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Deposited version:
Publisher Version

Peer-review status of attached file:
Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:
Gameiro, A., Esteves, A. & Lacerda-Nobre, Â. (2025). Metamodern activism: Both/and oscillations and affective hybridity in translocal social movements. In Ana Margarida Esteves, Amandine Gameiro (Ed.), SSE Book of Abstracts 2025 (pp. 67?68). CEI-Iscte.

Further information on publisher's website:
https://ssecommons.cei.iscte-iul.pt/

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COLLAPSE AND REGENERATION: COMMUNITY-LED INITIATIVES PREFIGURING LIVEABLE FUTURES



BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

SOCIAL SOLIDARITY AND THE COMMONS INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

ISCTE - UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE OF LISBON

5th edition

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ISCTE-IUL
International Conference
Social Solidarity Economy & the Commons

EDITORIAL

SSE Book of Abstracts 2025
5th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
SOCIAL AND SOLIDARITY ECONOMY AND THE COMMONS

Conference Coordination:
Ana Margarida Esteves
Amandine Gameiro

Book Preparation, Edition and Conception:
Amandine Gameiro

Year of Edition: 2025 | **Edition**: 5th

Indexation | Iscte Repository:
http://hdl.handle.net/10071/35756

ISBN: 978-989-584-382-4

This work was supported by the Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia (FCT) under UID/3122/2025 and https://doi.org/10.54499/UID/03122/2025

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Final version *Published on 01.10.2026 (v8)*
Previous versions are not valid for publication references

Metamodern Activism: *Both/And* Oscillations and Affective Hybridity in Translocal Social Movements

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Contemporary grassroots movements are commonly organised as Translocal Networks (TLNs) connecting local initiatives connected through national and global-hub nodes. Examples of these networks include the Transition Network (TN), the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN) and Extinction Rebellion (XR). They combine hybrid repertoires of action across digital and physical spaces, enacting new forms of collective learning, affective mobilization and regenerative politics. Their decentralised, rhizomatic approaches are transforming political mobilization by introducing new participatory and dissemination strategies, innovative organisational practices, and a narrative of *deep culture change*, advocating systemic and regenerative change as a central tenet of their discourse. Understanding their innovative dynamics is a key challenge for contemporary social activism studies, yet research on their hybrid strategies and cultural logics remains limited.

To address the challenges inherent in TLNs and hybrid social learning practices, this presentation applies the *periodization* approach of metamodernism, as defined by Vermeulen and van den Akker (2010, 2017). Moving beyond the polarities of modern idealism and postmodern irony, metamodernism foregrounds oscillation, sincerity, and complexity - qualities increasingly visible in contemporary activism's tension between critique and construction, hope and despair, local pragmatism and global-idealistic and holistic scales. Drawing on affect theory (Bachmann-Medick & Tygstrup, 2015) and recent work on visual communication and hybrid activism (Crilley et al., 2020; Showden et al., 2023), the study explores how these movements perform metamodern sensibilities through both their discourses and visual cultures.

Methodologically, the paper employs an exploratory visual grounded theory approach (Mey & Dietrich, 2016; Ridge, 2024), analysing textual and visual materials—newsletters, memes, images, and videos - as affective artefacts (Piredda, 2020) that shape participation and belonging. The metamodern analytical framework reveals how TN, GEN, and XR function as metamodern movements, cultivating sincerity amid irony, pragmatism amid utopianism, and inner transformation alongside systemic change. Their decentralised and rhizomatic structures resonate with relational and regenerative ontologies (Escobar et al., 2024; Esteves, 2022), framing activism as both political practice and cultural performance.

By applying metamodern theory to the study of social movements, this research offers an innovative interdisciplinary bridge between cultural theory and social movement studies. It highlights how TLNs enact a "both/and" paradigm that reimagines the personal as political and the

local/inner as planetary, advancing our understanding of how activism itself becomes an expression of metamodern culture and enriching theoretical discourse on culture, activism, and social movement innovation.

Keywords: *metamodernism theory; social movements innovation; affect and activism; embodied hybrid repertoires; both/and oscillation; visual grounded-theory.*
Thematic Field: 6, 7 and 5

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