Workshop on Historical Systemic Collapse
Memo #3
Email from Miguel Centeno, Thursday, July 12, 2018

First, a couple of logistical issues:

- We will have a conference call on JULY 16TH at 10 AM (NYC). Details to follow on how to call in.
- The first workshop will be on OCTOBER 5th. Logistical information to follow.

We also wanted to explore an alternative way of organizing the workshops. I think there is a great deal of theorizing, and lots of history on the various cases we might address. What is missing is a "systemic" way of thinking about what we mean by aggregation/articulation/complexity and its decline. That is, given the arguments about what is collapse and whether it applies, can we agree on some concrete and empirical measures that we might use to track the rise and fall of systems?

Examples of these might include (just as a start):

- Dependence on trade for food and other basic necessities
- Population density
- Amount of intra-system violence
- Heterogeneity of population origin

The argument being that a more complex society imposes an order on a system that requires greater coordination in order for it to maintain itself. This gets at the critical relationship between complexity and fragility.

I suggest that we might devote the first workshop to producing a list of such indicators and discuss the specific instances in selected cases. The second workshop would then use those indicators to explore specific cases?