluntarily - to fuel this mode of production that benefits a small percentage of the human population.

Humans have changed, destroyed and recreated organic and non-organic life, from the microcellular to the global scale. This includes climate change and increasing

frontier extraction and exploitation, indeed, humans have turned into geological agents as they are changing the basic physical processes of the earth. Frontiers have been redefined with global networks of money and communication that cross territories, disregarding nationality, as well as with new regional identities, national barriers to migration, and immense, impoverished areas. Businesses open new commodity markets, and financial institutions define more profitable forms of investment, including grabbing new land and resources. Technology markets have intensified in many sectors, with ownership concentrated around information and production technologies, including private data sharing, automated labour, and patents for seed and other forms of life. Global capitalism is pressing the planet to its limits while creating safer and wealthier areas for a small part of humanity. In this century, we must create a new mode of production and of relationship within the complex web of organic and non-organic life.

3.3 The commodification of everything

One of the drivers of frontier expansion has been commodification, making whatever is available subject to market forces. When something becomes private property, it can be traded, bought and sold to the highest bidder. It is given a market value, making it accessible only to those who can pay for it. But everything has an untold cost; it is the cost for humanity and the whole planet.

The current capitalist global economy is an economy of unpaid costs. Ecological damage, natural degradation, pressure on the earth's ecological capacity, animal extinctions, and limits to fuels are never factored in or considered. We also know that renewable energy is not a solution for the levels of energy we are currently consuming. In fact, solar energy batteries are made with minerals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Bolivia, where the extraction process resembles complexes in colonial times that used child labour. Elsewhere, damming rivers became a strategy to dispossess indigenous populations and dismantle human-made reservoirs.

As we have seen, the regional impact is unequal: core countries import non-renewable riches and export ecological degradation via mining and plantation agriculture. The profits disproportionately enrich the already wealthy elites based in core countries, and the harmful consequences disproportionately affect the most impoverished populations that inhabit the most peripheral areas. The effects of the commodification of planet Earth and the ecological costs of commodification are global.

Since capitalism's mode of production continuously results in the commodification of life, humans must guarantee 'utilities' as social entitlements for the entire population rather than as commodities that must be paid for. At the same time, these entitlements have to be organised in accordance with the earth's ecological capacity.

3.4 Work and workers

One of the earliest forms of commodification has been labour, at least some of the labour activities humans have been performing. Workers have created societies, infrastructures, transportation, buildings, commodities, knowledge, and other humans. We have learned that work can be performed under different conditions. In slave labour, humans are considered property and forced to perform tasks; they are not free to refuse or break the bond with their master. In wage labour, workers sell their labour under conditions that are established by a contract. Flexible work contracts generate an ever-growing group of precarious workers. One single job can have many employers through the system of subcontracting; this makes it difficult for workers to get social benefits, better wages and working conditions. Few workers can refuse to work or are guaranteed rights, including social rights. Many forms of labour are still not recognised as paid 'work' and do not generate social protection. Care work remains the most vulnerable area of employment, especially in a world where persons aged 65 or over make up the fastest-growing group. At the same time, advances in fertility technology have produced a demand for surrogate mothers; the world's largest market for wombs is South Asia. Vast international networks of care service providers sustain households elsewhere.

Workers are on the move more than ever before, often changing country (that means different fiscal and social systems) and employers. Workers are mobilised and managed by global capitalism, but they also move to find better living and working conditions.

3.5 Global migrations

One of the biggest challenges in this century is global migration, which is expected to increase in the coming decades. Three world regions are net receivers of migrants: Europe, the United States and Canada; Northern Africa and Western Asia;

and Australia and New Zealand. In these regions, particularly in the United States, Southern Europe and Australia, borders and internment camps are multiplying to prevent human movement. Few countries are hosting migrants, and ever more governments are turning to nationalistic policies.

At the same time, climate change is putting pressure on ecological systems and living conditions, forcing populations to escape. The effects of global capitalism are forcing them to move and become climate refugees. Ongoing wars and conflicts in some regions - that are often the outcome of colonial interventions or disputes between international allies - are forcing more humans to move to other regions. The first global crisis of the twenty-first century contributed to a wave of migration from Southern European countries like Italy and Greece.

In the textbook, we have shown that humans have always moved throughout all of human history. We have shown that migration can be a transformative force that connects different populations and cultures. We need to figure out how to create systems of safe migration that address global inequality, poverty, insecurity, and a lack of decent work.

CONCLUSION: RESISTANCE AND THE COMMONS

During most of history, humans have organised their existence through common systems of possession and use rather than through private property. We call this the commons: spaces and institutions where humans manage land, resources, and ecosystems in the interest of all parties. Many humans do not accept the current world order in which economic expansion, profits and commodification are the main drivers. They organise themselves to instigate processes of change and transformation: they rethink the world, creating more equal social organisations, and protecting organic and non-organic life from the effects of frontier expansion.

Commons movements are more active than ever. They advocate the preservation of non-commodified access to food, water, housing, forests, clean air, knowledge and goods. Twenty-first-century forest commoners, for instance, are better caretakers of trees than either corporations or central governments. Environmental justice groups have defended culturally and ecologically relevant areas from the expropriation attempts by global companies; this challenges the expansion of present-day frontiers. Popular economies have reorganised the production of goods towards equal systems of wealth distribution and ecological sustainability. Social groups defend migrant movements and their access to welfare.

The common use of resources and the organisation of social life should guarantee a better balance between resource consumption, organic and non-organic life, wealth, and biodiversity. There are already alternatives at play, and we can choose to embark upon this global movement of change. The textbook embraces the motto “Learning from the past, changing the planet”.

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