

World Social Forum
Critical Explorations

Jai Sen and Peter Waterman
Editors



World Social Forum

Critical Explorations

World Social Forum

Critical Explorations

[Jai Sen](#) and [Peter Waterman](#)

editors

Volume 3

in the *Challenging Empires* series



New Delhi

2012

World Social Forum : Critical Explorations

Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series

Edition 1.0

New Delhi, 2012

ISBN : 978-81-904808-2-6

OpenWord is about open publication, and sees itself as a contribution to the wider struggle for making knowledges open for people across cultures and languages and on as many and as wide platforms as possible. We outline our intentions and framework in a statement of our License Policy on one of the following pages; please read that. In general, we want to make our work open for re-use and sharing.

In this book, there are two broad categories of essays : Open and Restricted. You are free to re-use – for non-commercial purposes only - all those essays that have the OpenWord logo on their opening page. For all the others, please consult our website <http://www.openword.in>.

In all cases, please make your work available to others just as we are doing to you, and please acknowledge your source and the respective authors.

Editors : Jai Sen and Peter Waterman

Associate Editor : Madhuresh Kumar

Content Editors : Parvati Sharma, Vipul Rikhi, and Jai Sen

Design : OpenWord (free to be reproduced in any form)

Layout : Nishant

Published by :



A-3 Defence Colony
New Delhi 110 024, India
openword@openword.in
www.openword.in

About the Book

"Be the change you want to see in the world."

(Mahatma Gandhi, activist and philosopher from India, 1869-1948, internationally respected for his doctrine of non-violence)

Our world is today at a time of enormous change. On the one hand, there is tremendous scientific and technological change taking place, which in turn is contributing powerfully to widespread social and cultural change of many kinds; there are enormous changes in the world economy leading both to a massively growing concentration of wealth and also to a deepening and widening of precarity across the world; and we are in an accelerating and deepening ecological crisis as a consequence of massive overconsumption and the rape of Mother Earth.

On the other hand, there is intensifying social and political resistance, now across the world and across many sections of societies, both to the negative impacts of all these changes and also to continuing structural injustice in all societies and to continuing colonialism – and also assertion, towards building a more just world. In many ways, the past two decades – the last of the 1900s and the first of the 2000s – have been an extraordinary period in all these terms. The movements seem to have peaked during the year 2011, with major protest movements and irruptions taking place in many places both in what is often now termed 'the South' – in some circles still referred to as 'developing (or 'emerging') countries' - as well as the North, the more industrialised countries. In some places it has already overthrown dictators, governments, and corporations, and forced others into retreat; and there are also now many signs of a growing massification of this upsurge, both within nations and across regions.

Although the World Social Forum – formed precisely during this period and irruption, in 2001, in counter-position to the World Economic Forum and to neoliberalism more generally - may not be at the very centre of such movements (as has been claimed by some), it has certainly become an important actor in this process. Arguably, it has inspired hundreds of thousands (and maybe even millions) of women and men across the world to come together and try and think through and act on its slogan 'Another World Is Possible !'. As such - and although it has also been strongly critiqued – it has come to be quite widely seen and projected as a major contributor to progressive social change.

But to be the change we want to see, and to think out other worlds, we have to know what we want. This book, World Social Forum : Critical Explorations, is a sequel to the 2004 book titled World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (Viveka, New Delhi; edited by Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman) and to its international second edition in 2009 (Black Rose Books, Montreal; edited by Jai Sen and Peter Waterman). It brings together some 35 essays from around the world – from authors young and old, women and men, black brown and white, and activists, scholars, and those in between – that enable us all to critically explore and understand this important phenomenon called the World Social Forum; and so to better know what kind of world we want to see and to build.

Read it !

»» *This is an extraordinary book about an extraordinary phenomenon. From the outset of the 21st century, the World Social Forum has been the premier venue of world social movements. It has been the home of globalized challenges to corporate globalization and neoliberalism from the global opposition to the Iraq war to the transnational challenge to caste and racism to the anti-austerity politics of the Great Recession. It has led to renewed hope that "another world is possible".*

As the Indignados, Occupy Wall Street, climate protection, and other large new movements have

spread around the globe in the past two years, the ways in which the World Social Forum and these new movements choose to relate to each other will be critical. For those who wish to understand the WSF and its limits and potentials for the period ahead, there is no better guide than the new book World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Its 36 essays by diverse contributors from around the world engage deep issues about the WSF, and more broadly about the process of social movement globalization, with conceptual clarity and straightforward language and style. Whether the WSF wheel is modified for new conditions or reinvented, the lessons of its experience will be essential for global social change. This book is an indispensable guide to what the WSF has been and what that means for the future of global social movements. For those in the new movements trying to decide whether and how they should relate to the WSF, this is the book I would tell them to read.

Jeremy Brecher

Historian and author/editor of Global Village or Global Pillage : Economic Reconstruction from the Bottom Up (1994), Globalization from Below : The Power of Solidarity (2000), and, most recently, Save the Humans ? Common Preservation in Action (2012)

»» This book is a passionate, reasoned, and critical collection of essays that demonstrate the lasting legacy of the World Social Forum and the horizontal politics that the 'movement of movements' helped inspire. At a moment in history when millions of people worldwide are participating in social movements organized through horizontal political structures, this book is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the international history of these practices as well as the problems faced and lessons learned. World Social Forum : Critical Explorations provides an acute political analysis of past social struggles across and between an extraordinary collection of places, spaces, positionalities, and histories and offers a critical but hopeful diversity of ideas for how we can collectively build a better global political/economic system in the future.

Marianne Maeckelbergh

Author of The Will of the Many : How the Alterglobalisation Movement is Changing the Face of Democracy (Pluto, 2009) and Assistant Professor in Cultural Anthropology and Development Sociology at Leiden University, Netherlands

»» The constructively encompassing scope, diversity, and dynamically transformative shapings/re-shapings of the World Social Forum phenomenon require an equivalent breadth and fluidity of reflection, critique, and affirmation as we seek to understand positive politics and potentials for the 21st century. This book, World Social Forum : Critical Explorations, offers an original and vitally needed departure point for such an understanding, with its heterogeneity of voices flowing around the global social justice center of gravity.

Importantly, this provocative and energizing compilation, from a wide variety of writer-activists, provides sharply critical discussions of limitations and impediments to the development of the World Social Forum, such as the key issue of male dominance in certain settings, and the vexing question of who financially can and cannot attend such events. This necessary and refreshing openness to doing sharply etched reflections on and from the various World Social Forum gatherings, tells us that the dry-rot of dogmatism - that scourge of leftist history - is being transcended. The openness of Critical Explorations to wide ranging difficulties, possibilities, and organizing necessities is perhaps not so much about 'a movement', but rather describes people and organizations around the world that are in movement. With its constantly constructive respectfully dialogues and critiques and its depiction of the fluidity, dissolution, and resolution of diverse global perspectives, this book is an invaluable reader, both explicating and exhorting the best of the human spirit.

John Brown Childs

Emeritus Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, USA, and author of Transcommunality : From the Politics of Conversion to the Ethics of Respect

»» This is an extraordinary book about the most extraordinary fact of our time : The coming together of social movements across the planet, organised around many issues, drawing on very different social groups and speaking in many tongues – but sharing a common refusal of neo-liberalism and daring to work together, as equals, without the blessing of the powerful. Critical Explorations brings to life this multiplicity of voices and many of the crosscutting strands of debate and conflict that animate this reality. It is both a reflection of this process – an image of it - and also carries this further by reflecting on the experience, questioning while walking, shaping new possibilities. As knowledge from below, starting from the South and movement-centred, the book is radically different to conventionally static top-down accounts. Reading this book we can see our own movements in the light of wider possibilities, broader alliances, and at times perhaps even glimpse what it might be like to be part of a future, free humanity.

Laurence Cox

Long-time activist, editor of the open-access social movements journal Interface, and director of the MA course in Community Education, Equality, and Social Activism at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth

From the publisher :

A Note on the Challenging Empires Series

The Challenging Empires series emerged out of an extremely successful book that the editors of the present work brought out along with Arturo Escobar and Anita Anand in 2004. Titled World Social Forum : Challenging Empires, this major anthology of essays from many parts of the world, and from authors of many different persuasions, critically examined the World Social Forum and the global debates around this phenomenon and located them in relation to the 2004 edition of the WSF that was held in Mumbai, India.

This book managed to accomplish, in large measure, the task it had set out to do, and was then also translated into Hindi, German, Japanese, and Spanish over the subsequent years, as well as most of the chapters being made available online almost at the same time as the hard copy. In 2008-9, it was updated into a revised, second, international edition published from Canada. The success of these books prompted the lead editors of the 2004 book, Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, to conceive of a series of volumes around contemporary social movements which could critically evaluate their impact and trace their history both at local levels as what sometimes seem to be isolated, localised phenomena and as streams of solidarity efforts regionally and globally – such as the World Social Forum, and to publish these through OpenWord. Together, the new series editors and OpenWord named the series *Challenging Empires*.

Being the first such intervention after the first and second books were turned into a series, the present volume World Social Forum : Critical Explorations examines the gains and impact of the World Social Forum process over and across the subsequent eight years, while also opening up many debates for movements across the world. This volume also opens up and leads the Challenging Empires series into looking at other spontaneous, structured, and virtual movements through the next two volumes. The fourth volume in the series, tentatively titled The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds, seeks to strengthen conversations between and across different world movements, while the fifth volume, tentatively titled Worlds in Movement : New Movement, New Politics, will build on this theme further, and will in particular focus on voices and knowledges generated from within movements : On 'knowledges from below'.

OpenWord, the publisher of the Challenging Empires series, and the series editors welcome suggestions and criticism on the volumes that have come out or that are proposed, and ideas for subsequent volumes. Feel free to send your suggestions either to the series editor(s) or to OpenWord through its web site www.openword.in.

The Titles in the Challenging Empires Series :

Series editors : Jai Sen and Peter Waterman

Volume 1

World Social Forum : Challenging Empires

Edited by Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman

Viveka Foundation, New Delhi, India, 2004

Slightly abridged version available @ http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html

and @ <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=WSFChallengingEmpires2004>

Volume 2

World Social Forum : Challenging Empires

Updated and revised International Edition

Edited by Jai Sen and Peter Waterman

Black Rose Books, Montreal, Canada, 2009

Volume 3

World Social Forum : Critical Explorations

Edited by Jai Sen and Peter Waterman

OpenWord, New Delhi, India, 2012

Volume 4

The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds

Edited by Jai Sen and Peter Waterman

OpenWord, New Delhi, India, forthcoming

Volume 5

Worlds in Movement : New Movement, New Politics

Edited by Jai Sen and Peter Waterman

OpenWord, New Delhi, India, forthcoming

CONTENTS

OpenWord License Policy

Acknowledgements & Credits

Notes on the Editors

Notes on the Contributors

Invocations

Foreword :

Immanuel Wallerstein - The World Social Forum : Great Success, Shaky Future, Passé ?

Preface :

Peter Waterman - The World Social Forum and this Book : Pessimism of the Intellect and/or Optimism of the Will ?

Introduction :

Jai Sen - 'Another World Is Possible !' : Critical Explorations of the World Social Forum and the dreams it has inspired

1

Understanding the WSF : The Roots of the WSF - The WSF as Rhizome

1.1 Charmain Levy – Influence and contribution : Liberation Theology, the Progressive Church in Brazil, and the World Social Forum

1.2 Rodrigo Nunes – The Intercontinental Youth Camp as the Unthought of World Social Forum, Revisited

1.3 Ara Wilson – Feminism in the Space of the World Social Forum

1.4 Janet Conway – Place, Scale, and the Politics of Recognition at the World Social Forum

1.5 Jeffrey S Juris – Social Forums and Their Margins : Networking Logics and the Cultural Politics of Autonomous Space

1.6 Graeme Chesters – The Secret of Fire ! Encountering the Complexity of the World Social Forum

2

The Globalisation of the WSF : The Globalisation of Movement

2.1 Geoffrey Pleyers and Raúl Ornelas – Alter-globalisation hits New Ground : Bamako and Caracas 2006

2.2 Ingmar Lee – Reflections on the Polycentric World Social Forum, Karachi

2.3 Pierre Rousset – The Karachi Social Forum and Its International Significance

2.4 Demba Moussa Dembele – African Social Movements and the World Social Forum

2.5 Wangui Mbatia and Hassan Indusa – The World Social Forum 2007 : A Kenyan Perspective

2.6 Virginia Vargas – A Look at Nairobi's World Social Forum

2.7 Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle and Nicolas Haeringer – The WSF at Test : Extraversion and Controversies during the World Social Forum in Nairobi

2.8 Michael Leon Guerrero – The Second US Social Forum : What did we accomplish ?

2.9 Sonia E Alvarez – Globalised Localisms : The Travels and Translations of the World Social Forum Process

3

Some Critical Issues – in the WSF, in Movement

3.1 America Vera-Zavala – A Space of Freedom : The World Women's Forum

3.2 Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca – 'Skeleton Women' at the World Social Forum : Feminist Struggles for Visibility, Voice, and Influence, 2001-5

3.3 Rahul Rao – Included Out ?

3.4 Taran N Khan – Trio

3.5 Amanda Alexander and Mandisa Mbali – Have the Slaves left the Master's House ?

3.6 Corinna Genschel – Are Social Forums an Opportunity for Renewing Emancipative Gender

Politics ? A Feminist Account of the Local Organisation of Social Forums

3.7 Laura Sullivan – Activism, Affect, and Abuse : The Emotional Contexts and Consequences of the ESF Organising Process 2004

3.8 Giuseppe Caruso – Difference and Conflicts in the World Social Forum in India : Towards an 'Open' Cosmopolitanism ?

3.9 Jai Sen – Towards Building the Future Together : An Open Letter to the Puno Cumbre

3.10 Franco Barchiesi, Heinrich Bohmke, Prishani Naidoo, and Ahmed Veriava – Does Bamako Appeal ? The World Social Forum Versus the Life Strategies of the Subaltern

3.11 Shannon Walsh – We Won't Pay to Discuss Our Own Poverty ! Activist Interventions into the 'Open Space' of the World Social Forum

3.12 Patrick Bond – Linking Below, Across, And Against : Rethinking Global Civil Society Strategy

3.13 Jeffrey S Juris – Opening Spaces at the US Social Forum

3.14 Alex Callinicos and Chris Nineham – At an Impasse ? Anti-capitalism and the Social Forums

3.15 Walden Bello – World Social Forum at the Crossroads

3.16 Chico Whitaker – Crossroads Do Not Always Close Roads

3.17 Boaventura de Sousa Santos – A Left of the Future : The WSF and Beyond

3.18 Ronaldo Munck – The Great Counter-Movement : Empire, Multitudes, and Social Transformation

4

References

Bibliography

Note :

Because of a shortage of resources before publication, and because we are this time primarily doing soft publication rather than hard, the **Glossary**, **Index**, and **List of Websites** - normally a part of all books in the *Challenging Empires* series - will be added later, first as an Appendix to this volume and then within a new revised edition.

OpenWord License Policy

OpenWord, November 2012

OpenWord is about open publication, reaching across isms, and sees itself as a contribution to the wider struggle for making knowledges open for people across cultures and languages and on as many and as wide platforms as possible. We work closely with our authors and editors towards achieving these objectives. This statement tells you how you can use this book in part or as a whole.

In general, we want to make our work open for re-use and sharing, and to constantly push the boundaries for content sharing as far as possible. Some of the material we publish however, has restrictions. We summarise below the broad categories of availability of the essays in this book, but for more details, please visit the web page for this particular book, <http://www.openword.in/ce3>, and our web site <http://www.openword.in> to see more full and updated versions of this license statement. You can also write to us to suggest ways to make this work more open, at openword@openword.in.

We accordingly invite and promote the open and transparent use of the material in this book. Since most of the essays included here were prepared for the editors or submitted to them for publication, you are free to use these essays freely, but where, should you do so, we request you (a) to make them freely available to others just as we are doing to you, and (b) also to inform both us (@ openword@openword.in) and the respective author(s) of your use. (The contact details of all the authors are given along with their entries in the List of Contributors in this book.)

You are free to freely re-use all the essays that have the OpenWord logo on their opening page.

You are also free to use a part of one or more of these essays as quotes and reference or even as a starting point to build on them and incorporate them into your own work(s). Feel free to adapt the content of this book, in whole or in part, to media other than the printed forms, including in digital formats.

In the cases of some of the essays that we are re-publishing, there are restrictions on them, and they therefore have the letter **R** on them, on the opening page. Keeping in mind that there are different restrictions for these various essays, in case you want to reproduce one or more of these essays either in full or in part, for more specific information (a) consult the license table we have posted on our web page for this book <http://www.openword.in/ce3>, specifying the conditions that they are available under, and / or (b) get in touch with us at openword@openword.in. Please of course respect the conditions.

Also, note that **all the above permissions and conditions apply only for non-commercial use** of any work you have in mind that is built on parts of this book. For commercial use, contact us.

In all cases, please of course acknowledge your source and the respective authors.

Finally, note that you can freely use only the written part of this work. To use any of the pictures in this collection, if any, get in touch with the creator/s of the pictures to get permission. (See Credits for details.)

If you wish to replicate or borrow from the design of this work however, you can do so simply by crediting the designer of the book. (See the Print Page for details.)



Acknowledgements & Credits

Content Editors

Beyond those discussed in the Introduction, an important feature of this book (and of all the books in the *Challenging Empires* series to which this book belongs) has been the intensive and extensive background work that has gone into the preparation and finalisation of the essays we are publishing. In this book we have tried to work closely with our authors in helping them more fully develop and articulate their ideas, and we have therefore of course been happy that many of our authors have appreciated this and said that they have rarely experienced this degree of attention. Most of the credit for this goes to our Content Editors, Parvati Sharma and Vipul Rikhi, and we warmly thank them for their contributions to making this book what it is. Jai Sen also helped with the content editing.

Parvati Sharma, for :

Amanda Alexander and Mandisa Mbali – ‘Have The Slaves Left The Master’s House ?’

Franco Barchiesi, Heinrich Bohmke, Prishani Naidoo, and Ahmed Veriava – ‘Does Bamako Appeal ? The World Social Forum Versus the Life Strategies of the Subaltern’

Giuseppe Caruso – ‘Difference and Conflicts in the World Social Forum in India : Towards an ‘Open’ Cosmopolitanism ?’

Janet Conway – ‘Place, Scale, and the Politics of Recognition at the World Social Forum’

Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca, 2011 – ‘“Skeleton Women’ at the World Social Forum : Feminist Struggles for Visibility, Voice, and Influence, 2001-5’

Ingmar Lee – ‘Reflections on the Polycentric World Social Forum, Karachi’

Charmain Levy – ‘Influence and Contribution : Liberation Theology, the Progressive Church in Brazil, and the World Social Forum’

Rahul Rao – ‘Included Out ?’

Virginia Vargas – ‘A Look at Nairobi’s World Social Forum’

America Vera-Zavala – ‘A Space of Freedom : The World Women’s Forum’

Shannon Walsh – ‘We Won’t Pay To Discuss Our Own Poverty ! Activist Interventions Into The ‘Open Space’ of The World Social Forum’

Parvati Sharma and **Jai Sen**, for :

Sonia E Alvarez – ‘Globalised Localisms : The Travels and Translations of the World Social Forum Process’

Patrick Bond – ‘Linking Below, Across, And Against : Rethinking Global Civil Society Strategy’

Corinna Genschel – ‘Are Social Forums an Opportunity for Renewing Emancipative Gender

Politics ? A Feminist Account of the Local Organisation of Social Forums'

Jeffrey S Juris – 'Social Forums and Their Margins : Networking Logics and the Cultural Politics of Autonomous Space'

Taran N Khan – 'Trio'

Wangui Mbatia and Hassan Indusa – 'The World Social Forum 2007 : A Kenyan Perspective'

Geoffrey Pleyers and Raúl Ornelas – 'Alter-globalisation Hits New Ground : Bamako and Caracas 2006'

Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle and Nicolas Haeringer – 'The WSF at Test : Extraversion and Controversies During the World Social Forum in Nairobi'

Pierre Rousset – 'The Karachi Social Forum and Its International Significance'

Ara Wilson – 'Feminism in the Space of the World Social Forum'

Vipul Rikhi, for :

Walden Bello – 'World Social Forum at the Crossroads'

Graeme Chesters – 'The Secret of Fire ! Encountering the Complexity of the World Social Forum'

Boaventura de Sousa Santos – 'A Left of the Future : The WSF and Beyond'

Ronaldo Munck – 'The Great Counter-Movement : Empire, Multitudes, and Social Transformation'

Jai Sen – 'Towards Understanding the World Social Forum : Three Proposals'

Chico Whitaker – 'Crossroads Do Not Always Close Roads'

Vipul Rikhi and **Jai Sen**, for :

Demba Moussa Dembele – 'African Social Movements and the World Social Forum'

Laura Sullivan – 'Activism, Affect, and Abuse : The Emotional Contexts and Consequences of the ESF Organising Process 2004'

Jai Sen, for :

Alex Callinicos and Chris Nineham – 'At an impasse ? Anti-capitalism and the Social Forums'

Michael Leon Guerrero – 'The Second US Social Forum : What Did We Accomplish ?'

Jeffrey S Juris – 'Opening Spaces at the US Social Forum'

Rodrigo Nunes – 'The Intercontinental Youth Camp as the Unthought of World Social Forum,

Revisited'

Jai Sen – 'Towards Building the Future Together : An Open Letter from a Fellow-Traveller to the Puno Cumbre'

Immanuel Wallerstein – 'The World Social Forum : Great Success, Shaky Future, Passé ?'

Peter Waterman – 'The World Social Forum and this Book : Pessimism of the Intellect and/or Optimism of the Will ?'

Concept, Design, and Production

As discussed in the Introduction, this is the first time that we as editors have published through OpenWord - and also that we are bringing out our book first as an ebook and in a print-on-demand format; and indeed where this is also the first time that OpenWord is independently publishing a book. In many ways, OpenWord and our recent books – see the back pages for information - have been intertwined in terms of conceptualisation and reality, and much of the credit for this goes to Nishant, Co-Coordinator at OpenWord : For both the conceptualisation and the production of this as an ebook. Our warm thanks to him, in helping us down this road.

Material Resources

We also acknowledge some support from Oxfam-Novib, based in The Netherlands, for covering professional editorial expenses in the early stages of the preparation of this book, as a part of a grant that they made available to us during 2007-9 titled 'The World Social Forum : A Critical Engagement' (Project No BORX-505275-4713). We also thank InterPares, Canada, for its supplementary support in 2009 for our work around the World Social Forum; even if its grant was small and not really support for our books as such, this act of solidarity when we needed support was important for what we were more generally trying to do with respect to the WSF, and in a broader and more general way therefore also helped this particular project move forward.

Networking as Resource : The CACIM Community as Cloud

Finally, we as editors also want to note and acknowledge the fact that this book is the product of an immense amount of almost global networking over several years, between several people and in different permutations and combinations over the years; and indeed, that a book like this is perhaps only possible through such a cloud-like process. Aside from a certain amount of professional support for which we were initially able to raise funds for, as mentioned above, the bulk of the conceptualisation of this book (and also of the book project discussed in the Introduction) and then its preparation has involved intense voluntary input from almost countless individuals, over these many years : Many of the contributors, all the members of a loose, amorphous, and constantly evolving '*Challenging Empires* editorial collective' – including Michal Osterweil and Lee Cormie, at different times -, and all members of the OpenWord Working Group and more recently, of the OpenWord Editorial Collective that is taking shape (see <http://www.openword.in/about/team>), aside from us, the editors; and as will become more evident in subsequent editions of this book, also of our graphic designer at CACIM, Adityan M. All of these people – all of whom were or have become members of the CACIM Community through this fact of association - have made key contributions to the crystallisation of this book and of this book project, in different ways and at different levels. We warmly thank them all.

Notes on the Editors

Jai Sen | [1](#), [2](#), [3](#)

is a researcher based in New Delhi, India, and now also in Ottawa, Canada. An architect by training and first practice, he became an activist around the rights of the labouring poor, and is now a student of the history and dynamics of movement. Seeing critical reflection as a potent contribution to building transformative power, his present work is around creating spaces for reflection in movement, in different media. Author, editor, and/or co-editor of several books and articles on movement and the globalisation of movement, he is presently Director and coordinator of [CACIM](#) (Critical Action : Centre in Movement) and Co-Coordinator of [OpenWord](#). jai.sen@cacim.net

[Peter Waterman](#)

taught at the Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, for nearly thirty years, and has specialised on international labour and social movements. He has been active in internationalist activities all his life, and now blogs @ <http://www.unionbook.org/profile/peterwaterman>. He is the author of Globalisation, Social Movements, and the New Internationalisms (now also as ebook @ <http://ebooks.continuumbooks.com/BookStore/pagedisplay.do?genre=book&pub=continuum&id=9781441181268&readMore=true>), Recovering Internationalism, Creating the New Global Solidarity : Labour, Social Movements and Emancipation in the 21st Century (first edition on the Choike website : http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/6439.html), and of Under, Against, Beyond : Labour and Social Movements Confront a Globalised, Informatised, Capitalism (Helsinki : Into Books, available free @ <http://www.into-ebooks.com/book/under-against-beyond/>). He is also co-editor of World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (first edition, Viveka, New Delhi, 2004, available at http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html and <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=WSFChallengingEmpires2004> and second revised edition, Black Rose, Montréal, 2009) and of World Social Forum : Critical Explorations (OpenWord 2012). peterwaterman1936@gmail.com

Notes on the Contributors

The contributors to this volume are as follows, listed alphabetically *by first name* :

[Ahmed Veriava](#)

is an activist and a researcher living in Johannesburg, South Africa.
ahmed@red.org.za

[Alex Callinicos](#)

is Professor of European Studies at King's College, London, UK. He is a member of the Socialist Workers Party and played an active role in the development of the European Social Forums. His most recent books are The Resources of Critique, Imperialism and Global Political Economy, and Bonfire of Illusions.
alex.callinicos@kcl.ac.uk

[Amanda Alexander,](#)

now at Yale University in the US, did her PhD at Columbia University's history department and was earlier a Visiting Scholar at the Centre for Civil Society, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Her research primarily focuses on transnational social movements, land struggles, and racial politics. Her recent publications include Articulations : A Harold Wolpe Memorial Lecture Collection (2006, ed, Africa World Press/Centre for Civil Society) and a guest-edited issue of the Journal of Asian & African Studies on 'Problematizing Resistance' (with Mandisa Mbali, 2006, vol 41 no 1/2).
amandaalexander4@gmail.com

[America Vera-Zavala](#)

is a writer and an activist. She has written commentaries for ZNet since 2001. She has published three books in Sweden and her book Participatory Democracy was released in Turkey in 2006. She lives in Sweden. She has been active in both the Left Party and in founding the ATTAC movement in Sweden. In 2007 she debuted as a theatre writer with the play Concha tu madre, on illegal workers. She is currently working with several plays. www.americavz.com.
america@participamos.org

[Ara Wilson](#)

is currently director of Sexuality Studies and associate professor of Women's Studies at Duke University in the US. Since 1994, she has been a participant observer in transnational feminist and sexual justice projects, including attending the 2005 WSF at Porto Alegre and the 2006 Polycentric World Social Forum in Bamako. She is the author of The Intimate Economies of Bangkok : Tomboys, Tycoons and Avon Ladies in the Global City and is working on a book, Sexual Latitudes, that analyses globalisation as a stage for sexual politics.
ara.wilson@gmail.com

Bice Maiguashca

is a lecturer in the Department of Politics at the University of Exeter. Recent publications include, with Catherine Eschle, Making Feminist Sense of the Global Justice Movement (Rowman and Littlefield 2010) and Critical Theories, World Politics, and 'The Anti-Globalisation Movement' (Routledge, 2005) as well as Politics of Governance / Politics of Resistance, co-edited with David Armstrong and Theo Farrell (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

B.Maiguashca@exeter.ac.uk

Boaventura de Sousa Santos

is Professor of Sociology at the University of Coimbra, Portugal and a distinguished scholar of the Institute for Legal Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the US. He is the author of numerous books, including most recently The Rise of the Global Left : The World Social Forum and Beyond (Zed, 2006). He is currently editing a series of books resulting from a collective project titled Reinventing Social Emancipation : Toward New Manifestos, presently being published in Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, and English. (Volumes I, II, and III in English have been published during 2005-7 by Verso.)

bsantos@ces.uc.pt , bsantos@wisc.edu

Catherine Eschle

is a lecturer in the Department of Government at the University of Strathclyde. Recent publications include, with Bice Maiguashca, Making Feminist Sense of the Global Justice Movement (Rowman and Littlefield 2010) and Critical Theories, World Politics, and 'The Anti-Globalisation Movement' (Routledge, 2005) as well as the sole-authored Global Democracy, Social Movements, and Feminism (Westview Press, 2001). Catherine is also co-editor of the International Feminist Journal of Politics.

catherine.eschle@strath.ac.uk

Charmain Levy,

a PhD and DEA in Anthropology and Sociology of Politics (2000) from the University of Paris 8, is a Professor at the University of Outaouais in Canada, teaching International Development. She is a specialist in Latin America, particularly Brazil; social movements, religion, and development; and urban and development studies. She is also Associate Researcher of the Canadian Research Chair on the development of collectivities; Associate Researcher of the Observatory on regional development and differentiated analysis according to sex; member of the Quebec University network on training, research, and intervention in Brazil; executive member the Canadian Association of Studies in International Development; and on the editorial board of the journal Studies in Political Economy. She co-authored Collective Action and Radicalism in Brazil : Women, Urban Housing, and Rural Movements (2005).

charmain.levy@uqo.ca

Chico Whitaker

(Francisco Whitaker Ferreira) is a leading social activist and one of the founding figures of the

World Social Forum (WSF) in Brazil. He was Executive Secretary and is now member of the Brazilian Commission of Justice and Peace; active in radical movements within the Catholic Church; and in the Workers' Party, having been elected twice as a councillor on the PT ticket. He left the party in the beginning of 2006 having come to the conclusion that it had become similar to all other Brazilian parties. He is a member of the International Council of the WSF. In 2006, he received the Right Livelihood Award for his life's work.

intercom@cidadania.org.br

Chris Nineham

has played a leading role in many of last decade's anti-capitalist mobilisations in Europe, including in the organisation of the European Social Forums in Florence, Paris, and London. He is one of the founding members of the Stop the War Coalition in the UK and currently a national organiser, and is also a member of Counterfire. He has written on the anti-capitalist movement, the role of the modern media and capitalist culture and is researching into the media's treatment of the anti-Iraq protests. He has just written Capitalism and Class Consciousness : The ideas of Georg Lukacs.

chrisnineham@hotmail.com

Corinna Genschel

initiated the Project for the Berlin Social Forum together with other people from Berlin in 2003 and worked in that context until late 2007. She has been active in various left and civil rights, feminist and queer movements for the last twenty-five years. After academic work in Gender Studies / Political Theory for some years she is currently employed by the Left Party in parliament as a liaison person for social movement. She has published in the field of theories of democracy in relation to feminist, queer, and trans issues, as well as more journalistic essays on social forum processes, poor peoples' movements, and civil rights.

Corinna.Genschel@linksfraktion.de

Demba Moussa Dembele

is from Senegal, with a background in economics and finance. He is Director of the African Forum on Alternatives, a research network based in Dakar, Senegal, which focuses on contributing to a critique of the neoliberal paradigm with a particular emphasis on the policies of the IMF and the World Bank; on conducting critical reflection on the African development experience; and on promoting an alternative development paradigm in Africa. He is member of the Council of the African Social Forum and the International Coordinating Committee (ICC) of the Jubilee South Network; Chair of the LDC Watch Steering Committee; and one of the main organisers of WSF 2011 in Dakar, Senegal.

forumafricain@yahoo.fr and arcade.sen@gmail.com

Franco Barchiesi

teaches in the Department of African-American and African Studies at Ohio State University. From 1994 to 2002 he lived in South Africa, where he taught at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and was one of the founding editors of the journal Debate :

Voices from the South African Left. His research is mostly on working class politics in the South African post-Apartheid transition.

f_barchiesi@yahoo.com.

Geoffrey Pleyers

(PhD) is FNRS Researcher at the University of Louvain (Belgium) and at the Centre d'Analyse et d'Intervention Sociologiques (CADIS, Paris), and a Visiting Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Global Governance (London School of Economics), London. He teaches social movements and global studies at the University of Louvain and at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (Paris), and is a member of the Explorations in Open Space (EIOS) discussion network. He has conducted field research on the Global Social Justice Movement in Western Europe and Latin America and at seven World Social Forums. His publications include Forums Sociaux Mondiaux et défis de l'altermondialisme ('World Social Forums and the challenges of alter-globalisation', in French; 2007, Academia); Alter-globalization : Becoming an Actor in the Global Age (Polity Press, 2010), and L'alter-consommation ('Alter-consumption', or 'Critical consumption', in French; Desclée de Brouwer, 2010).

Geoffrey.Pleyers@uclouvain.be

Giuseppe Caruso

is Post-Doctoral Researcher at the Centre of Excellence in Global Governance Research at the University of Helsinki, Finland. His research interests have developed from migration studies to the role of traditional healers as cultural and conflict mediators in the Peruvian Amazon. He has more recently worked on conflict in organisations and networks of the global civil society and in particular on the World Social Forum. His current interests focus on transformative ethnography of transnational activist networks and on the right to the city movement.

giu.caruso@gmail.com

Graeme Chesters

is Deputy Director of the International Centre for Participation Studies, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford. He was a member of the collective Notes from Nowhere that published We Are Everywhere : the irresistible rise of global anticapitalism (Verso, 2003) and he is the author (with Ian Welsh) of Complexity and Social Movements : Multitudes on the Edge of Chaos (Routledge, 2006). He is currently writing a book on bio-materialism and social movements.

graeme@shiftingground.org

Hassan Indusa

is the Speaker of People's Parliament (*Bunge La Mwananchi*) in Kenya and the National Chairman of KENGO, the Kenya Network of Grassroots Organizations.

infokengo@gmail.com

Heinrich Bohmke

lives in Durban, South Africa, and works as a trainer.

kznecc@union.org.za.

Immanuel Wallerstein

is Senior Research Scholar at Yale University and former president of the International Sociological Association. He is the author of The Modern World-System (4 volumes), as well as Decline of American Power; Utopistics, or Historical Choices for the Twenty-first Century; and European Universalism : The Rhetoric of Power. He has been an active participant in the World Social Forum.

immanuel.wallerstein@yale.edu

Ingmar Lee

has planted more than 1,000,000 trees in the industrial logging wreckage of Canada's once-magnificent forests. He has learned that mass-production tree planting in the stump fields is a giant greenwashing scam to legitimise the scandalous farce of the liquidation/conversion scheme that is destroying the world's forests. He has trekked throughout the Hindu Kush, Karakoram, and Himalayan mountains, where many people still live a timeless self-sufficient lifestyle, in tune with nature. Ingmar believes that humanity must relearn such arts of living and that all of the world's still intact forest ecosystems must be off-limits to any further commercial extraction.

ingmarz@gmail.com

Janet Conway

is Canada Research Chair in Social Justice at Brock University in St Catharine's, Canada. She is a long-time activist in women's and anti-poverty movements, in cross-sectoral social justice coalitions, and as an organiser of the Toronto Social Forum. She is the author of Identity, Place, Knowledge : Social Movements Contesting Globalization (2004, Halifax, Nova Scotia : Fernwood), and is writing widely on the World Social Forum, including her recent book, Edges of Global Justice : The World Social Forum and its 'Others' (Routledge, 2012).

jconway@brocku.ca

Jeffrey S Juris | [1](#), [2](#),

Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Northeastern University, in Boston, has participated extensively as an activist and researcher in the global justice movement, including the WSF and the PGA. He is author of Networking Futures : The Movements against Corporate Globalization (Duke University Press, 2008), which explores the cultural logic and politics of transnational networking among anti-corporate globalisation activists, and a co-author of Global Democracy and the World Social Forums (Paradigm Press, 2008). He has also published numerous articles on this topic as well as the relationship between new digital technologies and grassroots social movements.

jeffjuris@yahoo.com

Laura L Sullivan

is currently [2005] completing, in the UK, a PhD in English with concentrations in Film and Media Studies, and Women's Studies. Her research interests include Marxist and feminist media theory, women and technology, film and television studies, electronic pedagogy, hypertext, the politics of the World Wide Web, and autobiography. Her dissertation research focuses on experimental feminist writing, including the translation of such writing into hypertext. She has published articles on the following topics : Linguistic and social developments in the wake of new electronic technology, gender and cyberspace, nature and neo-colonialism in the discourse of beauty, the film *The Watermelon Woman*, electronic pedagogy, and Cuba and the internet. Laura also leads support groups and workshops for women, activists, and members of other identity groups.
alchemical44@yahoo.co.uk

Mandisa Mbali

is a South African Rhodes Scholar and Doctoral Candidate in Modern History based at the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine and St Antony's College at Oxford University. Her research focuses on the history of South African AIDS activism. Her recent publications include an article placing the Treatment Action Campaign in historical context, published in a collection entitled Problematising Resistance : Social Movements and the Quest for a New Humanism in Post-apartheid South Africa, edited by Nigel C. Gibson and published by Africa World Press. She also guest-edited an issue of the Journal of Asian & African Studies on 'Problematising Resistance' (with Amanda Alexander, 2006, vol 41 no 1/2)).

mandisa.mbali@sant.ox.ac.uk

Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle

is a lecturer of political science at the University of Antilles-Guyane. A specialist in political sociology, her main area of research has been activism and mobilisation in Africa. She wrote her PhD on human rights activism in Kenya and Cameroon, and has also written on this issue in a number of journals, including Africa Today (2006), Politique africaine ('African Politics', in French) (2006 and 2007), and African Affairs (2003). She is currently working on memory and mobilisation, and on the internationalisation of African activism.

mepommerolle@free.fr

Michael Leon Guerrero

was Coordinator of the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance in the USA from April 2004 till May 2012. Previous to that he worked for seventeen years (1987-2004) at the SouthWest Organizing Project, in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where he served as a community organiser, Lead Organizer, and Executive Director, supervising organising efforts in low-income communities throughout the state of New Mexico and organising campaigns on issues of environmental justice, corporate accountability, and globalisation. He currently serves on the Boards of Jobs with Justice, the New World Foundation, and the Asian Pacific Environmental Network, and was chair of the Resource Mobilization Working Group for the US Social Forum in Atlanta in June 2007 and on the National Planning Committee for the US Social Forum in Detroit in June 2010.

michael.leonguerrero@gmail.com

Nicolas Haeringer

is a PhD candidate at the Dauphine University (Paris 9) in sociology. He works on the dynamics of social forums, through participant observation and action-research. He has participated in projects aiming at building the social forums' memory as well as facilitating the 'agglutination' of activities and organisations.

nicolas.haeringer@gmail.com

Patrick Bond,

a political economist, is research professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal School of Development Studies where he directs the Centre for Civil Society (<http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs>). Books recently authored and edited by him include Climate Change, Carbon Trading, and Civil Society (UKZN Press and Rozenberg Publishers, 2008); The Accumulation of Capital in Southern Africa (Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, 2007); Looting Africa : The Economics of Exploitation (Zed Books and UKZN Press, 2006), Talk Left, Walk Right : South Africa's Frustrated Global Reforms (UKZN Press, 2006); and Elite Transition : From Apartheid to Neoliberalism in South Africa (UKZN Press, 2005). He was born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 1961.

pbond@mail.ngo.za

Pierre Rousset,

from the association *Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières* ('European Solidarity Without Frontiers', ESSF), is member of the International Council of the World Social Forum. Born in 1946, he is an activist of the French 'May 1968' generation and a long time member of the Fourth International. He has been engaged in Asian solidarity activities and has written extensively on Asian revolutions, national and social movements. He is the founding director (1982-1993) and presently a fellow of the International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE, Amsterdam).

Pierre.Rousset@ras.eu.org

Prishani Naidoo

is a writer, researcher, and activist living in Johannesburg, South Africa.

prishanin@gmail.com, prishani@red.org.za.

Raúl Ornelas

holds a Bachelor's and a Master's degree from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and a PhD in Economics from the University of Paris-X Nanterre. He is a researcher at the Research Institute in Economic of the UNAM and a member of the Latin American Observatory of Geopolitics.

raulob@servidor.unam.mx

Rahul Rao

has a law degree from the National Law School of India University (Bangalore), and a doctorate in International Relations from the University of Oxford, where he currently teaches. His research focuses mainly on the normative thinking of postcolonial social movements, but he is interested more broadly in the experience of empire, globalisation, and cosmopolitanism in the

postcolonial world.
rahul.reddy.rao@gmail.com

Rodrigo Nunes,

a Brazilian, is currently a post-doctoral researcher at PUCRS, Porto Alegre, Brazil, with a grant from CAPES-Brazilian government, after pursuing a PhD in philosophy at Goldsmiths College, University of London. In both Brazil and the UK, he has participated in different community and labour organising projects, as well as in the organisation of the International Youth Camp and the World Social Forum. He is a member of the editorial collective of Turbulence (www.turbulence.org.uk), and his texts have appeared in such publications as Radical Philosophy, Deleuze Studies, ephemera, Mute, and Transform.
rqnunes@yahoo.com

Ronaldo Munck

is theme leader for internationalisation, interculturalism, and social development at Dublin City University and visiting professor of sociology at the University of Liverpool. Before that he was chair of sociology at the University of Durban-Westville in South Africa. He is the author of Globalisation and Labour : The New 'Great Transformation' (Zed Books 2004), Contemporary Latin America (Palgrave 2008), and Globalisation and Migration (Routledge 2009). He is the editor of a new, free online journal dealing with migration and social transformation called 'Translocations' (www.translocations.ie), and is currently also working on critical foresight as a tool for transformation of the university.
Ronnie.Munck@dcu.ie

Shannon Walsh

is a filmmaker and writer who splits her time between Canada and South Africa. She is currently working on a feature-length documentary about the human and environmental impacts of oil sands development in Alberta. Walsh is also an interdisciplinary doctoral candidate in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University.
shannondawnwalsh@gmail.com

Sonia E Alvarez,

a Cuban-American feminist, anti-racist, alter-globalist scholar and activist, is Leonard J Horwitz Professor of Latin American Politics and Studies and Director of the Centre for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, in the US. She holds a PhD from Yale University and is author of Engendering Democracy in Brazil : Women's Movements in Transition Politics, and co-editor of The Making of Social Movements in Latin America : Identity, Strategy, and Democracy and of Cultures of Politics / Politics of Cultures : Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements. She has three collaborative volumes in preparation : Translocalities / Translocalidades : Feminist Politics of Translation in the Latin/a Américas; Decentering Latin American Studies; and Interrogating the Civil Society Agenda. Her new book, Feminism in Movement : Cultural Politics, Policy Advocacy, and Transnational Activism in Latin America, is forthcoming from Duke University Press.
soniaa@polsci.umass.edu

Taran Khan

is an independent journalist and filmmaker currently based in Mumbai, India. She holds degrees in Mass Communication (Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi) and Development Studies (SOAS, London).

taran.khan@gmail.com

Virginia (Gina) Vargas

is a veteran Peruvian feminist sociologist and founder of the Centro Flora Tristan in Peru. She is one of the 1,000 women nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for the year 2006. She is associated with the Articulación Feminista Marcosur in Latin America, and the Program of Democracy and Global Transformation in San Marcos University, Lima. She has taught at universities worldwide and currently teaches the Master of Sexuality and Public Policies course at San Marcos University in Lima, Peru, and is the author of *Feminismos en America Latina : Su aporte a la política y a la democracia* ('Feminisms in Latin America : Implications for Politics and Democracy', in Spanish; Lima : Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos and Centro Flora Tristán, 2008). She is a member of the WSF International Council.

ginvargas@gmail.com

Walden Bello,

former Senior Analyst with Focus on the Global South, Bangkok (a project of Chulalongkorn University's Social Research Institute, Thailand), and Professor of Public Administration and Sociology at the University of the Philippines, currently sits as a member of Congress in the Philippines' House of Representatives representing the political party Akbayan. He writes regular columns for *Foreign Policy in Focus* , Filipino and Thai newspapers, *Focus on Trade* , and the *Far Eastern Economic Review* . His most recent books are *Dilemmas of Domination : The Unmaking of the American Empire* (New York : Metropolitan Books, 2005) and *Deglobalisation : Ideas for a New World Economy* (Zed 2002). He received the Right Livelihood Award, also known as the Alternative Nobel Prize, in 2003 for "playing a crucial and complementary role in developing the theoretical and practical bases for a world order that benefits all people".

W.Bello@focusweb.org

Wangui Mbatia

is General Secretary of KENGO, the Kenya Network of Grassroots Organisations, and is actively involved with the People's Parliament (*Bunge La Mwananchi*) in Kenya.

infokengo@gmail.com

INVOCATIONS

Foreword :

Immanuel Wallerstein - The World Social Forum : Great Success, Shaky Future, Passé ?

Preface :

Peter Waterman - The World Social Forum and this Book : Pessimism of the Intellect and/or Optimism of the Will ?

Introduction :

Jai Sen - 'Another World Is Possible !' : Critical Explorations of the World Social Forum and the dreams it has inspired

Foreword

The World Social Forum : Great Success, Shaky Future, Passé ?

Immanuel Wallerstein

I have attended most meetings of the World Social Forum since the second one at Porto Alegre in 2002. I have done so because I have believed that it has been the “only show in town” for the world Left in the twenty-first century, the one most likely to achieve that other world that is possible. Ever since that first meeting I attended in 2002, I have been witness to a continuing debate about the merits and future of the WSF, a debate in which more or less the same arguments have been repeated endlessly.

There have always been three basic assessments among those who have attended and written about it : That it has been and continues to be a great success; that it has at best a somewhat shaky future; that it may have once been useful but is now passé. Of course, there have also been some who have derided it from the outset and refused to attend. Among those who have attended and therefore have thought, at least at one time, that it has been a useful institution, there is one outstanding characteristic. The debate among them has been remarkably civil, relatively free from the denunciatory and sectarian polemics that crippled the world left throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The debate may have been civil but it has been intense and revolved around several different themes. One has concerned the structure of the WSF itself : Between those who thought it should be an open forum without collective leadership and official positions but rather a horizontal meeting-ground of all those who are left-of-centre and those who wanted it to be a movement of movements that would engage in some forms of direct political action. A second debate has been about who shall be allowed to attend. Shall NGOs be admitted alongside social movements ? Shall political parties and movements that engage in violence be excluded ? A third has concerned how it should be financed, that is, whose financial support shall be sought and accepted. A fourth has been whether and to what degree it should engage in ‘dialogue’ with the World Economic Forum.

Over the years, the WSF has managed to expand its geographic inclusiveness, but still incompletely. It has been able to improve in multiple ways how the actual meetings have been conducted - both by encouraging bottom-up programming and reducing the multiplicity of sessions by encouraging cooperation among persons interested in the same themes. It has been able to improve, but again still incompletely, the transparency of its decision-making. And despite all of this, the three basic evaluations - great success, shaky future, and passé - have remained constant.

What underlies this continuing debate is, in my view, the uncertainty of the world left as to how it should reorganise its global strategy following the transformatory experience of the world-revolution of 1968. I don't think we can make sense of the debate internal to the WSF without assessing two things : The historic trajectory of antisystemic movements in the world-system since the mid-nineteenth century, and the trajectory of capitalism as a historic social system. Let me take each in turn, and then see how this affects our evaluation of the potentialities of the WSF as a structure that may or may not be able to contribute to achieving another world that is possible.

I

Antisystemic Movement

The story of the antisystemic movements starts, in my view, with what I call the world-

revolution of 1848. The historians generally use two descriptive phrases about what happened in 1848. First of all, they talk of the “social revolution” in France, which started in February and was quashed by June. The significance of that social revolution is that it was the first attempt by workers, some workers, to make a revolution that was anti-bourgeois. It was a political failure, analysed in great detail by Marx in the 18th Brumaire.¹

But 1848 was also the “springtime of the nations”, which refers to the multiple attempts in various European nations - Germany, Italy, Hungary, Poland and others - to achieve either national unity or national independence with ‘liberal’ constitutions. These revolutions too were quashed after some initial success. It should be noted that 1848 marked also the first important meeting of feminists seeking suffrage. They assembled in Seneca Falls, NY, in the United States. And while the feminists too had no immediate success, this meeting more or less launched feminism as an organisational force in the modern world-system.

The significance of the world-revolution of 1848 is to be found in the conclusions that adherents of the three ideological currents drew from what happened. The ‘liberals’ who had, prior to 1848, been in great conflict with the ‘conservatives’ were deeply frightened - less by the nationalist revolutions, which seemed to them ‘liberal’ in spirit, than by the social revolution in France. They suddenly seemed to realise that the radical elements in the working classes, previously considered a minor adjunct to the liberals were to be taken seriously as an autonomous political force. As Marx said, “a spectre [was] haunting Europe, the spectre of communism”. As a result, liberals favoured measures that would hold these radical forces in check. In France, for example, they moved towards accepting the ascension of Louis-Napoleon because of his potential to repress the radicals.

The ‘conservatives’ however drew a quite different conclusion. They noted that the one country that did not have a revolution in 1848 was England, although this was the country that seemed to have had the strongest radical movement in Europe, the Chartists. What they noticed is that - under the leadership of a conservative, Sir Robert Peel, and even that of his more conservative predecessor, the Duke of Wellington - England had made a number of ‘concessions’ to more ‘radical’ demands - for example, concerning the rights of Catholics, the suffrage, and the Repeal of the Corn Laws. These ‘concessions’ seemed not to have strengthened the radicals but rather to have vitiated the level of popular anger that underlay their political position. The conclusion the continental ‘conservatives’ drew from this analysis was to turn away from the stance of total ‘reactionary’ refusal of any change (as had been practiced by Metternich) and to move instead towards a more flexible outlook, in imitation of English conservatives.

And the ‘radicals’ - sometimes called at the time republicans, socialists, or communists - drew the conclusion that spontaneous uprisings, such as those that had been vigorously preached by Blanqui, were not likely to be politically effective. They saw the need for ‘organising’ for change by creating movements that had continuing hierarchical structures, whose purpose was to educate their potential followers and prepare the struggle for the revolution over a longer time scale.

In the next thirty years or so, two things happened. At first, the radical forces were suppressed with some vigour in most countries. And the liberals proved quite timid about promoting their own programme of prudent socio-political change under the guidance of competent experts. However, a new brand of political figures - the so-called enlightened conservatives - moved in to implement the programme that the liberals had advocated but been too timid to carry out.

Napoleon III in France, in his second decade in office, relaxed repressive measures and permitted labour organisations to emerge, while maintaining universal male suffrage. Benjamin Disraeli in Great Britain enacted a significant extension of male suffrage in 1867, on the gamble,

which turned out to be successful, that there would be a significant segment of enfranchised workers who would support the Conservative Party in future elections. And in Germany, after its unification in 1871, Bismarck enacted the beginnings of the welfare state as well as the extension of the suffrage.

We might designate this as the 'triumph of centrist liberalism' and note that the conservatives were now pursuing what was in fact a mere variant of liberal ideology. The question was now what would the 'radicals' do. In the last third of the nineteenth century, both the social movements (workers in the pan-European world) and 'nationalists' in the various 'empires' within the world-system engaged in serious discussions about strategy.

Within the social movements, the struggle was between the anarchists and the Marxists. It was basically an argument about how they should relate to existing states. Anarchists regarded the states as total enemies, which had to be shunned and destroyed. Marxists argued that the road to transform the world required taking state power as the necessary interim step. A parallel strategy debate took place among the nationalist movements - between 'cultural' nationalists and 'political' nationalists, once again revolving around how to regard the state. Cultural nationalists wanted to transform the 'people' by reviving languages, customs, and local values. Political nationalists insisted it was necessary to obtain state power (by secession or unification) as the necessary interim measure.

The Marxists and the political nationalists felt they were political realists, deriding what they considered to be the romantic assumptions of the anarchists and the cultural nationalists. The anarchists and the cultural nationalists warned that seeking state power would actually undermine rather than achieve the objectives of the movements. The outcome of the debate was that the Marxists and the political nationalists won out and began to implement their two-step strategy : First obtain state power, then change the world. And collectively, the social movement (which came to be divided between those who sought state power via suffrage and those who called for insurrection) and the national movement constituted what came later to be called the Old Left.

The emphasis on obtaining state power led the radicals in turn to become in fact merely a variant of centrist liberalism in the same way that enlightened conservatism had transformed the conservatives into a variant of centrist liberalism. And in the period 1945-1968, both varieties of social movement - the Communists and Social Democrats - and the national liberation movements all seemed to accomplish the first step of the two-step strategy. The Communists came to state power in the East, the so-called socialist bloc. The Social Democrats (under multiple labels) came to power in the West, the pan-European world. To be sure, it was 'alternating' power, but alternating power in regimes in which the conservative parties accepted the basic programme of the social-democrats, the welfare state. And the national liberation movements came to power in the South - in colonies that became independent states, in semi-colonial countries where more militantly nationalist regimes came to power, and in Latin America where more populist regimes came to power.

So what had seemed so difficult to imagine in the last third of the nineteenth century - the coming to power of the Old Left movements - actually occurred quite rapidly and dramatically in the post-1945 period. Step one of their strategy was achieved. But what about step two - transforming the world ? The multiple movements we lump together under the label of the world-revolution of 1968 (which actually took place between 1966 and 1970) were all about step two. They said to the Old Left movements, 'You may have come to power but you have definitely not transformed the world. There are still great economic inequalities. The new regimes are not in fact democratic. There is still a class system, perhaps under different names such as Nomenklatura. And the supposed champion of world anti-capitalist revolution, the USSR, is in collusive partnership with the world's hegemonic power, the champion of world

capitalism, the USA'.

Just as in 1848, so in 1968, the revolutionary movements had some initial political successes in many parts of the world, but were quashed soon thereafter. However, there was one extremely important consequence of the world-revolution of 1968. The ability of centrist liberals to hold both the conservative right and the radical left forces in check as their avatars collapsed. The world-system became once again the arena of three competing ideologies. Both the left and the right were liberated to be what they had set out to be in the wake of the French Revolution.

II

The WSF

If we wish to understand the dilemmas of the WSF therefore, we must start by realising that in this transformed situation post 1968, the revitalised conservatives were at first far more politically successful. What we today call 'neo-liberalism' is really aggressive rightwing conservatism. This form of aggressive right came to political power in Great Britain in 1979 when Margaret Thatcher became the Prime Minister and in the United States in 1980, with the election of Ronald Reagan. Both transformed first their political parties and then their country's economic and social policies.

The key programmatic change that Thatcher and Reagan led was embodied both in the new discourse of 'globalisation' and also in the new set of global policies that we have come to call the Washington Consensus. In the world economic stagnation that began in the 1970s, country after country ran into suffering from balance of payments deficits. And when they sought relief, the IMF - with the strong support of the US Treasury - imposed on these countries the requirements of so-called structural adjustment. Structural adjustment meant renouncing import substitution as a policy in favour of export-oriented production. It meant reducing the size of the civil service, undoing what welfare state provisions a country had in place, privatising state enterprises, and allowing free movement of capital in and out of the country. Mrs Thatcher said there was no alternative - the famous TINA - but of course there was no alternative precisely because of the strong hand of the IMF.

What we have to remember is that it was not only the South that suffered these drastic conditions but much of the so-called socialist bloc which also needed to borrow money on the world financial market. The net result was the collapse of most Old Left governments both in the South and the East, as a result of popular anger over their economic suffering, culminating in the disintegration of the USSR in 1991.

The world Right proclaimed victory - the presumed victory of the United States in the cold war, the presumed victory of capitalism over socialism as an economic programme. Neither victory was to prove more than an illusion, but the illusion was widespread in the early 1990s, and one result was enormous disarray among left forces throughout the world. The Old Left had been routed by the world-revolutionaries of 1968, and their movements were forced from state power in the 1980s because of their inability to sustain the economic position of their citizens. The resurgent neoliberal Right acclaimed itself a historical 'victor' in 1989-1991. And large numbers of Left leaders, intellectuals, and followers despondently believed they were correct.

What kind of strategy could now rescue the world Left ? The gloom of the world Left did not last too long, as the world's peoples saw that the promises of the world Right of renewed prosperity were vapid, if not totally dishonest. A counter-offensive of the world Left began in the mid-1990s with three formative events : The neo-Zapatista uprising in Chiapas in 1994; the successful demonstrations at the Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organisation in Seattle in 1999; and the founding meeting of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2001. It is the different lessons of these three events that explain the conflicts about strategy within the WSF

and more generally within the world movement for social justice. It is by reviewing the message of the three events that we can clarify what kind of overall strategy might actually work in the next decade or two.

Before, however, I outline what I think are the strategic choices we are making, I must intrude one important assumption which others may or may not share. I believe that the capitalist world-economy is in its terminal phase, faced with a structural crisis that it cannot contain, and that therefore the question before everyone is not whether or not the present system will survive but what kind of system will replace it. I do not have space here to explain this assumption. I refer readers to two places where I have outlined my views in greater detail - an article in the *New Left Review* in 2010 and a book written in 1998.²

The key relevance of this assumption, in discussing future strategy for the world Left, is that capitalism as a historical system cannot survive and will disappear in the next 20-50 years. That seems to be certain. But what will succeed it is totally uncertain and inherently unpredictable. We have entered a phase of historic transformation that takes the form of a bifurcation, that is, a 'choice' between two alternative modes of bringing order out of chaos, thereby constructing a new, relatively stable world-system (or multiple world-systems). I call this choice one between the spirit of Davos and the spirit of Porto Alegre.

The spirit of Davos refers to those who wish to replace the existing capitalist world-system with a different one that retains its three essential characteristics : Hierarchy, exploitation, and polarisation. There are many ways to achieve this that are not capitalist. The spirit of Porto Alegre refers to those who want another world that is possible, that is, one that is relatively democratic and relatively egalitarian.

III

Lessons

Let us now look at the lessons we have drawn from what I think of as the three formative events - Chiapas, Seattle, and Porto Alegre in 2001. The neo-Zapatistas launched their struggle against US imperialism (embodied in the NAFTA agreements) and the Mexican state by fighting for the right of the peoples of Chiapas to control their own lives under their own institutions. They demanded that the Mexican state withdraw its army from the region and recognise their local institutions as having juridical primacy.

It is important to underline what they did not demand. They did not ask to take power in the Mexican state. Instead, they offered their support to all movements and peoples throughout Mexico and throughout the entire world that fought for their autonomy and their right to follow their own paths. They built their movement, the EZLN, around the principle of *mandar obediendo* ('lead by obeying') - a concept intended to constrain the leadership to be followers, not the avant-garde.

What the neo-Zapatistas started has bloomed into a panoply of strong movements among the so-called indigenous peoples of all the Americas, and indeed beyond the Americas - movements that speak the language of a civilisational crisis, movements deeply suspicious of the revival of Old Left modes of operation, movements however that seek lateral ties with other comparable local movements and peoples everywhere.³

The lessons of Seattle are quite different. The Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organisation was intended to be the one in which the principle of guaranteeing intellectual property rights would be adopted by the member states of the WTO and therefore end, or at least constrain, the ability of states in the global South to interfere with the trade dominance of the large multinational corporations in all those fields in which they had obtained patents. In a sense, this was to be the capstone of the Washington Consensus, and the world's dominant forces thought that this treaty was a sure thing to be enacted.

To their surprise, the WTO meeting was met with popular demonstrations of a massive

sort, which brought together in a common objective - stop the meeting - three widely different popular forces that had hitherto been unwilling to cooperate with each other : Radical anarchists, trade-unionists, and environmentalists. What surprised everyone was that those who were demonstrating were very largely from the United States (not the usual source of radical demonstrations) and that, despite the different priorities of the three groups, their de facto collaboration was successful.

The demonstrators in effect brought the meeting to a halt. The WTO never adopted the treaty on intellectual property rights, and has never since been able to resume effective functioning as an international institution. The demonstrators had won. The lesson was that collective political action can work. This sort of action was then successfully repeated at a number of other international meetings in the next few years, until the organisers of these meetings realised they had to locate their meetings in remote corners of the world where police could block the very access of the protestors to the sites. Protest had sent the world's dominant forces into well-defended ghettos, somewhat akin to the Green Zone the US military found it necessary to establish in Baghdad.

The message of Seattle is the one that has been persistently put forth within the WSF by those who have called for the concentration on direct political action - as the only efficacious method to move towards that other world that is possible.

The last formative event was the initial meeting of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2001. One of the facts that impelled the convening of the WSF was the lesson drawn from the counter-reaction of the world right to Seattle. The attempt of groups to demonstrate at the Davos meeting in 2000 was in effect derailed by the actions of the Swiss government to block access to the country and the site of potential demonstrators.

A group of Brazilian left organisations and a spirited group of French activists organised under the banner of ATTAC-France came up with the idea that instead of demonstrating at the Davos meeting, they should hold a counter-meeting at the same time as Davos, locate this counter-meeting somewhere in the global South, and invite the world's social movements to attend. This came in 2001 to be the first meeting of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. It was called the World Social Forum to mark its opposition to the World Economic Forum, the official name of the meeting at Davos.

The initial meeting of the WSF proclaimed itself open to all those were opposed to neoliberal globalisation and imperialism in all its forms. Porto Alegre turned out to be a great success, far beyond what had been anticipated. Twice as many people came as were expected. The world's press took note of it. Many political, intellectual, and movement notables attended. Participants were enthusiastic. To be sure, the attendance was geographically a bit lopsided - primarily persons from the southern cone of Latin America and from France and Italy. But attendance would begin to broaden as of the second WSF. What the first WSF had demonstrated was that the forum model of horizontal discussion among the movements worked and had positive political consequences.

IV

Conclusions

So what can we learn from the impact of these three formative events, which were exemplary moments ? We learn from Chiapas that an organisational process that gave priority to civilisational change and rejected seeking state power works. We learn from Seattle that organised political demonstrations that bring together various movements in direct political action works. We learn from the first WSF that horizontal debate among vastly different movements that are left-of-centre works. All three are contradictory modes of action work.

What I conclude from these lessons is that it is not only possible to move forward with all these methods simultaneously but that it is imperative to do so if we are to have a real

impact on the choice of a new historical social system, one that is truly better than our present one. What we have to do is not to choose among these three organisational tactics but rather to figure out how we can in practice do all of them at the same time. I do not think this is a fantasy, but I concede that it is very difficult.

There is one last element to put into the picture of developing a strategy of change. That element is time scale. All humans operate on a dual time scale - the immediate future (three years at most) and the middle term (say twenty to fifty years). Individuals, families, communities must all survive in the immediate present. No one can afford merely to wait for middle-term change. And in the immediate present, what takes priority, especially in a time of chaotic transformation, is minimising the pain. Movements that do not participate in the short-run struggle to minimise the pain will find no resonance - should find no resonance - in the world's population at large.

Minimising the pain in the short run is a game of constantly changing political alliances, which always amount to choosing the lesser evil. To be sure, we have to choose wisely, but there is no way we can choose other than the lesser evil if we wish to minimise the pain. Purist preferences are what Lenin justly denounced as "infantile leftism".⁴

However, the choice is completely different in the middle run. In the middle run, there are no compromises, only choices. There can be no 'dialogue' between the advocates of the spirit of Porto Alegre and the spirit of Davos. There is only struggle. So the next part of our tactics is learning how to combine the short-term tactics of the lesser evil with the middle-term tactics of total commitment to a fundamentally different and far better historical system than the one we have now. Capitalism cannot be reformed, and in any case will not survive. We need a relatively democratic and relatively egalitarian world, and this is the opposite of what the advocates of the spirit of Davos really want, even those who seem most ready to use 'progressive' terminology.

If the question is whether the World Social Forum as an institution will continue to be the principal framework for the world movement for social justice and a better historical system, my answer is that I am not sure. It is however the best framework we have at present. And I for one think we should continue to try to use it. If however in several years it is not functioning - because it has not learned how to combine the three different tactics and priorities - then we may have to create an alternative. Let us first however make the effort to realise the fusion of the three seemingly contradictory tactics and priorities.

Notes

1 Marx, 1999 [1852].

2 Wallerstein, March-April 2010, and Wallerstein, 1998.

3 *Eds* : For detailed discussions of this blossoming, see the essays in the companion volumes to this book by Alex Khasnabish and by Xochitl Leyva Solano (Khasnabish, forthcoming (2013) and Leyva Solano, forthcoming (2013).

4 Lenin 1964 [1920].



Introduction

'Another World Is Possible !' : Critical Explorations Of The World Social Forum And The Dreams It Has Inspired

Jai Sen

I

This book, at this point in time : An introduction to this Introduction

This book, and the trilogy to which it belongs, is especially for younger people, and for the enquiring mind, whichever country you happen to be in on Mother Earth, whatever you think of politics and social issues, and whatever the colour of your skin. It is about nothing less than changing the world for the good.

(If you find you like it, please feel free to make use of all the material here (except those essays marked 'restricted') – to copy and circulate it, to discuss it, to re-publish it, keeping only in mind our publisher's license policy.)

More precisely, this book is not so much about actually changing the world for the good as about 'critically' – carefully – looking at and thinking through one very major continuing attempt to do so, the World Social Forum, and to see what we can learn from it – and perhaps even to take part in it in an informed, critical way. Doing this is very necessary at this time in history – and indeed, and not to overstate things, perhaps even in the history of humankind and of our planet.

Why is doing this so important, and at this time ? Because, on the one hand, we have entered and are living through a period of great challenge and great change, and on the other, because the World Social Forum (WSF) is quite widely thought of – and projected as – as being a highly significant initiative in trying to understand and address this moment and to do something positive about it.

Not only are we living through a period of great challenge and change however, but if present trends continue – as everything suggests they will -, this challenge and change is only going to greatly intensify over the very foreseeable future : Over the next few decades, or in other words within the lifetimes of those who are younger today. We all need urgently to learn how to cope with this change.

We already live in a world where in most societies, both in the 'North' and the 'South',¹ patriarchy, racism, casteism, ableism, and internal and external colonialism continue to discriminate against huge sections of peoples across the world and inflict massive violence on them, and where anthropocentrism - a macho, selfish concern for the interests of mankind alone and a disregard for all other forms of life - has led to the rape and devastation of our planet itself, which many cultures in the world continue to regard as noone less than Mother Earth.² In addition however, we today live in a context where capitalism, militarism, and authoritarianism have created conditions where there are opportunities for a few to get immensely rich and powerful (and to also have the power of the state to protect them), but increasingly unbearable conditions for the majority of the world that is still poor - and that is being kept in a state of impoverishment; and, increasingly, precarity for those who fall in-between. The hope that capitalism – in its current form, of neoliberalism – once hung out for the middle classes (of, if nothing else, material prosperity and the pleasures of consumption) is already disintegrating in many parts of the world; just look at the disintegrating conditions today in what have so far been called the 'advanced' parts, such Europe and North America. Far from tending towards greater equality and security – which is what the proponents of neoliberalism like to pretend -, social and economic conditions across the world have been

sharply tending towards greater inequality and precarity over the past two decades, precisely because of the so-called 'globalisation' that has been forced upon the world by neoliberalism, in both 'the South' and 'the North'.

But if other (and related) present projections hold true, this situation is also going to only intensify over the next decades. There is now so much to suggest that we have – in addition to the economic crisis that is continuing to ripple across the globe - already entered a process of intensifying non-linear climate change worldwide, precipitated by the ravages of over-exploitation, and where this will bring enormous and historically unprecedented, unknown, pressures on societies worldwide.³ If this picture is at all accurate, then the challenge and the change we are today seeing will only hugely deepen. As thinking, sentient beings, we badly need and want to understand this emerging situation, and as a part of this, also to assess carefully and understand, at this time in history, not only what is coming but also what is being done in these times in the name of changing the world for the good.

An important part of this challenge and change and of the struggle for doing good – but where 'good' is defined differently by different people -, and in many places greatly contributing greatly to it, is the social and political movement that we are today seeing around us in many, and perhaps in most, parts of the world; not one 'movement' but heavings - great, surging movement/s – in societies right across the world. Today, perhaps, nowhere are things still.⁴ The World Social Forum is a part of this heaving, this movement.

By 'movement' however, I am referring not only to how the term is normally used, and to what most social and political scientists - and most social and political activists – tend to refer to : Relatively organised and articulated expressions of social and political desire, usually taking an organisational form, with a name. This is movement, certainly, but in addition, I am also referring to the surging and heaving that takes place in the bodies of societies in the throes of change. Even if this is not always clearly visible or understandable and therefore not yet named or nameable, this too is 'movement' – but in the generic sense of something moving, or in motion; in a sense, biological movements (and convulsions) within the bodies of societies, or what we might see as bio-cultural or bio-political movements. This kind of movement usually has a range of shared or overlapping values and desires (and where different sections may have different and even conflicting aims) but initially anyway is not visible as an 'organised', articulated movement but more as seemingly disparate irruptions over time.

Seeing movement in this way, there have of course been many great movements in history – such as what in time became the struggle for civil rights in the US, and the women's movement in so many societies across the world, and that has also been behind much peasant movement throughout history.⁵ But arguably, it has perhaps never taken place at the scale at which it seems to be becoming visible today, across the world. Today, it seems as if the world itself is in movement.⁶ As it is, indeed...

Pushing further, it can also be argued that we have now additionally entered a stage where 'sea shifts' are taking place, or beginning to take place, in what 'movements' – both the articulated and un- or less articulated – for social justice and good are doing and in how they are relating to each other, locally, within national societies, across long-standing borders (both political and conceptual), and across the world; and maybe even tectonic shifts, in the sense that the ground beneath the oceans of movement itself seem today to be moving. And moreover where we are – arguably - only at the very beginning of these world-shifting changes, and where we are likely to see changes over this next decade or so that we can only barely imagine today.⁷

It is quite commonly argued in our times that these shifts (and some like to say, the movements themselves) are taking place because of the astonishing new information and communication technologies that we today have – mobiles, social networking, and so on. There

is no question that these technologies have transformed – and as new technologies are relentlessly brought onto the market, are continuing to transform – the infrastructure for enquiring and learning about the world, for communicating, and for managing our lives, and so also our relations with each other and the world. This is only a part of the picture in terms of what is happening today, however. While the technologies are certainly playing vital roles, the movements that are welling up are doing so – I suggest - both because of the objective conditions that people are facing (and that, as above, are getting more and more intense) and also because of the ways that people are now perceiving their situations and the opportunities available to them : The completely new possibilities that now exist for individuals to comprehend, organise, and manage their lives. If we also take this into account, then the technologies can be seen to be therefore both augmenting and amplifying their – our ? - primal scream of ‘**NO !**’ and also bringing birth to this new, interconnected world, which is – I suggest - emerging as what is today, in some circles, called an ‘emergent’ reality : A self-informing, self-organising life.⁸

Complementing this, I suggest - in an essay in this book and in other writing elsewhere⁹ - that this shift may also be taking place because of innate, organic sensibilities and tendencies that we have, as living beings, of what is going on in our world, and where we are, in our different ways in different places, both crossing critical limits and also developing a new interconnected, organic comprehensions of the world around us. At a time when there are intense struggles breaking out in most parts of the world, in many ways and at many levels we are, perhaps, truly becoming ‘world-conscious’ inhabitants of our home, this planet, this world,¹⁰ and we are perhaps moving into a phase of, more literally, world struggle.

As a contribution to this thinking, I have also tried to specifically pose the question of whether it is possible that the social and political ‘movements’ we are seeing – the heaving and the swelling, the cresting in different forms and around different issues - are, at root, the surface manifestations of deeper biological processes (or more precisely perhaps, bio-cultural processes) ?¹¹ Where we begin to perceive ‘movement’ not as individual, isolated actions or processes but in a Gaian sense, as a dense but intensely fluid layer of interconnected movements – sometimes converging, sometimes crossing and conflicting - that today, powered both by information and communication technologies and by morphic resonance, span the globe ?¹² Like, indeed, the oceans, and the air we breathe ?

This is not the place to develop this idea further, but this perception opens the possibility of entirely new and different understandings of organisation, order, society, power, and beauty, as well as the idea that the ‘movements’ we are seeing are organic and generic processes, a part of life and of Mother Earth herself, and not separate from her.

We are perhaps still too early into this to know how things are going to work out, but certainly, it does seem that the world, perhaps even after just another ten years, is not going to be the same as the one we know today : Because of the objective changes taking place, but also because of these movements.

Many social and political thinkers have argued that it was inevitable that this scale of change would take place, because of internal contradictions within particular societies and more broadly within capitalism as a world system; and at the world level there have been moments in recent history - 1967-68 comes most quickly to mind – when this seemed to almost be the case.¹³ But those moments seem almost to pale in comparison to what we are experiencing today, and even more so, to what seems to be coming.

The subject of this book, the World Social Forum, has been given shape during this period and is a part of all this. I would therefore like to invite you to see and read the essays in this book – and indeed, all the three books in this informal trilogy (more on this below) - in these terms, and to look at the World Social Forum not as a distinct phenomenon but

generically as movement, within worlds that are today in intense movement.

II

Who I am / Where this is coming from

For an introduction such as this, and to a book (and book project) such as this, it is probably useful for me to also introduce and situate myself - in relation to the book, and in relation to the subject of the book, the World Social Forum. In short, I am not a disinterested observer, nor a 'scholar' (understood in the sense of a well-informed person who seeks to document, report on, and analyse what she sees and understands, in a necessarily somewhat detached manner). Rather, I have been deeply involved in social movement and in the WSF, as a participant, organiser, and commentator, and have for some time been trying to nurture transnational and transcommunal exchange and reflection on it, and therefore have a quite subjective and committed position on it.¹⁴

After a wandering career as architect and urban planner, then as community organiser, movement strategist, and campaignist (and as an architect radically re-educated by this experience), I moved in the 1990s to trying my hand in research into the dynamics of movement, in part as therapy after getting burned out as an activist but also as a hopeful contribution to movement. A decade later, I learned of the WSF soon after it had started, got interested in it, and wrote on it – based on my research and on my prior experience as a movement strategist -, and was, I think because of this, invited to join the process that was then beginning in India, which I did. After briefly being Co-Convenor of the WSF India Preparatory Committee, also co-representing the nascent process on the WSF's International Council, and then being a member of the WSF India Organising Committee, I dropped out of the formal, organisational WSF India - and therefore also the global WSF – processes partly because of a tragedy in my life but more because I was a misfit there and felt I could contribute more to the WSF from outside.¹⁵

I have since then written widely on it, edited books on it, and organised debate around it, initially as a member of a correspondence collective named 'Critical Action' and then from 2005 on as a member of CACIM (www.cacim.net). I therefore do what I do not as a scholar, or even as a 'scholar activist', but – as is perhaps evident from what I have said – as someone who is trying to understand and communicate how things work and so to help them work better; and in this case, to help encourage critical reflection and action within the WSF process.

What I try to say in this Introduction therefore, and indeed also in my contributions to conceptualising and editing this book, naturally draws on my work in organising, listening, editing, and writing - and from what my friends and fellow-travellers Lee Cormie and John Brown Childs have reminded me is a privileged vantage point, of having been located in the South, at the crossroads of several networked (and transcommunal, transnational) dialogues, burgeoning solidarity, and expanding collaboration, at an extraordinary moment in history. And perhaps largely as a result of this, this book – and the book project of which it is a part (more on this too, below) – is somewhat chaotic and emergent, just as the WSF itself is!¹⁶

Finally, my demographic coordinates – my being from India, an important if sometimes overbearing part of the political 'South', where I was born and have spent the past forty years of my life; of my being immersed in movement there for most of this time; as well as now being an older, middle-upper caste and class, relatively cosmopolitan male who grew up in the famous 60s and has spent most of his life in India but also important, formative parts of it in Britain and in Canada, in the North. All this has surely had its own strong influence.

Read on...

III

Movements today

The present phase of movement is perhaps best known today – at least, in the 'west' and North; perhaps somewhat less so in the South – in terms of the struggles that irrupted so dramatically across north Africa and in west Asia in 2011,¹⁷ the struggles in Greece, the actions of the *indignados* – the indignants - in Spain¹⁸ (which were the precursors of the better-known Occupy movement), and the Occupy movement¹⁹ that has taken shape across Turtle Island²⁰ and Europe during 2011; and also, perhaps, for a while during the same year, the massive so-called 'anti-corruption' movement in India.²¹ Is it just a coincidence that all this, and so much more, happened in this one year?

But – and without in any way lessening the commitment and the achievements of these struggles – it is vitally important for us to also clearly and frontally recognise that while the movement themselves are a function of worsening conditions that people across the world are facing, as referred to above, and of 'our' increasing comprehension as human beings of our common global condition, the widespread recognition and public knowledge of these movements that exists today has in large part been a function of the attention that mainstream, corporate media have given to them. And second, and more crucially, that the corporate media has also given these movements their attention precisely because for the first time after a long time it was the middle sections of society that had become indignant and outraged. We are now in a new situation in history, where the middle classes – who are the consuming sections of society that all big business feeds and depends on - and especially

younger adults have now been driven to economic precarity and desperation by crony dictatorships and democracies and by neoliberalism and its repeated 'crises'; and where they too, outraged by seeing how the rich continue to feed off the crises that have driven them to this condition, have now finally taken a position and also risen in protest, both in the South and in the North.

But the key point here is that in doing so, they have in reality – and in history – now only joined working and labouring classes and castes, and peoples of colour all over the world, whose entire history – and being - has been and is one of resistance and struggle against this injustice.

In the case of the Occupy Wall Street movement in the US, for instance :

When people gathered in Zuccotti Park on September 17 [2011], the anger at corporate greed was a unifying call. This was a protest that in large part was about shifting power from the wealthy to the many. It was a mostly white crowd, but it sought to incorporate a wide range of voices.

The economic crisis in the US had made the white middle class question their future. Soaring unemployment rates, suffocating student loan debt, and thousands of foreclosures began to close in. This reality propelled the Occupy movement forward. And many feel that the presence of so many relatively privileged white people brought increased media attention and public sympathy.

Organizers told us they immediately saw the next step as needing to raise awareness among the many young people new to activism that came flocking to occupations. "It's the job of the social justice movement to continue that conversation," says Max Rameau, a co-founder of Take Back the Land, who has advised many of the Occupies. He told us that occupiers need to "make sure this isn't just a movement of the way white people have gone from being able to every day shop at particular malls, and now they have to shop at reduced, discount stores ... this has to do, really, about inequality and long-term inequality, including communities who have suffered for years, not just because of the recent economic downturn."

Jack Bryson, a 49-year-old Black public service worker, became an activist after his sons witnessed the killing of their friend Oscar Grant at the hands of transit police in Oakland. When he heard that Occupy Oakland had named their camp Oscar Grant Plaza, he came to check it out. He was excited by what he found, but also thought many young white activists he met had a lot to learn about poverty and repression. "The black community, for 400 years, [have] always been the 99 per cent," Bryson said. "Welcome to our world."²²

And as actor and film director Aamir Khan's moving film Peepli Live, set in India, shows so artfully yet mockingly, the tragic life and death struggles of working and labouring classes never get this kind of attention from the media unless there is something in it for them.²³

No less important and deep therefore, in what we are witnessing, are the much less known but sustained and more everyday struggles of ordinary peoples, across the planet : Of immigrants and immigrant workers in France, Britain, across Europe and in the USA (and not to forget those in the oil-rich countries of the Middle East); of shack dwellers in South Africa, Brazil, and India – and in all cities of Africa, Latin America, and Asia; of indigenous peoples in Abya Yala,²⁴ Turtle Island, Siberia, Asia, Oceania, Australia, and Aotearoa;²⁵ of dalits, forest-dwellers, fisherfolk, artisans, and peasants everywhere; of women, throughout history and in all societies; and of gay, lesbian, and other people of other sexualities, across the world.

As André Drainville has shown so beautifully, our world is given order not only from 'above' – by corporations and the state, and by organised religion – which is what we are normally taught to believe, but also, and many ways far more profoundly, by the everyday struggles of ordinary peoples everywhere and by their encounters with the powers from above.²⁶ People everywhere are struggling against injustice. It is therefore also important to recognise and remind ourselves, as Firoze Manji has written, that while what is happening in north Africa is certainly extremely important, the current phase of struggle in and for Africa is also manifested by struggles that are and have for some time been going on right across the continent for quite some time now :

.... There have also been protests, strikes and other actions in Western Sahara, Zimbabwe, Senegal, Gabon, Sudan, Mauritania, Morocco, Madagascar, Mozambique, Algeria, Benin, Cameroon, Djibouti, Côte d'Ivoire, Burkina Faso, Botswana, Namibia, Uganda, Kenya, Swaziland, South Africa, Malawi and Uganda. Many of these uprisings have

These movements might be at different stages of maturity, and are of different shapes and sizes and intentions, but what is important to keep in mind is that all this is happening, simultaneously, in our times. And that what is happening in Africa today is equally the case for all the other continents – both of the so-called ‘South’ and ‘North’. Today, and in recent years, there are also intense struggles going on across Abya Yala (in Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, and Mexico, to name just a few countries), in Asia (Bangladesh, Burma, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Tibet, and increasingly visibly now in China), and in Oceania; and also in Russia and on Turtle Island.

As Ronaldo Munck argues so powerfully in his essay in this book, and in full form in his own book, in a Polanyian sense what is happening today can be seen as the great “counter-movement” to the changes that have been wrought across the world by capital and neo-colonialism over the past half century and longer.²⁸ The question before us today however is whether under the historically new conditions that are emerging – on account of the climate crisis; given the unprecedented new technological possibilities that today exist in terms of information and communications; and given also, as I suggest, the innate bio-cultural tendencies of human beings –, whether counter-movement itself is not now moving into a new stage.

IV

The Challenging Empires series, the present set of three books, and this book This brings us to the World Social Forum, to this book and to the trilogy of which it is a part, and to the series of which all three are part, at this juncture in history. In this section and the ones following it, I attempt to summarise the book/s and our political and pedagogical intentions, as editors.

The World Social Forum²⁹ is a movement that became visible in 2001. (A great deal has now been written on the WSF – see below – so this is going to be only a brief introduction.) It started with a meeting held in a city in south-eastern Brazil, Porto Alegre, in January 2001, to challenge neoliberalism and its central idea that ‘the economy’ and ‘the market’ were and must be central to all development, and to put forward the idea that it is ‘the social’ that must be central. Accordingly, it was called the ‘World **Social** Forum’, in direct opposition to the so-called ‘World Economic Forum’ that is organised each January in Switzerland (in Davos, a remote and elite ski resort) as an exclusive meeting among transnational corporations and select government leaders to advance their project of giving order to the world, and which in many ways has come in our times to challenge multilateral bodies such as the UN and to symbolise the neoliberal project. The WSF was accordingly, and very deliberately, held during the very same days as the WEF – but in ‘the South’ and not in the North, and organised very differently, as a relatively free and open meeting.

As discussed by Sonia Alvarez in her great essay in this book,³⁰ over these subsequent years the WSF has travelled widely and has grown into a worldwide phenomenon, with dozens of ‘WSF-related’ meetings now taking place every year in different parts of the world, in all attracting hundreds of thousands of people each year – mostly younger people. The slogan that the architects and organisers of the WSF adopted for it in 2002 was ‘Another World Is Possible !’. As Boaventura de Sousa Santos has pointed out, this is a subtle but powerfully infectious flash of a thought that suggests all sorts of possibilities³¹ – and given how commonly different variations of this slogan are now visible across the world and in so many different spheres of life, this slogan clearly indeed seems to have resonated very widely with all kinds of people and institutions, and perhaps especially within movements.³²

(But this very fact however – of how successfully this idea of ‘another world’ being ‘possible’ has spread – is itself something that needs to be examined and thought about; just

what have been the consequences of the spread of this idea ? What does it actually mean, and what has it meant in practice ? And crucially, what influence has it – and the WSF - had on movements emerging during the past decade, since it was announced ?)³³

Over this past decade since I was formed, the WSF has grown - to use a term that social philosophers and scientists have borrowed from the biological sciences - 'rhizomatically',³⁴ like the roots of a tree, and where its roots and branches have spread out from Brazil, both under the surface of what we can see and also arching above us as part of the worldwide growth of movement in this time, and irrupted as myriad plants and trees across the world. What is today visible locally in different places is therefore biologically linked to all other such manifestations elsewhere, and where to some extent it is all growing together (along of course, with some of the plants dying out, as is only natural, depending on local conditions).³⁵ The tree that is the WSF today therefore has roots in many places, and at least as perceived in any given location, it has no single 'trunk' or centre anymore; in many ways, it is like the proverbial banyan tree, a extraordinary tree that spreads itself across a huge area, dropping roots from its branches as it grows that in turn become trunks and that nurtures all kinds of life.

This phenomenon – this worldwide tree, this worldwide forest - is considered by some, even many, observers (and also of course, by the founders of the WSF) to be an extraordinary contribution to incubating and encouraging the movements for social justice and democratisation that we see irrupting around us in the world today. It has therefore widely attracted not only social and political activists and their organisations to take part in it but also research scholars to study it, and a great deal has now been published on it, especially by scholars.³⁶

There is no question that all this discussion has added richly to our understanding of the WSF. But aside from the observations I make in the last footnote on what has so far been published (that so far, most of it has so far been by authors from the North, published in the North, and by scholars or scholar-activists), two other points perhaps bears mentioning, in this regard : One, that most of what has been published so far has tended to look at the WSF as a somewhat singular phenomenon, unrelated to other contemporary movement; in a way, as a singular tree. And second, precisely because it has been studied and projected so widely in this way however, and precisely because the WSF itself has become so prominent, this lens also tends to strongly influence how we see other movements taking place in the world today.

Keeping this in mind, and also the intense debate that has taken place about the WSF over the past some years both within it and among others outside it, this book – and especially when read together with the others in the trilogy to which it belongs - is intended both as a contribution towards a closer, deeper, and critical understanding of the WSF as such (and, for those who wish to, for also critically engaging with it and taking part in it) - and also towards a wider, more nuanced, and more plural understanding of the WSF as one among the many other movements taking place in the world today; and more generically, of movements and changes in our world today. A glance at the Table of Contents will give you an idea of what I mean.

On the one hand, and most obviously, this book is a direct sequel to a book that my co-editor Peter Waterman and I, along with Anita Anand and Arturo Escobar, brought out in 2004, World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (and also its second edition, brought out in 2009)³⁷ Like this one, those books also tried to unwrap and make visible and comprehensible the extraordinary phenomenon that we could see was then already unfolding in front of us.

On the other, and as already mentioned above, this book is also one of the three complementary books – an informal trilogy – that we are presently editing, all with these objectives : Of opening up social movements taking place in the world today – in the wider sense of 'movement' - and of engaging critically and carefully with them. This first one, focussed on the World Social Forum, will be accompanied within a short while by The

Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds, which - rather than focussing only on any one movement - attempts to create space for conversations across several significant streams of world movement : Feminisms, faith (or faith communities) in movement, the so-called 'global justice movements', movements among indigenous peoples, and others. By doing this, it will try to allow and help the reader both to read across movement and also, perhaps, to discern patterns across movement – for instance, to see how movements that otherwise seem to be very different are, in some ways, so similar - and so to begin to build, if they so wish, their own understandings and 'theories' of movement.

Complementing this attempt of ours to contribute to deepening conversations across movements, our publisher, OpenWord, plans also to make its website available to all its contributors in ways that they themselves can – as individuals - also open online conversations on their work, with other contributors and/or with other communities of interest – including, in principle, with readers.

The third book of the present set of three, and as of the time of writing tentatively titled Worlds in Movement : New Movement, New Politics, will continue this project of creating space for conversations across movement. But while including some writings by scholars and scholar activists, the normal producers of knowledge about movements, that book will be marked by a shift to a focus on writings produced from the ground – by activists from within contemporary movement and churning across the world - in an ambitious attempt to draw theory from conversations about practice. Here again, while we are inviting contributors to draw their own conclusions and theories from their experiences, we are hoping that readers will also do this, and so make it – and the book project – a participatory exercise (and where our publisher OpenWord's plans, as above, will again strongly complement this).

In addition to being a trilogy, these three new books will also constitute Volumes 3, 4, and 5 in a series that we as editors have collectively titled *Challenging Empires* – and where we consider our 2004 and 2009 books as Volumes 1 and 2 in the series.

V

The history of this project, the structure of this book

Over the years, several generous commentators have said to us as editors that the publication of World Social Forum : Challenging Empires in 2004 heralded a new phase in the life of the WSF, and contributed strongly to a wave of more critical reflection on and engagement with the initiative at a stage when it was still a relatively new phenomenon. Given the evident significance and yet complexity of the WSF, those of us who were involved in preparing that book - Peter Waterman and myself, along with Arturo Escobar and Anita Anand³⁸ – had specifically wanted, at that stage, to contribute to such reflections, and we were of course only very happy that the book came to be so well received in these terms. And we were made only more so first when fellow travellers in several countries approached us to prepare and publish translations, and when those in Germany, Japan, and Spain succeeded in doing so;³⁹ and then also when Black Rose Books, an international publisher experienced in publishing books (in English) on and from within movement and with a great book list, invited us in 2006-7 to put together a second and substantially revised and updated edition of the original book, which – as mentioned - came out in 2008-9.⁴⁰

Encouraged by all of this, Peter Waterman and I embarked - at more or less the same time, 2006-7 - on conceptualising a sequel to our 2004 book. The book project we embarked on back then, however, did not turn out quite as we had expected. There were many reasons for this, some of which unfolded only over time. On the one hand, it was a period of tremendous development within the WSF. The globalisation of the idea – which was always the objective of its originators – had started taking place at a dramatic pace, generating intense new experiences and perceptions as well as severe contradictions.

Even as this was taking place, intense discussion broke out within the WSF at precisely that time, 2006-7, about the future of the initiative. This was precipitated first by the publication in 2006 of a major manifesto by a group led by Samir Amin, an eminent political economist heading an influential member of the WSF's International Council,⁴¹ and then by a short, sharp essay in 2007 by Walden Bello, another leading intellectual within the WSF and heading another influential and active member organisation - within the WSF and outside.⁴²

On the other hand, that was also the period of a dramatic increase in world public consciousness of and concern about climate change and the looming threat to planet earth, which was only accentuated by the devastating effects of the financial bubble that burst in the USA in 2007, that both revealed the depth of corruption that existed in the heart of empire and also rippled across the world; and it was also the period when a less-known country named Bolivia suddenly emerged on the world stage, with its philosophy of *buen vivir* ('living well', in the sense of being in harmony), as the spokesperson for all those who were concerned about the state of the world in all these terms.⁴³ And where these were just two crests in the much larger swell that suddenly became evident in the world around us – the continuing and intensifying 'war against terror' being one more, and the rising resistance to it around the world yet another.

Both my co-editor Peter Waterman and I live in this wider world, and – in large part as an attempt to read and to make the book project we were working on a part of the currents of the intensifying movements we were living through - our project progressively expanded and developed, and in time came to take the shape of three books, not one, and covering a far broader landscape than the WSF alone; as outlined above. The project grew as the WSF grew and globalised, and as discussions around it intensified, and as an ever wider range of people took part in the discussions. All of this conspired to constantly challenge us to reconceptualise the book and the book project. As Lee Cormie has remarked, this book – and this project – has in a way become a living example of the "ecology of knowledges" that WSF scholar Boaventura de Sousa Santos has written about;⁴⁴ and in a way, this character and nature was perhaps almost contained within such a project, and especially when undertaken at such a time in world history.

As we attempted to both address emerging realities and also conceptualise the books to address the objectives and orientations we had set for ourselves at the outset (I come to these below), we attempted many different permutations and combinations of the material we progressively collected – so far, over a hundred essays, out of the many hundreds we have been through, written by authors from all over the world, and coming from many different cultural and political backgrounds. Starting with a first preference to locate the WSF within the larger universe of movement (and at that point, with only one book in mind), we finally opted for a concept that looks at the three books as a set – almost a kind of trilogy – and within this, this book that looks specifically at the WSF and the other two that look at the wider worlds of movement and where the WSF appears there only as one context, one manifestation, one world, among many, in what might be a more proportionate perspective. As a consequence, this book became a more direct sequel to our first book, but where we would now like to request you to also see it, as it were, as focusing on one galaxy within the much wider universe of movement; and as I have already suggested above, to look at the WSF not as a distinct phenomenon but generically as movement, within worlds in movement.

Towards doing this, this book brings together some 36 essays from around the world and by people of different ages, races, persuasions, professions, and genders. It includes work generated over the past several years – starting from 2004, from just after our first book came out, right through to 2010 - all looking critically at the World Social Forum. It includes both a great deal of completely new material, specially commissioned and written for this book, and

with some of it based on original research, and also carefully edited (and in some cases, very substantially revised) versions of some of the best material that has already appeared here and there on the WSF.

And since this book is finally coming out only in 2012, following the great irruptions of 2011, I have also prepared an essay – originally planned to be included as a Postscript within this book but now being published as a separate monograph –, that attempts to critically re-visit and locate and discuss the WSF in relation to this much wider world of movement in the crucial moment of history we are passing through, and – given the moment – to ask some hard questions of it; and also to locate this book and this book series in the present moment.⁴⁵

The book opens with a section of invocations – a Foreword by Immanuel Wallerstein, a Preface by my co-editor Peter Waterman, and this Introduction –, which is followed by the main body of the book, organised in three simple sections; and it concludes with the References section listing citations in all the essays, a major document in itself :

0. Invocations

1. Understanding the WSF : The Roots of the WSF - The WSF as Rhizome

2. The Globalisation of the WSF : The Globalisation of Movement

3. Some Critical Issues – in the WSF, in Movement

4. References

Section 1 critically explores the roots and some of what – and with reference to the discussion of ‘movement’ in the early sections of this Introduction - might called the life forces of the WSF, with seven essays that look kaleidoscopically at this phenomenon; at some / many of the traditions and dynamics that intertwine and combine to appear as ‘the Forum’. This collection of essays therefore richly complements the first Section of our 2004 book, titled ‘Antecedents : Critical Perspectives’ (and also of the second and updated edition of our 2004 book, in 2009).⁴⁶

Section 2, titled ‘The Globalisation of the WSF : The Globalisation of Movement’, moves to frontally examine what, after all, the architects of the WSF set out to do back in 2001 (as a part of launching a war of position on neoliberalism) : To globalise itself and to populate and ‘contaminate’ the world with its ideas (to use a humorous re-use of this word that became quite popular within the alter-globalisation movement). This section therefore also complements the sections with a somewhat similar title and ambition that appeared both in the first (2004) and second (2009) editions of our 2004 book – therefore becoming a similar snapshot, eight and three years later in the life of the Forum.⁴⁷

In particular, there is again a focus on Africa, both because of Africa’s structural location in the world economy, historically and today – of the most massive exploitation ever known - and also because, in turn, as a function of this, several WSF and/or related meetings (such as of its International Council) have been held in Africa during this period. In addition, it therefore also looks ahead to the next world meeting of the WSF in 2013 that is, at least at the moment, scheduled to be held in Tunisia.

And **Section 3**, titled ‘Some Critical Issues – in the WSF, in Movement’, gathers together eighteen essays that comprehensively discuss a range of critical issues that course through the WSF – and, arguably, through all social movement. Again, this section becomes a strong update of similar sections in our 2004 and 2009 books, titled ‘Critical Engagement : The World Social

Forum’.

Especially if read together, Sections 1, 2, and 3 also provide a strong backdrop to the upcoming world meeting of the WSF in Tunis, in Tunisia, in March 2013.

At the risk of highlighting certain issues and essays over others, it might be useful for me to also point out here some specific content in this book. There are several essays in Sections 2 and 3 that critically discuss the intense new experiences and perceptions, as well as contradictions, that have arisen as the WSF has been globalised; as mentioned above. See, for instance, the essays by Geoffrey Pleyers and Raúl Ornelas, Wangui Mbatia and Hassan Indusa, Virginia Vargas, and Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle and Nicolas Haeringer in Section 2, and by Rahul Rao, Taran Khan, Amanda Alexander and Mandisa Mbali, Corinna Genschel, Giuseppe Caruso, Shannon Walsh, and Jeffrey S Juris in Section 3.⁴⁸ Written at different points over almost the entire period since our 2004 book (and more particularly since the time when the WSF began to be globalised), and also discussing the Forum as manifested in widely different locations – from India to Kenya to Mali to Brazil to Germany to the USA and the UK –, these essays give a rich and very plural understanding of the dynamics and movements that have raged within the WSF through these years and that course constantly through it, and also a good idea of how debates and concerns within the WSF have evolved over these years.

Section 3 concludes with four key essays on the future of the Forum and one that critically locates the WSF within a much wider and longer history and dynamic. The ones on the future of the Forum are three edited reprints of essays published at that time, two by key WSF actors Walden Bello and Chico Whitaker and one by Alex Callinicos and Chris Nineham, and one that was specially prepared for this book by WSF scholar Boaventura de Sousa Santos.⁴⁹ And Ronaldo Munck’s essay – drawn from his classic work Globalisation and Contestation : The New Great Counter-Movement – in one sense engages with all this discussion, and more.⁵⁰

The book concludes with the References section. As is our practice in all our books, in this book too all the bibliographic references given in the various essays are compiled and listed together in the References Section (and not at the end of each essay). We do this in part to avoid duplication across essays, and therefore more pages and higher costs, but also so as to make available to readers a comprehensive list of references in the field that becomes a resource document in of itself; and that then also becomes a contribution to our parallel compilation of a ‘World Social Bibliography’.⁵¹ And beyond this, by doing this it also pools the resources that all our contributors have individually mined, and becomes a commons.

There are also other interesting ways to look at the collection of essays in this book, however. There are – for instance – several major clusters, or categories of concern, that cut across the essays. One, fundamentally, is understanding the WSF; a second, the perceptions of the WSF from some of its many margins; a third, difference and diversity; and a fourth, looking comprehensively at one of the vital forces that move through the WSF as it does also, perhaps, through much contemporary movement but that has nevertheless always been kept to the margins : Feminism.⁵² So this book is also about social structure more generally, and especially in social movement.

Having said this, and given the history of this book as discussed above – where what appears here is only our ‘final’ permutation of a range of permutations and combinations that we tried –, we also invite you to do your own reading of this content and therefore to, as it were, assemble your own preferred book from this collection. In this sense, there is and will not be any ‘final’ book. And where this will become even more possible (and interesting) when, as presently planned, we put all or most of these essays – from this book and in time, from its companion books – up on our website, as a part of the commons.

VI

Political features

The last point above leads me to also point out some other features of this book and of this act of publication. Like all the others in this series starting from the first volume,⁵³ it is also somewhat different from most books in the market, and intentionally so – and where this will likely be increasingly so, across this set of three books.

Balance

Most centrally perhaps, the difference is in terms of balance, and especially so in relation to the structures of (and tendencies towards) coloniality that exists in publishing and the knowledge industry. While our first and final criterion for selecting pieces for inclusion has always been excellence in terms of what the authors say and how they say it, we as editors have also wanted to break with the normal, dominant patterns of knowledge on such subjects being largely produced by aging, white (or whitish, ‘fair’), and upper caste and middle-to-upper class (and caste) male scholars in the North and/or in the north in the South (and, moreover, being published from the North).

Even as we say this, we feel we must underline the fact that we have every respect for most such individuals as individuals (and we of course openly acknowledge that we ourselves largely fit this pattern - both male and aging, and where one is from the North and the other now also part based in the North !); and that we also have every respect for many publishers in the North, and indeed see them as fellow-travellers. But we also nevertheless believe that we need urgently to recognise that the structures of local, national, and global societies have so far been such that everything is biased in favour of them / us, and that ‘we’ are in control of most of the levers of the production of such knowledge; and beyond this, that it is largely as a result of this undergirding – the nature and structure that underlies this production, which is part and parcel of the empires of caste, race, patriarchy, faith, and colonialism, and now also of globalised capitalism - rather than our prowess, we dominate all such knowledge; and even if for some of us, despite our best intentions.

As Janet Conway argues powerfully in her recently published book, this is as true of the knowledge being produced about a fundamentally social and political enterprise such as the WSF – and moreover, one that on the surface appears to have largely arisen from the South⁵⁴ - as in general; but crucially, she underlines that this coloniality is not separate from the social and political nature of the enterprise but a part of it. It is intertwined with the broader structural and existential dilemmas that the WSF faces, which Conway discusses in detail (and that I too attempt to discuss in the monograph that accompanies this book)⁵⁵ :

... knowledge production about the WSF increasingly reflects the global coloniality of power and knowledge. The vast and growing majority of work, and that which is increasingly authoritative and widely cited, is being produced by white scholars from the global North. Not surprisingly perhaps, they have been particularly attentive to the European and US Social Forum processes. The world-scale iterations of the social forum, where they are considered in this literature, are almost always those in Porto Alegre. The world events in Mumbai, Nairobi, and Belém (and most recently, Dakar) are rarely visible, much less substantively analyzed in their own terms. Substantial regional social forum processes in Latin America and in Africa are seriously under-studied. Coloniality seriously and increasingly distorts knowledge production about the WSF, which has been and remains above all a phenomenon emanating from and produced by knowledges and agencies of the global South.

Secondly, much of the scholarly literature remains deeply Eurocentric and modernist in its analytical approaches and interpretive frameworks. Many studies assume terrains and horizons of struggle that pertain to modern liberal polities and are projecting this condition onto the pluriverse of the anti-globalization movements and of the WSF.⁵⁶

As editors, we have wanted in this series to consciously challenge these empires too, and so readers will find a very different pattern of authorship in this book, and where this will also be progressively more so across the three books. By shifting this balance, and by including the voices of others who are key to the production of new social knowledges but who have historically been largely excluded because of the increasing emphasis on specialisation in

society and of the structure of the knowledge production and publication industries, we want to contribute to help change both our current understandings of world movement and the discussions around them and also the structure of knowledge production.

Keeping in mind examples in history where publication from below has literally changed the world – for instance, the publication in Germany of Martin Luther’s writings in the 16th century,⁵⁷ or the publication in Britain of pamphlets by the Diggers and the Levellers in the 17th century,⁵⁸ and where these ‘writings from below’ had far-reaching social and political impacts on their respective societies - we believe that this shift has profound epistemological, theoretical, and political implications.

In short - and while you can consult the section on Contributors’ Profiles for more detail, and see for yourself the extraordinarily rich experience that the contributors individually and collectively bring to this book - we are very pleased indeed to have found, after all the recombination and editing work was complete, that we have again managed to bring together in this book a rich diversity among the authors : In terms of gender, 26 men, 14 women (not a great balance, but not bad); in terms of age, 17 younger, 13 middle-aged, and (only !) 9 older; in terms of regions, overall, 20 from the North and 20 from the South, and as a breakdown, Africa 9, Asia 4, Abya Yala (Latin America) 6, Europe 11, Turtle Island (North America) 9, and Other 1; and in terms of race, 21 authors of colour, and 19 white, or ‘fair’.

Although we have always had ‘balance’ in the back of our minds, this profile has taken us a little by surprise too. But we are confident that the results of this richness, and in so many ways, will speak for themselves.

Open publication, from the South and in the commons

Second (in terms of the particular features of this book), this time – unlike in the case of the first two volumes in the *Challenging Empires* series – we are publishing our book through **OpenWord**, a new initiative in open thought and publishing that we at CACIM (www.cacim.net) - with which both editors are associated - have taken; check out <http://www.openword.in>. As discussed in the next section, we believe that it is not just important but vital to first publish our work in and from the South; and moreover, as open publication, in the commons.

CACIM’s decision in 2007 – and even as we as editors were preparing these books - to set up OpenWord was in fact a direct result of our (as members of CACIM) experiencing severe difficulties during 2005-6 in getting other such books published, in India and internationally : Material crossing isms, emphasising open and critical thinking; material produced by various ‘others’; and material published first as ebooks and on a print-on-demand basis.⁵⁹ While I consider our being very fortunate at OpenWord to have got the partnership of Daanish Books (<http://www.daanishbooks.com/>) in bringing out OpenWord’s first two books, *Interrogating Empires* and *Imagining Alternatives* (in hard copy only so far, but soon in soft copy as well; see the OpenWord site for details), publishing this book – and this trilogy – directly is a major step in the journey we have undertaken, both as editors and as members of CACIM and OpenWord. We hope to have – and to continue to have, through the accompanying volumes – your fellowship and solidarity in this journey.

In addition, and in order both to maximise availability of this book across the South and towards a common political project, OpenWord is also in discussion with progressive publishers in Africa and Abya Yala (Latin America) towards co-publication.

This means that this book will appear not in hard copy first but as an ebook and on a print-on-demand basis, as well as a limited run in hard copy. We are also exploring the possibilities of making available individual essays from our website as free downloads – all so as to be able to reach out to all the different kind of readers we want to reach, across the world, and so to address our publishing objectives.

In one sense this has already happened with this book, to a limited extent. A good deal

of this book was issued as a Sampler, on CD, in time for a major seminar some of us organised at the world meeting of the WSF process that was held in Dakar, Senegal, in February 2011.⁶⁰ The CD was widely distributed at the Dakar Forum, at the three workshops we at CACIM co-organised during the Forum and also to local Senegalese students at the university where the Forum was held (but about which they, very ironically, knew little). We would like to believe that those CDs, and the material contained in those CDs, have since then taken a life of their own and that by now, copies are circulating widely in Senegal, and perhaps also more widely.

Make your own books

The third feature is as mentioned above, at the end of the previous section. This book is the outcome of discussions over several years (and where indeed, till late 2009 we had two books in mind, and until late 2010 the three books in the present trilogy were organised in a completely different manner !). What we present you with here therefore, is only one way of organising this material. Given the relatively open license we are publishing this book under, and all the more so if we can carry through our present discussions with other publishers to their limits, most of these essays will – in time – also be available individually, and so you will be free to download them and, as it were, put together your own books.

VII

Orientations and objectives

In addition to the features outlined above, that are more specific to this book, we have also been guided in the preparation of all three books by a set of orientations and objectives that my co-editor Peter Waterman and I laid out in 2006-7 for the series we were then embarking on, as discussed above : The *Challenging Empires* series.

Keeping in mind the turbulence of the times we had come through (think of the period 2001-2007) and that we were then living in – and also the apparent success of the 2004 book and the feedback we got on that -, we laid out the following as orientations for the one book we were then embarking on, and also for the new series that we, together with our publisher OpenWord, conceptualised at that point and named the *Challenging Empires* series. (Our 2004 book at that point then became, in effect, Volume 1 in the series, and the second edition in 2009 – already referred to – Volume 2.)⁶¹ :

A continuing critical focus on the WSF and the wider global justice and solidarity movement,

Now however, locating the WSF and the global justice and solidarity movement in relation to wider, other movement taking place in the world, and through this, contributing to opening and/or strengthening conversations between different currents of movement,

Worldwide contributions and coverage, as far as possible balanced in terms of gender, caste, geographic, and ethnic origin, age, and ideological persuasions and affiliations, Pluralism in theoretical/ideological/political contributions, but with a preferential option for social autonomy and radical democracy [and, I would now add, after these years of discussions and strategisation about the books, also non-western, non-Eurocentric, and incivil traditions of resistance, struggle, and hope, for instance among indigenous peoples]⁶²

An awareness of all collective subjects affected by capitalist globalisation [and by caste, race, communalism,⁶³ patriarchy, and anthropocentrism] (including those unaware of such structures or outside the movement)⁶⁴

Publication [first] in and from the South,

Plural forms of publication (printed, web, CD-Rom, and – in keeping with technological developments since when we started in 2006 – now also as ebooks and print-on-demand) and a search for other language editions,

Voice – a major attempt to retain and reflect the rhythm and nuance of the contributor's original statement, in whatever language, so that the author/s speak/s through,

A style of writing, compilation, and presentation that is relatively easily accessible for activists, students, younger people, and the public at large - and yet intellectually challenging, and –

As we progressively edited the essays, a suggestion to our authors to be critically aware in their writing of their own subjectivities, and as far as possible to both locate and reveal themselves in their writings and also to critically reflect on their experiences and roles with respect to their subject/s.

In 2011, and reflecting the evolution of our project and our thinking, we added another major objective and orientation :

Collecting, presenting, and making visible and accessible the experiences, understandings, and knowledges of movements and by movement activists themselves, and especially from less known, less articulated movements, and thereby contributing to helping to shift the present balance in the social relations of the production of knowledge : In terms of how social knowledge is produced and made public, whose knowledges are put forward, and their accessibility.

VIII

Landmarks

Beyond this, as we embarked on the journey of this larger book project in 2006-7 we soon became more acutely aware that the historical juncture at which we were putting together and bringing out our books was significant, in terms of historical landmarks. Among them, and to take just three landmarks, 2008 was the fortieth anniversary of '1968' – a year and period when so much happened and when so much movement both took place and burst on to the world stage;⁶⁵ 2009 the 10th anniversary of the Battle of Seattle, which is seen by many as the point at which the 'global justice movement' emerged onto the world stage;⁶⁶ and 2010 the 10th year of the WSF. We therefore also decided, for the three books as a larger whole, to specifically find and include material by key actors and strategists that looked critically over the past forty years and at contemporary movement in this longer and much wider perspective.

Given this, we have therefore been delighted to have the privilege of including essays in our books by the late Daniel Bensaïd and by Tariq Ali, both key activists and strategists in the 1968 movement,⁶⁷ and also by David McNally, Fouad Kalouche and Eric Mielants, Immanuel Wallerstein, Lee Cormie, Muto Ichiyo, Ronaldo Munck, and Samir Amin, all of who survey this period and this larger picture, in their different ways.⁶⁸

Moreover, because of the widely-shared perception – especially within the alter-globalisation / global justice movement – that the Zapatista movement that broke out in Mexico in 1994 has played a vital role in shaping the new world movement in general and the World Social Forum in particular (but where, very ironically but tellingly, this movement was then excluded from the WSF process),⁶⁹ we also specifically decided to seek out and/or commission, and to bring together, several key essays that explore the multiple meanings, influences, and resonances of this movement, in Mexico and around the world. We are privileged to have two essays by Xochitl Leyva Solano - one by herself alone and one with her co-writer Christopher Gunderson - and one by Alex Khasnabish.⁷⁰

We also commissioned and are publishing – across the three books - four major essays exploring the role of faith and faith communities in movement, including in the birth, life, and culture of the WSF, by Charmain Levy, François Houtart, Lee Cormie, and Roel Meijer.^{71, 72} We are doing this not only because of the renewed rise of the role of faith and faith communities in world movement – which we all are now somewhat familiar with - but also because of the

foundational role of faith and of one important strand of faith community in the WSF (and in something apparently so secular such as the WSF); which far fewer people know of.

Equally, we are at a historical juncture when we have arguably moved into a new age – among other areas, of creativity in resistance and in the articulation of alternatives. Throughout much of the 19th and 20th centuries, many of the big movements across the world – in resistance, protest, and alternatives, and also of artists and other creative people working together with or in support of protest – were in one way or another in direct service to the Internationale, or inspired by it; or worked in its shadow.

This began to break in the 1960s, with the emergence of new movements that were ‘left’ in orientation but independent of the established Left formations – the anti-war, civil rights, feminist, and student movements in so many parts of the world -, and Lee Cormie has also reminded me that Immanuel Wallerstein has pointed out what he sees as the ‘world revolution’ of 1968 was a protest not only against post World War II politics but also the established left, and that the emerging ‘global left’ was thus marked from then onwards by great diversity. Speaking from my admittedly more limited experience however, of involvement in mass work in India through the 70s and 80s and of campaign work through the 1990s, I would argue that the influence of the established and historical Left, and of the political culture it generated and established, has wide and deep roots, at least in some parts of the world, and that this lingered right through that period; and that notwithstanding the constant emergence of vigorous new shoots of the left movement, it is still very present even today.⁷³

Post 1989 however – after the collapse of the Soviet Union -, we arguably moved more clearly into an age without such global guiding principles (other than the sham ones of the promotion of ‘democracy’ and the ‘free market’) – and so everyone, from activists to artists to composers, has been freer to create new vocabularies, and to search for new guidelines; and indeed, we have been compelled to do so.⁷⁴ We as editors have therefore sought hard with our books not only to be ‘plural’ but also to search out and include authors – activists, researchers, scholars, and others – who are original and creative in their work. We hope that our books pay adequate tribute to them.

Finally – in this general overview of ‘landmarks’ for these books – we are also today at a stage where ‘new’ movements have dramatically taken shape on the world landscape and where, as perhaps never before, movements are being articulated and led not by leaders, as has been traditional whether in the world of political parties or in the non-party world, but by ‘ordinary people’ and where new knowledges are being articulated. In a way, this has perhaps always been the case – that ordinary people also lead movements – but in the past such ‘movements’, stirrings, swellings, heavings, in the bodies of societies were overshadowed and eclipsed by the ‘big’ movements, almost to the point of being rendered absent in the public eye.

As mentioned above however, this phenomenon also has a lot to do with how such knowledge has been produced and by whom, and the preoccupations and biases of those who produce knowledge. Traditionally (and even today, in most cases), ‘social knowledge’ that reaches the public has been and is produced by specialists – scholars, journalists, filmmakers, whoever; and even if it is based on knowledge drawn from within movement, it is nevertheless always knowledge that has been interpreted, translated, packaged, and presented by people outside the movements, however supportive or sympathetic they might otherwise be. It is ‘indirect knowledge’.

On the other hand, we are today experiencing a burst of knowledges directly from ‘the ground’. Certainly, this is partly because of the existence of technologies that make doing this relatively simpler, but it is also happening because a far wider cross-section of societies are today being forced into movement – including people with high communication skills – on

account of the new precarities that have taken shape, as discussed earlier.

Taking all of the above into account, inspired by the irruptions of 2011, and influenced also by the brilliant insights of André Drainville's recent writings - and conscious also that we as editors also needed to face, embrace, and address this movement in history - we decided in 2011 to also take one more major step in producing our books : To search out, and where necessary commission, a substantial body of essays prepared directly by those in movement, for inclusion in Volume 5 in this series.

This project is still very much work-in-progress however, and other than acknowledging the generous help and support of friends and comrades from across the world in his endeavour – so far André Drainville, Emma Dowling, Firoze Manji, Jacques Depelchin, Kori Benson, Megan Redmond, Richard Pithouse, and Xochitl Leyva Solano – and the enthusiastic participation of the writers themselves, at this point I cannot (and should not !) say more.

IX

In conclusion

Collectively therefore, what we have undertaken has therefore become a substantial project of thinking and moving critically : Of critical exploration of the World Social Forum and of the dreams it has inspired, and of a world in movement.

Combined with the serial impacts during this same period on my role as lead editor of several other very real developments in my personal life however, this greatly expanded and more complex scope of our book project has meant much slower progress on this particular book; not least because we, a small team at best, were now bringing out something like 100 essays spread over three books ! But even though it has taken us much more time than planned to get this first book together and out, I feel that in many ways the timing of its appearance now is good. Especially given the enormous contemporary outbreak of movement across the world – and where, after all, it has always been the ambition of the authors of the WSF to make the world its stage -, it is a good time in the WSF's life to deeply and critically reflect on what it is, what it has become, what it today represents, after a decade and more of existence, as an idea and as social force, and to take up critical positions and roles.

It is good both for those 'within' the WSF (those taking part in it, and those organising and leading it) as well as those outside it, looking at it. We – all of us, and especially those of us who have been deeply involved from within - need to look once more at how it relates (and how it should relate) both to the world as it is emerging around it and also to the changes taking place within its body : Honestly, candidly, and without fear of taboo, including of standing naked; and with this, not only of revisiting and 'reviewing' it as such but also of thereby being able to open critical conversations between it and other strands of world movement; of worlds in movement; and – reminding ourselves of the WSF's resonant slogan and of the dreams that it re-ignites - ask ourselves : Are other worlds really possible ? And if so, how ?

As an editor, I feel that this book – with its wide range of essays that critically explore the WSF - may be able to help substantially in this much-required task of critical engagement.

This is a task, moreover, that is true not only of the WSF but also the so-called 'alter-globalisation movement'; and I say this as someone who in one sense or another also 'belongs to' this wider movement, as activist and campaignist, as researcher, as writer, and as editor.

In saying all this, I nevertheless remain very conscious of the delay in bringing out this book, and want to warmly thank all our contributors – to all our three books - for their immense patience and solidarity in bearing with us. We hope that all of them will find the product – and the book project, as outlined here – worth the wait.

I should add that I know that in one case at least, an essay we are publishing here and that was specifically commissioned and prepared for us has already appeared in a translation

elsewhere,⁷⁵ and it is entirely possible that some of the other material has also already appeared elsewhere, in different forms. From our side, we can entirely understand this, and at one level, this kind of experience – and especially given new technologies and trends in publishing that have emerged over the past some years – has also made us reflect on whether the kind of almost classical approach to book editing and publication that we have so far taken (getting all the material together and to a similar high degree of perfection) is necessarily the right approach, in today's world; and whether making things public as we go would not in fact be a much better and more appropriate way to go about things.

(And to be frank, in the case of the one publication that we know of, I was in fact actually glad to see it out, since the particular essay – by Charmain Levy – is the first time this story has been told, and is one that is long overdue : About the ideological and theological roots of the WSF in the country where it is said to have been born, Brazil.⁷⁶)

In addition to thanking our contributors, I would also like to use this Introduction to acknowledge the mostly excellent work done on many of the essays by our two Content Editors, Parvati Sharma and Vipul Rikhi,⁷⁷ which many contributors have appreciated. I also want to acknowledge my special debt to all the contributors to this book – from whom I have learned so much –, and in particular to my companions Janet Conway and Kolya Abramsky for their astonishing scholarship and energy; and who I refer to and cite so extensively both here and in the monograph that I am publishing separately simply because they have said things so much better than I can !

I also warmly thank my co-coordinator at OpenWord, Nishant, and also Tripta Chandola, our colleague at OpenWord at that time, for producing the February 2011 sampler of this book almost overnight and so making that simple, low cost debut possible; Lee Cormie for his extensive and deeply substantive comments on my earlier drafts of this Introduction, only some of which I have directly acknowledged; and Peter Waterman, my co-editor, for his many contributions to these books through these years, in terms of both concept and content, but also for his patience and fellowship.

Finally, I want to end this summary and introduction by returning to and celebrating the diversity of knowledge contained in this book. As I have already mentioned, we as editors believe we are greatly privileged to have been able to pull together a truly extraordinarily wide range of opinions and experiences, from many parts of the world and from many occupations, persuasions, and from all (most !) ages. At the risk of some overstatement, the diversity that we have achieved comes close to reflecting the richness that is contained in the WSF process, and therefore in itself becomes a cornucopia of conversations across worlds and across movements; and like the WSF it thereby begins, perhaps, to be a space where one can hear some of the sounds of the movements that are today sweeping across the world; movements of the world music that is today being written, performed, and enacted.

I am hopeful that this book, and this book project, can and will also contribute to this music, and warmly invite you to enter, read, listen – and if you wish, join in this performance !

Jai Sen
New Delhi and Ottawa

Notes

1 These terms – 'South' and 'North' – were once useful to broadly (if somewhat simplistically) divide the world into, and to express both differences between, so-called 'developing' countries (mostly in the southern hemisphere and in the southern part of the northern hemisphere) and the so-called 'advanced', already industrialised parts of the world, which till recently were mostly in the northern hemisphere – and also to signal some kind of dialectic of struggle between them. They were useful even if the terms tended to refer only to nation-states (and even more so, to governments) rather than to peoples, and even if they also hid – and disguised – the harsh realities of the very real existence of a north within the South and also of a profound south in the North. (In the case of the former, I am referring to the elites, whose new primary identity was and is linking with their brethren in the North and, to a lesser extent, in other parts of the South, and quite widely colonising and exploiting their

own peoples and societies, and in the latter, to indigenous peoples, immigrants from 'the South', peoples of colour in general, so-called 'religious minorities', and working classes being increasingly disintegrated and crushed by neoliberalism.) But today, with the rise of the new regionally hegemonic economies such as China, India, South Africa, and Brazil – all supposedly belonging to 'the South' – and where the leaderships and ruling classes of all these countries see themselves as some kind of as-yet unrecognised members of a re-defined North (as the elite of Japan once did, in the 19th century, and successfully), the terms have become far less useful. Therefore the apostrophes here. But, even as we all must struggle to find new and more appropriate vocabulary, I will continue to use these terms in this Introduction, usually without apostrophes.

2 For instance, in much of Abya Yala, where one expression is the Aymara term Pacha Mama; and in India, through the term *dharti mata* (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dharti_Mata), but where the cosmological meanings are very different.

3 There is a lot published on 'climate change', but – to my knowledge – all too little as yet on the pressures that this will bring on humankind (on ordinary women men and children, everywhere) and on the social consequences and outfalls of these pressures; and on how different sections of humankind are likely to respond. One of the few accessible works that looks at this situation is by Gwynne Dyer (Dyer 2010), but this too talks only about how nation-states will respond, and the wars that are likely to erupt, and not at all on – for instance – the impact of the pressures on social structure, the behaviour of corporations in such a situation where their access to things they think is their right to exploit will be threatened by new nationalisms and protectionisms, and the rise of new fundamentalisms. There is data emerging each year – on rising average temperatures and consequent 'freak' events, on the numbers of people being displaced and forced to migrate to 'new' but usually already populated land because of climate change-related pressures – that suggests the process is definitely intensifying. If present trends continue, I believe that the result will mean hugely increased social conflict, on a scale that we have never known, and that most social institutions will collapse – including social movements – and in place of so-called 'civil society' and government, we will see the renewed emergence of warlordism, worldwide.

4 For one discussion of this wider world of movement, see Drainville 2012; and for a presentation of such movements in history in one part of the world, see Linebaugh and Rediker, 2000. For those unfamiliar with this usage of this term, I use the singular version of the word 'movement' not only when I am referring to one movement but also to indicate the larger world of such movements, as a generic and collective term.

5 For a great discussion of some of the key underlying factors behind peasant movement, see : Scott 1976. See also Linebaugh and Rediker 2000, and Drainville 2012.

6 Though at the same time always understanding that the movements are in many different directions, carrying all kinds of values, some that one may not agree with. Even as I say this, I want to acknowledge the concept and vision of a 'counter-movement' put forward by Karl Polanyi in his great work The Great Transformation (Polanyi 2001) and which is a key basis of the argument put forward by Ronaldo Munck in his essay in this book (Munck 2012).

7 As Lee Cormie said in the course of his comments on an earlier version of this Introduction, "A look at the last 10, or 20, years confirms that we are already caught up in processes of immense change, and suggests it is reasonable to expect – [and] unreasonable not to expect – more/bigger/faster."

8 For a discussion of this concept of 'No !', see : Holloway 2005 [2002]; and for a seminal discussion of the concept of emergence, especially in relation to social movement, see : Escobar 2004.

9 For a discussion, see my essay in this book, Sen 2012c; also Sen 2010b.

10 Agamben 2004.

11 Sen, June 2007a, and as explored also in part in Sen 2012c. For a deeper discussion of the concept of bio-culturalism, see McNeill and McNeill 2003.

12 This is comparable at some levels to John Keane's graphic portrayal of 'global civil society' (Keane 2001, pp 23-24), but where I suggest this not as simile but organic reality. For a discussion of earth as Gaia – of being a living, organic whole – see Lovelock 2000. For the idea of morphic resonance, which proposes the idea of the evolution through repeated behaviour by a given species leading to 'organising fields' that inform what that species does and how it behaves, across time and space, see Sheldrake 1988, Sheldrake 2009; or more accessibly, Sheldrake, February 2005.

13 For a sketch of '1968' and the years since, see Kalouche and Eric Mielants, 2008; and where this essay will also appear in an abridged version in a companion volume to this book (Kalouche and Mileants, forthcoming, 2013).

14 For those interested, most of my more recent work – since about 2002 –, and including on the WSF, has been with and through CACIM, the India Institute for Critical Action : Centre in Movement; www.cacim.net.

15 Summarised briefly, most people on the WSF India organising body became – perhaps for understandable reasons – increasingly interested in organising the event, whereas I was as (and even more) concerned with the organising process and in particular the social and political potentials – and contradictions – of organising something like the WSF in India. I had earlier written on this (Sen, January 2002a and 2002b), and agreement on this – addressing these concerns – was why I had agreed to join the organising body. Although there was some sympathy for these ideas among some members of the WSF India Organising Committee, the organising process came to be progressively taken over and dominated by a one big organisation, and when the experience of the process became increasingly difficult, and the tragedy occurred in my life, I dropped out. I reflected on this experience in Sen, January 2003c, which was published in edited form as Sen 2004c.

16 Along with Lee Cormie, I am here using the term 'chaos' not in its popular sense, of randomness or with a lack of intelligible pattern or combination, but in the way the term is used in emerging theory in mathematics and physics and now also social sciences that deals with the behaviour of nonlinear dynamical systems. Similarly, the term 'emergent' also comes from new theory in biology, which is now being applied by some to explain social behaviour; processes that learn from what

they do, and through this progressively develop ('emerge') into new forms. For a breakthrough discussion of the World Social Forum in terms of emergence, see Escobar 2004; and for something that tries to build on this, my essay in this book, Sen 2012c.

17 For excellent ongoing reportage, see <http://www.jadaliyya.com/>. In their very timely book in late 2011, Firoze Manji and Sokari Ekine argue moreover that what has become visible across north Africa is only the tip of the mountain of struggle that has erupted in the continent as a whole; see : Manji and Ekine, 2011.

18 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011%E2%80%932012_Spanish_protests; Wainwright, October 2011; <http://theconversation.edu.au/spain-dispatches-from-the-frontline-of-the-indignados-movement-7091>.

19 There are countless sites on the Occupy movement; as a beginning, <http://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/occupywallstreet>, <http://www.facebook.com/occupytheworld>, <http://15october.net/>, www.October2011.org, and <http://infrontandcenter.wordpress.com>.

20 Turtle Island is the term used by many First Nations / native Americans in the northern part of 'the Americas' for the land they live on, and where 'North America' is the term coined by the Europeans who came there and are now referred to by the indigenous peoples as 'settlers'. To honour them as first peoples on this land, and their knowledges and perceptions, I will tend to use this term for this land in this introduction.

21 <http://www.indiaagainstcorruption.org/index1.html>.

22 Vohra and Flaherty, March 2012.

23 A Khan 2010.

24 Again, and just as in the case of Turtle Island (rather than 'North America'), the Aymara term Abya Yala is used by many indigenous peoples in the southern part of 'the Americas' for the land they live on, and where 'South (or Latin) America' is the term coined by the Europeans who came there and that is still all too widely used by Europe and 'North America' - and therefore, because of colonialism and world hegemony, also by the rest of the world. I again tend to prefer to use this term for this land.

25 The Maori term for what is otherwise called 'New Zealand'.

26 Drainville 2012.

27 From : Manji, November 2011. For a more detailed discussion of events in Africa over 2011, see Manji and Ekine 2011.

28 In this book, Munck 2012; and Munck 2007.

29 <http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/>.

30 Alvarez 2012.

31 de Sousa Santos, 2004a.

32 Both the name of the process (the 'World Social Forum') and the slogan seem to have been coined in the mid-late 90s however, by Susan George, US American-French economist and author and one of the founders of ATTAC in France. For a more detailed discussion of the origins and founding of the WSF, see Sen, forthcoming (2012e).

33 I attempt to do some of this in a monograph that will accompany this book, 'What 'Other Worlds' Are Being Given Shape To ? : Critical Explorations of the World Social Forum, continued' (Sen, forthcoming (2012e).

34 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhizome_%28disambiguation%29 and <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhizome>. For application of the idea of rhizomes to the WSF, see Escobar 2004, and also the essay in this book by Graeme Chesters (Chesters 2012).

35 In many ways, the WSF in India is a case in point, where after a dramatic and memorable flowering in 2002-4, and where a landmark world meeting of the WSF was held in Mumbai in January 2004 – see the essay by Rodrigo Nunes in this book, for a discussion of some of its powerful influence (Nunes 2012) –, the formal WSF process in India has completely died out since then (or has been deliberately killed, as I argue). This case has not yet been fully examined or publicly discussed, as far as I know, but for critical discussion of some aspects of the WSF 'process' and experience in India, see : Sen, January 2003c; Sen 2004c; Caruso, December 2004; Caruso 2012; and Chetia, August 2008.

36 If you want to read further, there is now a large body of literature on the WSF. Limiting this list simply to material on 'the WSF' as such (and to the WSF as a whole, rather on particular editions or regions), and also only to books and to special issues of journals (ie not individual articles) – and therefore, NB, skewing this list in favour of scholars and scholar-activists, whose profession it is to publish (as against activists, who only occasionally publish) –, see : Fisher and Ponniah, eds, 2003; RUPE (Research Unit for Political Economy), September 2003; Sen, Anand, Escobar, and Waterman, eds, 2004; Anand, Escobar, Sen, and Waterman (Hrsg), 2004; Keraghel and Sen, Editorial Advisers, December 2004; Sen and Saini, eds, January 2005; Whitaker, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c; Böhm, Sullivan, and Reyes, eds, 2005; Leite 2005; Sen, Anand, Escobar, and Waterman, eds, 2005; Sen, Anand, Escobar, y Waterman (Editores), nd, c.2005; Whitaker Ferreira, 2006; de Sousa Santos, 2006a; Sen, Anand, Escobar, and Waterman, eds, 2006; Sen and Saini, eds, March 2006; Sen and Kumar, compilers, January 2007; Pleyers 2007c; Smith, Chase-Dunn, Della Porta, and ors, 2007; ATTAC Germany, nd, c.2008; Blau and Karides, eds, 2008; Sen and Waterman, eds, 2009; Beaudet, Canet, et Massicotte, eds, 2010; Conway 2012; this present book (Sen and Waterman, eds, 2012); and Teivainen, forthcoming.

As will be evident from the full citations in the List of References at the end of this book however, most of these publications are by authors in the North, and most - other than the books produced by Peter Waterman and myself - are published in the North. (They are also mostly in English, but this is a reflection of the language in which we as editors work and in which this project has been conducted; we apologise for this.) All this is indicative not only of the authorship however, but

also, and very much so, the nature and structure of the publishing world today of the knowledge industry more generally, and of the hegemonies within them; and where Janet Conway goes beyond this and powerfully shows how this condition both reflects and also tends towards continuing colonialism in the field (Conway 2012, pp 19-20).

37 Sen, Anand, Escobar, and Waterman, eds, 2004; and Sen and Waterman, eds, 2009.

38 Here, and for the first time that I have done so publicly, I want to mention and acknowledge that the idea for such a book originally came from critical historian Jeremy Brecher, in the course of conversations that he and I had during the World Social Forum at Porto Alegre in January 2003 - and where we preliminarily even agreed to collaborate on this. Jeremy then decided however that he would not be able to give the kind of time and attention that would be required for such a project, and suggested that I discuss the idea with Peter Waterman, who was also there in Porto Alegre at that time. I did, and the rest is history, as they say. But thanks, Jeremy !

39 In German : Anand, Escobar, Sen, and Waterman (Hrsg), 2004; in Japanese : Sen, Anand, Escobar, and Waterman, eds, 2005; and in Spanish : Sen, Anand, Escobar, y Waterman (Editores), nd, c.2005. We believe that part or all of the book might also have more informally come out in other languages (Arabic, Greek, Urdu, among others), but we are not sure. And where we at CACIM, the organisation with which the writer and the associate editor for this book, Madhuresh Kumar, are associated, also undertook a translation in Hindi, in four slimmer volumes and including a glossary, of which one has come out (Sen, Anand, Escobar, and Waterman, eds, 2006) and a second is in press. As editor, I tried to also get translations published in French and in Portuguese, but unsuccessfully.

40 Sen and Waterman, eds, 2009.

41 Samir Amin is Director of the Third World Forum in Dakar, Senegal

(http://www.forumtiersmonde.net/fren/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=74:the-third-world-forum&catid=39:forum-du-tiers-monde&Itemid=28) and – on the WSF's International Council – President of the World Forum for Alternatives (<http://www.forumdesalternatives.org/en/>). For the full text of the manifesto – titled the 'Bamako Appeal' – and of the debate that took place around it, see : <http://monthlyreview.org/mrzine/bamako.html>, and also : Sen and Kumar, compilers, with Bond and Waterman, January 2007.

42 Bello, May 2007, reprinted in this book in slightly edited form (Bello 2012). Walden Bello is the founder and first Executive Director of Focus on the Global South (<http://www.focusweb.org>), and from the formation of the WSF in 2001 till 2012, when he stepped away from Focus, represented it on the WSF's International Council along with his colleague Nicola Bullard. Focus on the Global South is now – since 2012 - headed by Pablo Solón.

43 In particular but not only through the 'Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth's Rights' organised by the Plurinational Government of Bolivia in April 2010. The official website for the conference was www.cmpcc.org; this url now (2012) seems to have been taken over by something else, so see <http://motherearthrights.org/2010/04/27/world-peoples-conference-on-climate-change-and-the-rights-of-mother-earth/> for the Declaration from the Conference.

44 Lee Cormie to Jai Sen, in personal communication, 2012; and for the concept of an ecology of knowledges, see : de Sousa Santos, June 2007.

45 As already mentioned above, Sen 2012e.

46 Respectively, Sen, Anand, Escobar, and Waterman, eds, 2004, pp 1-66, and Sen and Waterman, eds, 2009, pp 1-68.

47 Sen, Anand, Escobar, and Waterman, eds, 2004, pp 254-310, and Sen and Waterman, eds, 2009, pp 243-342.

48 Pleyers and Ornelas 2012; Mbatia and Indusa 2012; Vargas 2012; Pommerolle and Haeringer, 2012; and (in Section 3) : Rao 2012; T Khan 2012; Alexander and Mbali 2012; Genschel 2012; Caruso 2012; Walsh 2012; and Juris 2012b.

49 Bello 2012, Whitaker 2012, and Callinicos and Nineham 2012; and de Sousa Santos 2012.

50 Munck 2007.

51 For the first volume, see : Sen, Waterman, and Kumar, December 2003.

52 For an in-depth discussion of this dynamic, see in particular the essays in this book by Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca (Eschle and Maiguashca 2012) and by Corinna Genschel (Genschel 2012); and also Conway 2012.

53 Milan Rai, UK, in a blog to The New Standard, January 19 2004 :

"A new book about the WSF – 'World Social Forum: Challenging Empires' - edited by Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar and Peter Waterman : It's a stupendous collection of essays, documents and statements, a critical self-consideration of the WSF process by a variety of people. Published by the Viveka Foundation in Delhi... it's an absolutely unmissable book for anyone interested in the WSF. Irene Santiago and Hilary Wainwright open the collection and Anita Anand contributes introductions to each section (if only the WSF panels matched the gender balance in this book). I've only read a few pieces and dipped into the rest, but am staggered by it. It's brilliant and groundbreaking and a major cultural achievement." (Rai, January 2004.)

54 For discussions of the cultural-political origins of the WSF, see the essays in this book by Sonia E Alvarez (Alvarez 2012) and by Charmain Levy (Levy 2012), and also, for a different take on when, where, and how it arise, see : Sen 2012e.

55 Sen 2012e.

56 Conway 2012, pp 19-20.

57 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propaganda_during_the_Reformation.

58 Hill 1984 [1972]; for general information, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diggers>.

- 59 Our experience has been that till quite recently, most publishers were very nervous about crossing the line into these new worlds. But things are now rapidly changing.
- 60 Sen and Waterman, eds, February 2011, circulated quite widely during the WSF world meeting in Dakar, Senegal, in February 2010, and especially at a workshop on 'Facing the Challenges of the Present and the Future : How Well is the World Social Forum Doing ?'. For the event outline, see : CACIM, with AFM - Articulaci3n Feminista Marco Sur, ATTAC France, Canada Research Chair in Social Justice, GGJ - Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, Kenya Network of Grassroots Organisations (KENGONET), M3moire des lutes, Mouvements, and People's Parliament (Kenya), January 2011a. The material contained in the CD is available for download at www.openword.in/ce3.sampler.
- 61 Our ideas for the books have evolved over time, going through several re-drafts. This present list is based on a list first presented in : Peter Waterman and Jai Sen, November 2006, as above.
- 62 With thanks to Lee Cormie for pointing this out.
- 63 I am here using the term 'communalism' in the very meaningful sense that it used in South Asia, to refer to politically-instigated prejudice – usually leading to violence - against people of other communities, generally faith communities (see also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communalism_%28South_Asia%29) and not in the sense that it is used in the West / North (see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communalism>, but where there is now (2012) also a subsection in this entry for the 'Indian subcontinent').
- 64 The original statement of this item is again as contained in our 2006-7 draft, reflecting perhaps somewhat classical (new) left analysis. Clearly, and as Lee Cormie has also pointed out to me, this formulation requires revision today, especially in the light of how the book project has evolved : "Of course, many 'subjects' do not see their suffering/hopes in terms of 'capitalist globalization', but of 'patriarchy', 'anthropocentrism', etc. E.g., in the expanding dialogues across movements (each with its own traditions and 'causes') existing critical discourses of reality ('world', 'system') are also being disrupted, and transformed – along with understandings of 'knowledge' itself (epistemologies), its 'producers', and roles in social change." The items in square brackets indicate the revisions I have made to the original statement.
- 65 Even a glance at the first few months of the Wikipedia entry for '1968' (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1968>) is a graphic reminder of just how much happened that year, from the election of Alexander Dubcek as the President of then-still-united Czechoslovakia as a symbol of free thinking within socialist countries – leading to the re-occupation of the country by the-then Soviet Union - to the assassination of Martin Luther King, the leader of the civil rights movement in the USA, to the passage of the historic Civil Liberties Act there; to the student revolts starting in Paris and spreading across Europe. For a very personal but more anecdotal account of some of the events of that year see, for instance, Ali, 2005b.
- 66 For familiarisation with 'Seattle', see for instance, Big Noise Films and ors, November-December 1999; George, January 2000; Martinez, January 2000; and Reuters, April 2000.
- 67 Ali (forthcoming) 2013, Bensaïd, forthcoming (2013). Daniel Bensaïd died in January 2010. I feel personally very privileged to have had the opportunity of working with him on editing his essay for Volume 4 in this series, The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds, in what turned out to be the last year of his life.
- 68 Amin, forthcoming (2013), Cormie, forthcoming (2013), Kalouche and Mielants, forthcoming (2013), McNally forthcoming (2013), Munck 2012, Muto, forthcoming (2013), and Wallerstein 2012. Given our concern with balance in our books, it has struck me while doing this computation that all the contributors I have listed here – those taking the larger picture in this book - are males. As lead editor for this trilogy, this pattern (though thankfully not also all from the North) is more than of a little concern to me !
- 69 For a brief discussion of how and why this is the case, see Sen, 2004d.
- 70 Khasnabish, forthcoming (2013), Leyva Solano, forthcoming (2013), and Leyva Solano and Gunderson, forthcoming (2013).
- 71 Levy 2012, and Cormie, forthcoming (2013), Houtart, forthcoming (2013), and Meijer, forthcoming (2013).
- 72 Editors' note : We are aware of an issue from his past that arose a few years ago in the life of one of our authors, Franois Houtart. He was known to us as a humanist, theologian, philosopher, scholar, and scholar-activist, and we had therefore requested from him an article for a forthcoming book of ours; he wrote an essay for us on the life and message of Mahmoud Mohamed Taha, a great Islamic activist in Sudan. Soon after this however, Houtart was accused of 'touching a child', forty years ago, which he acknowledged and regretted, but in the contemporary context of outrage in Europe about child abuse (and especially in Belgium, where he happens to also come from, and in the Church - and where he was also once a priest), the incident came to have considerable prominence.
- Given our deep respect for his intellectual and political work, but where we as individuals also deplore such behaviour, we were at first torn about the inclusion of his work. But the episode also sharply reminded us of the sometimes severe contradictions that many involved in social and political work face, including in the practice of our own lives and in the mores of the organisations we work in and with – here, the Church; and of the continuing struggle we all must engage in to practice the values we stand for.
- After much discussion, including with other fellow travellers, we have chosen to go ahead and include his essay (in a companion volume; Houtart, forthcoming (2013)). We do so not condoning his act but in recognition of his life and work as an academic and an activist, and recognising also that so many of us struggle with contradictions in our lives. Franois Houtart is not alone. In doing so, we have been especially influenced by the argument put forward by Francine Mestrum in a posting she did on this question in December 2010. For those interested, you can see a revised and translated version of her statement in English @ http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=802.
- 73 I acknowledge though, that my main work was in Calcutta (now Kolkata), which has been a centre of left activism since the

first quarter of the 20th century, and in India where the established left continued to be strong; and so my judgement in these areas might well be somewhat blinkered and subjective.

74 Drawn from : CACIM, September 2009a and in particular, with conversations with Kolya Abramsky.

75 Levy 2009.

76 Levy 2012.

77 See 'Credits' for details.

SECTION 1

Understanding the WSF : The Roots of the WSF - The WSF as Rhizome

1.1 Charmain Levy – Influence and contribution : Liberation Theology, the Progressive Church in Brazil, and the World Social Forum

1.2 Rodrigo Nunes – The Intercontinental Youth Camp as the Unthought of World Social Forum, Revisited

1.3 Ara Wilson – Feminism in the Space of the World Social Forum

1.4 Janet Conway – Place, Scale, and the Politics of Recognition at the World Social Forum

1.5 Jeffrey S Juris – Social Forums and Their Margins : Networking Logics and the Cultural Politics of Autonomous Space

1.6 Graeme Chesters – The Secret of Fire ! Encountering the Complexity of the World Social Forum

1.7 Jai Sen – Towards Understanding the World Social Forum : Three Proposals

Influence And Contribution : Liberation Theology, The Progressive Church In Brazil, And The World Social Forum

Charmain Levy

Since its beginnings, much has been written in publications and informal articles on the origins and evolution of the World Social Forum (WSF) and the other local and regional Forums that have followed in recent years. Its origins can be traced to transnational NGOs, French intellectuals, new social movements, and the most recent social actor, the 1990s anti-globalisation movement.¹ But little, practically nothing, has been said about another actor directly and indirectly involved in the conception, organisation, and evolution of the Forums : The Progressive Brazilian Church (PBC).² As the Church's influence does not appear at first glance, one has to go back to the principles and practices of Liberation Theology (LT) and the PBC to fully understand the type of undercurrent influence that the Church has exercised on the Forum.

The PBC is a body of organisations and individuals that was inspired by LT and involved in carrying out profound changes in the Catholic Church, and in Brazilian society, from about the 1960s onwards, and which in turn had its roots in activities of the Church in Brazil in the 1950s. Unlike in other Latin American countries, Brazil's Progressive Church was, and still is, present at all levels of the Church. Progressives are found among cardinals, bishops, and priests, and also in orders and congregations.

In many ways, the PBC was the single most important social actor in the formative years of contemporary Brazilian civil society, creating, nurturing, and supporting modern social movements across Brazil in both urban centres and the countryside. For many years, and beginning with its work in the formation of the *Comunidades Eclesiais de Base* ('Christian Base Communities', CEBs) in the 1960s, it was at the heart of struggles involving poor displaced farmers, indigenous communities, fishermen, urban workers, housewives on the outskirts of cities,³ and slum and shantytown dwellers. It took action in poor communities to organise those who lost out during the modernisation of the country's economy, and it also publicly denounced social injustices, trying to influence the decisions of the political elite, and shed international light on human rights issues in Brazil.⁴

In the essay, I will explore to what extent and in what ways LT and the PBC have influenced the conception, mission, organisation, content, and evolution of the WSF between 2001-2005. I will also analyse how this influence can be differentiated from that of other WSF actors. I have based my analysis on secondary research, information available in the WSF programmes, and interviews with Brazilian Church personalities and organisation leaders who have participated in and contributed to the WSF, both at national and international levels.⁵

This subject is related to a larger one, notably the place and role of religious reflection and faith within political practices in the alter-globalisation movement, and resistance to the capitalist system. Although I will not address this general issue here, I intend to at least draw out the larger implications of the influence of LT on a phenomenon like the WSF and the social movements it embraces.

I

The Progressive Church and the World Social Forum

Why consider the PBC significant in the conception and evolution of the Forum ? First, even at the primary level of analysis, several of the actors who organised the first WSF in 2001 – thus laying the foundation for future WSFs – were principally Brazilian.⁶ If we compare their roles to

those played by actors from other participant countries, these actors have had a very major influence on the WSF.⁷ And among these Brazilian actors, half were directly or indirectly linked to or inspired by LT, and involved in past Church-led activities and / or organisations : The Justice and Peace Commission, ABONG, IBASE, and the MST. In addition, individuals such as Chico Whitaker, a Progressive Church activist, were involved in the very conception of the WSF, in this case as the representative of the Justice and Peace Commission.⁸

This article intends to demonstrate that the PBC is part of an ensemble of Brazilian civil society actors who moulded the form and content of the WSF. This particularly Brazilian influence has led to both advantages and contradictions over time, as the WSF has had to adapt to the societies, values, practices, and issues of other continents. Nevertheless, and even though the WSF has changed and evolved in time and space, its blueprint was drawn principally by Brazilian civil society actors, and especially the PBC.

Even the limited research conducted in early 2007 that led to this paper, showed clearly that LT and its expression in the PBC contributed to the mission, organisation, methodology, values, and content of the WSF in a very distinct manner. This contribution includes a seminal influence on the principles, world vision, and practices of all the individuals and civil society organisations involved in the conception and realisation of the WSF, all of whom were linked to the Progressive Church in the 1980s and 1990s.⁹ This influence – which took place both through the participation of Church members and organisations (Pastorals, *Conferencia Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil* (CNBB), or ‘Brazilian National Conference of Brazilian Bishops’, and Caritas) in the Forum’s decision-making councils and committees, as well as at the grassroots level in popular movements and groups, and ensured that the WSF adopted certain characteristics that differed from more traditional, leftist social movements in Brazil, such as those tied to leftist ideological currents (Communist, Maoist, Trotskyist), armed struggle, trade unions, and political parties.

These characteristics include diversity, respect for others, and the defence and promotion of democratic values and practices through direct participative democracy at all levels of decision-making. They especially include seeing the Forum as an open and horizontal structure, and as an instrument for awareness-raising and grassroots-empowerment. Another notable influence is the importance given to **spirituality**, **symbolism**, and **celebration** in the Forum, defining its spirit and going far beyond intellectualism.

Asserting this does not imply that other social actors participating in the WSF do not share these principles and practices, and only that LT influenced those who were strategically positioned in terms of the conceptualisation and organisation of the WSF – and their influence in turn is reflected in the characteristics mentioned above.

II

Liberation Theology and the Progressive Brazilian Church

What is so distinctive and particular about LT ideas, discourse, and practice ? In this section, I would like to present the different characteristics and axes of thought of LT, to understand how it influenced a generation of activists of the 1960s, and again the generation of activists born in the 1980s through the CEB, Church pastorals, and different popular movements – and how these activists in turn conceptualised, participated in, and moulded the WSF.

Liberation Theology is above all a spiritual and religious reflection. Its basis is that human beings are the subjects of their destiny, and the creators of history. Through participation in social movements, Christians aim at understanding specific issues such as labour, as well as more general issues such as human rights and human dignity. The fundamental inspiration is the Christian faith, lived and understood as a transforming action of history. There is a fundamental belief that the poor and destitute can contribute towards transforming the world – and pastoral and Church agents, aware that often the results are few

and far between and definitely not immediate, are dedicated to this task. They have a historical patience, and believe that revolution, or taking power from above, is not the way to long-lasting social transformations.

The central factor that characterises LT is the dialectical relation it establishes between theory and praxis. Praxis is a legitimate source of analysis, inspiration, reflection; not only a way to apply an established orthodoxy. LT is oriented towards a dialectical conception between individual practices and social structures.

The pastoral work inspired by LT cannot be attributed to its profound symbolic content or message of liberation alone. It is also inspired by the value attributed to the human struggle through social movements that aim at the utopia of liberation. The starting point is the liberation of human beings, the discovery of their dignity, the redefinition of their status as citizens, and liberation from different forms of oppression (economic, political, judicial, racial, sexual).

This theology is founded on a pastoral praxis, in turn based on the principle that the Christian faith must engage with social justice and human rights to create social change in the world. Salvation is understood at individual and collective levels as a process that begins with the construction of a new and better temporal reality.

Liberation Theology involves three different levels of social praxis : Theoretical construction based on struggles against oppression; cultural change and education that aims at awareness raising and a change in values through discussion groups; and political intervention through social movements. One of the fundamental characteristics of LT is its engagement with the liberation of the poor. The poor are not only individual objects of charity, but also the majority of the planet's population. Opting to work with the poor expresses a desire for a spiritual experience with God among the poor. This experience requires an intellectual effort that transforms Christian love into human reflection on, and scientific analysis of, a social context. The two moments – of **spiritual experience** and **theological and scientific thought** – are considered complementary, making up a living unity.

The political dimension of this “preferential option for the poor”¹⁰ is another important aspect of LT. It understands this option as a collective phenomenon and as the result of a conflictive process in a society that needs an alternative social project. This option includes a social dimension and a political character because it aims at transforming society from the grassroots. This option has a structural, collective, transformative, and liberationist character, and is directly engaged in the struggle for social justice.

Let us reiterate the idea that the liberationist vision of politics in its largest sense, as a common matrix of political and religious beliefs, is a process of elective affinity between religious ethics and social utopias that has guided many ex- and current Church activists in their actions in the WSF.¹¹ Within this vision, LT acknowledges the autonomy of the political sphere and leaves such issues to the political parties of the left, limiting itself to social and moral critiques against injustice, raising popular consciousness, spreading utopian hopes, and promoting initiatives from below.¹² Thus, only in an indirect or generic sense can the Church be considered a political actor.¹³ It is the LT discourse around a global meaning of existence that mobilises spiritual forces.¹⁴ It aims at encouraging grassroots self-organisation and democracy, and mobilising a new political culture and space, and it manifests a distrust of political manipulation, top-down structures, and state paternalism.

The origins of the PBC can be traced to the 1960s, and the social, political, and ecclesiastical changes taking place in Brazil, and the Church, internationally – Vatican II (1962-65) – and regionally – the *Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano* (CELAM, ‘Latin American Episcopal Conference’) gathering in Medellin in 1968. Politically, it was a time of rapid economic and social change, military dictatorship and repression, and the growth of Third-

World revolutionary movements alongside international polarisation between Western capitalism and Soviet communism.

One of the origins can be traced to the Catholic youth movements of the 1950s and 1960s, led by Brazilian Catholic Action (BCA), which had an important impact on the Church as well as on social movement. According to de Kadt, the most important group within BCA was the *Juventude Universitaria Catolica* ('Christian Youth University', JUC). The JUC was active in universities at a time when, in a period of accelerated economic growth and modernisation, the urban middle classes were sending a first generation to university, and so had the chance to be quite influential.¹⁵ JUC activists took active part in university politics and were close to the more secular left, which was also interested in issues around the social problems involving the popular classes. These JUC activists were incited by clergy and seminarians to participate in literacy programs and study groups to better understand the changing Brazilian context.¹⁶

After the military coup d'état in 1964, the Catholic action groups became depoliticised and many of their activists left to join Popular Action, a group inspired by the Church yet autonomous of it. Towards the end of the 1960s, this organisation went underground and several of its members opted for armed struggle, while others chose exile, or work with base communities at the grassroots. Catholic Action ceased to exist around 1968 principally due to repression from the military dictatorship.

As the coup d'état eliminated the traditional social movements of that period, the different forms of collective action earlier available to the poorest of society also disappeared.¹⁷ For the millions experiencing the consequences of rapid modernisation, the Church was now the only space open to social and political organisation. During the 1970s and early 1980s, the CEBs, as well as social pastorals (fishermen, women, and indigenous peoples, and around land and housing issues) helped - despite violent state repression - found popular movements around economic demands such as land, access to water, electricity, property, and other urban services, alongside movements based on social justice. During the 1980s, the Church actively supported these movements as well as new political parties such as the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* ('Workers' Party', PT) in their struggle for political, social, and economic democracy. It is estimated that CEBs had 2,000,000 members in the mid-1980s.¹⁸

The CEBs were basically, small community lay groups comprising twenty to 100 people of modest origins, organised by clergy or religious orders to reflect on the collective and material problems of their members in light of the Bible, and to look for solutions to these problems.¹⁹ Indigenous and other movements such as the MST, as well as numerous grassroots NGOs in Brazil, also owe their existence to the Progressive Church.²⁰

Through the CEBs, members articulated immediate local actions besides long-term, global projects for social change. During the twenty-five years of military dictatorship, the CEBs, social pastorals, and the movements they inspired valued direct democracy and participation in decision-making and activities, in opposition to the Church's top-down hierarchy and the state's authoritarianism; because, at the heart of LT is the principle of organisation as a learning process in the construction of a democratic society.

LT and the PBC were thus important agents in the strengthening of civil society during the 1980s, as the military dictatorship came to an end, helping organise and mobilise millions of people into social and political organisations. They also offered precious support to organising these groups democratically, arguing that means are as important as ends. As mentioned earlier, a second generation of social and political activists received their political education in the CEBs, social pastorals (such as land, youth, and worker), and social movements of the 1980s.

However, after 1985, CEBs began to lose their political influence as social movements gained political weight, engaging in politics as autonomous civil society organisations. Many of

the CEBs' leaders left to work with social movements and engage in politics. This politicisation of the CEBs strengthened the Brazilian left and social movements, but weakened the PBC.

The decline of the PBC during the 1990s can be attributed to different endogenous factors : The Vatican's organised attempt to reduce the influence of LT on the Brazilian Church, the Church's new reality of how to work with a new poor – unorganised victims of neo-liberal economic policies – and the return to a democratic regime that included other political actors including parties, trade unions, social movements, and NGOs.

Today, even though the Progressive Church cannot be considered a central actor any more, it still influences civil society, and politics.²¹ It not only participates actively in, but also organises networks around social justice issues through its social pastorals and CEBs, mobilising its grassroots, and other actors, around both general and specific events and issues.

The CEBs' national gatherings, important means of reaching its goals, are pertinent to this analysis. These gatherings have taken place since 1975 and are a space and moment when CEB representatives from all regions of Brazil exchange experiences and ideas, and reflect on different kinds of pastoral action and thought. Much importance is placed on the preparation of individual CEBs for this national gathering through series of parish, diocese, and regional gatherings. This process contributes to inculcating a larger vision in CEB leaders and activists, who serve as a bridge between the local and the national. These gatherings also help crystallise dispersed energies; and inspire solidarity and fraternisation among leaders, agents, and theologians. Their primary characteristic is celebration, unlike gatherings focussed on analyses and studies. They attempt to articulate opposing dimensions: festivity and struggle, celebration and death.

This articulation was especially clear in the CEB's reference to a faith-based stimulus to social action, the *mística*. This practice was developed in the CEBs and pastoral organisations that expressed this dimension in a spiritual, emotional, and artistic manner. *Mística* is composed of a force or spirit that inspires struggle and belief in social transformation based in faith, and thus differs from a cult ritual.²²

Another characteristic of the gatherings is their diversity in terms of region, race, and popular religion; most explicit around the end of the 1980s and during the 1990s, when themes were chosen especially to reflect this diversity.²³

Other events like the CNBB Social Week organised annually since 1991 can also be considered important influences on the organisation and characteristics of the WSF. The CNBB Social Week aims at creating a dynamic of "reflection, mobilisation and engagement" and has both a cognitive and spiritual vocation – that of "renewing utopias so as to strengthen motivation when going up against injustices and the structures in which they are represented".²⁴ The event is for discussing what kind of society the people want, and how to achieve it. As in CEB gatherings, events are organised both at the local and national level. This is evident in one of its themes : What Kind of Brazil Do We Want ? – an illustration of discussion of alternatives at these levels, and of the methodology of local-national-local.

To summarise, LT and its action through the Church influenced social movements in Brazil with the following ideas : The poor are the subject of their own liberation, the valorisation of popular knowledge, adding a new political meaning to Catholic symbols, giving priority to community movements, direct democracy, direct participation and networking, the significance of pacifist organisation, and the importance and relevance of pedagogy in social organisation. As we will see, many of these ideas and practices are also found reflected and manifest in the principles and practices of the WSF.

III

Characteristics of the WSF : Similarities and Differences

The origins of the WSF can be traced to a number of different international sources and

experiences. These include the many UN conferences that took place during the 1990s, the Zapatista Intercontinental Encounters for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism in 1996, 1997, and 1999 (Mexico, Spain, and Brazil), the anti-WTO demonstrations in Seattle in 1997, the anti-World-Bank protests in Washington and Prague in 2000 (among others), the Summit of the Americas in Quebec in 2001, the protest against the G8 in Genoa in 2001, and the Jubilee 2000. Among the actors involved the WSF's conception and organisation we find French intellectuals, Brazilian political party activists, NGOs, poor peoples' movements, and an anti-globalisation elite.

In order to understand LT's influence on the WSF, we must briefly describe the Forum's major characteristics. The Forum differs from past anti-capitalist, left wing gatherings in that it is decentralised and horizontal in nature. Its participants are principally civil society activists, not part of governments and political parties. This reinforces the Forum's principal of change coming not from the social elite, but from the middle and below. It is not institutional, unlike UN conferences; and it is proactive, not reactive like the gatherings in Seattle, Washington DC, Prague, Genoa, and Quebec, or the more specifically aimed campaigns.²⁵

The WSF can thus be considered a response to the limitations of participation in international organisation spaces, and of one-off oppositions to formal governance processes. It is, moreover, plurithematic - not concentrated on specific subjects or themes (such as feminists, farmers, or indigenous peoples) - but aggregating different causes, struggles, currents, and their practices.

According to Pleyers, the WSF's three main characteristics are : The inclusive atmosphere with respect for diversity; the organisation of open spaces; and the non-deliberative nature of meetings.²⁶ Just like the CEBs' national gatherings in Brazil, the WSF's original Organising Committee insisted on a decentralised and reflective character for the WSF, encouraging participants to use their local experiences to enrich the Forum, and in turn to use the Forum to refresh their local actions.²⁷ They saw it as a space for dialogue and collaboration, distinctively non-deliberative.

Again, just like LT and the CEBs have been open to understanding and sharing space with other ways of thinking and doing, the Forum aims at preserving the individual identities of its parts, while making it possible for them to join in a large, open moment, to which everyone can contribute – plural from a political and ideological point of view, but no less committed to the struggles against exploitation, injustice, and oppression; and to the search for liberty, justice, equality, and solidarity.²⁸

The Forum is considered representative of global diversity, and the political meaning it gathers as such is fundamental to this process of the democratic formation of contemporary society. The Forum also possesses a strong educational character. It is a strategic space, an agglomeration of common struggles working towards convergence and a new civilisational paradigm that aims at both structural and personal transformation.

According to Biagiotti, debate, testimony, and discussion are the tools of the Forum. What is at stake in the WSF as a socio-political phenomenon is creating an agora of alternative globalisation movements instead of subordinating them to a predetermined joint programme.²⁹ This is very similar to the experiments and experiences of the PBC. More fundamentally, it has been the horizontal, holistic, and participatory vision subscribed to the principles of deliberative democracy that made launching the Forum possible.

Similarly, the Forum's goal is not to create effective majorities capable of attaining power but to build networks, share experiences, and produce a consensus. It is a process that refuses urgency and tries to avoid imposing priorities on smaller, weaker, or less well-integrated organisations.³⁰ As in the CEBs, each participant's pace, means, and rhythm is respected.³¹ The Forum is considered both a space and a process to ensure and enable the

formation and development of social movements.³²

IV

Participation of the Progressive Brazilian Church in the WSF

While the PBC's influence on the WSF is evident, the Church's quantitative participation in the first two WSFs (2001 and 2002) was weak (though it improved significantly after 2003). Although a few organisations and personalities from the progressive Church were present at the first and second WSFs, their presence increased in quantity and quality only during the third and fifth WSFs³³, when they recognised the WSF as a space for mobilising their bases and contributing to the alter-globalisation movement with their values, practices, and discourse.³⁴

The reasons the Church did not participate massively from the start could be the many networks and events (national and international) that it organises and participates in, and the limited resources it possesses for these events. By 2002, those participating in the Forums and in their councils convinced others in the Church of the Forum's importance in terms of grassroots mobilisation and potential for social transformation. By 2003, the Forums were an integral part of the Church's agenda.

The Church thus became more aware of the importance and potential of the Forum, and invested in mobilising Church related grassroots to participate in the Forum, its decision-making arenas, and its international networks and campaigns. This was most visible in the participation of Church personalities and organisations in round tables, conferences, and workshops.³⁵ And a week before the Porto Alegre WSF in 2005 – the year it 'returned' to Brazil from Mumbai – a World Forum of Liberation Theology took place. Most of its participants then took part in the WSF. This has continued to be the case, with such a gathering also taking place just before the 2007 WSF in Nairobi, Kenya.

It is important to mention that the Brazilian Church did not organise its participation in the WSF in the manner that trade unions, feminists, and other political tendencies did - focused on issues concerning their own organisations and struggles. Instead, its participation was spread over several themes and axes such as the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA), external debt, migrants, land, and water – and therefore somewhat diluted in each.³⁶ Nevertheless, it was especially active in organising inter-faith events and celebrations that drew significant participation from WSF participants.³⁷

In terms of participation, it was important that the Church was collaborating in a universal event that interested everyone struggling against oppression and injustice, and not simply participating as the Catholic Church looking for an audience.³⁸ It did not formally organise its participation among its many organisations, leaders, and members, nor attempt to create its own groups, but rather took part, and so strengthened a collective and common effort at changing the world.

Since the beginning, Church-related organisations and personalities, such as Chico Whitaker, have participated in the WSF's International Council (IC), which discusses general political issues, the annual event's methodologies, and the WSF's future.³⁹ In the IC, activists of the PBC have adhered to the methodology of arriving at decisions through consensus and excluding the idea of having any Director, President, or Board that involves hierarchy. Its idea was of the Council as a space for participative democracy, even though this takes more time and is not always as efficient as a top-down methodology. Those belonging to, or influenced by, the Church and LT have attempted to radicalise horizontality in the administration and organisation of the Forum, as well as in the dynamics of its self-administrated actions.⁴⁰

V

Brazilian Progressive Church Undercurrents in the WSF

The Brazilian Progressive Church has thus had several kinds of influence within and on the WSF, both overtly and as undercurrents. In this section, we examine the latter.

As mentioned, during the 1950s the Church had an important influence on middle class Catholics just beginning a university education. Many of these young people would later become intellectuals and activists working with progressive social movements, political parties, and NGOs of various kinds and in various fields during the 1980s and beyond; and would later participate actively in the WSF.⁴¹ The values and practices they assimilated from the progressive Church can be found in the way the WSF is organised, in its mission, its goals, and, to a lesser extent, its content.⁴²

The most important Church related influence on the conception of the WSF was in the role played by Francisco (Chico) Whitaker, one of the founders of the Forum and coordinator of the Church organisation called Justice and Peace.⁴³ Whitaker spent most of his life as a Church activist, beginning in the JUC, where he was the Sao Paulo chapter President in 1952-1953. During the late 1970s, he coordinated the CNBB's annual International Days for a Society Surpassing Domination, setting into motion the idea of horizontal network building based on co-responsibility.⁴⁴

The influence of LT on Whitaker is evident in his writings and the positions he has taken regarding the Forum's character and mission. Since the beginning, he has advocated that the Forum's mission is not to become a 'movement of movements' but rather to strengthen the alter-globalisation movement as well as the individual movements and movement organisations that compose it.⁴⁵ He insists on the Forum's instrumental character. According to Whitaker, one of the Forum's principal goals is to generate new movements that amplify the struggle against neoliberalism or, as he has phrased it, "to be an incubator of movements".⁴⁶

Whitaker's idea of the Forum is not of an organisation aiming to take power. Like that of the Church's, the Forum's role in relation to other civil society actors, was not to take power from above or to be the central actor of transformation, as is the case in political parties and in some social movements and NGOs, but to empower social movements, especially poor people's movements, and thus influence power, and produce change from below. The idea is not to be the voice of the poor, but to make sure that their voices are heard and to facilitate their organisation and mobilisation. Church-related activists see the Forum not as a central actor that is the sum of the forces of alter-globalisation movements – as Naomi Klein's concept of a "movement of movements"⁴⁷ – but as a supporting actor to social movements and their networks that work towards transformation through collective struggle.

In this sense, the autonomy of the WSF in relation to other political actors has become central. As such, the PBC participants in the decision-making processes of the Forum comment on how they have tried to be careful to keep the Forum independent of political parties, governments, and businesses; so that it looks for its own means to guarantee its events without being strongly influenced by or dependent on other social and political actors.

Church-related participants involved in the organisation of the Forum have continuously insisted that effective political action can occur from below.⁴⁸ Drawing from their experience in the CEBs and social pastorals of the 1980s, they have emphasised that resistance involves confronting cultural logics and the quotidian practices and social relations that constitute, produce, and reinforce the dominance of political and economic systems.⁴⁹ For them, the Forum's participative essence is to fuel the idea of building alternatives.

As in the case of CEB gatherings and the Brazilian Church social week, one of the most important goals of the WSF is exchanging experiences, so that activists and social movements become aware of struggles in other parts of the world, and feel not alone but part of a larger movement. For example, pastoral agents working on a specific theme in a specific region could connect with those working on the same theme in other parts of the world. This had the effect of connecting different local and regional struggles on a global level, and creating new understandings of a larger phenomenon, which in turn nourished the local struggles in their

reflections and actions.

Similarly, Whitaker has insisted that the Forum be an open space with a horizontal character. He sees the Forum not as a meeting of intellectuals to showcase their ideas, but as a grassroots, empowering, and participative process and event.⁵⁰ There is a profound belief in the PBC that important social transformations begin locally before they go global. Action begins locally and the Forum then serves to agglutinate ideas, and as a space to replenish ideas that can transform reality; it is a space of exchanges and establishment of local, regional, and international networks that integrate peoples and groups with different visions.⁵¹ This is what gives meaning and hope to the struggles of these movements.⁵² The Church thus contributes to the WSF's utopian dimension – identifying and articulating issues of common interest to humanity.⁵³

In terms of the Forum's organisation, another influence of LT is on what we may call the *basista* character of the Forum as it takes the form of a direct democracy.⁵⁴ No one may represent the Forum or make decisions or speak on its behalf, and no statement or platform may be issued by the Forum as such. As mentioned above, it has a different conception of democracy and deliberation based on consensus and participation rather than majority rule.⁵⁵ This approach is now shared by others in the Forum worldwide, and in general the actors supporting this character of the Forum – the so-called 'horizontal' – have attempted to promote democratic politics by focusing on the micro-practices, organisation process, and bodies of the Forum itself. In addition, they have sought to challenge unequal and undemocratic relations of power by, among other things, changing how meetings are run, how space is organised, how authority and expertise are distributed, and how knowledge is conveyed.⁵⁶ This also characterises the CEBs, where decisions were made collectively, and their organisation was built on democratic practices.

Whitaker and other PBC related activists feel that in terms of organisation, priority should be given to self-organised activities that guarantee a horizontal far-reaching event, instead of a top-down vertical structure determining the content and direction of the process.⁵⁷ As in Progressive Church organisations, great value is placed on listening to the grassroots, soliciting participation from everyone, and a liberation perspective that centres on the poor and destitute.

A major influence of LT on the WSF is thus not so much on its content as on its methodology, which revolves around motivating grassroots activists and social movements to be subjects and protagonists in transforming their reality, and based on the conviction that history can be changed if we become aware of our reality and unite to transform it. As in the CEBs, awareness raising is achieved through daily collective organisation and struggle.

One may argue that these values are shared by other social movements and actors, and are not a direct result of the PBC's influence. However, as opposed to Osterweil's perception that these horizontals are primarily composed of Northern anarchists, the PBC also belongs to the horizontal camp and, as such, has been a protagonist in the Forum so as to contribute to these plural, open, participative, and grassroots characteristics to the Forum. It is true that other groups share the same grassroots empowerment perspective of the Church (Zapatistas, People's Global Action), but they were not directly involved in the conceptualisation and organisation of the WSFs as was the Church.⁵⁸

The WSF actors linked to the PBC have the advantage of belonging to a powerful institution in terms of resources, and social and political credibility, which gives them access both to decision-making and also to grassroots mobilisation. Its members are thus simultaneously involved in social movements, networks, and campaigns.

In terms of Forum content, the *mística* developed in CEBs throughout the 1980s has been a major contribution to the WSF. All collective action involves symbolic aspects, ethical

references, utopias, and a cultural dimension. Most collective action by the left in the North has taken a secular, civic orientation, but this is not the case with leftist and popular peoples' movements in the South where, as in Brazil, the religious dimension remains omnipresent, even in otherwise secular movements like the MST.

This spiritual influence is explicit in the spaces created in the Forums for religious and inter-faith celebrations and manifestations that were originally proposed in the IC by members of Brazilian Church organisations. This illustrates the Church's influence on symbolism, an important element of the Forum – through, for example, daily interfaith ceremonies in specially designated spaces, and a *mystica* at the Forum's closing ceremony. As a result, according to Correia Leite, the sense of living is a remarkable characteristic of all the great events of the WSF process.⁵⁹

Finally, those related to LT do not contend that they are the sole founders of the Forum's principles, which can also be found in other social movements in the North and South. This paper has attempted to demonstrate that Brazilian LT activists have perhaps had more influence than other actors, in the sense that ever since the Forum's conception they have participated at all levels of the Forum, in its decision-making organs as well as at the grassroots, and with other social actors. They have drawn on their experiences and practices in the PBC to contribute to and invest in the Forum. Through their participation they have put forth their vision of what the Forum should be, the different means to achieve this and, in a larger sense, to transform the world. Their ideas and practices – the poor are the subject of their own liberation, priority given to grassroots participation, direct democracy, direct participation and networking, the significance of pacifist organisation, and the importance and relevance of pedagogy in social organisation – developed during the past 30 years are the concepts that permeate the WSF.

VI

Future Perspectives on Church Influence on the WSF

In past World and regional social Fora, the Brazilian Church, in conjunction with liberationist elements in other national Churches, has increased its investment and presence as well as its visibility. This has contributed to fora that are more accessible to more people involved in popular struggles at the grassroots. More recently, it has also led to the perception by others of the growing role of religious bodies in the WSF. This growing presence of the Church may lead organisations and people from other religions to feel that this investment in the Forums is eclipsing the contribution of groups that are less institutional and possess fewer resources.

On another level, the Brazilian model of governance has come under severe criticism in the past few years and different models have been proposed by others. Aguiton and Cardon consider it a co-optive model, incompatible with the practices of other organisations and Forum participants. They feel that it is not possible to transfer a national experience to an international level with so many different governance practices and interests, and suggest other forms of governance that can better administrate conflicts around decision-making, as already adopted in the European Forum.⁶⁰ The Church's participation will be decisive as the debates continue around which path and what form the Forums should take.

In conclusion, as long as the Forum is a space that regroups leftist organisations around social transformation, the PBC will continue to participate and invest in it. However, as the Forum truly becomes a global process, the Church will have to share space with other practices and traditions from both the North and the South, which may or may not coincide with those of the Church, and which will also impregnate the culture of the WSF with their ideals and traditions.

Notes

- 1 Mertes, ed, 2004.
- 2 I do not exclude the fact that progressive international elements of the Catholic Church have also been involved in the Forum since its beginnings; however this article will focus on the Brazilian Progressive Church.
- 3 During the 1960s and 1970s, not many working class women were in the workforce and tended to be housewives. They were particularly involved in the Mothers' Clubs that religious orders created to reach these women.
- 4 Mainwaring 1986; Bruneau and Hewitt 1992, pp 45-62.
- 5 Given the short timeframe I had to write this article in, I in no way claim to have exhausted the literature on the WSF.
- 6 Aguiton and Cardon 2005, p 13.
- 7 In 2001, eight Brazilian organisations originally wrote the WSF's Charter, which was fine-tuned and ratified later that year by the Forum's International Council. If we look at the groups that organised the first WSF we find : The *Associação Brasileira de ONGs* (ABONG, 'Brazilian Association of NGOs'); the *Association pour la Taxation des Transactions et pour l'Aide aux Citoyens* (ATTAC; 'Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid to Citizens'); the *Comissão Brasileira Justiça e Paz* (CBJP; 'Brazilian Commission for Justice and Peace'), belonging to the National Brazilian Bishop's Conference; the *Associação Brasileira de Empresários pela Cidadania* (CIVES; 'Association of Brazilian Businessmen for Citizenship'); the *Central Unitaria de Trabalhadores* (CUT; 'Trade Union Central'); the *Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas* (IBASE; 'Brazilian Institute for Socio-Economic Analysis'); the Centre for World Justice (CJG); and the *Movimento de Trabalhadores Sem Terra* (MST; 'Landless Peasants' Movement').
- 8 In 2006, Chico Whitaker was awarded the Right Livelihood Award – considered by some as an 'alternative Nobel prize' – for his work, including in particular his contribution to the conceptualisation and institutionalisation of the World Social Forum as a world process. *Eds.*
- 9 Burdick describes this contribution as a "fund" of ideas that inject values into activist and popular interpretations of the world. The Church forms leaders whose form of action and thought bear the mark of their progressive Church background. Burdick 2004, pp 140-141.
- 10 This concept first arose at the Second CELAM (Latin American Episcopal Conference) gathering at Medellin in 1968, and was formally defined by the bishops in their Third Conference at Puebla in 1979.
- 11 L ö wy 1996, p 36.
- 12 Ibid, p 37. One of the most important Progressive Church activists, Frei Betto, once said that it would be wrong to transform the Church or the CEBs into a political party or a social movement because their motivation is not power but faith. (Frei Betto, in Mainwaring, p 230 FN# 10.)
- 13 Bell 2001, p 61. Bell notes that Gutierrez distinguishes between two meanings of 'political' : A broader, more inclusive sense and a more specific sense. The former refers to a general level of values and principles that have political consequences. The latter refers to specific, concrete, political plans and options. The Church cannot help but be political in the first, indirect sense of the term, but is, in principle, not political in the second, more concrete sense.
- 14 Houtart 2007, pp 24-25.
- 15 Several JUC activists were influenced by events that characterised this period, as well as by the ideas of Christian humanists such as Lebreton, Mounier, Maritain, de Lubac, and Cardonnel.
- 16 According to Wanderely, the result was that a group of Catholics, especially lay, undertook actions towards social change. Many of the activists involved in BCA would later become activists in Church pastorals and CEBs, as well as the social and political movements of the 1980s. During the 1990s, these same activists would continue their activism in NGOs, progressive political parties, and governments, as well as social movements. It is important to reiterate that an entire generation was influenced by BCA and later Liberation Theology. It is this generation that took an active role in the conception and organisation of the WSF. Wanderely 1984, p 71, cited in Levy 2000.
- 17 One can even say that 'thanks' to the military dictatorship there were no political parties to channel traditional oppositional forces, which left the CEBs free to experiment with new forms of activism and mobilisation of the poor masses. Other kinds of alternative struggles, such as armed struggle, were marginal in Brazil.
- 18 Bruneau and Hewitt 1992, p 50.
- 19 The CEBs represented a new decentralised, horizontal, and participative form of political and social collective action, giving religious symbols a critical dimension and identifying them with the interests of the poor and oppressed. One of their central principles was that questioning reality is a pedagogic process of mobilisation that involves a large number of people. It is a moment when the critical spirit and identity is formed.
- 20 It is important to mention Paulo Freire's influence on Liberation Theology and Catholic grassroots organisations, in the late 1960s and beyond, in creating a new levelled relation between the teacher and the learner, the exchange of knowledge between them, and the role of protagonist attributed to the poor.
- 21 This in terms of articulating social movements; lending its institutional resources to social movements; involvement in popular education and human rights issues; and publicly denouncing social injustices and human rights violations. Or, as Burdick explains, "Catholic progressives remain vigorous institution-builders in Brazilian social life". Burdick 2004, p 9.
- 22 For more information on *mística* and its influence on other social movements, see Burdick 2004, pp 111-114.
- 23 Such as in 1992, in the city of Santa Maria, Rio Grande do Sul, when the theme was : 'CEBs : The People's God Reborn in

the Oppressed Cultures’.

24 Interview with Luiz Demétrio Valentini, Bishop of the diocese Jales, Sao Paulo, President of Caritas Brazil, the Catholic agency responsible for humanitarian aid.

25 Although the Brazilian Church has strong ties to European and North American Church organisations, it was not as directly involved in international protests as Brazilian NGOs. We can say that the Jubilee 2000 campaign was its first strong involvement in an international campaign. And through this campaign, its main involvement was in relation to Jubilee 2000’s proposal to abolish poor countries’ external debt.

26 Pleyers 2004, p 509.

27 Leite 2005, p 12.

28 Leite 2005.

29 Biagiotti 2004, pp 532-533.

30 Biagiotti 2004, p 535.

31 Whitaker, October 2003, in Merlant et al 2003, p 57.

32 Whitaker 2004, p 114.

33 The fourth one occurred in Mumbai, India.

34 During the first WSF, Church presence included the President of the National Conference of Religious Orders, Bishops such as Dom Tomas Balduino (President of the Pastoral Land Commission) and Dom Orlando Dotti, as well as other representatives of social pastorals from the Catholic Church. The round table organised by the Brazilian Institute of Popular Action reunited several Catholic Action activists and leaders. However, the leadership of the CNBB and the *Conselho Nacional de Igrejas Cristãs do Brasil* (‘National Council of Christian Churches in Brazil’, CONIC) was not very visible. de Souza 2001.

35 For example, in 2002, there were around thirty Catholic bishops present at the WSF, including the President and Secretary-General of the CNBB. In 2002 and 2003, the Brazilian Church organised panels on external debt, the collective struggle against hunger, interfaith dialogue, and an ecumenical tent.

36 For example, during the 2005 Forum, the Church organisation Caritas-Brazil managed to mobilise the participation of over 400 of its grassroots members.

37 Interview with Friar Marcelo Barros, organiser of Space E for interfaith celebrations.

38 Interview with Leonardo Boff, ex-Franciscan and one of the founders of and principal contributors to Liberation Theology.

39 The WSF IC also organises working groups that meet principally before and after a WSF. Another operational organ is the WSF Secretariat that, between 2001 and 2003, was composed of the Brazilian Organising Committee. As the process focused on the Mumbai Forum in 2004, the WSF was renamed the WSF International Secretariat, and composed of eight Brazilian and eight Indian organisations. This organ functioned until April 2005. The role of the Secretariat is to stimulate and support regional and thematic forums; facilitate IC meetings and WSF IC commissions; ensure WSF communication process; ensure systematisation of the memory of the WSF process; and support fundraising for the WSF process.

40 Interview with José Magalhães de Sousa, Director of Caritas Brazil.

41 In his *Legacies of Liberation* Burdick also demonstrates “how individuals exposed to liberationist ideals and values have made these their own, have sometimes reshaped them, and have applied them in a variety of ways within different fields of social action”. Burdick 2004 p 10.

42 In terms of content, we can assume that there is a convergence of ideas in terms of struggles against neoliberalism and its political, social and cultural consequences.

43 Whitaker 2005c.

44 Whitaker 2005c, p 207.

45 Whitaker, October 2003, in Merlant et al 2003, p 42.

46 Whitaker, October 2003, pp 113, 117.

47 Klein 2004, in Mertes, ed, 2004.

48 Interviews with José Magalhães de Sousa, Director-General of Caritas Brazil and Luis Bassergio, coordinator of the Pastoral of Migrants and the Cry of the Excluded. Conversation with Richard Renshaw, ex-Director-General of the Canadian Catholic Organisation for Development and Peace in 2005. Whitaker 2006.

49 Osterweil 2004, pp 498-499.

50 Whitaker 2005c.

51 Interview with José Magalhães de Sousa and Roberto Malvezzi, coordinator of the Pastoral Land Commission.

52 Interview with L Boff. This is explicit in these words of a Canadian priest, former missionary and representative of a Catholic organisation, Richard Renshaw: “The World Social Forum is another expression of the long struggle of Liberation Theology to provide a space where the voice of the poor can be heard, where it can erupt into the world of the rich and powerful and where God’s Kingdom, always present and always challenging us, can be welcomed into the real world of today” (Renshaw 2004).

53 Löwy 2007, p 7.

54 The *basista* nature may be defined as social transformation from below that provides a short term answer to poor communities' problems, and acts in the perspective of long term change. David Lehmann, in Democracy and Development in Latin America (Lehmann 1990, p xiii), describes *basismo* as a "grassroots ideology of development" and adds that "in the strong version of *basismo* the 'people' are viewed as the only legitimate source of political understanding, the formal institutions of liberal democracy are regarded as a type of alienation, and collective-consumption, trade unionism, and communal self- management, as opposed to party militancy, constitute the prime elements of political mobilisation".

55 Pleyers 2004, p 514.

56 Osterweil 2004, p 498.

57 This is clear in the following statement: "The objectives of the Forum are to allow as many people, organisations and movements opposed to neo-liberalism to get freely together, listen to each other, learn from the experiences and the struggles of the others, discuss proposals of action, and become linked in new networks and organisations aimed at overcoming the present process of globalisation dominated by large international corporations and financial interests". Whitaker 2004, p 119.

58 It is interesting to note that the European Forum has differed from the WSFs organised in Porto Alegre and Mumbai in its methodology and in its relation with political parties and government. The involvement of the St-Denis municipal government in 2003 and the London municipal government in 2004 was commented on in Osterweil 2004.

59 Leite 2005, p 139.

60 Aguiton and Cardon 2005.

The Intercontinental Youth Camp As The Unthought Of World Social Forum, Revisited ¹

Rodrigo Nunes

Despite being as old as the World Social Forum (WSF) itself – it has existed since the first edition in Porto Alegre, in 2001 –, and despite its having become a major part of the WSF (roughly a quarter of the total number of participants in 2003 and 2005), the Intercontinental Youth Camp (IYC) remains a mostly unknown and untold story, perhaps even to the people who ‘lived’ there.² From its humble beginnings in 2000 (about 2,000 people, mostly Brazilians) to its peak in 2005 (37,000 people from all over the world, its own social currency, and its own full-fledged cultural and political programme), in the way it was organised, in the understanding of the Forum that it involved, the Camp has by and large remained an obscure part of the history of the WSF.

While the Youth Camp has officially been a space of the WSF since 2002, and has also taken place in one form or another in most editions of the world meetings of the WSF that have been organised outside of Porto Alegre, the very particular experiment and experience of the Porto Alegre IYC has never been tried, let alone replicated elsewhere, in terms of size, importance, or characteristics. This is because, in the course of the 2001-2005 period, despite its being just one part of the WSF process, it also developed and sustained a dynamic of its own – one that, while shaped by the political environment in which it developed, was also rich and novel enough to contribute something new to it. Not only did some of its practical experiments eventually become incorporated into the main event itself, it also generated much theoretical elaboration on politics and on the WSF process. Given that the organisers of the Youth Camp were at each point faced with the same problems as the organisers of the WSF, in what concerned the organisation of events as much as the maintenance of a process, there is almost a parallel history to be told through the ways in which IYC grappled with them. In some areas, the solutions it came up with had an impact on the overall process; in others, they failed to.

This essay attempts to recover some of this parallel history, describing the conditions that made the Porto Alegre IYC what it was, recounting some of its contributions and innovations, and trying to explain what were the reasons that limited its impact.

I

A Short Genealogy of the WSF and the IYC

A genealogy of the WSF cannot, by definition, begin with it; it is not a matter of finding ‘fathers’ or ‘leaders’ from whose heads it would have sprung fully formed, but identifying, in the political panorama of the late 1990s, the conditions that led to it.

From Chiapas to Seattle

After more than a decade of neo-liberal advance in the world, and the end of really existing self-appointed alternatives to capitalism in 1989-90, the mid-1990s saw the announced success – in fact, inevitability – of capitalist globalisation, encapsulated in Thomas Friedman’s infamous ‘vanilla’ thesis :

There is no more chocolate chip, there is no more strawberry swirl, there is only plain vanilla and North Korea. (...) Not only is all that we’ve got plain vanilla, but everyone is basically happy about it.³

Then it happened : In the first hours of 1994, as the North American Free Trade Agreement came into force, the Zapatista uprising in Mexico created a certain amount of disruption around the edge of this triumphant picture. Not a typical Latin America guerrilla

movement of the 1960s-70s, this uprising aimed not at taking power and creating a socialist regime; its communication was not the usual cliché-ridden leftwing discourse, but full of irony, poetry, and sophistication; those who had 'put on masks so that they could be seen' wanted to make the voice of the indigenous communities living in subhuman conditions in the poor region of Chiapas heard; and these voices cried for 'justice, dignity, and freedom', and the establishment of new, horizontalised, community-centred forms of governance.⁴

Not only was the quick success of the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation) in establishing territorial autonomy in Chiapas a wake-up call for people all over the world, its subsequent success in surviving as a political force depended on the support, material and immaterial, of internationals. This turned Chiapas into an important place of political inspiration and interchange, which led to the organisation of the First International Encounter Against Neo-liberalism and for Humanity in 1996.⁵

If anything, this First *Encuentro* was the direct forerunner of the WSF. What was remarkable about it was that, instead of looking for support in traditional Western leftwing parties or international NGOs, the people the EZLN spontaneously gathered belonged to small, grassroots groups espousing principles of horizontal, networked-based organisation, whose appearance itself was a relatively new element in the political scene. These were also the groups behind the organisation of the Second Encounter in Spain the following year, 1997, which in turn led to the creation in 1998 of People's Global Action, the first international 'anti-globalisation' network, self-defined as a 'coordinating instrument' for groups and movements struggling against international financial institutions such as the IMF and the WTO.

These first steps in organisation would eventually come to full fruition in the anti-WTO and anti-IMF protests of Seattle in November 1999 and Prague in September 2000, respectively. These massive, plural, and spectacular demonstrations against capitalist globalisation managed to puncture the supposed 'consensus' of what the French have dubbed *la pensée unique* of neoliberalism and make newspaper headlines all over the world. For the first time in years, the idea of inevitability in the ways of global economy was challenged, and mostly by networked, internet-based, non-traditional, new forms of organisation, which instead of couching their political agendas within the framework of this or that nation-state (as political parties and trade unions, for obvious reasons, are bound to do), used the global situation as their background – and simultaneously demanded and helped create a transnational political sphere for their discourse and practices.

From Seattle to Porto Alegre

Sometime in 2000, after events such as Seattle, some groups decided that the moment was ripe for an anti-neo-liberalism event, gathering intellectuals and movements from across the world, to raise the profile of the struggle and reach out to larger numbers of people. This was the initiative of groups with an older background and outlook, which went on to become the WSF Organising Committee (OC) : ATTAC, the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), the Brazilian Commission for Justice and Peace (CBJP),⁶ the largest Brazilian trade union federation (CUT), the NGOs IBASE, Cives, and Rede Social, and the NGO association ABONG. Of these, only the first two had a significant international presence and had up to that point had some involvement in the mobilisations taking place around the world. But the heavy presence of Brazilian organisations made sense considering what had already been decided about this event : That it would be pitched as the counterpart of the World Economic Forum in Davos, hence the name (the 'social' versus the 'economic') and the date when it should be held; and that it would take place in the global South – more specifically, in Porto Alegre, capital of the state of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

The composition of the OC gives an idea of what the main vectors shaping the event

were – not only what the forces were, but also the trajectories they were coming from. ATTAC, despite having a leadership whose political trajectories had begun in the 1960s-70s, was the one that was the closest to those new actors at the forefront of the new cycle of struggles, in terms of its organisational form (despite its supposedly network nature being repeatedly overridden by its founders/leaders), its emphasis on transnational politics, and its direct involvement in moments such as Prague. The NGOs had been involved in a different sort of transnational coordination – that of the United Nations conferences during the 1990s, including the 1992 summit in Rio de Janeiro; their experience lay in lobbying and negotiating with governments and international organisations.⁷ Finally, all the NGOs, as well as CBJP, MST, and CUT had a common background in their more or less organic ties to the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT).

Much has been said about the role played by PT in the creation of the WSF.⁸ What must be understood here, however, is that this was not a simple case of 'entryism': Rather than the PT infiltrating the organisation of the WSF, the fact is that the WSF took place in a political landscape fundamentally defined by the existence of the PT. To understand this, it is necessary to understand that the PT has a very unique history. After fifteen years of military dictatorship in Brazil, the last years of the 1970s saw a progressive thaw of the political sphere: A certain level of dissent was tolerated, political prisoners and exiles were given amnesty (along with torturers, it must be said), and many started joining the ranks of MDB (Brazilian Democratic Movement), the only 'opposition' party available. Several elements were lying around, however, waiting for a catalyst: The *comunidades eclesiais de base* (basic ecclesial communities) organised by the Liberation Theology wing of the Catholic Church; growing peasant movements, especially in the South of the country; the environmental and trade union struggle of the *seringueiros* (rubber tappers) in the North and Northwest; the remnants of various small splinter groups who had reneged the politics of the Communist Party in the 1960s; the new independent trade unionism; and various political tendencies within the student movement. The catalyst came in the form of the auto industry strikes in São Paulo, led by a union leader called Lula; it was then that the idea of organising a new, grassroots-based party 'of workers without bosses' came about, which resulted in the foundation of PT in 1980.⁹

The PT was thus born as an umbrella for very different sectors which retained much autonomy within what often functioned as their political/electoral instrument. Its hegemony in the Brazilian left thus comes not only from its size (it is the largest leftwing party in Latin America), but from the fact that its direct or indirect connections spread across a much wider area than that of the party itself, resulting in a political culture of greater permeability and flexibility than most other political parties'. Even if the PT of 2001 was already a very different animal than in its early days – much more bureaucratic and election-oriented, much less bottom-up and grassroots-controlled – it is unlikely that any smaller, more traditional leftwing grouping could have dealt as comfortably with the degree of diversity and openness the situation required.¹⁰ While its size and hegemonic position allowed the PT to be relatively relaxed about not needing to control everything, its internal plurality meant at once that it was not alien to a culture of looser, more flexible agreements, and that its different internal tendencies and interest groups did not necessarily act as a single, unified force.¹¹ At the same time, it could count on the affinity and general sympathy of many non-members involved in the organising process.

This is not to say, of course, that some decisions regarding the WSF were not taken with the party's interest in mind, but that this was usually less a case of impositions made on the organising process from the outside than a matter of the way the process was shaped. Take the choice of Porto Alegre as the host city: It obviously also served to give international visibility to what had been a showcase PT administration since 1988, the place where some of their then

most touted policies, such as the Participatory Budget, had been introduced.¹² At the same time, the WSF would not have happened in 2001 were it not for heavy investment from the local and state governments that had been in the hands of PT since 1998, and there was also no other place in Brazil at the time where that would have been possible. Besides, it was common for many non-members to hold those administrations and policies up at the time as examples of fresh radical thinking on the left.

Ultimately, what this genealogy allows us to see is : The wave of protests that created the global political space where the WSF could happen was mostly produced by actors that were younger and with different political practices to the previously-existing older cultures and forces that produced the WSF. In the Youth Camp, this would come to be defined in generational terms : A 'new' and an 'old' political generation. This leads us to the subject of this article.

II

The First WSF and the First IYC

The consequence of the above is that the first WSF looked like a mixture of old-style politics and NGO culture. On the one hand, a place for people to gather to listen to the 'thinkers' of the global movement, or rather, usually intellectuals and leaders who had made a name for themselves in the 1960s and 1970s; on the other, a vast amount of workshops, many of which dealing with local problems and solutions, most of which organised by NGOs.

As such, this did not have much to do with something like Seattle : No big warehouses turned into convergence centres where people could crash with their sleeping bags, no spokescouncils, no communal meals. It was meant for a political world where people or their organisations could afford hotels and restaurants, and would not be in the least fussed by the fact that the event took place in the very comfortable facilities of a private university with Coca-Cola vending machines in the corridors. It came across as both a one-off event, and unrelated to the events of recent years – the only official acknowledgement of which being, perhaps, the title of the opening march : 'Against Neo-liberalism and for Life'.

The Youth Camp came about as a very practical consequence of this situation : Despite the fact that the WSF had the potential to mobilise a great number of students and young people in general, no thought whatsoever had been put by the organisers into how to make this possible. Therefore, the idea of a 'Youth Camp' was initially raised as an emergency solution to provide accommodation for many (younger) people who might have otherwise not gone Porto Alegre. As it happens, Porto Alegre has a huge public park, Harmonia, in a very central location; just the perfect place for people to come and pitch their tents for five days.

The organisation of the first Youth Camp, in 2001, as much as that of the first WSF itself, was a very local affair : Less than two months before the event took place, a number of youth groups got together as the WSF Youth Committee and negotiated with the state and local governments for their financial and structural support for the camp. To say that it was a local affair means that it was a natural consequence of its political landscape : Since most youth organisation in Brazil is channelled through political parties, the groups involved were basically the youth of two PT internal tendencies, and of the smaller Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB) and Unified Socialist Workers' Party (PSTU).

It is clear, then, where the name 'Youth Camp' came from; it makes sense in different Latin American countries as a political category used by leftwing parties. Most of these young people are engaged in student politics, which is heavily dominated by organised party structures. Again, it is a good example of how existing political cultures helped shape the Forum : In their wish to bring together 'intercontinental' 'youth', the organisers were unaware of how badly the concept translated for those (young) people who had been in Seattle and Prague.

In any case, there were only two continents represented at the first IYC, Europe and the

Americas. And in the end, it served mostly as free accommodation : Of the 2,000 people who lived there for five days, most would take the bus to the Catholic University in the morning and attend the official event. A small cultural programme was organised for the evenings, mostly revolving around a very small stage; still, most people would rather go to the big concerts happening just round the corner at the Pôr-do-Sol Amphitheatre. A small 'political' programme was devised as well, which consisted of a 'Youth Plenary' in the mould of a Brazilian students' encounter; it was attended by around 70 people, almost all of which belonging to groups involved in the organisation. Naomi Klein was said to be expected, but did not show up; she probably did not miss much.

III

The WSF According to the IYC

Many things changed between the first and the second editions of the WSF/IYC. On the WSF's part, the realisation that the experiment had succeeded and could be more than a one-off led to the issuing of the Charter of Principles, which defined the Forum as an open space and not a 'locus of power',¹³ and the establishment of the International Council (IC). On the IYC's part, organisation for the second WSF started this time as early as ten months before, when the 'WSF Youth Committee' now became the 'Youth Committee'. It sought to replicate the change in the organisational logic of the WSF – where the IC was supposedly responsible for the politics, while the Brazilian Organising Committee (BOC) dealt with on the ground executive decisions – in having a National Youth Committee (NYC) and a Rio Grande do Sul Youth Committee, the executive body in Porto Alegre.¹⁴ This, however, would prove not to be such a good idea.

Many things had changed in the world as well : The heavy repression in Gothenburg and Genoa and the terrorist attacks of 9/11 meant a further widening of the gap between those groups involved in direct action and the ones organising the WSF; where the latter saw the need to distance themselves from anything that could be labelled violent, the former often felt left to their own devices and, in some cases criminalised by the state, corporate media, and political forces on the left. The gap was made evident at the WSF IC meeting in Barcelona,¹⁵ when the now- extinct, PGA-related Catalanian Movimiento de Resistencia Global (MRG), having been invited to join the IC, replied by staging an occupation of the meeting to ask why other, similar groups had not been invited, and to expose the contradiction in a network belonging to a representative body.¹⁶ On the other hand, the crisis in Argentina had given rise to various forms of self-managed grassroots experiments, and provided the world with a vivid picture of the depths neo-liberalism could create, as well as where the alternatives to it could come from.

The Youth Committee, in the meantime, also underwent a very significant transformation. Gone were some of the original political party youths; in came new elements, such as LGBTT groups, the National Homeless Boys and Girls Movement, the growing Porto Alegre hip hop movement, and many individuals and smaller groups. One of these was to provide extremely valuable input : The Free Metropolitan Council of Architecture Students (COLMEA). Along with the less-structured, less party-influenced organising practices of the Architecture students' movement, they brought with them the concept of the Youth Camp as a city. Both things were what would start setting the IYC apart from the WSF.¹⁷

The IYC as a City, the WSF as a Process

In conceptualising itself as 'a city within the city', the IYC effectively produced its own interpretation of what it meant to treat the WSF, as many of its organisers had by then started saying, as 'a process, not an event'. This meant, first of all, that it had to address its material relation to the space in which it was to exist and where it would leave its imprint once the event had ended. In other words, that the process of organisation that the WSF purported to be

was not only something that should take place at workshops and plenaries, in conversations and meetings, but had to be a very material process starting from those actors that could be involved 'on the ground'. It was not just a matter of finding consensual analyses or developing common agendas, but of taking the motto 'another world is possible' *into the organising process itself*. A good example of that was the solution found, from the 2002 IYC, to work with the homeless population of the park : To involve them in the process of waste collection and selection, centred on a Waste Selection Plant organised by the National Waste Collectors' Movement, providing them not only with a source of income during the days of the event but with a possibility of becoming involved in the Movement in the long run.

The idea, in other words, was to think of the event as a moment in a larger process – larger than the process of organising WSF events. Usually, what members of the IC or BOC seemed to have in mind when speaking of Social Forums 'as process' referred to a continuity between one event and the other – in terms of expanding the number of participants and involved organisations, carrying an agenda further, and pursuing a common pedagogy of dialogue, inclusiveness and diversity.¹⁸ The IYC's conception, however, saw this – the process of Social Forum events – as only a part of a much larger one. Firstly, that of the cycle of struggles that pre-existed the WSF and which made it possible, sidestepping the confusion many a IC or BOC member would come to make, speaking of the SF process as if it were 'the movement' in itself. This was signalled by the move – unprecedented within the WSF process - to strengthen ties with the (mostly) Global North groups who had been prominent in the anti-WTO and anti-G8 mobilisations, and to establish a line of continuity with then-recent history, naming the Camp 'The Carlo Giuliani City of Youth',¹⁹ and providing space for an encounter of horizontal, anti-hierarchical groups from all over the world, the Intergalactika Laboratory of Global Resistance.²⁰

More importantly, though, this 'larger process' was one of material organisation and concatenation of the existing struggles and practices that posited alternatives to capital – "the slow cultivation of the coming together of these many worlds that coexist".²¹ Thus, while the second WSF had a professed emphasis on 'proposing alternatives', as if people would come together and agree on a minimal programme of things to do, the IYC was all about tapping into the already existing resources and practices of social movements and giving them the opportunity to come into contact with each other and expand. It was less a matter of proposing different things to be done than one of simply doing them.

Thus, whereas the WSF remained within the expensive buildings of the Catholic University, all the common spaces at the IYC were built in collaboration with social movements using environment-friendly techniques, such as vernacular technology (mud, wood etc), or recycled waste (plastic, milk cartons, etc). Whereas the WSF struggled to make itself heard by and through corporate media, the IYC was the only place 'within' the WSF for alternative media, with a free-software-based computer lab and a radio station shared by Indymedia, local community and free radios. In lieu of the Coca-Cola vending machines at the WSF, most of the food was provided by social movements, organic producers, and solidarity economy enterprises. While the WSF event remained an event in the most traditional sense, Harmonia Park was a **space** for people to live and share, with a self-management plan that divided the tents into zones and expected people to share the responsibility for things such as security and cleaning.

The point of the Youth Camp, however, was more than just a 'prefigurative politics' of 'being the change you want to see' as an end in itself. For involving social movements in eco-construction was understood also as a moment of technological transfer and development of political relationships (and where this is one which has in fact worked : Many of the then architecture students involved in the IYC today work with organisations such as the MST in

exactly this field). Involving solidarity enterprises or using free software was understood as a way of introducing these to a wider constituency, opening a debate on how people could support different struggles by transforming their daily practices (of consumption, of participation) – but also took off from the very simple fact that the more people buy from solidarity economy or use free software or independent media, the more the networks practicing them can find ways of collaborating and supporting each other, and the stronger they become. Likewise, the point about the self-management plan was less the expectation that an ephemeral city of very diverse population would be fully self-managed than to foster the debate about ways in which people could take control of their own collective life, and about familiarising them with the sort of practices that had by then become widespread among *piqueteros* and neighbourhood assemblies in Argentina after that country's 2001/2002 crisis. More than ideas or a common agenda, it was this experience in **different ways of doing**, as well as their networking in mutually supporting ways, that was expected to constitute 'the process'.

The Porto Alegre IYC as process

From 2002 on, the IYC would consistently make many of the WSF-related headlines, and most of the pictures. On the one hand, this was a function of the media's exoticising interest in the Forum – what could be quainter than thousands of fresh-faced, body-pierced, tattooed, dreadlocked youngsters living in tents? On the other hand, this not only signalled the growth of the IYC in terms of numbers (from 12,500 people from all continents in 2002, to 23,500 in 2003, to 37,500 in 2005), but also the fact that it had become a process and event on its own right, with its own programme of cultural and political activities where the emphasis was on collective, informal environments rather than the 'talking head' framework employed by the WSF. This would eventually be acknowledged by the WSF IC at a meeting in Bangkok later that year, when it was decided that the IYC was an integral part of the WSF and should happen wherever the WSF went.

That it had become something in its own right was clear in how the concepts of 'city' and 'process' and the practices introduced in 2002 would carry on developing. As the occupied area expanded to contain the growing population, so did the spatial organisation (with a clearer differentiation between camping and activities areas) and the common services become more complex (with the introduction, for instance, of a station to treat the water from the showers). The gamble according to which investing in solidarity economy, free software, independent media etc would strengthen them paid off, as their participation intensified not only in quantity, quality, and diversification, but also in a recognition of the IYC as **the** space for political debates. Likewise, some progress was made in the self-management process, and some of the areas of the Camp indeed became pretty much self-managed.²²

The fact of the IYC now being something in its own right was also clear in the way in which experiments and transformations in the larger political landscape were reflected within the IYC. For example, the experiments with social currencies and barter fairs that had been implemented in Argentina in the wake of 2001-2002 crisis were incorporated in the IYC from 2003 on, with the introduction of a currency (Sol) that could be exchanged for Reais²³ on a 1:1 rate and that was accepted by stalls around the Camp. This, and the creation of a Cultural Exchange Fair that employed its own currency (Lua), fostered the Camp's local economy as well as introducing the idea and practice of alternative currencies to a wider constituency.²⁴

That none of this was ever tried, let alone replicated, outside of Porto Alegre comes down to three factors. Firstly, that nowhere else did the organisation of the IYC have this time to grow and develop; secondly, that any knowledge transfer between the Porto Alegre IYC organisers and those elsewhere was rendered very deficient by material conditions such as the lack of travel funds, a permanent office, availability of language skills, and access to the internet

etc, and where this in turn necessitated the not always very effective mediation of the BOC/ES.²⁵ Thirdly, and most importantly, the singularity of the overlap of very different and specific political cultures, trajectories, and circumstances in the Porto Alegre IYC OC.

It was around 2002 that the concept of 'new political generation' started being used by the Porto Alegre IYC organisers. What it meant did not have much to do with age as such : It referred to new ways of organising and practicing politics, to the new political sensibility embodied by the new political actors that had made emerged in the second half of the 1990s. The use of the concept was ambiguous. On the one hand, it served to demarcate the difference between the IYC as 'laboratory of practices'²⁶ and more radical, action-oriented, horizontal space, and the more institutional, representative, hierarchical state-centred approach hegemonic among IC and BOC members. On the other, it recognised a fault line within the IYC organising process itself, opposing the youth wing of political parties and more traditional organisations ('youth') to the more autonomous, networked elements ('new political generation'). That is, it meant 'we' when used outside of the IYC process, but its use within it defined a 'us' and 'them'.

More than mere tactical fluctuation, this ambiguity reveals two things. Firstly, a reality experienced by the youth of political parties which the IYC, as the 'youth' of the WSF process, also confronted : That of having its contribution systematically discounted by the 'adult' leadership. The concept of 'youth' inevitably suggests something in the process of being formed, an earlier stage in the development of something that will grow up to have a form that is, however, already established (the 'adult'). Thus, reclaiming an altogether different identity, rather than the 'undeveloped' form of an established one, functioned as leverage both for the IYC within the WSF process, and for the party youth involved in the IYC organisation within their other spaces of political participation. Secondly, it shows how the core of the IYC organising process developed into a unique combination of political cultures of its own.²⁷

This became perfectly clear when the National Youth Committee fell apart as a result of having become a infighting-ridden 'locus of power' for political party youth completely detached from the actual work of organising the IYC and from the understanding of the SF process and politics that was developing in Porto Alegre. After the 2002 edition, the NYC was dissolved, and all organisational responsibility fell upon the Porto Alegre Youth Committee, now renamed the IYC Organising Committee (IYC OC).²⁸ More than just recognition of the local specificity of the work required, this demonstrates how much the logics according to which the IYC was thought of and the IYC OC functioned had moved away from the average Brazilian (party) 'youth' politics. This was testified by changes in the IYC's composition : From 2002 on, the relative weight of political parties progressively decreased and the 'autonomous' activists²⁹ came to outnumber those belonging to political organisations. Besides, the political relations that traversed the core group of organisers (solidarity economy, independent media, popular movements etc) were of a very different order than the power struggles over apparatuses that mostly occupied student politics. Likewise, and very significantly, the focus on open process, shared space, horizontality, prefigurative politics, the rejection of fixed institutional forms, and a globalist outlook not only separated the IYC from the (party) 'youth' politics then predominant in Brazil but also approximated it, precisely, to the 'new political generation' that had been at the forefront of struggles in the global North. In this sense, both the 'youth' and the 'new political generation' that were now within the IYC OC shared a common ground in the politics characteristic of that new cycle of struggle.

Yet, at the same time, even those who had never been members of political parties also shared with the others the common ground of politically coming of age not only in a field heavily determined by the hegemonic presence of PT, but, especially, in the context of the experience of the PT administrations in Porto Alegre and Rio Grande do Sul. This becomes clear

in the language of the IYC OC's documents, mixing as it does the new lexicon of 'movement of movements' and 'horizontality' with the vocabulary of governance : 'Inclusion', 'participation', 'public policies'.³⁰ This was not only clear in the way in which the city was thought – as a 'shared space' rather than a 'hub'³¹ – but also a precondition for much that was unique about the IYC : Solidarity economy, family agriculture, and free software, for example, were directly supported by state government policies at the time, and the existence of this prior coordination was key to the IYC's capacity to tap into it. (Not to mention, of course, that the local and state governments financial and institutional support were key to the IYC having managed populations greater than those of most towns in Rio Grande do Sul.)

Likewise, the existence within the IYC of organised social movement (the MST, National Homeless Boys and Girls Movement, National Waste Collectors' Movement), with less ad hoc structures, also facilitated the establishment of political relations. In fact, the unique brand of deliciously optimistic utopia contained in the IYC's concept of the 'process' of the WSF could be described as a 'new political generation' twist on an understanding of the relation between social movements and state that was characteristic of the PT experience, particularly in Porto Alegre. Here, tactical occupation of and collaboration with the state apparatus would serve to create the conditions for expanding social organisation, in turn creating the conditions for progressive autonomisation from capital and the state. At the same time, however, the ways in which the IYC attempted to foster that process were also heavily influenced by then current social policy concerns; in the example of the Waste Selection Plant, the handing over of the provision of services to organised social groups, but also the transversality involved in bringing together the problem of waste management and the situation of the park's homeless population.³²

In general, from 2002 the term 'youth', either in the sense of 'young people' or that of 'youth wings' of parties and organisations, had become too limited to account for what was going on. Neither the space nor the agenda were restricted to age or to student or 'youth' politics; the political and social relations established by the IYC went far beyond (as testified by the involvement of the MST, homeless, environmentalist, free software, solidarity economy, *piquetero* and *desocupado*³³ movements), and if there was a significant difference between the kinds of debates and practices going on there and those in the main event, this had more to do with a difference in political cultures and comprehensions of politics manifested in each space than with age as such.

IV

Unfulfilled promises

The 2004 WSF in Mumbai, India, represented a major new point of departure for the WSF process. For the first time not in charge of the executive decisions, the BOC/ES watched as the Indian Organising Committee refused money from the Ford Foundation, employed free software on all levels, and, instead of comfortable university premises, held the main event in an abandoned factory whose inside was transformed by means of relatively cheap, vernacular architectural techniques. On the other hand, the plenaries in which the 'intellectuals' of the 'movement' spoke during the Forum were largely unattended, whereas the self-organised activities took place in overcrowded rooms. From now on, the actors involved in the Indian process were forces to be reckoned with, and the Brazilian groups had to show they were capable of keeping up.

After India, the discussion turned in Brazil to how the next Porto Alegre could be entirely different from the previous three, and the only ones in the Brazilian WSF process who could claim some experience in this area were those involved in the IYC organisation. Not only was the IYC OC therefore invited to join the BOC, but the Youth Camp also came to be spatially incorporated by the WSF : The next Forum, in 2005, took place not at the PUC but entirely in

public spaces along the shore of the Guaíba Lake, and with Harmonia Park and the IYC right in its middle. The people responsible for the whole of the WSF infrastructure were now PK Das, the architect who designed the layout for the Mumbai WSF, and the infrastructure working group of the IYC OC. The IYC OC also had important input in International Council working groups such as solidarity economy and communication.

Instead of having thematic axes around which plenaries, seminars, and workshops were proposed, as had happened in the past, the WSF now took place in what it called the 'World Social Territory' – also described as 'a city within the city'³⁴ – divided into eleven Thematic Terrains with spaces for activities around certain key themes; and instead of the BOC-organised plenaries, the whole event consisted in self-organised activities resulting from the merging of proposals from different organisations, with the intention of facilitating common projects and campaigns resulting from their encounter. In other words, this redesign for 2005 closely resembled the 2003 IYC's 'Thematic Convergence Spaces' – which in turn had been inspired by a similar experience at the 2002 Argentinean Social Forum.³⁵

These examples show us two things. Firstly, how, as the SF process complexified into a constellation of new spaces (regional, national, and thematic forums, autonomous spaces etc), all of these were grappling with the same questions being asked by the new 'core' of the IC/BOC. From 2002 on, the key question had become that of how, without losing in openness and diversity, could the WSF produce concrete convergences that would develop into common agendas, agreed initiatives, etc ? It was exactly this problem that Thematic Convergence Spaces and Thematic Terrains wished to address.

Secondly, the examples show us that some of the most interesting attempts at solutions were coming from the SF process' periphery rather than from its core – sometimes slowly incorporated, sometimes ignored, sometimes incorporated but unacknowledged, by the latter. Indeed, the 'recognition' received in 2005 came with a bittersweet taste for the IYC OC : All the texts and public declarations made by key IC and BOC members after India identified the various issues that had been raised by the Youth Camp since 2002 as being 'the lessons of Mumbai' !³⁶ This was especially clear at the presentation of the overall design of the 2005 WSF, where both the-then mayor of Porto Alegre (himself a relative newcomer to the process) and the head of the Porto Alegre WSF office both spoke of the changes as being entirely the consequence of the learning process of India.³⁷ Maybe this was the price to pay for being 'youth'.³⁸

When this text first was written, six years ago, it bore a clumsy, unacknowledged reference to Heidegger in describing the IYC as the 'unthought' of the WSF. The word was mostly used in a prosaic way – to describe the IYC as something that had been both alongside and inside the WSF process since its inception, and still somehow had managed to be 'missed'. The other meaning of the word that the Heidegger reference alluded to, however – and as it should be – worked, as it were, behind the author's back. To put it roughly, and with less concern for philological exactitude than for the use that can be made of it here : The 'unthought' as the condition under which what is given is given; the background against which the objects of our thought can appear to us, but which, as a background, must withdraw and be forgotten as soon as we make these objects into objects of thought. This sense is opposed to the more prosaic one – of something being missed, or not thought about – in that it does not signal a blank space in a field of objects, as something that was 'somehow missed', but as what is always *necessarily* missed : 'Not a lack [but what] is there in each case only as the unthought'.³⁹

With the distance that time affords, I can now see that the actual unthought of in **both** the IYC and the WSF was the richness of creation, collaboration, mobilisation, and struggle of the turn of the century's 'global moment'.⁴⁰ As that moment receded, for reasons both intrinsic

and extrinsic (such as the climate created by the so-called War on Terror), it was the peripheries of the Social Forum process that were the first to be affected – losing capacity to mobilise and innovate, being appropriated by particular interests, and becoming embroiled in power struggles. The WSF, which in the meantime had developed considerable fundraising capacity and negotiating clout, distanced itself more and more from these original conditions, the dynamic of its organisational ‘core’ growing increasingly self-referential and divorced from the dynamics of other sectors of the larger ‘movement’ which it still purports to be the space for.

It may just be, as some would argue, that there is simply no need today for something like the WSF as there was (or seemed to be) ten years ago.⁴¹ But then again, there may be, at some point in the not so distant future again, the need for a space or spaces *like* the WSF. In that case, those attempting to create something of the kind would be well advised to start by thinking the WSF from the conditions that made it possible – and to perhaps learn its history starting from its periphery to its core.

Notes

- 1 This essay was originally written in July 2004 and then revised in June 2005, for publication in a special edition of *ephemera* on the World Social Forum edited by Steffen Boehm, Sian Sullivan, and Oscar Reyes (available at <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-2/5-2index.htm>); and has now been substantially revisited and revised, with the benefit of half a decade of hindsight, for this volume. The editors of this book warmly thank the editors of that seminal issue of *ephemera* for permission to re-publish the essay here, and the author for agreeing to revisit and revise it.
- 2 While attendance to the WSF in Porto Alegre increased 7.5 times between 2001 and 2005 (from 20,000 to 150,000), the number of people at the IYC grew by 18.5 (2,000 to 37,000 people).
- 3 Friedman 2003.
- 4 *Eds* : For a detailed discussion of the origins, emergence, and impacts of the Zapatista movement, see the essay by Xochitl Leyva Solano and Christopher Gunderson in a companion volume in the *Challenging Empires* series, *The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds* (Leyva Solano and Gunderson, forthcoming (2013)).
- 5 *Eds* : For a detailed discussion of the wide resonance of the Zapatista movement in many parts of the world, see the essay by Alex Khasnabish in the same companion volume, as above (Khasnabish, forthcoming (2013)).
- 6 A commission of the National Confederation of Brazilian Bishops, a body within the Catholic Church.
- 7 *Eds* : For a critical discussion of this history and background in terms of the experiences of the feminist movements, see the essay by Gina (Virginia) Vargas in a companion volume, *The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds* (Vargas, forthcoming (2013)).
- 8 For instance, see Levidow 2004.
- 9 One could compare this to what happened in Argentina, where it is estimated that state repression claimed the lives of around 20,000 activists between 1976 and 1983, effectively wiping out much of the existing political forces on the left. Not only were the latter rather weak by the end of the regime, there was no comparable catalyst to focus them around them. When something like that did eventually happen – with the 2000 crisis known to Argentines as ‘19/20’ – it was met by a political scene with a number of self-organised grassroots movements on the one hand, a myriad small political parties on the other, and very little in between.
- 10 One could compare this to the experience of the European Social Forum in London, which was heavily controlled by the small Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Action (a small Labour Party faction around former mayor of London, Ken Livingstone). See Nunes 2004. *Eds* : For a more particular analysis of the psychological dynamics of the London ESF organising experience, see also the essay by Laura Sullivan in this volume (Sullivan 2012).
- 11 In fact, the only internal tendency of PT that was heavily involved in the process was Socialist Democracy (DS), as a result both of its strength in Porto Alegre (among others, it counted one former mayor, the vice-mayor and the vice-governor as members) and its international connections (it was the Brazilian chapter of the Fourth International – Unified Secretariat at the time). The majoritarian tendency (then called Articulação), to which Lula belongs, was relatively weak in the South, and never seemed to view the Forum as much of a priority.
- 12 Now functioning in various towns and even states across Brazil, the Participatory Budget is both a policy and a method of governance that allows the population, divided into regional and thematic areas and through an elaborate system of open assemblies and elected councils, to choose the priorities for the application of a part of the overall budget, and monitor its employment. See Baierle 1998, 2009.
- 13 World Social Forum Organising Committee and World Social Forum International Council, June 2001.
- 14 One important difference is that where the executive centre of the IYC was Porto Alegre, the BOC office was in Sao Paulo; contrary to what many people believe, the centre of the WSF process in Brazil is the latter, not the former.

- 15 WSF Secretariat, 2002.
- 16 See Juris 2005b and/or Juris 2012a.
- 17 Another key contribution of COLMEA was that it possessed its own office space, thus supporting the autonomisation of the IYC organising process. This space – in a former morgue and political police headquarters ceded to the Institute of Architects of Brazil – would be one of the IYC headquarters up until 2005. I thank Leandro Anton for raising this point.
- 18 See, for example, Whitaker 2005a.
- 19 Named after the young Italian who was murdered by the police during the Genoa demonstrations.
- 20 The first Intergalactika Laboratory of Global Resistance was attended by people belonging to groups such as MRG (Spain), AAARG (France), Disobbedienti (Italy), Reclaim the Streets ! (UK), Colectivo 501 (Argentina), Independent Media Centres belonging from the global Indymedia, and ATTAC ‘youth’ groups from countries such as Argentina and Germany.
- 21 Intercontinental Youth Camp Organising Committee, nd, c.January 2003, p 10.
- 22 It is interesting to notice that the areas where this was more effective were occupied by groups with a living experience in self-management, such as Argentinean *piqueteros* and the Brazilian MST. It must also be noticed that, in 2005, the advances till that year in self-management were offset by the enormity of the population and area of the Camp – and where the IYC was arguably the greatest victim of that year’s gigantism.
- 23 *Real* is the Brazilian currency.
- 24 . ‘Sol’ both means ‘sun’ in Portuguese and is the first syllable of *solidariedade* (solidarity) and *solidário* (someone or something which possesses or behaves according to solidarity). The name for ‘solidarity economy’ in Portuguese and Spanish is *economía solidária* (not ‘of solidarity’, but ‘behaving according to solidarity’). The name ‘Lua’ (moon) was jokingly proposed out of symmetry.
- 25 At the International Council meeting in Porto Alegre in January 2003 that decided that the following WSF would be in India, two ‘safeguard clauses’ were introduced by the International Council under pressure from the Brazilian Organising Committee : One, that it should ‘come back’ to Brazil in 2005; and two, that the BOC would become the Executive Secretariat (ES) of the International Council, and thus still able to actively engage with the organising process in India.
- 26 See Intercontinental Youth Camp Organising Committee 2004.
- 27 *Eds* : For a discussion more specifically focussed on youth in the WSF and in the alter-globalisation movement, see the essay by Jeffrey S Juris and Geoffrey Pleyers in the companion volume The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds (Juris and Pleyers, forthcoming (2013)).
- 28 For a more detailed history, see Intercontinental Youth Camp Organising Committee 2004, this issue.
- 29 By 2005, many of these had coalesced in a loose collective called Grumo, which appeared precisely as a way of gathering the ‘autonomous individuals’ in the process.
- 30 See Intercontinental Youth Camp Organising Committee 2004, this issue.
- 31 This distinction is fleshed out in my other article in the journal where this essay was first published (2005); basically, a hub is ‘ a non-space, an empty centre that facilitates “plugging in”, whereas in a shared space ‘ there still is some level of coordination and a central organisational core, but its task is one of facilitation and provision of infrastructure, not of steering’.
- 32 It is clear that, for most, this short-term experience would not suffice to move them out of their situation of homelessness; the idea was to work with the available social services to support those who were willing to.
- 33 *Desocupado* is the word Argentinean movements use for ‘unemployed’ (the MTDs being ‘Unemployed Workers’ Movements’); *piquetero* is literally someone who blocks roads – a recurrent method employed by the Argentinean MTDs to achieve governmental response to their demands. The IYC also worked with the Brazilian MTD, which, unlike the Argentinean MTDs, which are locally based, was a national movement then in its first stages of development.
- 34 See Weissheimer 2005.
- 35 This idea is fleshed out in: Intercontinental Youth Camp Organising Committee 2004, this issue. For an evaluation of it, and its transformation into the Action Centres of the IYC 2005, see Nunes 2005b. It must be observed that the idea for the Thematic Convergence Spaces itself came from a similar concept employed in the Argentinean Social Forum in October 2002.
- 36 For instance, see Honty; Weissheimer 2004.
- 37 Weissheimer 2004.
- 38 As late as a couple of months before the Forum in India (hence after three IYCs and the autonomous spaces at the Florence and Paris European Social Forums), a key figure in the BOC/Executive Secretariat was asking himself : “What are we going to do to include the youth ?” (Grzybowski 2004) — seemingly oblivious to the fact that they had been occupying and producing their own space, and could carve out their own participation rather than being ‘included’ in the terms already established. For the autonomous spaces surrounding the ESF, see Juris 2005b and/or Juris 2012a.
- 39 Heidegger 1968, p 76.
- 40 For a discussion of why this should be described as a ‘moment’ rather than as a ‘movement’, see Nunes 2010.

41 *Eds* : See, in this volume, the essays by Walden Bello, Chico Whitaker, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (Bello 2012, Whitaker 2012, and de Sousa Santos 2012).

Feminism In The Space Of The World Social Forum¹

Ara Wilson

Introduction : The Space Of Arrival

My arrival in Brazil to attend the fifth World Social Forum (WSF) in January 2005 was as delineated an experience as any I had at the surfeit of the Forum itself.² Delayed by an impressive snowstorm in the northeastern US, I obtained the last seat on a flight from Buenos Aires to Porto Alegre, agreeably sandwiched between a scruffy white US American man and a Filipina, Mavic Cabrera Balleza. It turned out that they knew each other through activist radio work; Mavic and I knew people and projects in common from international feminist organising; and the wife of the lanky community radio advocate, he told me, taught Women's Studies, as do I. We found our commonalities in the back row of a plane full of pilgrims to what has been called a 'movement of movements', the WSF.

In the Porto Alegre airport, US citizens were gently escorted to a small office for digital fingerprinting, the Brazilian government's response to US treatment of visitors with Brazilian passports and a reminder that the world does not share a commitment to US exceptionalism. While waiting, I talked to a bright young compatriot who corrected my efforts at 'thank you' (*obrigado*) and 'excuse me' (*desculpe*) in Portuguese. She had majored in Women's Studies, but after college wanted to partake of different – larger – issues, and was working for an environmental organisation. My thumb scanned, I shared a taxi with my seat-mate Mavic to a feminist meeting called the Feminist Dialogue.

My entrée into the WSF highlighted a number of elements relevant to the Forum, and feminist engagement with it : The obvious – though at times problematic – role of participants from the global North, universities, and non-government organisations (NGOs); the place of the human relations that constitute politics, a feature resonant with the critical humanism of Forum and feminist values; the pervasiveness of feminism at the Forum, with both integration into and also distinction from other 'larger' movements; and the weight of post-9/11 global contexts, were all themes that unfolded in my experiences at the Fórum Social Mundial ('World Social Forum', in Portuguese).

The cacophony of progressive agendas, disparate spatiality, and open-ended politics at the Forum make it impossible to analyse feminist participation there in a straightforward way. (Michael Hardt, the co-author of *Empire* and *Multitude*, was overwhelmed by the "unknowable, chaotic, dispersive" quality of another Porto Alegre Forum half the size.)³ The Forum's pluralist diversity raises two points for this analysis. On the one hand, the event that is the WSF 'event' can best be described from a particular vantage point, a recognition of partiality that accords with both feminist theory and with the Forum's embrace of multiple epistemologies, and with its emphasis on providing an 'open space' for a plurality of progressive and radical commitments. On the other hand, accounts of the Forum generally attempt to identify some core principles and meanings, as I note below.

In this essay, I try to recast this effort by centring an account on feminism at the Forum, and on the relationship between Forum politics and feminist presence. My focus is on radical efforts of transnational feminist that either centre on, or are engaged with, the politics of North-South relations, anti-racist and anti-nationalist commitments, and critiques of global capitalism and US hegemonic powers, with a particular focus on feminist projects located in the global South.

Is the Forum feminist ? The question recognises proximity and distance. Transnational feminist projects and alter-globalisation movements share horizons, agendas, values, and methods – but this mutuality is incomplete.⁴ Feminists participate in the Forum at virtually every level, and transnational feminist projects – radical, critical formulations – share fundamental orientations with the Forum’s overarching themes, and with the alter-globalisation or transnational social justice movements it gathers together. Yet how thoroughly feminism is incorporated into the core framing of WSF politics remains less than unclear.

The integration of feminism into the WSF remains uneven, in ways reminiscent of well-known histories of women’s movements with various left movements, but also undeniably registering the transformative effects of years of feminist and allied projects. Moreover, the relation between feminism and the WSF is not only a matter of how ‘feminist’ the WSF is (although participants reflect on that) but also what feminists are doing at, with, and through the Forum.⁵ Lurking beneath the question of what the WSF means for feminists is a deeper puzzle : What does feminism mean for the WSF ? If feminists are drawn to the alter-globalisation momentum of the WSF, then what are feminist alternatives to globalisation ?

Addressing the articulations of feminist, Forum, and alter-globalisation politics, my essay draws on the growing body of transnational feminist analysis along the critical edges of political science and sociology, and from advocacy. My approach differs from much of this political analysis in its reliance on the methods and frameworks of ethnography and geography, and attention to tacit, routine, or everyday dimensions of participation in the Forum. Besides discussing explicitly political discourse, I use ethnography to convey how politics are realised and constituted through the Forum’s practices, relations, and texts. My opening anecdote, for example, flags the methods of feminist ethnography, which uses situated and delimited observations of practices, spaces, and relations to ground political theory. This ethnographic perspective gives highlights the practices and discourses of participants, underscoring how the informal and habitual dimensions of women’s participation also constitute feminist politics.

This essay draws mainly on my observations of the 2005 WSF held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, but also of one of the regional meetings that constituted the 2006 Forum, the Polycentric World Social Forum (P-WSF) in Bamako, Mali.⁶

I

Uneven Political Developments : Text and Practice

Emerging from a particular political culture in Brazil, the WSF did not set out to be a feminist space; it began in 2001 as an oppositional alternative to the hegemonic World Economic Forum (WEF) held each winter in Davos, Switzerland. As often noted, the Forum has multiplied into multitudes of political and social claims, more or less allied against the new world order, and includes feminist concerns in this plurality. But, despite this inclusion, the Forum recognises feminist ideas and voices unevenly. WSF leaders and its best-known figureheads and theorists have been predominantly, though not completely,⁷ male. The 2005 (unofficial) Manifesto of Porto Alegre, for example, was signed by eighteen men and one woman, an African politician who, while not anti-feminist, was not closely articulated with feminist worlds.⁸ When the WSF is depicted as a whole by progressive commentators, the description of its core politics does not highlight feminism.

One way to consider feminism at the WSF is textually : The WSF generates an enormous amount of texts, ranging from conference ephemera to Internet postings and print publications. Here, I take a cursory look at a sample of its English-language texts.

The WSF’s main public documents do not convey a deep engagement with feminist politics. Representations of feminist politics in commentary of and about the Forum range widely, at times seemingly late and haphazard additions. Forum texts – themselves contested and often unofficial – incorporate gender, women, or sexuality as itemised subsets of larger

issues.⁹ The 'Manifesto' of 2005 nods to feminism in its eighth proposed measure, which reads : "First of all, combating all forms of discrimination, sexism, hostility against foreigners, racism and anti-Semitism through different political measures".¹⁰ The term "sexism" (which appears elsewhere) is a puzzling choice, revealing an atypical reliance on liberal frameworks, perhaps a vestigial artefact of particular archives that inform textual production. Terminology varies across documents. The General Objectives for the 2007 WSF in Kenya include "guaranteeing gender equality" halfway down a list as part of an entry on discrimination. This phrasing hails from UN-NGO and Gender-and-Development language.¹¹

The phrases 'sexism' and 'guaranteeing gender equality' are found in the discourse of transnational (or domestic) feminist networks. However, much feminist discourse adopts more radical and wide-ranging analytic terms. Vocabulary aside, discourses emerging through the WSF are not generally **framed** by feminism. The main exception is one of the five transversal themes in the 2005 Forum, 'patriarchal capitalism'.¹² The hard-won modifier 'patriarchal' acknowledges that gendered forces shape the new world order (although the phrase was rarely explicated in either the two Forums I attended, or the texts I perused). A US American at Porto Alegre, engaged in projects concerning women and unions, wrote that "the mostly men behind the WSF act like we need a room of our own rather than that they need to be in the room with us. I feel like we are in parallel universes".¹³

The Forum's political culture is open to feminism, but not markedly feminist. As a condensed site of cultural practice and social relations, the Forum represents and constitutes political subjects in certain images that involve gender (and sexuality). In the Latin American Forum, the cultural image of the radical remains masculine. To judge from t-shirts and memorabilia, the icons of the 2005 Forum were Bob Marley and Ché. At the Bamako P-WSF, however, radicalism appeared less marked by gender. Different Forums are too diverse to consolidate into one figure comparable to the 'Davos Man' of the WEF, yet the gendered political imagery of revolutionaries and radicals informs representations of the Forum. Some women detect a persistent masculinist character in the WSF's political culture. There have also been charges of sexual assault at the gatherings.¹⁴

Yet, feminism has not been scarce at the Forum. The inclusion of the phrase 'patriarchal capitalism' in Forum texts reveals backstage feminist organising. Feminists, particularly from Latin America, were involved as organisers and participants in early editions.¹⁵ According to participants, feminism was unmistakably visible at the 2004 gathering in Mumbai, as a result of organising efforts in Latin America and South Asia.¹⁶ A Swedish activist, America Vera-Zavala, writes, for example, that "[n]ever before at the World Social Forum have women been so visible, nor has the issue of gender played such a central role."¹⁷ Others confirmed this assessment of the unprecedented prominence and integration of feminists and women's issues in Mumbai.¹⁸

What the Forum does is allocate space to a plurality of progressive agendas, including feminist or gender politics. The spatiality of feminist presence takes specific forms at different gatherings. The 2006 Bamako P-WSF, for example, converted the grand Palais de la Culture into a site for women's issues, the Women's Universe. With its air of grandeur fallen on hard times, this compound allowed for large meetings – like the African Feminist Dialogue – in its capacious main hall, and for informal conversations in the courtyard. Forum organisers there identified this dedicated women's space as one of Bamako's major contributions to the unfolding experiment of the Forum.

The 2004 WSF in Mumbai had a different spatial approach. There, demands for parity (50 percent representation of women on panels) were taken with some seriousness, resulting in an abundance of feminist or, at least, female voices across the Forum. In Brazil, in 2005, feminist panels peppered the thematic areas of *Diversidades* ('Diversities'), Communications,

Lutas Sociais ('Social Struggles'), Peace and Demilitarisation, *Ordem democrática* ('Democratic alternatives'), and Human Rights and Dignity. An evening panel on Feminism and Anti-globalisation Movements was packed, volunteers scrambled to provide enough transistors for the audience to hear the translation. A small ferry in the harbour, the Women's Boat, hosted daytime meetings and two parties. Underneath a rack of life preservers, politicians drank caipirinhas, danced salsa (and samba and merengue), and engaged in multilingual conversations. I do not know of a comparative evaluation of these approaches to spatialising diverse and inclusive politics for feminist activism at the Forum, but their variation represents the Forum's effort to avoid uniformity and top-down organising agendas, and confirms that the WSF provides a welcome space for progressive feminists to meet and articulate their concerns with other critical projects.

How feminism is integrated varies, then, with the edition and location of the Forum, and by domain or scales. At the textual level, the incorporation of feminist politics is uneven to the point of arbitrariness. At the level of practice, the feminist presence exemplifies the Forum's open-space and inclusive politics. In the domain of norms and values, feminist and WSF discourses resonate with each other.

A consideration of how feminist the WSF may be also invites the question of what feminists themselves want from the Forum, and what they are doing there. I turn now to examine how the relation between feminism and the Forum played out in the concrete discourses and practices at the variegated spaces I observed.

II

Feminist Dialogues

What are feminists doing at the WSF? I answer this literally, by describing what feminists did at Porto Alegre and, to a lesser extent, at Bamako. I begin with an extended illustration of the Feminist Dialogue at Porto Alegre.

The event that Mavic and I rushed to from the airport was Porto Alegre's major feminist event, the Feminist Dialogue, which took place just before the Forum officially began.¹⁹ Launched the previous year in Mumbai, the Dialogue was organised by feminist networks in the global South, and heavily influenced (some said) by a South Asian processual political style. At the Dialogue, both Mavic and I immediately saw women we knew from transnational feminist networks, fostered during more than a decade of international organising in the distinct (and in the alter-globalisation context, dubious) political milieu of NGOs and the UN.

The Dialogue offered an autonomous place for feminist organising, an attempt to balance integration into and autonomy from the WSF. This negotiation relays long-standing feminist navigations between autonomy and affiliation with left, popular, or national struggles, an effort that continues to be feminism's 'double challenge' within the global justice movement.²⁰ The Dialogues attempted to enact values of diversity, anti-racism, and participatory democracy, manifest in a deliberate effort at inclusion. In Brazil, the Dialogue included proportionally more Asian participants than the Forum at large. A few transgendered people also joined the event, including an Argentinean transman who was a consistent, if reluctant, participant in feminist events across the Forum. There were a dozen or so academic participant-observers, myself among them.

The Dialogue was divided into time dedicated to discussion groups based on language (English, French, Portuguese) and time for formal plenaries. This structure reflected feminist principles of inclusive representation. It was designed to include multiple voices in ways that did not reproduce global or racial hierarchies – as well as feminist epistemologies – in an effort to build from concrete particulars to more abstract generalities in ways that valued diverse knowledges. On the first day (which I missed), discussion groups talked about local, grounded, and personal issues; these discussions were meant to form an organic basis for subsequent

explorations of 'how to move the issues forward' and 'effective new strategies'. The result was to be an inclusive compilation of strategies, and generate a collective experience of the process. On day two I joined the English 5 group, which included women from India, Africa, Uruguay, Scotland, Canada, and Malaysia. Our assignment was to come up with three strategies for feminist activism in this new world order.

A matter-of-fact development worker from Zambia suggested one strategy : To gain acceptance for feminist principles, relate them to local claims and contexts. A lesbian feminist from Uruguay argued for sexual diversity noting, for example, that reproductive rights should include lesbians' right to have children. Others asserted that feminists should forge "strategic relations" with non-feminist women's groups and new social movements and, towards that end, calls to use the WSF space 'creatively' were heard repeatedly. Responding to the common query, 'Where are the young women ?', participants proposed popularising feminism (using top-ten countdowns was suggested) and incorporating younger women into feminist spaces and networks. A 30-something Malaysian activist noted a reluctance to assume leadership in her generation, following the trail-blazing feminist activists in the region. She also remarked how her group had fantasised about a feminist takeover of the government; but when one of them asked, "So, which ministry do you want ?", each woman was at a loss. While the contours of participants' critiques of the new world order were relatively clear, the Malaysian organiser's dilemma was symptomatic of the difficulty of enunciating specific agendas for new modes of government or economics.

Our group discussion raised more questions than it answered. Should feminist groups work with (non-feminist) religious women ? (Feminists were concerned that the WSF might allow the participation of religious groups that were anti-globalisation but also anti-women's rights and anti-sexual rights : Feminist critiques of fundamentalism stress the gender politics of politicised theology.)²¹ Are we seeking alternatives to capitalism or are we resigned to working within it ? (This question has plagued the WSF from its outset, since it does not explicitly call for an end to capitalism.) The vibrant throngs of young women in the alter-globalisation movements evoked an anxiety more specific to feminists : Why aren't those young women more involved in feminism ?

The challenges facing transnational feminism were apparent. It was difficult for our disparate English 5 cohort to arrive at specific, let alone new or effective, strategies based on 'concrete' experiences – a difficulty hardly unique in the WSF. It was not clear which were strategies, which were aims, and which were issues. The large and lively Spanish-language groups may have had more success, to judge from their energetic exchanges; however, as Sonia Alvarez later pointed out in a conversation, they were also more homogenous, given the geography of Spanish speakers. Their group restaged the Latin American feminist *encuentros* (encounters) of the 1980s and 1990s.²² Still, we English speakers were with the event in spirit and, as instructed, cobbled together a few strategies and questions to pass along to the general body. (The political scientist Catherine Eschle²³ and I were assigned this rapporteur's role.)

At the Dialogue's plenaries, speakers enunciated the major themes : Militarisation and war, fundamentalism, and neoliberal globalisation, with sharp critiques of US imperialism. These critical discussions fit seamlessly with the WSF's major currents, demonstrating the mutuality of critical transnational feminism and the global justice movement. Clearly there is a far-reaching transnational feminist network whose politics engage and overlap with those of the Forum. Yet this overlap also raises the question, what is distinctly **feminist** about feminists' anti-global critiques ? Feminists continue to navigate relations with the global justice movement through modes of autonomy, integration, dialogue, and affinity, with a desire for representation and impact. The desire to impact the Forum and have feminism registered at the level of the 'larger' social movements is a recurring theme among Latin American and

European feminist advocates in particular.

III

Feminism beyond Feminists

The day after the Porto Alegre Dialogue, the question of feminists' relation to the Forum was discussed at a feminist orientation in a stiflingly hot tent in the *Lutas Sociais* ('Social Struggles') space, where twenty or so feminists sat in a circle, waving the handy fans provided by a savvy anti-fundamentalist project from Uruguay. The discussion arrived at the question of how feminists could engage the Forum strategically : How could the Forum be used as a venue for feminist organising ? How should feminists articulate with other movements ? And how might feminism shape the agenda of the Forum itself ?²⁴

The coalition that produced the Feminist Dialogue addressed the call to articulate feminism with other political projects by hosting an ambitious panel called the Intermovement Dialogue. The panel juxtaposed representatives of four movements : Labour; race/ethnicity (in this case, Dalit); GLBT (gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered, also associated with the term 'queer'); and feminist. Their task was to identify both convergence with and criticism of other movements. The GLBT representative conceded that First-World GLBT movements had not addressed racial diversity or class issues. A women's movement representative challenged the Dalit representative to acknowledge that ethnically based struggles had not recognised sexuality as a political domain.

Unfortunately, logistics matter : The audio was terrible. The event next door consisted of impassioned exhortations (the struggle continues !)²⁵ that drowned out these soft-spoken activist voices and their tired translators. Still, as a premise – as an example of the strategies that the groups in the Dialogue were striving to name – the Intermovement Dialogue offered an alternative to the choice between autonomy or integration for feminism in the spaces of the Forum, by locating feminism as the hub for broader political coalitions.

This panel was also noteworthy for positioning GLBT politics as a major social justice movement. A full discussion of sexual politics at the Forum would require its own essay; here, I will offer brief observations of the different modes of publicly addressing sexuality in Brazil and Bamako. In Porto Alegre, one of the 'diversity' tents was dedicated to sexuality, which the Forum recognised as a salient axis of difference and oppression. Gay, lesbian, or queer groups from Brazil, the Philippines, the Gay Games, and international networks had panels, stalls, fliers, and a night at a local bar. The prominence of sexuality at Porto Alegre was due in no small measure to Latin American feminist networks, which have engaged with sexual diversity, as well as the emergence of politicised gay, queer, and transgendered publics.

In Bamako, there was no visible non-heterosexual, queer, or transgender presence. A South African colleague and I scoured two conference compounds trying to locate the one panel in the programme that addressed sexual diversity (organised by a group from Uruguay) : After three taxi rides, we found a locked door with no sign of the event, and no trace that it had happened. Sexuality was implicit in discussions of such subjects as HIV / AIDS, what was widely referred to as 'female genital mutilation', or the rights of the girl child (for example, to decline marriage at a young age). I heard sexual orientation or sexual diversity mentioned only once outside private conversations, when a South African Afrikaans woman included sexual orientation in a list of issues at a large and long event called the World Court of Women.

The difference clearly lies in the specific realities governing African organising and the different histories of women's organising on the continent. The collective politics of the regional Forum prioritised critiques of the effects of global inequalities on health, livelihood, and national economic sovereignty, and not sexuality. However, given that organising around sexual rights, including self-styled gay and lesbian advocacy, exists in Africa and is particularly strong in South Africa, this absence points to different formations of progressive networks

associated with social justice. It suggests that the many advocates working on sexual and gender diversity in Africa did not identify the Bamako P-WSF as a relevant venue for their political projects.²⁶ The varying ways that the WSF engages with sexuality, and the ways that sexual rights or queer activists articulate (or not) with the global justice movement, is worthy of more consideration than I can give here. However, the place of sexual politics in global social justice movements resonates with the relationship between feminism and alter-globalisation movements.

IV

The Geography of Politics

Many interpretations of the WSF map the Forum along a political cartography, locating its meaning by reference to particular placed events. The WSF was conceived as a counterpoint to the WEF, referenced through the shorthand of its location in Davos. Michael Hardt proposes placing the WSF in a lineage with the non-aligned movement (NAM), describing it as a “distant offspring” of the Bandung Conference, the 1955 meeting of post-colonial African and Asian government representatives in Indonesia.²⁷ The WSF has been linked to a series of geographic metropolises : Bandung 1955, Paris 1968, Seattle 1999. (There has also been much reflection about the WSF’s relation with its original host, Porto Alegre, known for socialist politics.) These geographic histories chart lineages for the progressive left.

These sites do not map the political trajectory of feminism at the WSF. Nor was the WSF the first venue for significant transnational feminist organising. Feminists arrived at the WSF after decades of heightened international activity. Many, if not most of the women at feminist events in Bamako and Porto Alegre were seasoned through work in regional networks and in the worlds of the UN and NGOs.²⁸

Transnational feminist advocacy parallels other contemporary movements by traversing domestic, regional, and international scales. During the 1990s, feminist organising reached feverish intensity at otherwise banal venues associated with the UN and other multi-lateral agencies, peaking at the 1995 Beijing conference. To participate in these spaces, feminist activism took the institutional form of the NGO, drawing on established domestic or regional political trajectories. Through this work at the transnational scale, advocates learned politicking, lobbying, and UN prose style, honed their eye for power structures, and advanced their fluency in the language of funders and agencies.

In critical evaluations of the WSF, the presence of NGOs is viewed with sceptical alarm. Links with NGOs are seen to compromise the WSF’s radical values.²⁹ Within feminism also, particularly in South Asia and Latin America, the “NGOisation of feminism” has been a subject of concern.³⁰ Traces of the UN-NGO experience appear in Forum terminology, in the numbing reliance on acronyms and by-committee prose. In Porto Alegre and Bamako, feminist discourse was peppered with references to B+10 (‘Beijing Plus 10’, meetings held in March 2006 to mark the anniversary of that event), WTO+10 (the women’s meeting and the World Trade Organisation shared an anniversary), MDGs (Millennial Development Goals), and ICTs (information and communication technologies). Feminist agendas became ‘women’s rights’, ‘gender issues’, or ‘gender mainstreaming’.

The feminists at the WSF, being the reflexive actors they are, are aware of the constraints and powers of the UN orbit. Without directly answering the problems posed by NGO complicity with the UN, states, multilateral agencies, or neoliberal programmes, I want to suggest that NGO participation for feminists might have specific gendered and regional dimensions that complicates wholesale critiques of NGO participation in global social justice movements. As a South African advocate active in transnational feminist work said to me of NGOs and the Forum, “they are not mutually exclusive”.

The Bamako P-WSF was particularly stamped with the effects of NGO organising – the

names of accredited organisations painted on banners and even woven into the fabric of some women's dresses and scarves. Here, the venues of the UN, NGOs, and the WSF seemed to exist along a continuum. (Indeed, one of the best-attended women's events was a fundraising workshop hosted by donor organisations from the North.) Many feminist participants would map the Bamako sites in relation to the geographies and acronyms of the UN-NGO orbit : Cairo (a conference on population), Vienna (a UN conference on human rights), or Beijing (the territorial shorthand for the 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women).

The 2007 WSF in Nairobi, Kenya, represents a return to the site of the earlier 1985 UN World Conference on Women. Feminism's alternative lineage shows that the familiar coordinates of radical left discourse – Bandung, Paris, Davos – represent particular political geographies, however salient and powerful. The geographic history of transnational feminism reveals gendered politics operating across multiple sites and networks, and engaging a plurality of political institutions and strategies. For many feminist participants, the WSF offers one node in a wide terrain of political projects, ranging from local organising in Africa to the corridors of UN headquarters in Manhattan.³¹

Yet increasing feminist participation at the WSF suggests a new trend, a shift away from concentrated focus on the UN towards other transnational and translocal progressive platforms (even as many continue to act in both UN-NGO and global social justice worlds). In the 1990s, feminist organising reformulated human rights to incorporate gender issues and generated significant reference points in UN texts. By the 2000s, as the B+10 meetings showed, efforts at the UN level became more defensive, mainly attempts to prevent the US administration and a loose alliance of conservative governments from enacting eviscerating policies concerning gender, reproductive rights, and sexuality.

Feminists no longer look to the UN for progressive advances on most issues. Moreover, many NGO feminists, themselves the products of radical movements, criticise the compromises and complicity of work in the UN arena. A panel at the 2002 meeting of the Association of Women in Development Conference in Mexico, called 'The Big Debate : Have the UN Conferences Benefited Women ?', exemplified such internal, reflexive critique. Anti-globalisation movements offer a vital arena for an alternative, more radical domain of feminist politics.

The WSF's 'open space' allows feminist projects honed in the UN-NGO orbit to extend into this alternative transnational milieu. One of its virtues is its social justice orientation, which allows feminists more latitude to express the critical politics that informed prior women's movements. Feminists at the Forum voiced energetic critiques of US policy, global capitalism, the World Bank, and so forth. Feminist themes at Mumbai or Porto Alegre diverged from those that prevailed at, for example, the B+10 meetings. Then, at an NGO gathering across the street from the UN, the heated debate concerned the trafficking in women, while other panels were dedicated to gender mainstreaming. Such issues were not in the foreground at the WSF. The Fórum Social Mundial allowed feminists to express radical politics that are muted in UN-NGO discourse and to articulate with other global social-justice movements.

Feminist participation at the WSF thus invites questions not only about feminism's relation with alter-globalisation movements but also about transnational feminism's own trajectories after a decade in the UN's orbit. While feminist engagement with the WSF rejuvenates its articulation with radical left movements, this engagement is not despite but, in important ways, because of its history in the UN-NGO orbit, and in autonomous and affiliated women's movements in the global South.

V

Feminisms and the Forum : Space, Process, and Norms

The WSF attempts to realise a set of radical principles such as inclusion, diversity, and

alternative culture, and self-consciously avoids the ends-orientation and commodity logic of neoliberalism and global capitalism. At the level of norms and values, feminist discourse overlaps considerably with the Forum's political vocabulary. In particular, feminism and the Forum share emphases on space and process.

Among the Forum's aims is the creation of social, cultural, and political space. The term 'space' was ubiquitous at the 2005 WSF, concretised in the self-conscious design of thematic areas. Similarly, it is difficult to find writing about feminism at the WSF that does not refer to space. As one website explains, "Feminists are seeking spaces to move from fragmentation towards common grounds for action".³² Three essays in a special issue of *Revista Estudos Feministas* ('Journal of Feminist Studies'), a Brazilian feminist journal, describe the WSF as : "a space of confluence of the struggles and proposals of movements"; "international spaces of encounter and articulation"; and "a space where feminisms find a productive **locus** to weave their alliances and ideas with other subjects".³³ In Porto Alegre, feminists called for seeing the WSF as a strategic space, using this space creatively, creating inclusive spaces, incorporating young women in spaces, and creating spaces to move the dialogue further. The women's events in Bamako also invoked space. Space – literal, symbolic, and rhetorical space, and feminist space within the spaces of alter-globalisation – is an end in itself. The emphasis on the significance of space for inclusive processes is coextensive with the anti-privatisation, pro-democracy discourse about space by the Forum at large. The feminist emphasis on space also draws implicitly on its critical evaluation of the public / private division in the gendered hierarchies of modernity. Feminists have shown how public political spheres have excluded or marginalised women such that women's claim to public space has political significance. However, such gendered significance of space was rarely articulated explicitly.³⁴

The norms, politics, and discourses of radical transnational feminism and the WSF overlap to the point of convergence. Both share political critiques of the new world order and globalisation in its hegemonic, capitalist, imperialist form. The themes of feminist panels at the WSF, like speakers at the Feminist Dialogue, echoed the Forum's prevailing themes : Fundamentalism, militarism, neoliberalism, and a critique of US hegemony.³⁵ At the same time, the WSF might also be seen as echoing feminist discourse. The Forum departs from other expressions of 'anti-globalisation' protests by integrating more attention to diversity of people and cultures (or at least trying to). Its lexicon includes marginalisation, inclusive spaces, diversity of voices, and open dialogue. In Latin America and India, its design was predicated on an allowance for (or celebration of) different modes of knowledge, politics, and expression (non-Enlightenment epistemologies in particular) that echoed feminist principles. Many feminists consider this resonance to be the result of feminist influence on 'larger' left movements, although such links are not explicit in Forum texts.

A second striking convergence between feminism and the Forum is their understandings of the relation of means to ends. The Brazilian Forum's processual politics bore a remarkable resemblance to familiar feminist principles. Its organisation manifested enormous labour reflecting on epistemology, methodology, and politics of infrastructure, attendance, communication, cultural production, and labour itself. The Forum guide at Porto Alegre explained the principles behind these decisions and commitments in multiple European languages; and the 2005 tote bag even included a tag that explained the labour arrangements behind its production. Clearly, the Forum has been predicated on a philosophy in which the means must attempt to manifest, rather than be justified by, the ends. Process is as political for the WSF as it is for feminist political ideals.

So is the WSF feminist ? Does the recognition of patriarchal capitalism and the emphasis on space and process make for a happier collaboration than the "unhappy marriage" between feminism and Marxism diagnosed by socialist feminists ?³⁶ Probably. But however sympathetic,

feminists, at least at the 2005 meeting, did not feel the Forum was a feminist event per se. Feminists continue to navigate between autonomous spaces – the Women’s Universe in Bamako, the Feminist Dialogue in Mumbai, the Women’s Boat in Porto Alegre – and integration across Forum events.

Feminists still choose autonomous projects affiliated with progressive venues like the WSF in part because of enduring limits to ‘gender mainstreaming’ in larger movements, reflected in the uneven representation of feminism in Forum texts, among other things. But I suggest that feminism’s relation to planetary progressive politics does not hinge only on a lingering leftist, masculinist culture.

The political history of global women’s organising is relevant for the question of feminism’s impact on Forum political norms. Feminists asserted, especially in Brazil, that they wanted feminist voices audible at the larger Forum. But, in day-to-day discussion, it was less clear what feminists wanted heard. What are the feminist agendas at the WSF ? What is specifically **feminist** about the visions of alter-globalisation ? Transnational feminist analysis abounds in critiques of global capitalism, militarism, imperialism, and the new world order. The Feminist Dialogue highlighted the gendered effects of these processes, particularly on racialised and female bodies. Feminism certainly has more to say than submerged calls to eliminate ‘sexism’ and guarantee ‘gender equality’; but, in my admittedly partial and situated observations, these questions were not the centre of gravity in feminist discourse or practice. Discussions of what feminists might contribute to the **content** of Forum political discourse were relatively rare. As is true for the Forum as a whole, there was more clarity about critique than about norms for alternative social orders and strategies to achieve them. Group conversations at the 2005 Dialogue, and cross-language, cross-border debates in the Palais de la Culture in Bamako indicated a need for propagating but also cultivating alternative feminist visions of governance and political economy.

Those young Malaysian women who, when divvying up government ministries they had not yet taken over, found that they were unsure of their vision for state governance, are hardly unique in their lack of an applicable feminist theory of governance. The relative lack of concrete radical visions expressed in feminist practice at the Forum may reflect the impact of the UN-NGO world, which enabled, but also profoundly constrained, critical transnational feminist projects. It may also have something to do with the norms of WSF and feminist organisers, such as the common belief that means are inseparable from ends. At the 2005 WSF, the process itself – providing spaces, staging dialogues, ensuring a diversity of voices – was a major political aim and achievement for feminism’s version of alter-globalisation. The feminist emphasis on space and process as ends in themselves – **How can we use the WSF space creatively ? How can our processes match our politics ?** – defers the question of content. **What** feminist logic should be absorbed as alter-globalisation common-sense ?

Feminists could, for instance, revise various Forum texts, providing new language for ‘sexism’ or ‘gender equality’. But, given the significant integration of feminists into WSF practice, and the shared sets of political norms, it has been harder to identify a distinctly feminist analysis that could rewrite the Forum’s prevailing political frames, at least in the commonplace discourse surrounding it. By partaking of the Forum’s inclusive spaces, can feminist political norms shape alter-globalisation and global social justice visions – and if they can, will these be legible as distinctly feminist visions ? Will feminist gestures towards another possible world be any different ?

How feminists navigate the WSF – their autonomy or integration, their claims on the Forum and for social justice – revolves not only around the gendered cultures of progressive movements but also around feminism’s internal dynamics and historical trajectories. Bringing feminist histories to the understanding of the WSF can pluralise the political geography of the

global social justice movement. These feminist trajectories – particularly the years of strategic complicity with the UN – have both enabled, and constrained, feminists’ engagement with the heterodox visions of the WSF. The question that remains to be answered is whether aligning with the WSF has also pluralised the feminist movement/s.

Notes

- 1 This essay benefited from a Seed Grant from The Ohio State University, and fruitful residencies at The Five College Women’s Studies Research Center in Massachusetts (USA) and the Centre for Law, Gender, and Sexuality at Kent University (UK). I would like to thank Mary Margaret Fonow, for sharing her analysis as well as her Porto Alegre hotel room; Yukiko Hanawa; the Centre for Law, Gender, and Sexuality at Keele University (UK), which invited me to present this material there; and the many feminists at the Forums in Porto Alegre and Bamako for their insightful exchanges about the WSF (including Brooke A Ackerly, Sonia Alvarez, Susanna George, Bernedette Muthien, Millie Thayer, Gina Vargas, and Peter Waterman).
- 2 The WSF developed as an alternative to the World Economic Summit, a privately run retreat for corporate and government elites. It aims to provide a hub for a network of global resistance, particularly foregrounding south-south relations and struggles, but welcoming activists from the global north. For information about the Forum, see : World Social Forum 2001 and 2005b, and Waterman 2004a .
- 3 Hardt 2000, p 112.
- 4 On feminism’s relation to anti-globalisation, see : Eschle 2005a, pp 1741-70; Staudt, Rai, and Parpart 2001, pp 1251-1257; and Alvarez, Faria, and Nobre 2004, pp 199-206.
- 5 The participants at the WSF are of course reflexive actors and incorporate thought about their methods, frameworks, and address these not only during meta-level discussions but also throughout the range of activities and discussions that constitute their participation in the Forum. The question of feminism’s place at the Forum was an explicit thread in feminist discussions about the 2004 Mumbai and 2005 Porto Alegre Forums. At the 2006 Bamako Social Forum, it was more implicit, conveyed in the tacit framing of women’s issues.
- 6 The Bamako Social Forum was a regional meeting, not imagined to replicate the scale of the World Social Forum. In 2007, the WSF was held in Nairobi, Kenya. Because I lack in-depth experience with African feminist networks, my observations of women’s organising at the Bamako meeting are far more limited and provisional than those of the 2005 WSF. The research for this essay is part of long-term projects studying feminist organising and sexual rights at transnational venues. See, for example : Wilson 1996, pp 214-218.
- 7 The World March for Women, a worldwide radical project originating in Montreal, is on the WSF International Council. Latin American feminist groups, like the *Articulación Feminista Marcosur* (‘Marcosur Feminist Coalition’, AFM), which is also a key member of the International Council, participated in the WSF in Porto Alegre in 2002 and 2003, where they were key to organising two of the five axes organising those editions of the Forum. And domestic and regional feminist networks have been active in struggles connected to the WSF – against free-trade agreements, Third World debt, militarism, US imperialism, and so forth. For example, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN) is a network of women in the Global South who focus on economic justice, feminism, and democracy. But the feminist presence in alter-globalisation events remained limited until recently.
- 8 Group of Nineteen, February 2005 . The sole woman signatory was Animata Traore, a former government official from Mali.
- 9 From Number 4 of Group of Nineteen, February 2005 : “The right of every inhabitant of this earth to work, social security and pension following the equality between man and woman as a finding element of all internal and international policy”.
- 10 Group of Nineteen, February 2005.
- 11 World Social Forum 2006 .
- 12 The Transversal themes can be found at : http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=2&cd_language=2 .
- 13 Fonow 2006.
- 14 For a hard-hitting critique of the WSF, see : Obando 2005.
- 15 For example, Virginia Vargas and Lilian Celiberti of the *Articulación Feminista Marcosur* (‘Marcosur Feminist Coalition’, AFM) were active in organising earlier editions of the WSF in Porto Alegre.
- 16 Women’s voices were prominent in the Indian gathering, including at the radical anti-WSF protest staged across from the Forum.
- 17 Vera-Zavala 2004.
- 18 Many people reported to me the increased feminist impact in Mumbai. See : Albert 2004.
- 19 The Feminist Dialogues for India and Brazil were organised by a Coordinating Group constituted by seven international feminist networks and organisations : Isis International (Manila); DAWN; INFORM (Sri Lanka); Women’s International Coalition for Economic Justice (WICEJ); *Articulación Feminista Marcosur* (AFM); African Women’s Development and Communication Network (FEMNET); and India National Network of Autonomous Women’s Groups (INNAWG). On the

Dialogues, see : Isis Women 2005, *Articulación Feminista* Marcosur, nd, c.2005 , and World Social Forum, 2005b.

20 Alvarez, Faria, and Nobre 2004.

21 *Eds* : For discussion of how precisely this took place at the Nairobi WSF in 2007, see essays in this volume by Gina (Virginia) Vargas and by Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle and Nicolas Haeringer (Vargas 2012 and Pommerolle and Haeringer 2012).

22 Known by the Spanish term, feminist *encuentros* were region wide meetings held between 1981 and 1993 that staged vital debates and led to the emergence of new political projects in Latin America. See: Alvarez, Friedman, Beckman, Blackwell, Chinchilla, Lebon, Navarro, and Tobar 2003, p 537.

23 Eschle 2005. *Eds* : See also the chapter by Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca in this book (Eschle and Maiguashca 2012).

24 *Eds* : See the essay in this volume by Corinna Genschel (Genschel 2012).

25 An analysis of the pervasive political exhortations, narratives, platitudes, and slogans at the Forum would be instructive. One evaluation of this discourse attributes the rhetorical style to affinity politics : “The many empty statements and banal phrases that characterise many of the speeches and cultural events may not be a product of the shallowness of this or that artist, but the need to produce bland, overriding remarks that do not offend any particular tendency participating in the social forum” (Foltz and Moodliar).

26 A salient declaration about sexuality and Africa is from the online journal, *Feminist Africa* : “Instead of the silences and silencing surrounding sexualities, which allow patriarchal, abusive and heteronormative relationships and power structures to have hegemonic sway, it is important that scholars and activists foreground the embeddedness of sexuality in the lives, emotions, desires, health and fears of women and men across Africa” (Mama, Pereira, and Manuh 2005).

27 Hardt 2002. The Bandung Conference aimed to develop solidarity among newly postcolonial countries to counter the capitalist and communist blocs of the First and Second Worlds.

28 Alvarez, Faria, and Nobre 2004. *Eds* : See also the essay by Gina (Virginia) Vargas in the companion volume to this book, *The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds* (Vargas 2013).

29 Iqtidar 2004.

30 Sonia Alvarez writes analytically, rather than dismissively, about the institutionalisation of feminism in NGOs, but by now the term ‘the NGOisation of feminism’ is usually used pejoratively (Alvarez 1998, pp 306-324). Since the 1995 UN Conference, as a prominent example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has criticised feminists engaged in NGOs as the handmaidens of global capitalism: “In this phase of capitalism / feminism, it is capitalist women saving the female subaltern.... This matronising and sororising of women in development is also a way of silencing the subaltern” (Spivak 1996). The critique of NGOisation seems stronger in Latin American and South Asian discourses than in African or Southeast Asian conversations, regions where radical activity has often taken NGO form.

31 An example of research on women’s human rights at the WSF is: Ackerly and D’Costa 2005.

32 Björk 2004.

33 The translated quotations appear in Alvarez, Faria, and Nobre, 2004, pp 202-203, the introduction to the special dossier on the WSF in *Revista Estudos Feministas* (‘Journal of Feminist Studies’, in Portuguese).

34 Critiques of the gendered nature of the public / private divide have been central to much feminist argumentation in advocacy and scholarship, although generalisations about the uniformity or cross-cultural reach of the divide have been criticised. See, for example : Rosaldo 1980. *Eds* : For a specific discussion of open space in feminisms, see the essay by Emilie Hayes in the companion volume to this book, CE4, *The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds* (Hayes 2013).

35 The key themes at the Bamako Social Forum differed from those at Porto Alegre. They were : The ecosystem, war and peace, cooperation, debt, neoliberalism. Women’s events in Bamako overlapped with much of the discourse of the Forum, which was characterised overall by a regional focus on African issues, but as noted, were also marked by the use of NGO and UN terminology.

36 Hartmann 1979.

Place, Scale, And The Politics Of Recognition At The World Social Forum

Janet Conway

The World Social Forum (WSF) was initiated in 2000 by a committee of Brazilian organisations, to convene groups and movements of civil society opposed to neoliberalism from around the world. Many participants and commentators understand the WSF as a new and emergent form of counter-hegemonic globalisation confronting a new form of empire. The WSF's declaration that "Another World is Possible" is posed against the authoritarian imposition of *pensamiento unico*, or 'a single way of thinking', on every society in the world.

The anthropologist Arturo Escobar calls the process of neoliberal globalisation a "new US-based form of imperial globality, an economic-military-ideological order that subordinates regions, peoples, and economies world-wide". The underside of imperial globality is "global coloniality", that is "the heightened marginalisation and suppression of the knowledge and culture of subaltern groups". Escobar argues that this condition is provoking the emergence of self-organising social movement networks fostering counter-hegemonic globalisations; and, to the extent that these networks engage with the politics of difference, particularly through place-based yet transnationalised political strategies, they represent a challenge and emergent alternative to empire.

I explore these claims about the significance of place-based movements, local differences, and the transnationalisation of struggles against neoliberal globalisation with reference to the WSF, its "spatial praxis",² and the relationship between it and the WSF's politics of difference. My argument proceeds as follows :

In the face of new forms of hegemonic power, social movements are rescaling. The WSF is a key site for the reinvention of the spatial praxis of emancipatory social movements; being itself an enactment of a new spatio-political praxis.

There is a complex 'politics of scale' underway, within and among the social movements of the WSF and constitutive of the WSF itself.

This politics of scale is not just an expression of power politics vis-à-vis empire, nor a struggle for hegemony among social forces. It also embraces a politics of difference, diversity, and recognition in which the specificities of struggles arising from particular places and expressing themselves at various scales are acknowledged and valorised. The emergent scalar practices and discourses, and the political debates and struggles over them in the social movements of the WSF, and in the WSF itself, suggest that scale is a critical axis of 'new politics'. A new democratic imaginary, or what Escobar calls "new utopian imaginations", is coming into view, and a new politics of scale is emerging as a critical element of it.

This spatial praxis and politics of scale constitutes an engagement with empire, a counter-hegemonic social practice, and embodies emergent alternatives to reigning relations.

This paper contributes to a larger and longer-term study of the WSF and its significance for re-imagining democracy in post-Marxist, post-modern, and post-neo / liberal directions. I engage in an initial exploration of the specifically **spatial** praxis of the WSF (and some of its constitutive social movements) and its possible meaning and contribution to this larger undertaking. In this and any discussion of the WSF, it is critical to maintain a distinction between 'the World Social Forum' and 'the social movements and activist networks of the

WSF'.³ The latter act in and beyond the WSF understood as event and space, but also help constitute the WSF as event and space. The WSF is both more than and different from the sum of these movements; and the movements are more than and different from the sum of their practices vis-à-vis the WSF. The WSF and its constituent movements all have their own particular and evolving spatial praxes.

I

Space, Place, and Scale

Globalisation is remaking relations between local places and global flows and forces; involving multiple and contradictory processes of re-scaling politics. In activist politics, the re-scaling of political struggle has prompted both intensified processes of transnational networking and renewed attention to the local, amid fierce debates about their relative priority. As in much activist practice, such transformations are uneven and contradictory, seldom unfolding with any reference to theoretical debates.

Through the 1980s and 90s, the spatial turn in social theory challenged prevailing assumptions of history / time as dynamic, and space as static, dead, or neutral.⁴ Space was reconceptualised as socially constructed, and social relations, in turn, began to be seen as socio-spatial relations.⁵ Social relations are conditioned by hegemonic spatial discourses and arrangements, typically experienced as pre-given, fixed, even 'natural'. Critical geographers have demonstrated that such spatial arrangements are actually constantly produced and reproduced through ongoing practices and discourses. In turn, spatial discourses and practices actively condition social reality and the terms of social struggles.⁶

Similarly, understandings of 'place' have also been problematised. Static views of 'place', which associated it with cohesive communities, bounded cultures, and fixed identities have been replaced by 'place' as process.⁷ Places are constantly produced through social relations and practices, inherently dynamic, and conflictual. Places are produced through social contestation; a production riven with the exercise of power(s) and resistance(s). Places cannot be represented as internally coherent or unitary; nor conceived as static pieces of ground or neutral stages for action. Finally, and especially under globalisation, places can no longer be conceived of as pre-given or bounded locales : Places are being constituted by forces and conditions from beyond them, including the globalisation of production, trade, and finance; international migration; environmental crises; and transnational social movements. This new way of seeing 'place' complicates any inquiry into the relationship between places and their social movements; and between place-based movements and transnational movement spaces and practices like the WSF.

Clearly, not all socio-spatial practices 'construct' space or new spatial arrangements to the same degree, at the same pace, or with the same effects. Among other things, differences in the spatial effects of social practices and discourses are effects of power inequalities and reflect the sedimented power of existing spatial arrangements, which can appear permanent, especially when buttressed by institutional practices or through widespread and habitual cultural practices, which, in 'performing' existing spatialisations, further 'fix' them.

Scholarly work on the 'social construction of scale' is situated within these broader theoretical developments in critical geography. Scalar terms like 'local', 'national', and 'global' denote scales of socio-spatial processes constantly produced and reproduced through socio-spatial practices and discourses. These terms can no longer be used as if their meanings are singular or self-evident, or as if they represent fixed, obvious, or self-contained 'levels' of social life. Further, spatial scales are relationally constituted : What we call the 'local' or the 'global' is not the product of single but rather multiple processes operating at various 'levels' of geographic resolution. Different scales must, therefore, be understood as mutually constituted.

In an article reviewing the literature on the social construction of scale, Sallie Marston

summarises that for those who treat geographic scale as a 'relation' rather than a simple descriptor of size or level, scalar narratives are understood as a way of framing reality, and have material consequences.⁸ In other words, scale is not a 'thing', but a way of representing the politically laden socio-spatial reality that shapes social practices;⁹ of understanding and ordering the social world.¹⁰ Scalar framings are often contested and not necessarily enduring.¹¹ Some manifestations of scale, such as the national scale of states, do appear more permanent and fixed, but they are no less socially produced. Their apparent fixity is an effect of power and functions to contain, channel, and construct social practices, including practices of resistance, of insurgent activism. Deploying scalar narratives orders and contains actions, and determines their meaning. Hegemonic scalar discourses shape and contain socio-spatial practices, restricting them to apparently natural political or geographic arenas, and investing them with significance – or not. The 'politics of scale' is a central dimension of power, especially today. With all this in mind, let us consider the spatial praxis of the WSF.

II

'Global' to 'Local' : The Many Worlds of the WSF

The development of the WSF as an 'annual event' is central to my exploration of the politics of place and scale; but it is critical to recognise that the WSF is more accurately represented as a world-wide, movement-based, multi-scale, and multi-sited cultural 'process'. The annual gathering is a critical node in space and time for the consolidation and articulation of the process on a global scale, but the world process cannot be reduced to it. The annual event is growing exponentially and spawning parallel and thematic forums, and forums within the Forum. As a global process and multi-faceted phenomenon, the WSF evolves daily, characterised by creativity, dynamism, and some degree of shape-shifting that presents multiple problems of representation and analysis. Indeed, it is increasingly untenable to refer to the WSF event or process in the singular.

This has been especially true since 2002 when organisers at the second WSF in Porto Alegre called on participants to organise similar processes in their own places, defined by their own priorities, at whatever scale made sense to them. Since then, hundreds of SFs have appeared on every continent, at every scale, inspired by the WSF and organised in accordance with its Charter of Principles.

Most spectacularly, the first European Social Forum (ESF) in November 2002 mobilised over 1,000,000 people in Florence to march against war. ESFs have been held in Paris (2003), London (2004), Athens (2006), and Malmö, Sweden (2008). The 'Mediterranean' and 'Middle East' are emerging as regional agglomerations, their processes overlapping but distinct from the European one. In Hyderabad (India) the Asia Social Forum attracted 60,000 people in January 2003. In the lead-up to the 2007 WSF in Nairobi, SF processes were underway in twenty-five African countries and four continent-wide African Social Forum events had taken place : In Bamako, Mali (2002), Addis Ababa (2003), Lusaka, Zambia (2004) and Conakry, Guinea (2005). From neighbourhood to national scales, SFs have been organised across Latin America. In Quito (Ecuador) the first Social Forum of the Americas, in July 2004, attracted over 10,000 participants. The 2006 WSF was organised as a polycentric process, the 'world' event held in three sites, Bamako (Mali), Caracas (Venezuela), and Karachi (Pakistan), each highly autonomous and regionally specific. In Canada, autonomous organising processes inspired by the WSF emerged in Toronto, Quebec City, Sherbrooke, Victoria, Ottawa, London, and Vancouver. An Alberta Social Forum took place in Edmonton, in October 2003, and a second occurred in Calgary, in February 2005. A Quebec Social Forum attracted 5,000 participants in Montreal in August 2007.

So there is no one 'World Social Forum', even though distinguishing features of the 'Social Forum' as a specific political-cultural form characterise otherwise intensely diverse

instantiations of the process. The world event / process is re-created by groups across the world, and this changes its consequences, local and global. Likewise, when an SF is enacted locally and regionally, it assumes specificities derived from place and scale, the historical-geographic conjuncture in which it occurs, and the discourses, practices, preoccupations, and strategies of its constitutive social movements. Furthermore, particular movements make a claim on particular instantiations of the WSF through the particularities of place and / or scale, and also intervene in the world process, albeit unevenly. Intensifying networking among SF processes at similar and across different scales, including through the International Council (IC) and world event, allows for mutual recognition and learning, and the proliferation of difference amid growing contact and dialogue, at least for the moment.

This lack of an identifiable centre, of a unitary process or discourse, coupled with the variety of activities, and modes of being together, and the expanding diversity of participants that characterises any one SF, let alone the worldwide, multi-sited, and multi-scaled process, makes any substantive generalisation hazardous. Yet, it is exactly these features of the phenomenon, the links between chaos and creativity that they suggest, and their magnetic power that make the WSF new and noteworthy, and its meanings simultaneously multivalent and opaque.

In my view, the power and potential of the Social Forum as a new political form and process rests on four features :

Its character as a non-deliberative yet highly participatory and inclusive 'space of spaces' with multiple centres.

Its global diffusion as a form and method through the proliferation of local and regional social fora.

The increasing internationalisation, inter- and multi-culturalism of the global process, signalled by the WSF's move from Brazil to India in 2004, and to Kenya in 2007.

A growing recognition of multiplicity, diversity, and pluralism as organising principles in fostering a new politics for a new world with space for many worlds within it.

These features have emerged in practice and become definitive even as their significance can yet only be dimly perceived. Their possible meanings depend on how future political practice, experimentation, and debates over the future of the WSF unfold.¹²

III

'Global' to 'Local' : The World-Wide Diffusion of the WSF

Maintaining the distinction between the WSF and its social movements, let us acknowledge that the constituent movements have their own spatialities, spatial praxes, and scalar politics; and that these play out in the events and processes that constitute the WSF. Is it possible, then, to attribute to the WSF qua WSF an identifiable spatial praxis ? If so, what are its attributes ? And what are the relations, if any, between the spatial praxis of the WSF and that of its constituent movements ? I want to advance four major claims.

First, from the beginning, there has been a de facto recognition and valorisation of the emergence of resistance and alternatives to neoliberalism from the most local to the most global. The creation of conditions for contact, recognition, and inter-change among movements and organisations working at various scales, in a range of modes on numerous issues and fronts with plural strategic approaches, has been among the most significant innovations of the WSF. Each instantiation of the WSF, indeed any SF, is characterised by the participation and valorisation of activism operating at different scales, and the (possibility of) horizontal exchange among them.

De Sousa Santos writes of the WSF "as an alternative, counter-hegemonic kind of globalisation, based on the articulation among local, national and global struggles".¹³ In its praxis, there is a de facto recognition of the necessity of struggle at various scales, the right of

activists to meet, and to participate in this new internationalism regardless of the spatial scale(s) at which they operate. This is a noteworthy departure from the practices of UN-sponsored gatherings, which privileged nationally-articulated civil society entities in international fora. The WSF's praxis also departs from conventional coalition practices in Canada, defined by collaboration among groups at matching scales.¹⁴

The global diffusion of the SF as a particular political form and methodology is a **second** key dimension of the WSF's spatial praxis. It must be emphasised that this did not occur through WSF architects in Brazil or on the IC, but through the extraordinary response to their invitation to participants to organise SFs in their own regions. The valorisation of political activity at multiple scales coupled with that of self-activity helps account for the global proliferation of SF processes and events.

Like the exponential growth of the world event, the proliferation of local and regional processes was unforeseen. Though self-organised within the terms of the Charter of Principles, local and regional fora embody the autonomist practices that define the Forum; they are beyond the management and control of any central body, although clearly the continental or hemispheric events have a status within, and draw investment from, the IC in ways that smaller-scale fora do not.

Although there has been a rather traditional scalar vocabulary emanating from the IC ('local', 'national', 'regional') and a *de facto* hierarchy in terms of the political importance attached to bigness, to national-ness, and to inter-national-ness in terms of representation at the IC and visibility in the world process, the fact remains that people and groups all over the world have seized the SF and run with it, at whatever scale makes sense, working across the differences that seem most pressing to them. This intersection between self-activity / auto-gestion and the proliferation of **scales** of SF processes / events suggests a critical link between the valorisation of self-activity in autonomous groupings as a foundational feature of the SF, and the valorisation of different scales of socio-political activity in producing the global diffusion of the SF as a particular political form and methodology, and in multiplying its power.

Furthermore, the emplacement of SF processes in so many contexts enroots it locally and specifically. In turn, those practices and processes take on their own dynamic, with their own innovations, political breakthroughs, multiculturalisms, and conflicts and limits. At the regional / continental / hemispheric scale(s), major processes are developing, accumulating their own histories, knowledge, and sedimented power; becoming somewhat institutionalised through regional councils, and flexing their muscles at the IC in terms of their autonomy, specificity, decision-making power over continental scale Forum processes; and from the fact that they help constitute the **world** SF process.

In terms of the politics of place and scale, feminist, indigenous, and queer movements made a significant claim on the WSF by organising the first Social Forum of the Americas in Quito (Ecuador). Although the increased political visibility, substantive political content, process innovations, and important dialogues among these movements in Quito were not neatly transposed to the following world event in Porto Alegre, it indicated the political possibilities of claiming the regional process / space as an intervention in the world process.¹⁵

In 2005, a France-based initiative sought to identify and document specifically 'local' SF practices, make them visible to one another, network them, and make a claim about their importance in the world process.¹⁶ This initiative was explicitly grounded in an understanding that as 'globalisation' is produced and contested in specific places, so is any alternative globalisation. The 'local' of the WSF is making its presence felt at the world-scale, producing difference within the WSF and transforming the world-scale process / event, in addition to whatever effects it has on the politics of specific places and social movement networks.

The Politics of Location : The Difference that Place Makes

The option to move the world event geographically embodies a recognition that place matters in terms of the global event / process as well as for place-based processes. This is a **third** feature of the spatial praxis of the WSF.

In 2001, the IC first began to consider the merits of mounting a WSF outside Brazil as a way of further internationalising the process. Some key leaders recognised the significance of the territoriality of the world event in determining who participated in what numbers, the themes, issues, and alternatives under discussion, and possible future horizons. The specific site of the world event invests a place-specific visibility and power to the WSF and is probably the most important variable in determining the character of its globality. The proposed 'local' and 'regional' fora emerged as extensions of this deliberation and represented an emergent understanding of the WSF as 'process' not just event, and of the potential of multiple spaces and processes unfolding at multiple scales and temporalities around the world. The decision that the 2006 WSF be polycentric was an expression of this desire to deepen the process of internationalisation through strategic regionalisation.

In 2004, the fourth WSF, the first outside Brazil, occurred in Mumbai (India), with as many as 130,000 participant-delegates coming from 132 countries and representing 2,660 organisations. Unlike the Brazil WSF, a majority of participants in Mumbai came as part of mass, poor people's movements, notably Adivasis, or indigenous peoples, and Dalits, or 'untouchables'.¹⁷ These movements, in such numbers, transformed the WSF's political culture. It foregrounded issues central to the survival of tribal peoples : Their subsistence rights to lands, rivers, forests, and water denied by the destruction wrought by mega-development projects, resource extraction, privatisation, and corporate control of nature. These movements were rural, communitarian, oriented to subsistence livelihoods, and embodied the links between bio and cultural diversity. Their struggles forced ecological questions, heretofore relatively marginal, to the centre of the WSF agenda. They also posed deep challenges to the modernisation, urbanisation, and development discourses that continue to underpin the utopias of much of the 'anti-globalisation' movement.

The WSF's focus on neoliberal globalisation has tended to privilege discourses of economic justice and fair trade over struggles against discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and religion. But, in India, one could not ignore the power of religious identities and practices, nor reduce their status to epiphenomena of capitalism. The organising process towards the 2004 Mumbai WSF expanded the Charter of Principle's political vocabulary by insisting on the inclusion of patriarchy, militarism and war, racism, casteism, and religious communalism alongside neoliberalism as key axes of opposition characterising the WSF.¹⁸ The Dalit movements, for instance, claimed that another world is not possible without a global struggle against casteism in all forms, both within and outside India.¹⁹ Another noteworthy and related feature of the event was the participation and visibility of other movements, historically marginalised, including by the left : People with disabilities, people with AIDS, sex trade workers, and sexual minorities.

In Brazil, the WSF was peopled predominantly by Brazilians and secondarily by Latin Americans. In 2003, about fifteen percent of delegates were from outside the region; by 2005, the Porto Alegre event was even more Brazilian, though the participation and visibility of Asians and Africans in absolute numbers had also increased. Key mass movement entities in Brazil included the Movimento Sem Terra (MST, the landless movement), the Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT, the national federation of labour unions in Brazil) Via Campesina, and Articulación Feminista Marcosur (AFM, a transnational feminist network in the Marcos countries of South America). Prominent issues and campaigns in 2002 and 2003 included the

struggle against the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, against US intervention in Latin America as in the proposed Plan Puebla Panama and Plan Colombia, and focus on the Argentine economic crisis. Each WSF reflected both the global historical conjuncture and the particular conjuncture and social struggles of the host country and region. In 2003, for example, over 100,000 people marched in Porto Alegre against the American Empire, just before the US-led war in Iraq.

For all their diversity, the WSF gatherings in Brazil have primarily been light-skinned affairs of the middle-class and non-poor. The realities of Afro-Brazil and the indigenous Americas have barely been apparent.²⁰ Even the Brazilian MST, although a major player in the WSF process, has not been present in the WSF space in its tens of thousands.

The presence of mass poor people's movements in Mumbai testified to the complex organising process undertaken by Indian social movements. In marked contrast to Brazil, where eight major organisations organise the WSF, in India over 250 were directly through the Indian General Council. This group eventually mandated a group of fifty-seven to form the India Organising Committee.²¹ In India, organising the world event was itself a multi-scale process, including multiple national-scale consultations and social fora at village and state levels.²² The mass people's movements clearly organised to participate in large numbers and ensured that the WSF was financially accessible, and politically and culturally hospitable.

The India organising process also highlighted the particular social movement traditions and cleavages that shape any place-based instantiation of the SF. The intense inter-penetration of many social movements with political parties of the left both demanded and allowed for a different kind of political presence in the process and event than in Brazil.²³ Also, cultural and political traditions of self-provisioning and self-reliance, and a deep suspicion of foreign interference deeply rooted in memories of colonialism and anti-colonial struggle made the politics of funding the WSF newly contentious. It also produced extraordinary creativity in the designing and building of a WSF site, and the provisioning and servicing of the event through wholly non-corporate, mostly solidarity sources. The potentialities of these sensibilities and practices informed the WSF that was organised in Brazil, in Porto Alegre, in the very next year, 2005.

The newly acquired political weight of leading Indian movements in the WSF and intensified Indian-Brazilian / Latin American cross-movement dialogue, as well as heightened participation by Asians in general, and Dalit movements in particular, were also apparent at the Porto Alegre WSF. These significant developments were fruits of the process' growing internationalisation, even as the dominant political culture and discourses of Latin American, particularly Brazilian, movements reasserted themselves in Porto Alegre. This time, Africans were also present in greater numbers in Porto Alegre, mounting events, educating participants about African realities, and furthering the process toward the WSF in Kenya in 2007.

The 'place' is extremely significant for the character of the world event and for its contribution to the globality / multiculturalism of the WSF process. It is also significant for its effects on the host movements and indigenous political culture before, during, and after the world event, especially through its politics of diversity and inclusion, and how these get embodied in a particular place-based process. Wherever the world event is organised, it enacts its own culturally specific, geographically rooted social movement processes. This makes for significantly different WSFs and is critical for deepening the international, multicultural, and inter-civilisational character of the global process, and the possibility of genuinely dialogical encounters among movements across difference. Every edition of the WSF is 'placed' but transnational.

V

Reaching for the Global : Place-Based Movements in the WSF

The **fourth** aspect of the WSF's spatial praxis has to do with the presence, role, and status of place-based movements in the processes and events constituting the WSF, their own evolving multi-scale politics / practices, and the relation of these practices to their "subaltern strategies of localisation".²⁴ For highly localised movements just finding their ways into transnational civil society spaces, or those who have little cross-sectoral coalitional experience, the WSF is a place both to learn of new 'others' and to assert one's own right to be present in this worldwide convergence against neoliberalism.

Ekta Parishad is a livelihood rights movement in India focused on tribal peoples' control of land, water, forests, and other natural resources. Millions of families from over 5,000 villages are involved. At the Mumbai WSF, over 2,000 local community activists attended as Ekta Parishad delegates. Ekta Parishad organised a three-day land rights *mela* (in English, 'fair') at the WSF, which involved their delegates engaging in their own process, including international speakers and observers, and their intersecting with other land rights activities, and in the opening and closing ceremonies of the main WSF programme. To support their participation, Ekta Parishad organised their own site apart from the main WSF venue to house and feed people and advance their own process, while simultaneously drawing on and contributing to the larger process.

Jill Carr Harris, organiser with Ekta Parishad, had this to say about their engagement with the WSF :

What we're trying to do is bring people to us... we can't bring hundreds of thousands of people into different kinds of [international] fora. This is where we have decided that building fora like this within the World Social Forum is that people come to our ground. **People come to our ground** . We see the whole thing from local to global – we're not trying to just address 'global' issues...

Ekta Parishad is trying to counter [divide and rule] by bringing villagers together in larger numbers of villages, and then states together like this into a larger national grouping. And slowly, we're building a Land First International. And it's all premised local to global and bringing some sort of relevant global perspective to the local level...

The WSF is vastly significant in the sense that it is bringing all these people here... It is really hard and really expensive to fly people around and to intersect agendas and interests. It's really complicated. What you have here [at the WSF] is broad consensus that there are serious problems with regard to globalisation and the impacts of globalisation, so already you're on the same agenda.... From there you start building alliances – like our Land First *mela* ('fair'). I just spoke to the Kampucheans and I am going to speak next to [an activist] from Mexico about how we can create a Land First International, getting some significant groups together. When we do it, we want to link a lot of local groups not just big leaders.²⁵

Indigenous movements of the Americas have also made a claim on the SF. In a bid to host the Americas Social Forum (ASF), indigenous groups were among those who brought the SF to Quito, where indigenous peoples make up 40% of the population and which, with Peru and Bolivia, is home to Aymara and Quechua peoples. Ecuador is also home to one of the world's strongest, most dynamic, and politically potent indigenous movements. In January 2000, the Ecuadorian indigenous movement mobilised thousands in the capital, protesting the government's neoliberal agenda and dollarisation of the economy, forcing the government to resign, and negotiating for the installation of the current President on condition that he retract the neoliberal agenda of his predecessor.²⁶ At the heart of their mobilisation is the defence of their identities, which is in turn rooted in their defence of ancestral lands, claims to rights to self-governance and to their lands' resources, their own ways of life and the right to determine their own futures. The key national indigenous networks of Ecuador, Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador (CONAIE) and Confederation of Quechua Nationalities of Ecuador (ECUARUNARI), were prominent members of the ASF's Organising Committee.

The ASF was preceded by the second *Cumbre del pueblos y nacionalidades indigenas del las Abya Yala* ('Gathering of indigenous peoples and nationalities of Abya Yala', the

Americas), which convened 600 indigenous people from over twenty countries over four days in the Americas. The Cumbre was, in the words of Blanca Chancosa - indigenous leader and a key member of the organising committee of the Social Forum of the Americas in Quito in 2004 - , an “antechamber to the Social Forum”. To the Cumbre, she declared that :

Indigenous people cannot solve the problems [posed by neoliberal globalisation] alone; nor can non-indigenous people solve them alone. People need to come together.... The WSF is needed to co-ordinate to build another system of life... for people who want to build another world.... The Social Forum is expanding to more corners of the world. There is space to debate, to expand our ideas; but it is still not very diverse. We [indigenous peoples] have not been part of the Social Forum but we should be. The Social Forum can help us create links – all of us who are unhappy – to build with this hope we share. [It is a way] also to record the dignity and diversity of peoples across the world, our lands, our languages, our foods.

This [Cumbre] is an antechamber to get to the WSF in a different way. The WSF is basically a network of organisations : of peasants, women, thinkers, NGOs. But our absence is obvious. CONAIE is the only indigenous organisation on the International Council of the WSF. We can build more and better diversity. That is what we [as indigenous peoples] can contribute [to the SF]. We have to analyse, also with non-indigenous allies who recognise and respect our diversity, the rights we are reclaiming, who also understand our differences.²⁷

Within the Latin American orbit, the ASF issued a strong challenge to Porto Alegre through the 1,000-strong indigenous people; through their prominent presence on panels not narrowly about indigenous issues; in the visibility of their art forms, music, and dance; in their distinct political discourses, visions, projects, and processes. Crucial was their twin insistence that they need the WSF and that the world-wide movement needs them, specifically for their defence of diversity as a lived reality and political principle, and for their defence of nature against the rapacious incursion of resource-extracting corporations and neoliberal, neo-colonial states.²⁸

Many commentators, including on the left, portray such place-based movements as place-bound repositories of traditional, defensive, parochial, and often reactionary politics. By extension, place-based or localised social movements are assumed to be parochial and defensive or, more kindly, naive and ineffectual against increasingly globalised forms of power. In contrast, Arturo Escobar attributes to place-based movements such as those described here a “novel politics of scale” wherein they enact a place-based localisation strategy premised on the defence of local cultures and natures, coupled with active engagement with translocal forces, and a multi-scale politics linking identity, territory, and culture.²⁹ Further, he asks :

Do we even know how to look at social reality in ways that might allow us to detect elements of difference that are not reducible to the constructs of capitalism and modernity?... [To see] the extent to which local groups, far from being passive receivers of transnational conditions, actively shape the process of constructing identities, social relations and economic practice [?].... [This needs] to be related systematically to the project of rethinking place from the perspective of practices of cultural, ecological and economic difference among Third World communities in contexts of globalisation and post-coloniality.³⁰

The examples above testify to the importance that place-based movements, indisputably present at the WSF events and processes, attribute to the SF. They also point to the multi-scale strategies of these movements, even as they remain rooted in the defence of particular places. Finally, these movements embody the links between bio and cultural diversity and, more generally, the irreducible importance of recognising, valorising, defending, and promoting diversity as a defining feature of any new politics for another possible world.

VI

Conclusion

As a scholar of social movements and an activist, I have long been concerned to focus on the discourses and practices of emancipatory social movements and enquire into their meaning. I am concerned about scholarship on the left contributing to what Escobar, following Guha, has called “the prose of counter-insurgency”, effectively erasing practices of resistance through too

single-minded a focus on the power of capital and states.³¹ If we recognise that, today, the manipulation of scale is essential to the exercise of power, then it seems important to ask if and how non-elite social actors are also actively remaking scale in response to neoliberal globalisation, not just in frontal contestation with economic and political elites, **but within and among social movements themselves.**

In this paper, I have initiated an exploration into the spatial praxis of the WSF and inquired into its significance for constructing political / cultural alternatives to imperial capitalist modernity. Drawing on insights and approaches from critical geography, I have explored the interrelated character of space, place, and scale, the social construction of scale, and the practice of a politics of multiple scales taking shape in and through the WSF. I have begun to consider the relations between a politics of multiples scales at the WSF and its constitutive place-based movements. In this conclusion, I want to reflect on its relationship to a politics of recognition and difference and, following Escobar, its significance for emancipatory politics in a time of empire.

The recognition and valorisation of social struggles and movements at various scales and arising from distinct places enacts an expanding politics of diversity and recognition, acknowledging the multiplicity of alternative visions, values, and world views, and the presence of 'other worlds'. This praxis implies a break with globocentrism and is signalled by the profound shifts in relations among social movements at different scales – more horizontal, less hierarchical, and characterised by greater reciprocity, dialogue, mutual respect, and recognition. It invokes an alternative socio-spatial imaginary of 'the movement' as rooted in places / locales that are dispersed, diverse, and increasingly densely networked, rather than as a single, unitary, global, counter-hegemonic counter-force.

The WSF as autonomous **space** allows the movements and groups of globalising civil society to make themselves visible to, encounter, and transform one another. This is every bit as important as their effects on hegemonic institutions and regimes, and central to constructing anti-hegemonic power on a global scale, even as it cannot be reduced to this. The recognition of multiple sites and scales of struggles, the irreducibility of their existence and their significance, and the displacement of a hierarchy of scales of movement practice are central to creating a post-colonial politics, to breaking with capitalist modernity and its eurocentrism.

De Sousa Santos identifies the trans-scale character of the WSF, and the reassertion of the 'local' as key dimension of its newness. But it is not just the putative newness of the WSF but what it connotes about a 'new politics' in formation that is important. Notwithstanding his problematic grammar of fixed scales, he makes an important point :

What is new about contemporary societies is that the scales of social and political life – the local, national and global scales – are increasingly more interconnected... it is even more true with scales of counter hegemonic struggles. It is obvious that each political practice or social struggle is organised in accordance with a privileged scale, be it local, national or global, but whatever the scale may be, all the others must be involved as conditions of success. The decision on which scales to privilege is a political decision that must be taken in accordance with concrete political conditions. It is therefore not possible to opt in the abstract for any one hierarchy among scales of counter-hegemonic practice or struggle.³²

The recognition and valorisation of multiple-scale movement politics and the concomitant recognition of contingency and respect for difference arising from place and scale are critical to the 'new politics'. The social construction and politics of scale are not **only** operative in terms of power politics, within social movements, or between oppositional movements and elites. Social movement practices and discourses can also be pre-figurative and utopian. The scalar practices and discourses emergent, and the political struggles / debates over them, may be important aspects of a new democratic imaginary, pointing to other possible worlds and world orderings that may be coming into view, their outlines just barely discernible.

It remains indisputable, however, that the WSF has been central to the convergence of both anti-globalisation and anti-war movements. It has also been the site for the emergence of the World Dignity Forum and the growing claims of indigenous peoples on progressive movements worldwide. Its processes and methods are promoting extraordinary levels of self-organising and sowing new transnationalisms. The Social Forum is successfully fostering **convergence** among movements worldwide through the promotion of **pluralism**. It is this extraordinary paradox, that embracing diversity is producing unprecedented coordinated action on global and other scales, that is key to the generative power of the SF and suggestive of a new democratic, decolonised, and decolonising politics on a world scale.

Notes

- 1 Escobar, February 2004, p 207.
- 2 Herod 1997, pp 145–169.
- 3 Besides the conceptual and analytic distinction between the WSF and its constitutive movements referred to here, in this paper I use the term ‘WSF’ to indicate : 1) The annual global event (usually in a single place but sometimes constituted by events in several locations – as in the 2006 Polycentric); 2) The amorphous world-wide process made up of myriad regional and local processes and events; and 3) Occasionally to suggest that there is a somewhat coherent global project in the widespread promotion of the SF as a form; and I use ‘SF’ to refer : 1) Generically, to the particular political form; and 2) To processes / events at scales other than the global.
- 4 Soja 1999, pp 113–25; Foucault 1999, pp 134–41.
- 5 Harvey 1996.
- 6 Swyngedouw 1997, pp 137–166; Massey 1992, pp 65–84; Harvey 1989, 1996; Smith 1993, pp 87–119; Marston 2000, pp 219–242.
- 7 Massey 1994.
- 8 Marston 2000, pp 219–242.
- 9 Kelly 1999, pp 379–400.
- 10 Jones 1998, pp 25–28.
- 11 Marston 2000, pp 219–242.
- 12 Conway 2004b, pp 357–360; 2004a; 2003, pp 23–25; and 2002, pp 254–256.
- 13 de Sousa Santos 2004, p 4.
- 14 Conway 2004a, pp 115ff.
- 15 See : León 2006.
- 16 *Eds, in 2011* : The author says : “ I can’t find an on-line source for the original initiative, which Pierre George from France was animating. There was also an event at the 2005 WSF to advance this initiative (p 36 of the WSF 2005 program). [But] the France-based initiative has now morphed into [what appears in] this link” : <http://openfsm.net/projects/sfexintercom/project-home> .
- 17 For another discussion of the Mumbai WSF, see chapter by Giuseppe Caruso in this volume (Caruso 2012).
- 18 Sen 2004a, p 218.
- 19 For example, the World Dignity Forum, a Dalit initiative at the WSF, built transnational alliances with indigenous peoples in Africa and the Americas around the defence of dignity in the face of discrimination based on dissent.
- 20 *Eds* : This essay was written in October 2006 and finalised during 2008 – before the WSF that was organised in Belém, in the northeast of Brazil, in January 2009, where the colour, class, and ethnic complexion of the Forum in Brazil was quite different.
- 21 de Sousa Santos 2004, p 81; Raina 2004.
- 22 Sen 2004b, p 302.
- 23 Whitaker, January 2005 (interview with author); de Sousa Santos 2004, p 81; Sen 2004b, p 298ff.
- 24 Escobar 2001, pp 139–174.
- 25 Carr Harris 2004 (interview with the author).
- 26 Becker 2004.
- 27 Chancosa 2004b.
- 28 Chancosa 2004a (interview with the author).

- 29 Escobar 2001, p 163.
- 30 Ibid, p 155.
- 31 Escobar 2001, pp 139–174; Guha 1988, pp 37–44.
- 32 de Sousa Santos 2004, p 96.

Social Forums And Their Margins : Networking Logics And The Cultural Politics Of Autonomous Space ^{1, 2}

Jeffrey S Juris

Introduction

There were two different worlds in Porto Alegre, one slow moving, totally grassroots and self-managed, and another organised along completely different lines, two worlds coming together at different velocities.

- Nuria, activist : Movement for Global Resistance.³

On the evening of October 17 2004, the second day of the third European Social Forum (ESF) in London, 200 activists stormed the stage of an anti-Fascist plenary at London's Alexander Palace, where Mayor Ken Livingstone was scheduled to speak. After a brief scuffle, organisers from several radical groups that helped produce a series of autonomous spaces during the Forum, including the Wombles, Indymedia, Yo Mango, and others, occupied the stage for roughly thirty minutes, not to stop the plenary but rather to publicly denounce what they perceived as the non-democratic, top-down way the Forum had been organised, including the exclusionary practices of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) and the Mayor's Socialist Action faction. To that end, activists read a statement released by translators from the Babels network earlier that week, which included the following, "Perhaps our most important principle is that of self-organisation.... However, many opportunities of experimentation and innovation have been missed [in this Forum]... resulting in the exclusion of many people, organisations, networks, groups, and even countries".⁴

As protesters left the Palace, several were beaten and arrested by the police. More conflict occurred the following day when anti-capitalists were harassed prior to the mass march, and as police dragged away two radical activists when they tried to access the podium to speak out during the final rally. An intense debate ensued in the London Guardian and on Forum listserves. Members of the SWP and the Mayor's allies denounced their critics as illegitimate, non-democratic, and even racist, while radicals defended their right to make their voices heard.

By staging such highly visible direct action, grassroots activists succeeded in provoking a heated public debate, thus bringing two interrelated conflicts within and around the Forum into full view. On the one hand, their critique reflected the long simmering contest inside the London organising process, pitting self-ascribed 'horizontals', who support more open and participatory forms of organisation, against their more traditional institutional counterparts, whom they dub the 'verticals'.⁵ Although particularly pronounced in London that year, this tension has long characterised the Forum process, corresponding to an ongoing conflict between what I refer to as 'networking' and 'command' logics within the broader anti-corporate globalisation movements from which the forums emerged.⁶ Despite popular conceptions among radicals, the forums cannot be dismissed as attempts by mainstream political parties, NGOs, and the older left to co-opt grassroots movements. These traditional formations are certainly present in the WSF process, and arguably to a greater degree than during earlier mass direct actions, yet so too are newer network-based movements. Indeed, horizontal networking logics are inscribed into the forums' organisational architectures, perhaps most clearly expressed in the concept of 'open space'.⁷ The main point is that the forums, and the organising processes surrounding them, are highly uneven, contradictory, and

contested terrains.

On the other hand, by staging direct action protest at the London Forum, activists also expressed and physically embodied the conflictual relationship between radical anti-capitalists and the broader social forum process. Belying facile inside-outside dichotomies, diverse radical networks have at different times participated within the forums, boycotted them, or created autonomous spaces straddling the porous boundaries separating official and alternative events. Indeed, the social forums have largely eclipsed mass protests as the primary vehicles where diverse movement networks converge across urban space to make themselves visible, generate affective attachments, and communicate alternatives and critiques. Many radicals thus implicitly recognise that complete disengagement from the forums means exclusion from the broader movement. By creating autonomous spaces at the Forum's margins, radicals generate their own horizontal practices while staying connected to mainstream currents and pressuring official spaces to live up to their expressed ideals. Moreover, this cultural politics of autonomous space reflects a broader networking logic, and demonstrates how contemporary ideological struggles are increasingly waged through battles over organisational process and form.

This article explores the cultural politics of autonomous space along three distinct levels. Empirically, it provides an ethno-genealogy of the emergence, diffusion, and proliferation of 'autonomous space'.⁸ Theoretically, it argues that the cultural politics of autonomous space express the broader networking logics and politics increasingly inscribed within emerging organisational architectures. Finally, on a political level, it suggests the proliferation of autonomous spaces represents a promising model for rethinking the Forum as an innovative, network-based organisational form. The Forum is thus best viewed not as a singular open space, but rather as a congeries of shifting, overlapping networked spaces that converge across a particular urban terrain during a specific point in time.

I have written this essay both an activist and ethnographer who has participated actively within the world and regional social forum process, as well as activist networks in the United States and Catalonia, including the (ex-) Movement for Global Resistance (MRG) in Barcelona and Peoples' Global Action (PGA).⁹ The analysis for this paper was based on activism and research carried out in Barcelona from June 2001 to September 2002, and participation in subsequent forums.¹⁰ I have taken part in the organisation and implementation of diverse autonomous spaces during several World and European Social Forums, as well as in early discussions when the concept was first debated. My research is practically engaged, based on the refusal to separate observation from participation, constituting what I call a 'militant ethnography'.¹¹ I feel this is the best way to generate useful analyses and interpretations, designed to make interventions into ongoing political, tactical, and strategic debates. I situate myself within more radical grassroots movement sectors precisely because they most clearly express an emerging networking logic, which is among my primary analytical **and** political concerns.

I

Emerging Organisational Architectures

Facilitated by new information technologies, and inspired by earlier Zapatista solidarity activism and anti-Free Trade Campaigns,¹² anti-corporate globalisation movements have emerged through the rapid proliferation of decentralised network forms. New Social Movement (NSM) theorists have long argued that in contrast to centralised, vertically integrated, working-class movements, newer feminist, ecological, and student movements are organised around flexible, dispersed, and horizontal networks.¹³ Mario

Diani defines social movements generically as 'network formations'.¹⁴ Similarly, borrowing terms used to describe kin networks and other elements of pre-modern social organisation, anthropologists Gerlach and Hine argued years ago that social movements are decentralised, segmentary, and reticulate.¹⁵ However, by promoting peer-to-peer communication and allowing for communication across space in real time, new information technologies have significantly enhanced the most radically decentralised network configurations, facilitating trans-national coordination and communication.

As I argue elsewhere,¹⁶ contemporary social movement networks involve an emerging "cultural logic of networking", which entails a series of broad guiding principles shaped (perhaps counter-intuitively) by the logic of informational capitalism, that are internalised by activists and generate concrete networking practices. These principles include :

1. Forging horizontal ties and connections among diverse, autonomous elements;
2. The free and open circulation of information;
3. Collaboration through decentralised coordination and consensus decision-making; and –
4. Self-directed networking.¹⁷

Based on these principles, networking logics have given rise to what grassroots activists call a new way of doing politics. While the command-oriented logic of parties and unions is based on recruiting new members, building unified strategies, political representation, and the struggle for hegemony, network politics involve the creation of broad umbrella spaces where diverse movements and collectives converge around common hallmarks while preserving their autonomy and specificity. Rather than recruitment, the objective becomes horizontal expansion through articulating diverse movements within flexible structures that facilitate maximal coordination and communication.

At the same time, networking logics are never completely dominant and always exist in dynamic tension with other competing logics, often giving rise to a complex 'cultural politics of networking' within particular spheres. This is precisely how to best understand the conflict involving 'horizontals' and 'verticals' at the London ESF. This was not the first time such conflict had occurred in the Forum process. In fact, struggles between network-based movements and their traditional organisational counterparts are constitutive of the Forum process itself, and also of the broader anti-corporate globalisation movements from which the WSF emerged. Similar dynamics were present during earlier mass mobilisations in Seattle or Genoa, and during the Campaigns against the World Bank and European Union in Barcelona.

Horizontal networks should not be romanticised. Specific networks involve varying degrees of organisational hierarchy,¹⁸ from relatively horizontal relations within radical networks like PGA to more centralised processes like the world and regional social forums. Horizontal relations do not suggest the complete absence of hierarchy but rather the lack of formal hierarchical designs. This does not necessarily prevent, and may even encourage, the formation of informal hierarchies.¹⁹ What activists increasingly call 'horizontalism' involves precisely an attempt to build collective processes while managing internal struggles through decentralised coordination, open participation, and organisational transparency, rather than through representative structures and centralised command. At the same time, the broadest convergence spaces,²⁰ including the social forums, involve a complex amalgam of diverse organisational forms.

Horizontalism is perhaps best understood as a guiding vision. Beyond social morphology, networks have also emerged as a broader cultural ideal, a model of and for new forms of directly democratic politics at local, regional, and global scales. Moreover, such values are increasingly inscribed directly onto emerging organisational architectures. Decentralised communication structures, such as PGA or the (ex-) MRG in Barcelona, may be more or less effective at coordinating grassroots struggles and initiatives but, more importantly, they also physically manifest horizontal network ideals. Indeed, activists increasingly express utopian political imaginaries through concrete political, organisational, and technological practice. As Geert Lovink suggests, "Ideas that matter are hardwired into software and network architectures".²¹ This is precisely why contemporary political and ideological debates are so often coded as conflict over organisational process and form.²²

II

Social Forums as Contested Terrains

According to official accounts, the idea for the World Social Forum (WSF) as a space for reflection and debate about alternatives to neoliberal globalisation originated with Oded Grajew who, with Brazilian compatriot Francisco Whitaker, presented the proposal to Bernard Cassen, President of ATTAC-France (Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens) and Director of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, in February 2000. Cassen liked the idea and suggested the Forum be held in Porto Alegre, given its location in the Global South, renowned model of participatory budgets, and organisational resources provided by the ruling Workers' Party (PT). Although following on the heels of recent mass anti-corporate mobilisations in Seattle, Washington, DC, and Prague, the WSF would specifically provide an opportunity to generate concrete alternatives to neoliberal globalisation, coinciding with the annual World Economic Forum in Davos. The WSF built on previous convergence processes, including Zapatista Encounters in Chiapas and Spain, global PGA gatherings, UN civil society forums, and NGO-led counter-summit conferences organised by networks such as San Francisco-based International Forum on Globalisation. The Brazilian Organising Committee (BOC) was soon formed, involving the main Brazilian Labour Federation (CUT), Landless Workers' Movement (MST), and six smaller organisations.²³ The International Council (IC) was created after the first WSF, to oversee its global expansion.

Although the WSF provided an opportunity for the traditional left, including many reformists, Marxists and Trotskyists, to regain their leadership within an emerging global wave of resistance, radical network-based movements from Europe, North, and South America also participated. Moreover, the Charter of Principles, drafted after the initial WSF to provide guidelines for a permanent process, reflected the network principles prevailing within the broader movement. The Forum is defined as "an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences, and interlinking for effective action".²⁴ The Charter further states, "The meetings of the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body... it does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants... nor does it constitute the only option for interrelation and action by the organisations and movements that participate in it". This should be taken more as an ideal than actuality,²⁵ and perhaps more importantly as a reflection of a broader horizontal networking ethic. Indeed, as Jai Sen has consistently maintained, the WSF should be viewed as an open space :

The Forum... is not an organisation or a movement, or a world federation, but a **space** – a non-directed space, from and within which movements and other civil initiatives of many kinds can meet, exchange views, and... take forward their work, locally, nationally, and globally.²⁶

Again, this vision should be understood as a guiding ideal, not an empirical depiction, and is often contradicted in practice. For example, the hierarchical format of the main plenary sessions undermines horizontal networking, while the prominent role of organising committees in determining programme content belies the idea of non-directed space.²⁷ In addition, social movement assemblies at World and European Social Forums serve as de facto deliberative bodies,²⁸ while the Organising and International Committees constitute arenas for power struggle. Further, the injunction against political parties is rendered meaningless by the close relationship between the forums and Brazil's Workers' Party, Italy's *Refundazione Comunista*, Britain's Labour Party, or India's Communist Parties. Still, the ideal of open space does represent the inscription of a broader network ideal within the Forum's organisational architecture. At the same time, differently situated actors hold contrasting views of the Forum, often setting horizontal network movements against their traditional counterparts. Indeed, the Forum is a "hotly contested political space".²⁹

This was made abundantly clear at a meeting of the WSF's International Council in Barcelona in April 2002. Numerous grassroots groups were invited to attend as guest observers, but MRG had received an invitation to become an official member, presumably based on its reputation as an exemplar of the new radicalism. Since its organisational principles precluded taking part in this kind of representative structure, MRG decided to offer its delegate status to an open assembly of grassroots movements in Barcelona. The assembly drafted a statement criticising the IC for its lack of transparency, which I was entrusted to record, translate, and read aloud on April 17, the second day of the meeting.³⁰ The text included the following charge :

... MRG is part of a new political culture involving network-based organisational forms, direct democracy, open participation, and direct action. A top-down process, involving a closed, non-transparent, non-democratic, and highly institutional central committee will never attract collectives and networks searching for a new way of doing politics.

The declaration was meant as a communicative direct action at the heart of the IC. We expected a cold, if not downright hostile, reception. Much to our surprise, however, many Council members were extremely supportive. The political logic of this soon became clear. A prominent European-based figure later suggested, "We have to figure out a way to include this new political culture despite their unique organisational form".³¹

Beyond an attempt to co-opt our movements however, other IC members recognised the validity of our critique, expressing support for a process based on openness, transparency, and diversity which reflected a broader networking logic. In fact, the IC was internally divided on the issue. Some wanted to change the Charter of Principles, allowing for the development of collective strategies through the IC's political leadership. Others steadfastly opposed this view; as one member argued, "In response to the radicalisation of the right, we have to radicalise our process of diversity and participation. We are not a central committee !".

Much like the Forum, the IC is a contested space, not in terms of formal quotas of power but rather over the Forum's underlying vision. The main point here is that the conflict between networking and command logics does not so much position the Forum against its external critics as constitute the very process itself, involving heated debates over its organisational architecture among those espousing very different ideological perspectives.

III

The Intergalactika Laboratory of Disobedience

After the unexpected success of the first WSF in 2001, several hundred Barcelona-

based activists, including dozens, like myself, from grassroots networks like MRG, travelled across the ocean for its second edition. Although many of us were critical of the Forum, given the key role played by traditional parties, unions, and NGOs, we also recognised that it had become a major pole of attraction among movements, networks, and groups opposed to neoliberal globalisation.

Beyond simply providing a space for debating and constructing alternatives, the Forum is also an opportunity for diverse networks to physically converge, generate affective ties, communicate alternative messages, and physically represent themselves to each other and the public. More than an arena for rational discourse, the WSF is also, and perhaps primarily, a collective ritual (in the sense of process) where alternative social movement networks and their cultural logics become embodied. Indeed, the innumerable self-organised workshops and cultural events, and constant flow of networking activity within the corridors, plazas, streets, and cafés around the Catholic University (where the 2001, 2002, and 2003 Fora were held) generated a rush of stimulation, excitement, and bewilderment. As an MRG-based colleague suggested after the Forum, "I didn't learn anything new, but it was an amazing experience. You really felt part of a huge global movement !".³² Indeed, since mass actions became increasingly difficult to organise given waning enthusiasm and growing repression post 9/11, the reason why so many radicals feel obliged to engage the process is that the Forum became a key organisational platform for broader movement and identity building.

At the 2002 Forum, many of us from MRG helped organise and coordinate the *Intergalactika* Laboratory of Disobedience within the International Youth Camp, which would become a prototypical model for future autonomous spaces at forums, even if not conceived as such.³³ *Intergalactika* provided an informal, participatory forum for exchange among grassroots activists from Europe, South, and North America, many of whom felt ambivalent about participating in the institutional Forum. Moreover, because it was situated in the International Youth Camp, many young Brazilian anarchists explicitly opposed to the official Forum could also take part. On the other hand, many of us moved fluidly between both spaces.³⁴

Intergalactika thus provided an arena for engaging in grassroots, participatory forms of political exchange, while also creatively and sometimes confrontationally intervening within the official Forum to make its contradictions visible. Indeed, the ideal of the Forum as open space was perhaps most fully expressed along the margins, particularly within the Youth Camp. Though relatively marginal, *Intergalactika* prefigured the strategy of organising autonomous yet connected spaces within the larger Forum, reflecting a networking strategy MRG had already employed in Barcelona, and would promote leading up to the ESF. It was here that the broader movement's horizontal networking logic was most clearly apparent.

For example, on February 4 2002, the Forum's penultimate day, *Intergalactika* sponsored an excellent discussion of strategies and tactics, one of the few sessions to address direct action. A large crowd assembled in a circle around a well-known activist from London, not far from a photo exhibition displaying action images from Buenos Aires, London, Milan, and Barcelona, in explicit contrast to the massive lecture halls housing the official plenaries. The speaker gave an inspirational talk about decentralisation, diversity, and interdependence, arguing at one point, "Our movements are like an ecosystem : Very fluid, always changing, working toward their own survival". Reflecting the networking logic that had been muted, if not absent, within the larger Forum, he went on to exclaim, "I hate the slogan 'Another World is Possible' – **Many** Other Worlds are Possible !".

Intergalactika also provided a space for planning and coordinating several creative direct actions targeting the official WSF. The idea was not to question the Forum's legitimacy, but to criticise the perceived top-down way it was organised. Indeed, the WSF represented an opportunity to reach masses of potential supporters, but its more institutional and reformist elements were viewed as undermining the self-organising network logic within the broader movement. Immediately after the tactics and strategy discussion, dozens of us took the bus to the University for a 'guided tour' of the VIP room.³⁵ Soon after arriving, we joined the anarchist Samba band from Sao Paulo (dressed in black, rather than the usual pink) and danced our way to the second floor. We continued to march through crowds of surprised yet delighted onlookers. When we burst into the VIP room, a heavy-set Brazilian with long Rastas jumped on to the counter, tossed plastic bottles of water to the crowd, and led us in an enthusiastic chant, "We are all VIPs ! We are all VIPs !". We then gave ourselves, and a group of nervously amused NGO delegates, an impromptu bath. Forum organisers were livid, and only the intervention of well-connected allies spared us a direct confrontation with the police. However, as a Brazilian OC member confided to us at the IC meeting in Barcelona later that spring, there would be no VIP room the following year.

IV

One Foot In, One Foot Out

These experiences at the 2002 WSF in Porto Alegre and at the IC meeting in Barcelona were particularly instructive. On the one hand, we learned the Forum could bring together tens of thousands of people from diverse movement networks, thereby creating a unique space for encounter and exchange while generating powerful global identities and affective attachments. On the other hand, although the Charter of Principles expressed an open networking logic, there were serious contradictions in practice with respect to grassroots participation, open access, and horizontal organisation. However, it was also clear that critically engaging the Forum from the margins was not only useful for bringing our own projects forward, it allowed for the promotion of constructive change from within. Indeed, confounding clear boundaries between inside and outside, we realised we had important allies within the very heart of the organising process. As preparations began for the first ESF the following November in Florence, we began debating among our colleagues in Barcelona and elsewhere how best to engage the process. This led to the first proposals for creating an autonomous space in Florence.

The notion of building an autonomous space 'separate, yet connected' actually came quite naturally to many in Barcelona. The concept itself expressed a horizontal networking logic, and the previous fall we had negotiated similar dynamics surrounding the mobilisation against the Spanish Presidency of the EU in Barcelona. Tensions at the local level actually began in spring 2001, during the Campaign against the World Bank, a broad convergence space involving grassroots networks like MRG, the Citizens Network to Abolish Foreign Debt (XCADE), critical elements of ATTAC, leftist parties, unions, and more institutional sectors. Although some anti-capitalists participated in the Campaign, many militants, including radical squatters, formed their own autonomous platform.

The Campaign involved a great deal of conflict between radical grassroots networks and their institutional counterparts. Even when the latter decided to found their own organisation following the June mobilisation,³⁶ debates continued to rage between traditional Marxists, who wanted the Campaign to continue, and many from XCADE and MRG who preferred to dissolve the Campaign, at least until the next mobilisation against the EU. Given this ongoing struggle between networking and command logics, some within MRG proposed forging a large autonomous space the next time, with radical militants and squatters, which could then coordinate with the

broader Campaign against the EU.³⁷ An MRG-based colleague sent an e-mail to the Campaign listserve explaining the reasons for this proposal :

We can't force each other to integrate within organisational forms we don't share. The best thing would be to organise within different spaces according to our own traditions, but coordinate in order to complement one another in daily practice. Separating does not necessarily mean dividing. On the contrary, it means moving forward in order to take advantage of both the newer and older experiences and organisational ideas, learning from the errors of the past, toward a new form of understanding collective action. It's about separating in order to work more effectively together.³⁸

Thus, when discussions began about whether to participate in the Florence ESF it was a relatively simple step to apply this networking logic to a proposal for building an autonomous space there.³⁹

The Strasbourg No Border Camp in July 2002 provided an initial opportunity to debate the various proposals for building an autonomous space at Florence, leading to the now famous formulation : 'One foot in, one foot out'. The debate around the ESF on July 26 2002 drew significant interest, as dozens of grassroots activists from the Italian *Disobedientes* , Cobas, and PGA-inspired activists around Europe converged to share ideas and experiences. An activist from Berlin began with a brief outline of the situation, "People say everything is open, but a small group makes all the decisions. There are mostly Trotskyists, trade unionists, political parties, and ATTAC, but very few from networks like PGA or the broader movement. How do we bring radical ideas and proposals without becoming part of the power structure ?".

Several argued that we should participate but organise things differently, highlighting a vision of self-managed social change from below. Many others felt it would be better to stay outside. As one activist pointed out, "Participating is a way of legitimating their attempt to make the ESF **the** space of the anti-globalisation movement !". Others thought it was more important to intervene. The Berliner thus suggested, "In Porto Alegre many people never saw the Youth Camp; there was not enough interaction. We should have one foot outside, but also another inside". Her position was widely shared, as an Andalusia-based squatter added, "We should organise a different space, beyond, but not against the ESF, although we should also participate within". After a long discussion, the group ultimately decided to release the following statement :

We agreed to launch the idea of constituting a concrete space for those of us who traditionally work with structures that are decentralised, horizontal, assembly-based, and anti-authoritarian; a space that would maintain its autonomy with respect to the 'official' space of the ESF, but at the same time remain connected.... This would mean... having one foot outside and another inside the ESF.... This autonomous space should visibilise the diversity of the movement of movements, but also our irreconcilable differences with respect to models attempting to reform capitalism. The space should not only incorporate differences with the program of the ESF in terms of 'contents', but also in terms of the organisational model and forms of political action.⁴⁰

Thus, ideological differences were largely coded as disagreement over organisational process and form.

A session at the European PGA conference in Leiden on September 1 2002 provided an opportunity for further defining the autonomous space in Florence. Some were still reticent about participating, but as one activist argued, "The ESF is a perfect moment of visibility. We are a ghetto here in Leiden; there is very little media coverage". At the same time, there was growing support for a space completely outside the Forum, in which specific groups could decide themselves whether to take part. Others were concerned about being integrated into a social democratic project, leading

to consensus about the importance of clearly 'legible' actions to communicate underlying political distinctions. Indeed, such complex networking politics would involve a delicate balance : "The challenge... consists of making sure, on the one hand, the initiatives are not co-opted; and, on the other hand, avoiding... isolation".⁴¹ We ultimately decided to recast the autonomous space outside the Forum, which would allow individual activists and groups to decide where to position their own feet with respect to the boundaries dividing official and autonomous spheres.

Specific actions and contents were also discussed, and this is where major disagreements emerged. For example, as someone from the *Disobedientes* suggested, "We should organise a series of actions around three issues : Global war, labour, and new social subjects". Reflecting an open networking logic, and subtle critique of the *Disobedientes* , an activist from Indymedia-Italy countered that process was equally important, arguing that, "An autonomous space should be defined by open access. We have to create spaces and tools that allow people to come together". Disagreements over whether spaces should be more or less open or directed are not only found within the official Forum process; they are also present along its margins. What began as a single project thus ultimately broke down into parallel autonomous initiatives in Florence, including Cobas Thematic Squares, the *Disobedientes* 'No Work, No Shop' space, and the Eur@ction Hub.

V

Proliferation of Autonomous Spaces

The official Florence ESF surpassed all expectations, involving 60,000 activists from around Europe in debates and discussions, and drawing nearly one million to a demonstration on November 9 2002 against the war in Iraq. In addition, many more activists passed through the autonomous initiatives, as well as a feminist space called Next Genderation.⁴² Although criticised for being relatively marginal, the Eur@action Hub, in particular, provided an open space for sharing skills, ideas, and resources; building new subjects; exploring issues related to information, migration, and self-management; and experimenting with new peer-to-peer communication technologies. The project thus manifested a particularly clear horizontal networking logic within its organisational architecture, emphasising process and form over content. Above all, it was designed to facilitate interconnections inside the Hub, and between the Hub and other spaces around the Forum. As the flyer explained :

Hub is... a connector. It is not a space already marked by pre-established content. Anyone can contribute proposals designed specifically for the Hub, but 'also connect' to this space others that might take place in other places or moments in Florence. Hub is also an interconnection tool : for bringing together proposals or ideas that have been dispersed or undeveloped until now, which might acquire greater complexity.⁴³

After Florence, the autonomous space model caught on, becoming standard practice at subsequent events. At the 2003 WSF in Porto Alegre, grassroots activists organised several overlapping parallel spaces, including a follow-up Hub project, the second edition of *Intergalactika* , and a forum organised by Z Magazine , called Life After Capitalism. In addition, Brazilian activists hosted a PGA-inspired gathering involving activists from Europe, South, and North America.

At the second ESF in Paris in November 2003, activists organised various parallel initiatives including an autonomous media centre Metallo medialab, and a highly successful direct action space called GLAD (Space Towards the Globalisation of Disobedient Struggles and Actions).

And at the WSF in Mumbai in January 2004, although emerging from distinct

political contexts and histories the autonomous spaces that took shape were even larger, particularly since grassroots movements in India were extremely critical of the institutional NGOs leading the process. These included : Mumbai Resistance (an initiative of Maoist and Gandhian peasant movements), the Peoples' Movements Encounter II (led by the Federation of Agricultural Workers' and Marginal Farmers' Unions), and the International Youth Camp.⁴⁴ PGA also held another parallel session, involving mostly Asian and European movements.⁴⁵

However, many anti-authoritarians have refused to take part in the Forum process entirely. With respect to the ESF, Paul Treanor, a Dutch anti-authoritarian, has argued that "The organisers want to establish themselves as 'the leaders of the European social movements'. They want to become a negotiating partner of the EU (2002)".⁴⁶ As indicated above, though, the Forum process is much more complex, contradictory, and contested, involving anti-capitalists as well as reformers, libertarians, and vanguardists. As Pablo Ortellado, a Brazilian activist has argued, "The social forums are attracting a wide range of people, many of whom we really want to bring to our part of the movement. It's not enough to sit and criticise the Forum.... We should somehow set our own events and attract those people".⁴⁷ In a widely circulated essay, Linden Farrer thus came out in support of a 'contamination' strategy :

The best way of working with the ESF [is] being constructive in criticism, attempting to change the organisation from inside and outside, preventing liberals from tending towards their self-destructive habits of strengthening existing structures of government. Rather than abolishing the ESF because it had a shaky – but ultimately successful – start, we should work to make the ESF a truly revolutionary force (2002).⁴⁸

Many grassroots radicals would agree – and indeed, the cultural politics of autonomous space perhaps reached their fullest expression at the London ESF in October 2004.

VI

European Social Forum : London 2004

As conflict between horizontals and verticals around the London ESF process escalated, numerous activists and groups, some against the Forum process and others holding out hope for reform, decided to organise and coordinate a series of grassroots autonomous spaces. Despite important differences with respect to ideology and position, the various alternative projects were united in their commitment to horizontal, directly democratic processes and forms. As a Beyond ESF spokesperson explained during the opening plenary presenting the autonomous spaces at Middlesex University on October 13 2004, "We have spent six months defining ourselves in opposition to the ESF, but our way of showing opposition is by organising ourselves in a different way". Delegates from other spaces were not so much against the Forum but the perceived heavy-handed tactics of the SWP and Socialist Action. As an organiser of Life Despite Capitalism explained, "To fight the top-down, vertical culture we created the horizontals based on our own culture of openness". In many ways, the autonomous spaces represented an affirmation of the open space ideal expressed within the Forum's Charter, as their collective declaration clearly articulates :

We want to create open spaces for networking, exchanges, celebration, thinking, and action. We believe our ways of organising and acting should reflect our political visions, and are united in standing for grassroots self-organisation, horizontality, for diversity and inclusion, for direct democracy, collective decision making based upon consensus.⁴⁹

The autonomous spaces in London were ultimately more numerous, well-attended, and perhaps more fruitful, in terms of generating synergies, cross-fertilisation, and debate, than at any previous Forum. Thousands of grassroots activists engaged in a dizzying array of alternative projects, direct actions, and initiatives.

Although it was impossible to be everywhere at once, particularly given the long distances between venues, I attended many of the alternative events and workshops, which included :

Beyond ESF – October 13–17, Middlesex University

Beyond ESF was an alternative gathering of anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist struggles, involving hundreds of workshops, discussions, and events organised around five themes : Autonomy and Struggle, No Borders, Repression and Social Control, Zapatismo, and Precarity / Casualisation. Activists also used the space to plan and coordinate ongoing activities within grassroots formations like PGA, No Border, and the Dissent Network, which organised a day-long workshop to prepare for the July actions against the G8 in Scotland. Perhaps even more important were the informal networking opportunities around the bar, canteen, vegan kitchen, and hallways.

Radical Theory Forum – October 14, 491 Gallery

Radical Theory involved a series of workshops and discussions among activists and committed intellectuals exploring how theory can inform action. Themes included : Feminism, post-Marxism, popular education, complexity theory, and the politics and organisation of the ESF, among many others. The conference was followed by a party with film, art, music, and spoken word.

Indymedia Centre – October 14–17, Camden Centre

The Indymedia Centre provided a space for independent reporting and multi-media production around the ESF and autonomous spaces, including numerous protests and creative interventions. It housed a bar and public access computing facility, and hosted evening cultural events as well as a four-day conference around communication rights and tactical media production.

The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination – October 14–17, Rampart Creative Centre

The Laboratory provided a self-organised space for creative intervention and exchange, where participants shared ideas and tactics through workshops, discussions, and direct action events throughout the city. Some of the specific actions included : Corporate Olympics, the 5th biannual March for Capitalism, Yomango collective shoplifts and Tube parties, and Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army recruitments and trainings.

Mobile Carnival Forum – October 14–17, Rampart and throughout the city

The Carnival Forum was housed in the London to Baghdad bio-diesel double-decker bus, which circulated from site to site around the Forum and other parts of the city. The project used political theatre and music to generate discussions and workshops around various issues, including peace, democracy, and neoliberalism.

Solidarity Village – October 13–17, Conway Hall and London School of Economics

The Solidarity Village involved a series of projects and initiatives focused on alternative economies. Concrete spaces included the Land Café, Well Being Space, Art Space for Kids, Local Social Forums Area, the Commons Internet Café, and SUSTAIN !, which included presentations,

leaflets, and information stalls.

Women's Open Day – October 14, King's Cross Methodist Church

This one-day gathering involved speak-outs, food, video screenings, childcare, and information stalls focusing on the non-remunerated survival work carried out by women around the world, including breastfeeding, subsistence farming, caring, volunteering, and fighting for justice.

Life Despite Capitalism – October 16–17, London School of Economics

This two-day forum for collective debate and reflection around diverse issues and struggles involving the idea of the 'Commons' aimed at beginning to generate a new discourse and analysis, including a critique of capitalism and the articulation of alternative values and practices that represent what we are fighting for. These alternatives do not lie in the distant future when capitalism has been abolished, but rather exist here and now. Two series of workshops explored the idea of the Commons in diverse spheres : Cyberspace, the workplace, public services, free movement, and autonomous spaces, as well as several cross-cutting themes, including power, networks, democracies, creative excesses, and the commons more generally.

Throughout the London ESF I was able to move fluidly across the urban terrain from one space to another, and between the autonomous spaces and the official Forum. Boundaries were diffuse, shifting, and permeable, as spaces literally flowed through and across one another. Indeed, the movement's broader networking logic was physically expressed through the division of urban space, allowing diverse forms of organisation to converge in time, without imposing one form over another. This does not mean there was an absence of interaction and struggle as illustrated, for example, by the highly public direct action against London Mayor Ken Livingstone. However, conflicts were largely localised in space and time, and were, in fact, productive : Making underlying tensions visible, generating collective debate, and pressuring the Forum to abide by its expressed guidelines and ideals. The autonomous spaces thus allowed grassroots radicals to engage in their own alternative forms of political, social, and cultural production, while moving out from their radical ghettos to tactically intervene within the broader Forum, and throughout the city.

VII

Conclusion : From Open to Networked Space

I hope by this point to have accomplished my first two objectives. First, I have traced the emergence, diffusion, and implementation of the autonomous space concept with respect to the social forums, from my situated experience. I have thus considered complex local networking politics in Barcelona as well as my participation in *Intergalactika* , the IC, and the debates over the 'one foot in, one foot out' principle. Additionally, I have discussed the proliferation of autonomous spaces at recent World and European Social Forums.

Second, I have also explored the cultural politics of autonomous space from a more theoretical perspective. I have argued that building autonomous spaces reflects the underlying networking logic within anti-corporate globalisation movements, involving the creation of horizontal ties and connections among distinct elements or nodes across diversity and difference. At the same time, as we have seen, networking logics are never completely dominant, always challenged by competing logics, generating complex networking politics within specific spheres. Given that such political logics are increasingly inscribed directly into organisational architectures, it should come as no surprise that ideological debates have often

been coded as struggles over process and form. But what does this mean politically? How does the preceding analysis generate a new vision for the social forum process?

If activists have learned anything over the past few years it is that our movements, networks, and groups are exceedingly diverse. Conflicts over political vision, ideology, and organisational form are simply unavoidable – within and between sectors. Indeed, they are constitutive of the broader convergence processes that characterise mass-based movements. At the same time, given such high levels of diversity, it may be impossible to work effectively within a single space. This does not mean abandoning the Forum, as many radicals and anti-authoritarians suggest; but neither does it imply a mere strategy of contamination. Rather, it suggests radicalising our horizontal networking logic by not only continuing to build autonomous spaces within and around the Forums, but also by working to inscribe the politics of autonomous space within the very organisational architecture of the Forum itself.

In this sense, the proliferation of autonomous spaces at the London ESF ought not to be viewed as an aberration due to extremely bitter conflict between horizontals and verticals. Instead, the successful organisation of so many interesting, diverse, and often disjunctive spaces represents a model for re-conceptualising the Forums entirely. Interestingly, the WSF in Porto Alegre in January–February 2005 moved in this direction by shifting from a central site at the Catholic University towards a networked terrain involving diverse thematic areas. Moreover, the Youth Camp and the various projects housed there, including a new instantiation of *Intergalactika* called the *Caracol*, were geographically situated at the Forum's centre rather than along its margins. At the same time, there is also a danger that this kind of shift may represent the co-optation of difference, as opposed to its full expression.

In this sense, rather than viewing the Forum as a singular open space, even if networked internally, it should be conceived in the plural as a complex pattern of politically differentiated yet interlocking networked spaces, open not only within, but also with respect to one another. Boundaries are always diffuse, mobile, and permeable. Despite the contradictions noted above, openness and horizontality are important ideals, but they should be extended outward, reflecting the often conflictual interactions among different spaces and the relationships between them. Indeed, radical networking logics explode any rigid divisions between inside and outside. Such a view recognises that the Forum is always a work in progress, evolving as diverse networks and groups interact, connecting, disconnecting, and recombining.

By re-conceiving the Forum as a horizontal network of autonomous spaces that converge across an urban terrain at a given point in time, we would be reproducing the organisational logic that allowed activists to successfully organise mass direct actions against multilateral institutions in Prague, Quebec, and Genoa. In these cities, activists divided up the urban terrain to facilitate and coordinate among diverse forms of political expression. Indeed, a diversity of tactics represents the manifestation of a horizontal networking logic on the tactical plane.⁵⁰ The forums thus provide a unique opportunity to implement a similar networking logic through the articulation of alternatives, rather than simply protesting what we are against. Of course, much of this work will continue to happen within our own networks, but building mass movements requires periodic moments of broader convergence, interaction, and exchange, however complex and contradictory. In this light, reconstituting the Forum as a multiplicity of horizontally networked spaces does not mean dividing, but rather working more effectively together, thereby breathing new life into a process that desperately needs continual revitalisation.

Notes

1 Eds : This is an edited version of an article that was first published in ephemera 2005 forum - theory &

politics in organization (www.ephemeraweb.org), volume 5 no 2, pp 253-272. We thank the publishers for their generous permission to republish the essay here.

2 I would like to thank the editors of *ephemera* vol 5 no 2, 'The Organization and Politics of the Social Forums', and two anonymous external reviewers, for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article. Any remaining shortcomings are, of course, my own. I am also grateful to my fellow activists, particularly from (ex-) MRG, without whom these reflections would not have been possible. Indeed, all knowledge production is a collective endeavour.

3 Personal interview, conducted June 11 2002.

4 The entire statement can be downloaded from www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2004/10/299292.html , accessed on April 13 2005.

5 For an insider analysis of this conflict, see Nunes 2004.

6 See below; Juris 2004a. This tension reflects traditional debates between socialists and anarchists over the nature of organisation within movements of the radical left dating back to at least the First International and the conflict between Marx and Bakunin. However, the rise of new digital technologies and emergence of a broader networking logic have reinforced anarchist-inspired ideas and practices with respect to decentralised coordination and directly democratic decision-making. In this sense, horizontal forms of organisation are diffusing rapidly, even among many forces of the traditional left. At the same time, contemporary activists would do well to avoid the rancorous sectarianism of the past. Indeed, the social forums may be emerging as an interesting hybrid form, involving both horizontal and vertical elements.

7 Sen 2004b.

8 I use genealogy in the Foucauldian sense as a specific, situated history of the present rather than an overarching view from above. The ethno-side of the equation refers to the fact that my analysis is based on thick description rooted in my own particular experience as an activist and ethnographer.

9 MRG-Catalonia ultimately 'self-dissolved' in January 2003 due to declining participation and a broader political statement against reproducing rigid structures in response to an official invitation to participate within the World Social Forum International Council.

10 I have also taken part in numerous mass direct actions in cities like Seattle, Los Angeles, Prague, Barcelona, Genoa, Brussels, Seville, and Geneva.

11 Juris 2004b.

12 *Eds* : For discussions of the emergence and practices of neo-Zapatista activism, see the essays by Xochitl Leyva Solano and Christopher Gunderson and by Alex Khasnabish in the companion volume to this book, *The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds* (Leyva Solano and Gunderson 2013 and Khasnabish 2013).

13 Cohen 1985.

14 Diani 1995.

15 Gerlach and Hine 1970.

16 Juris 2004a.

17 Manuel Castells identifies a "networking, decentred form of organisation and intervention, characteristic of the new social movements, mirroring, and counteracting, the networking logic of domination in the information society" (Castells 1997, p 362). My own work builds on this insight by further theorising how networking logics shape, and are generated by, concrete networking practices. Indeed, contemporary anti-corporate globalisation movements involve an increasing confluence among network technologies, organisational forms, and political norms, mediated by activist practice (Juris 2004a). For an ethnographic account of how networking logics, practices, and politics play out in Barcelona and within transnational networks, such as PGA and the world and regional social forums, as well as how they are expressed via embodied action during mass protests, see Juris 2004b.

18 Specifically, diverse network formations include hierarchical 'circle' patterns, intermediate 'wheel' configurations, and the most decentralised 'all-channel' networks, which refer to those where every node is connected to every other (Kapferer 1973). New digital technologies specifically enhance the latter.

19 Freeman 1973; cf King 2004.

20 Routledge 2004.

21 Lovink 2002, p 34.

22 Cf Juris 2005c. The concept 'coding' refers to how activists communicate their broader political visions, ideologies, and values about the world through expressions of and debates over organisational structure and process. Organisational form thus operates as a synecdoche, pointing to wider models for (re-) organising social relations more generally. I am arguing that ideology is increasingly expressed through organisational practice and design as opposed to discourse, which contradicts the view that network-based movements are 'ideologically thin' (Bennett 2003). Osterweil (December 2004) makes a related claim about the expressly 'political' nature of social movement practices among radical activists within and around the forums, which involve a 'cultural-political' approach. For more on the relationship between cultural politics and the WSF, see Keraghel and Sen 2004. While I fully agree with this general claim, I am identifying a much more specific mechanism through which contrasting ideas and values are expressed through conflict over organisational architectures.

23 These included the Brazilian Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (ABONG), ATTAC-Brazil, Brazilian Justice &

Peace Commission (CBJP), Brazilian Business Association for Citizenship (CIVES), the Brazilian Institute for Social and economic Studies (IBASE), and the Center for Global Justice (CJG).

24 Cited from http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=4&cd_language=2 , accessed on April 13 2005.

25 Cf Waterman 2002, p 4.

26 Cited from <http://www.choike.org/PDFs/introduc.pdf> , accessed on April 13 2005.

27 This appears to be changing, however, as the fifth edition of the WSF in Porto Alegre moved away from an emphasis on large plenaries in favour of more self-organised spaces and workshops. Moreover, organisers sponsored a consultation process allowing participants from diverse movements, networks, and groups to participate in the process of selecting the broad thematic areas.

28 Cf Whitaker 2004.

29 Ponniah and Fisher 2003.

30 For a traditional social scientist, this kind of participation would constitute an unacceptable breach of normative objectivity, which is itself a politically normative construct and ideal. However, as a militant ethnographer, it allowed me to gain valuable first-hand knowledge of the complex logic of social interaction and micro-level cultural politics within the IC.

31 Unless otherwise specified, direct quotations were recorded during public meetings by the author on the date indicated within the text. Names have been omitted or changed to maintain anonymity.

32 Interview, February 5 2002.

33 For an insightful description and analysis of the 2003 edition of the *Intergalactika* space at the Youth Camp in Porto Alegre, see Osterweil 2004; and (eds) for a discussion of the history, dynamics, and contributions of the International Youth Camp as a whole, see the essay by Nunes in this volume (Nunes 2012).

34 For a detailed analysis of youth space and participation in the WSF and the alterglobalisation movement, see the essay by Jeffrey S Juris and Geoffrey Pleyers in a companion volume, *The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds* (Juris and Pleyers, forthcoming (2013)).

35 A group of radical French activists also organised a pie-throwing action to denounce the presence of French parliamentarians during an official press conference organised by the Socialist Party of France.

36 The institutional sectors created a more traditional membership organisation, which they confusingly, and perhaps manipulatively, called the 'Barcelona Social Forum'.

37 Because the institutional sectors ultimately pulled out themselves, militant anti-capitalists and squatters decided to participate within the Campaign against the EU. Rather than create a separate space, different networks thus divided themselves up internally around distinct commissions and logistical tasks.

38 Cited from a document called, 'Opening the Debate after the Statewide Meeting in Zaragoza : Separating in order to Work Together More Effectively', posted on the bcn2001@yahoogroups.com listserve on December 4 2001.

39 I am not suggesting MRG was the first or only group to formulate these ideas. In fact, they seemed to emerge simultaneously from many different directions. Rather, I want to illustrate how at least one version of the idea emerged, and further how networking logics and politics at local, regional, and global scales are often mutually reinforcing.

40 Cited from www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/space/index.html , accessed on April 13 2005.

41 Cited from http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/pgaeurope/leiden/autonomous_space.htm , accessed on April 13 2005.

42 Cf Waterman 2002.

43 See www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/space/hubproject.htm , accessed on April 13 2005.

44 The largest and most well known alternative space at the WSF in 2004 was Mumbai Resistance (MR), which involved a coalition of 300 political movements and organisations, including Lohiites, Marxists, Leninists, Maoists, and Sarvodaya workers. MR, which criticised the main forum for its funding practices and its unwillingness to reject capitalism, was initiated at the International Thessaloniki Resistance Camp in June 2003. It took concrete form when the Coordinating Group of the International League of Peoples' Struggles decided in July 2003 to organise a parallel event during the 2004 WSF. The social composition and political visions characterising such spaces in Mumbai differed from the largely young, middle class, and urban-based activists (with the exception of Cobas) behind previous alternative spaces at the forums. Previous spaces also were more inspired by a left libertarian vision and a commitment to the politics of autonomy in the strict ideological sense (I want to thank Michal Osterweil for reminding me of this point, personal correspondence). In other words, autonomy can refer to both a specific politics and a structural relationship. In this sense, while recognising these important differences, I continue to use the term 'autonomous space' to characterise MR and other alternative initiatives in Mumbai to signal their structural relationship vis-à-vis the main forum, which captures a key aspect of the emerging networking logic explored here: decentralised coordination among diverse, (structurally) autonomous elements.

45 See de Marcellus 2004.

46 Treanor 2002.

47 Ortellado 2003.

48 Farrer 2002. For a subtle critique of the contamination strategy, and an argument in favour of anti-authoritarians

developing their own grassroots networks, if not abandoning the forums entirely, see Grubacic 2003.

49 Cited from the free paper 'Autonomous Spaces' circulated around the London ESF. For additional information, see www.altspaces.net .

50 I refer to diversity of tactics here with respect to the underlying organisational logic, not the merit of any particular tactic. This is not the place to recapitulate debates surrounding violence and non--violence.

The Secret Of Fire ! Encountering The Complexity Of The World Social Forum¹

Graeme Chesters

The World Social Forum is the most recent, vibrant, and potentially productive articulation of an emergent global civil society.²

In this short essay I want to argue that an over-concentration on 'networks' can sometimes mask or reduce our understanding of the complex form and potential of new spaces of dialogue and encounter that are shaping global civil society (GCS) – for instance, the World Social Forum (WSF). I also want to argue that a failure to understand these complex dynamics might result in such experiments being tipped towards a point at which their capacity for innovation and their role in catalysing and fostering collective action is diminished by the desire to control or determine their outcomes.

Elsewhere, I have described the emergence of a self-aware global civil society where 'antagonistic' forms of collective action are becoming increasingly evident as issues of social, economic, and environmental justice are moving centre stage in the context of resource depletion and climate change.³ In particular, although some of the best known academic analysts of GCS include within this concept not only all movements but also corporations,⁴ the definition of GCS I use is closer to the Zapatistas' conceptualisation and implies an antagonistic orientation to the current system of producing, distributing, and exchanging social and economic goods. Among other things, this means that in my usage not all movements, and not all actors who others might consider to be part of civil society, are necessarily a part of GCS.

My argument here is that the emergence of a global civil society is both an outcome and a multiplier of networked social movements with the potential to communicate and multiply examples of participation, self-organisation, and collective action. These movements are involved in introducing and popularising examples of social and economic practices that run counter to, or are highly critical of, the norms and expectations that underpin neoliberal models of economic development and social change.

Global civil society is perceived as a contested domain,⁵ an outcome and effect of the nonlinear interaction between the 'networks' and 'fluids' that characterise planetary systems of production, mobility, and exchange.⁶ From this perspective, global civil society can be likened to a 'state space' – a multidimensional space of possible relations between many actors ranging from NGOs to social movements and others, all of whom bring a combination of ideological, organisational, and material investments. GCS is a dynamic 'system' and each 'state' of the system will correspond to a particular point within the state space. The task of the analyst in this context is therefore both to describe this state space and to describe the point at which the system is presently. In tracking these changing relations as they are reconfigured over time, a greater understanding may be gathered of the range of possibilities that are immanent to the current 'state' of GCS.

This approach inverts some of the more established approaches to the analysis of social networks, where there is an emphasis upon definitive mapping, including density of exchanges. Metaphorically, much of this work treats networks as so-much 'plumbing', a series of conduits connecting the nodes within which exchanges occur. Resultant network maps tend to emphasise the most prominent flows and marginalise minor ones. This can lead to an emphasis upon strong, established links characterised by entrenched 'habits of mind' – dominant discourses if you will.

Instead, I want to suggest that in terms of social change at critical junctures it is what Granovetter calls the “weak ties”⁷ that are actually crucial to maintaining and innovating network relations, and that it is in the operation of these weak ties that the resilience and potential of the WSF resides. Granovetter’s counterintuitive argument suggests that the weak ties between people, not strong friendships, are most important when it comes to such things as launching a new project, finding a job, or accessing news. This is because weak ties are crucial for being able to communicate beyond one’s immediate social (or activist) worlds, which can remain self-contained and limited. Weak ties have to be activated to open new channels of information and maximise the potential for agency – ties which might include email contacts, people met during meetings, at protests, and during gatherings. There is also a need to be able to connect with those activist hubs – individuals active within many networks (“spiders at the centre of many webs”⁸), networking spaces (such as gatherings and information exchanges), and social centres – without undue interference from structures and hierarchies, or barriers to participation such as class, culture, age, gender, and race that would inhibit such connections.

This moves our focus from networks to processes of territorialisation and de-territorialisation – the manifestation of networks within physically and temporally bound spaces and the lines of flight between these territories – the reconfiguration of networks through processes of encounter, proliferation of weak links, exchange of knowledge, and construction of affective relationships through facework and co-presence. These processes of personal and physical interaction characterise global social movements – the protest actions, encuentros, and social fora are further understood to be dynamically interconnected and co-extensive with a *digital commons*⁹ that underpins computer mediated interaction and communications, and which gives the ‘movement of movements’ its rhizomatic character.

When analysing the relationship between the dialogical spaces of global civil society and collective action, we must look to processes and to form, for it is within this hidden architecture that something of the dynamic strength of the alter-globalisation movements can be grasped. These movements display “small-world” characteristics,¹⁰ the so called ‘six degrees of separation’ where despite the fact that most nodes are not neighbours they can in practice be easily reached and communicated with via a series of small steps. The movements thus consist of hubs and nodes that are typified by a penumbra of ‘weak ties’. In network analysis, this structure demonstrably allows for rapid communication and is resilient to all but the most focused of attacks. It is also associated with generative processes that lead to macro-level outcomes that are not always apparent to their participants. These emergent properties are the outcome of complex adaptive behaviour occurring through participative self-organisation from the bottom up. This organisational form and the behaviour that structures it leads to the emergence of a collective intelligence that in turn drives forward the same processes in feedback loops, leading not to entropy as one might expect in a system of this type, but rather to substantial increases in agency and potential.

The concept of *emergence* describes the unexpected macro outcomes produced by reflexive actors engaged in complex patterns of interaction and exchange, outcomes that are historically determinate and unknowable in advance. That is, the outcome is a product of systemic interaction over time, but it is impossible to precisely predict or analytically reveal through disaggregating its parts. In this way, the concept of emergence describes how the outcome is always more than the sum of its parts. What is of interest here is the apparent operation of these feedback loops within the alter-globalisation movements, whereby the emergent properties of acting in a decentralised, participatory, and highly democratic manner are recognised at a collective level as affording a strength, durability, and interconnectivity that would otherwise be absent. This feedback is in turn able to reaffirm the praxis that gave rise to the emergent properties. Work in this field has demonstrated that emergent properties are

ubiquitous in complex systems, though they often go unrecognised.¹¹

What appears to have occurred within the alter-globalisation movements is that their affinity with participatory and democratic means and their adoption of a decentralised praxis has encouraged organisational forms with emergent properties that are politically and culturally efficacious within a network society. Thus, we have seen the emergence of durable networks that are highly effective at information management, communications, material and symbolic contestation, and mobilisation at the local and global levels. This has been coupled with recognition amongst certain actors of the primacy of process in catalysing these effects and a prioritisation of process as a means to maximise these emergent outcomes.

I

Network convergence : Encountering the Forum

The WSF is the largest 'open meeting place' of global civil society (perhaps both as I use the term and also as others do) and provides a discursive arena where movements come to communicate their struggles, to deliberate around possible strategies and alternatives, and to network with similarly inclined movements and individuals globally. In this sense, its aspirations for a non-representational domain of encounter are similar to those of another instantiation of a movement network, Peoples' Global Action (PGA). However there are many differences, including obvious ones such as scale, resources, and profile, where the WSF has significant advantages. Despite this, both forms of networked organisation underpin the growth in non-representational political theory and politics, and both consistently refine and experiment with the theoretical and empirical relationship between the concepts of 'space', 'network', and 'actor'.

The intellectual origins of the WSF are traceable to 1996, when intellectuals and activists associated with the Tricontinental Centre in Belgium¹² proposed a counter- summit to the World Economic Forum, the 'informal' gathering of political and business leaders hosted yearly in Davos, Switzerland. Subsequently, participants in this "other Davos",¹³ buoyed by the success of their meeting, and emphasising the importance of continuity of action, proposed a series of events that would "feed into the accumulation of knowledge, experience and analysis, becoming part of a long term dynamic".¹⁴ This proposal was framed by leading activists from France and Brazil as a 'World Social Forum' that would occur in the southern hemisphere, at the same time as the World Economic Forum was being held in the North, and this objective was finally realised in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001, where the efforts of a number of organisations came to fruition.¹⁵ These included the Brazilian Justice and Peace Commission (CBJP), the Brazilian Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (ABONG), the Social Network for Justice and Human Rights, and ATTAC (France).

The Forum was conceived as a participatory, dialogical, and pedagogical space that would be non-directed and non-representative and therefore unique as a self-organised space of encounter between civil society actors, including social movements, NGOs, trade unions, and engaged activists / intellectuals. The conditions of participation in and engagement with the WSF process are set out in its Charter of Principles formulated by the Organising Committee (now the International Secretariat) composed largely of the Brazilian organisations that convened the first Forum.¹⁶ Politically the Charter represents a clear statement of intent, by identifying and declaring the WSF's opposition to "neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism".¹⁷ The Charter also emphasises interrelations of knowledge exchange and linking of movements and points towards a "global agenda" based on the concept of "planetary citizenship".¹⁸

From the very beginning the WSF has been overwhelmingly successful – according to some of its critics too successful – attracting huge numbers of activists to discuss and debate and to otherwise participate in a vast array of workshops, seminars, and plenary events,

allowing for a cross-fertilisation of ideas and experiences previously unimagined. The appeal of the 'forum' model has also grown exponentially since the original Porto Alegre meeting, leading to the establishment of regional Social Fora in Europe, the Mediterranean, Asia, Africa, and the Americas, as well as the proliferation of autonomously initiated local and city fora. It is by far the fastest growing example of the rhizomatic domain of GCS, which is constituted by and through 'real' and 'virtual' convergence spaces, and which makes explicit the political importance of spaces of enunciation, interaction, and iteration that are co-extensive with the actions of movements, networks, and organisations, without trying to represent them, or in turn to be represented by them.

However, this rapid expansion has presented a number of practical difficulties and organisational problems, which have attracted praise and criticism in equal measure. Movement intellectuals have suggested that radical activism is in danger of becoming "a permanent conference",¹⁹ or of being "hijacked" by the "big men" of Latin American politics – Hugo Chavez and Lula de Silva.²⁰ Others have argued that the WSF has become "a logo" and "a religion" that is rapidly alienating its participants through "giganticism".²¹ Although a self-declared 'open meeting place', the WSF has retained the capacity to exclude and as commentators from leftist parties to Indymedia networks have noted, this capacity is most evident in point nine of the Charter which excludes "party representations" and "military organisations".

This clause was ironically (given their catalysing role) a reason for the Zapatistas (a military organisation) to stay away from the forum in 2002 and it has been much debated, particularly in India where it became a source of division during the organisation of the 2004 WSF in Mumbai. It was also used, albeit unsuccessfully, by autonomous social movement actors such as Indymedia, Babels (activist translation service), and the London Social Forum to argue against orthodox leftist political parties having organisational influence within the European Social Forum process. The Charter's other ambiguities include its emphasis upon non-violent struggle without specifically defining or ruling out violence *per se*. This appears to be a way to avoid having to criticise self-defensive actions, or to avoid censure of actions that may lead to property damage or other forms of protest activity that are constructed in dominant and normative discourses as 'violent'.

However, as Sousa Santos points out, the minimalist character of the Charter of Principles means that, despite principled opposition to the under-enforced exclusion of political parties or the failure to engage armed groups, in practice it is difficult for those who would willingly exclude themselves to define what they are excluding themselves from. This applies both to the political parties themselves, who frequently utilise front groups to attend, and to those who wish to curtail participation by these parties and front groups. This, he suggests, is the "WSF's power of attraction" and the reason why the WSF has grown so quickly, the minimalist criteria for participation acting as an incentive to participation.²² The emphasis that the WSF has placed upon process and flexibility, and its declared intention to defy temporal or geographical boundaries, also strengthen this inclusive trajectory :

The World Social Forum at Porto Alegre was an event localised in time and place. From now on, in the certainty proclaimed at Porto Alegre that 'another world is possible', it becomes a permanent process of seeking and building alternatives, which cannot be reduced to the events supporting it.²³

Waterman describes this as akin to discovering the "secret of fire", a secret which he elucidates as the capacity to "keep moving", to constantly challenge any process of capture or stratification.²⁴ The construction of the WSF as process rather than event advances the goal of a continuous, reflexive critique, which when iterated via computer mediated communications results in a situation Waterman terms as "around the world in 80 seconds".²⁵ However, in

order to understand the emergent qualities of this system, derived from the “edge of chaos” that the WSF exhibits,²⁶ we must first look to the processes of political competition between attractors²⁷ within the state space of GCS described by the WSF.

II

The Importance of the ‘Minor’ : Attractors, Margins, and Peripheries

The rapid growth of the WSF is attributed to a number of factors. These include the cultural politics produced through personal and collective outcomes derived from encountering and interacting with an extraordinarily diverse group of people from all over the world.²⁸ The WSF also provides a partial withdrawal or reprieve from the confrontations that feature so prominently in summit siege gatherings where experiences of solidarity, affectivity, mutual learning, and cultural exchange are framed by the risk of violence.²⁹ The massive marches / protests at the end of Social Forum events have notably attracted little media coverage with police and state agencies adopting low profile approaches, despite the period of growth and popularity of the forum concept coinciding with escalating state violence against alter-globalisation movements.³⁰ These events, combined with September 11 2001, raised strategic issues of alignment, including how to differentiate ‘anti-capitalism’ from ‘anti-Americanism’, mobilising against restrictions on civil liberties and US aggression against Afghanistan and Iraq. In this context, the process initiated by the WSF provided a means to ‘catch up’, to reflect upon a period of accelerated and sustained mobilisations, and to continue to explore the possibilities immanent to the alter-globalisation movements.

However, the influence of larger NGOs and of PT (the Brazilian Workers’ Party, *Partido dos Trabalhadores*), who until 2004 controlled the municipality of Porto Alegre, led to the suspicion within some anti-capitalist networks, including PGA, that the WSF was a comparatively ‘top-down’ initiative. Whereas PGA was envisaged by its participants as a system of relays to coordinate and multiply energies released within protest events at what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the “molecular” level, the WSF process appeared to some of these activists as a system of capture, a “molarising” force that treated groups as aggregates from which norms could be produced and generalised.³¹ The subsequent raft of criticisms by those active within PGA and other networks³² led to a ‘one foot in, one foot out’ approach, resulting in a proliferation of events and spaces on the peripheries of the ‘main event’.³³ These included autonomous gatherings of various sorts, including peasants’ forums,³⁴ youth camps, social laboratories, cultural events, and so on.³⁵

Once again, we can observe in this process the importance of the ‘periphery’,³⁶ where competing (antagonistic) attractors produce symmetry breaking behaviour, that in the social theorist Alberto Melucci’s terms “entails a breach of the limits of compatibility of the system within which the action takes place”.³⁷ In other words, we can see the emergence of movement forms in the state space of global civil society described by the WSF. In complexity terms, the system of relations constituting the WSF has tended towards a point of self-organised criticality, an ‘edge of chaos’ represented in the balance of attractors constituted by the official Forum and the self-organised alternatives. Thus the willingness of antagonistic actors to engage critically and the permeability of the WSF have been a strength of the Forum, leading to a high degree of sensitivity to external inputs, enabling it to assimilate ideas and initiatives whilst internally adapting its structures to move between steady states without violent perturbation. Indeed, I would argue that the constant iteration through reflexive practices that characterises the emergence of feedback loops within the alter-globalisation movements has been particularly apparent within the WSF, where the use of computer mediated communications, including wikis / blogs and other online publishing by autonomous actors,³⁸ has crowded out ‘official spaces’ of articulation in cyberspace. The emphasis placed upon process by both the International Secretariat and the International Committee of the WSF

also catalyses self-learning and adaptation and there is evidence that the structures of the WSF are flexible enough to enable many of the criticisms originating in the alternative or 'autonomous' spaces to be incorporated into the design of the WSF 'event'. Consequently, the 2005 WSF integrated the 'Youth Camp' format within the main body of the Forum, and dispensed completely with the plenary format to dilute the much-criticised opportunities for grandstanding by political actors seeking a large stage upon which to rehearse familiar arguments.

Thus, the WSF displays the capacity to adapt its internal structure as a result of dynamic interactions between its constitutive parts and its external environment, leading to emergent outcomes that are unforeseen and unpredictable. This is perceived to be problematic by orthodox political actors who wish to actualise the social and political force immanent to the Forum either by means of a manifesto³⁹ or through aggregation to form a party or campaigning organisation. This has led to attempts to exert control over the direction and outcomes of the WSF by powerful actors, from members of the International Committee⁴⁰ to political parties.⁴¹ However, these attempts have been largely unsuccessful because of the competition between attractors and the inability of any actor to hegemonise the process. It would appear that 'control' is no longer an option. This is not to suggest that the WSF process could not be stopped or moved towards a less dynamic state – either is possible. However, it is to suggest that the cultural-political attraction of the process for its participants is strong enough for it to resist obvious attempts at subversion or control.

These outcomes are the result of the complex and adaptive qualities that the system of relations underpinning the WSF exhibits. When we examine the WSF as a state space we can begin to see how the attractors referred to above are themselves emergent qualities of dynamic interaction between other systems that are *nested* within the WSF. These are systems of relations that are internal to social movement organisations and networks (SMOs / SMNs), and to the systems of relations between those SMOs / SMNs and the structure of the WSF – the International Secretariat (IS) and the International Committee (IC).

Within these reticular structures diverse motivations, aims and intentions, strategies and expectations circulate. For the most part, they co-exist as aggregations of particular identities, issues, or organisational forms, retaining their cohesion by organising with those of similar character. These interactions represent the familiar, despite the contextual potential for perturbing⁴² established modes of action. Thus they often talk **within** and not **between**. However, the discursive 'bleed' that takes place between these aggregations and the growth of affectivity encouraged by proximity and cultural exchange leads to an increased awareness of the immanent qualities of the encounter and its valorisation as a form. In this sense, the term 'open space' captures in a common sense fashion the complexity of interactions and the diversity of outcomes which do indeed begin to feel like the 'secret of fire' and as such prompt strident resistance to attempts to confine or inhibit this process.

III

Conclusions

The late Alberto Melucci, a well-known social movements scholar and psychotherapist, made the following claims a little over twenty years ago :

What is new about contemporary movements is first of all that information resources are at the centre of collective conflicts. Conflicts shift to the codes, to the formal frameworks of knowledge, and this shift is made possible by the self-reflexive capacities of complex systems. The *self-reflexive form* of action is thus another specific characteristic of recent movements. The decline of movements as 'characters' signifies the dissolution of the 'subject', and an increase in the formal capacity for self-reflection. Finally, *global interdependence* or the 'planetarianisation' of action profoundly alters the environmental conditions in which actors are formed and act; the field of opportunities and constraints of action are redefined within a multipolar and transnational system .⁴³

The emergence of self-organised, participatory spaces of encounter, deliberation, and coordination amongst social movements at the global level suggests the instantiation of Melucci's *planetary action system* : A militantly defined global civil society that can create spaces that are autonomous from formal and institutionalised processes of global governance, whilst maintaining links to means of political representation and exerting social force through the cultural expression of singularity and difference. This presents unique challenges to social theorists and social movement actors, requiring analysis of material and immaterial flows, including people, mobilities, technologies, and knowledge practices, as they unfold synchronically in intensive encounters and diachronically through the diffusion of weak links that reconfigure networks.

Using complexity theory as a means of describing nested systems and posing conceptual categories in order to differentiate the field of relations between networks, actors, and spaces, I suggest that the WSF is a system that instantiates the state space of global civil society composed of competing attractors that maintain the system at a point of self-organised criticality, where collective action at the edge of chaos becomes possible. Thus, I am arguing that the 'open space' metaphor that has proved so popular amongst those who seek to defend the Forum from processes of political capture and stratification has resonance because of its common sense formulation of an immanent field of potential revealed by processes of self-organisation at the planetary level. This leaves open the possibility of a 'pure' space of antagonism, an important insight that is frequently lost in analytical conceptualisations of movements that see them as only expressing claims or grievances. This purely open space perturbs global civil society through its 'coordination' of conflictual actors – thereby maintaining the centrality of the systemic challenge to neoliberal axioms – without necessitating that those actors lose contact with other means of political or social mediation.

One conclusion I draw from these observations is that the alter-globalisation movements have operated as an antagonistic 'attractor' playing a pivotal role in creating and maintaining an open and adaptive system of relations in global civil society through their insistence upon the primacy of process and non-representative practices as a means to resist political capture from above. This prioritisation of process and non-representationality is encapsulated both in the WSF Charter of Principles and in the hallmarks of Peoples' Global Action, and appears to flow from the collective memory (system history) exhibited within global civil society that poses the accumulated experience of trading one system of domination (capitalism) for another (authoritarian / state socialism) against the protestations of orthodox political actors, whose linear perspective evokes the palpable link between representation, control, and power.

Against this is celebrated not just the attraction of the encounter, nor the lyrical politics of disruptive desire, but open space as a multiplier of material support and symbolic solidarities : A space where knowledge can be created and shared, repertoires of action can be circulated and exchanged, and the potency of such praxis can be revealed.

Notes

- 1 First published as 'Networks Plus ? – Encountering the complexity of the Forum' in the Network Politics Reader for a Seminar at the University at California at Berkeley on December 5 2008; <http://www.networked-politics.info/berkeley/reader/>
- 2 Fisher and Ponniah 2003, p 1.
- 3 Chesters and Welsh 2006.
- 4 For instance, Keane 2003.
- 5 Keane 2003.
- 6 Urry 2003.
- 7 Granovetter 1973.

- 8 This is a description proffered to the author by a Dutch activist from People's Global Action.
- 9 The concept of a digital commons is closely associated with the free software movement, however it is used here in a broader sense to include the patterns of information/knowledge exchange within activist milieu that are mediated by digital technologies.
- 10 Watts and Strogatz 1998.
- 11 Barabasi and Albert 1999.
- 12 <http://www.cetri.be/>
- 13 Houtart and Polet 2001.
- 14 Houtart and Polet 2001, p 115.
- 15 Porto Alegre is a stronghold of the Brazilian Worker's Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*) and achieved renown through its implementation of participatory community budgeting.
- 16 World Social Forum Organising Committee and World Social Forum International Council, June 2001.
- 17 Fisher and Ponniah 2003, p 354.
- 18 Fisher and Ponniah 2003, p 357.
- 19 Grubacic 2003.
- 20 Klein 2003a.
- 21 Sen 2004b.
- 22 de Sousa Santos 2003; also de Sousa Santos 2004a and 2004b.
- 23 Point 2, the WSF Charter of Principles.
- 24 Waterman 2003a.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 A process of self-organised criticality, Cilliers 1998.
- 27 In this context an attractor is a point of convergence within the state space of global civil society.
- 28 Osterweil 2004, Osterweil December 2004.
- 29 Donson et al 2004.
- 30 Shabi and Hooper 2005.
- 31 Deleuze and Guattari 2002, p 275.
- 32 Farrer 2002, Grubacic 2003, Waterman 2003a.
- 33 By periphery I do not necessarily mean outside the event. 'Life After Capitalism' organised by Z-Magazine during the 2003 WSF was wholly within the organised process, as a forum within a forum. Yet due to perceptions of its critical standpoint relative to the WSF and the machinations of administrative and political processes, it became a 'marginal' space, located on the peripheries, both figurative and geographical, of the Forum. *Eds* : For another discussion of the margins of the social fora, see the essay by Jeffrey Juris in this volume (Juris 2012a).
- 34 The peasant forum at the Mumbai WSF was partially initiated by the Indian KRRS, one of the originators of PGA.
- 35 *Eds* : See also the essay by Jeffrey Juris in this volume, as above (Juris 2012a), and for a more specific discussion of the role of the youth camps and social laboratories in the Forum, see the essay in this book by Rodrigo Nunes (Nunes 2012).
- 36 Peripheral in the geographical sense of existing at the edges, rather than as peripheral to the substantive debates of the Forum or the impossibility of describing a periphery within a multidimensional state space such as global civil society.
- 37 Melucci 1996, p 28.
- 38 See in particular the Choike portal, www.choike.org .
- 39 The Bamako Appeal is one such attempt. See : http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/3948.html . *Eds* : See also Sen and Kumar, compilers, January 2007.
- 40 Some members of the IC of the WSF proposed the 'Porto Alegre Consensus' at the end of the fifth WSF in 2005, a statement of proposals and demands that amounts to a "synthesis of what the WSF is proposing globally". However, this statement was also roundly critiqued by other members of the IC including the Brazilian committee member Cândido Grzybowski who argued that "(w)hat kills this proposal is the method with which it was created and presented. It goes against the very spirit of the Forum. Here, all proposals are equally important and not only that of a group of intellectuals, even when they are very significant persons". See : Group of Nineteen, February 2005.
- 41 In Latin America this includes the PT and the Movement of the Fifth Republic in Venezuela. In Europe, this would include the *Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire* in France, *Rifondazione Comunista* in Italy, and the Socialist Workers Party in Britain.
- 42 A technical term within complexity theory concerned with iteration and modulation.

Towards Understanding The World Social Forum : Three Proposals ¹

Jai Sen

I

Why we need to understand the World Social Forum more deeply

We are living through interesting times. Central to this is that we are witness to the rise of a wide range of new movement and new politics, some of it quite dramatic in terms of what it is saying about politics and doing to politics. On the one side, and which is the best known and the most celebrated, this includes the huge rise since the 1980s of what I term 'civil politics' at all levels - local, national, transnational, and global : Non-electoral and often issue-based campaigns and networking by social movements and organisations working from within civil society and adhering to its norms, seeking social, economic, and political reforms either of a progressive or a conservative nature. A great deal has now been written about this (though less, so far, about its structural dynamics and politics), largely from within civil society and by its members.²

Most commonly, although sometimes taking place in spaces that are beyond the traditional state, these politics are statist and modernist in nature, and by and large, reformist. They are conducted well within the framework of the existing state and world systems, and restricted to a questioning and challenging of the policies and practices of existing state-nations – both authoritarian and the notionally democratic – or of multilateral institutions; and even if the challenge and questioning is sometimes fundamental. In some contexts and cases however, this extends to a questioning and delegitimisation of traditional political parties and their politics, and in a few cases, to becoming a challenge to the state itself, either implicitly or explicitly.

More recently, we have become witness to the rise of new manifestations of this power, such as across North Africa and in West Asia – the so-called 'Arab spring' – and also in Latin America, China, India, reportedly also in many parts of Africa, and elsewhere : From within civil societies but not 'issue-based', and centrally challenging state power. Even if the dynamics have not always fitted well within this framework, observers and theoreticians from within civil society in the North have so far quite widely portrayed these recent waves to also be a manifestation – and a success - of the modernist, civil, project, a premise that has begun to be challenged by some, especially those coming from outside civil society.³

On another side, we are also seeing the strong rise of fundamentalist faith-based movements, from within almost all religions and in all parts of the world, forging their own politics.⁴ Till the 'Arab spring' these were roundly dismissed by civil society theoreticians as being uniformly anti-modernist. After this particular wave however, which has all kinds of tendencies within it, but also as the result of new and more reflective analysis on this question over the past decade,⁵ the jury seems a little divided on this question.

And third, it is also - and perhaps most especially - a time of the dramatic rise and reassertion of historically suppressed peoples, constituting what I have suggested can usefully be termed the 'incivil' of the world, forming a wide range of insurgent new 'national' (often re-defined), cross-border, transnational, and global networks among the historically and structurally marginalised and oppressed peoples of the world : Indigenous peoples, Dalits, refugees, and minority religious groups, among others, as well as social, economic, and climate refugees and migrants.⁶ Although there are some classic studies of the roles of such networks in history,⁷ and some important accounts of particular movements,⁸ less seems to have as yet

been written about this contemporary phenomenon, collectively.⁹

Each of these tendencies have forged – are forging - a whole host of new politics.

In this large, swirling, and very live context, one of the most prominent manifestations today of progressive world civil politics – and arguably, in history – is the World Social Forum. Said to have been conceived and set up during 2000, it held its first meeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2001. At the time of the WSF that took place just across the southern Atlantic Ocean in Dakar, Senegal, in January 2011, the process was ten years old and entered its second decade.¹⁰

Over this decade, the WSF has grown enormously, becoming a major world institution that has attracted, involved, and inspired millions of people from many parts of the world. A great deal has been written and said about the Forum in these years.¹¹ Many – including myself – have seen it as being of great historical moment.¹²

This ‘success’ is thus in itself important to try to understand; just how and why has it been so successful? But beyond this, and insofar as the WSF - and more generally what is referred to as the ‘alter-globalisation movement’ - declares itself to be about the achievement of social justice, the fundamental issue must also be how this major world institution has related to and is relating to historically suppressed peoples (the third wave, above); and in particular what roles it – and its success - is playing in terms of their emancipation and liberation. Its ‘success’ must also be seen and understood in these terms.

In these terms, and even as I have argued for the recognition of the significance of the WSF - and more generally of the historical and contemporary significance of the contributions of civil society -, I have also argued that along with its apparent ‘success’ there are also some severe contradictions at play within the WSF process. Specifically, I have argued that it suffers from these precisely because of the severe structural contradictions of what is called ‘civil society’¹³ (and where the founders of the WSF definitely saw it as being an institution of **civil** society; see Article 5 of its Charter of Principles).¹⁴

Others have raised similar questions. Anila Daulatzai has raised crucial questions about the dogmatic nature of secularism and feminism in progressive processes such as the WSF.¹⁵ Giuseppe Caruso has written about the tendency within the WSF, in a particular context, to remain a discourse of a limited circle, which then tried to do damage limitation when confronted with awkward accusations of exclusion from ‘others’, such as Muslims.¹⁶ Janet Conway has critically researched certain aspects of these dynamics in relation to indigenous peoples within the WSF, and has posed profound questions about the coloniality of the ‘global justice movement’ and of the WSF.¹⁷ Anand Teltumbde has raised deep questions about how Dalits in India see the WSF, because of its leadership by the party left and the way that the party left in India has historically related (and not related) to the Dalit movement for liberation – and therefore, implicitly, of a colonial and casteist attitude;¹⁸ and where my sense of experiencing the Forum in several other contexts is that this analysis, if made available to them, would make a lot of sense to the structurally marginalised there, too.

In addition, several people have written about how much the WSF has remained a male-dominated process despite all the efforts of feminists over the years to work with and within the process – just as was earlier the case with the experience of feminists working within the long series of UN-sponsored ‘world conferences’ from the 70s through till the 90s - and despite the fact that in some events within the WSF process, women participants have actually been in the majority.¹⁹ And many have written about how much the WSF, despite its claim to being ‘open to all’ and with its professed special concern for social justice and for the structurally marginalised, has remained, in terms of social composition - and like most NGOs -, what is essentially a middle class process, which I term ‘civil’; and more, that it is a site of caste, class, and racial politics.²⁰

But it is also not as 'simple' as this picture, however – of the WSF suffering from a range of contradictions. As I have written elsewhere, I believe that it is essential that we try and understand **why** these contradictions are there – and in order to do this we have to lift the veil and see the WSF and civil society for what they essentially are, in terms of power and political process. When we do this, I suggest that we first see that so-called 'civil society' is very much about civility – and civility defined in very particular ways - and about imposing this civility on the world; second, that civil society and civility are also very much about power (including state power); and third, that the WSF is not merely 'dominated' by the civil – which is an apolitical way of seeing and terming reality – but that its leadership is now coming to represent a now near-global coalescence of a leadership coming from progressive sections of the national and global bourgeoisie; and that this leadership – which sees and portrays itself as 'the alternative' - is today increasingly forming a transnational social class that is actively seeking to exercise influence and power over society at local, national, and global levels.²¹

Precisely because all this is about social change and power, I believe we need both to probe what is happening and how this is happening, and also to question in what ways this leadership is an alternative, especially in terms of the question regarding the emancipation of the historically oppressed. Both to answer this question and to perceive this growing power, it is vitally important for all of us – wherever we stand with respect to the WSF – to more deeply understand it. This essay is an attempt in this direction.

The World Social Forum as an instrument and arena of social struggle

To understand the WSF, I suggest – and as I develop in more detail in other writings - that a vital aspect of what is happening is that this is taking place not only as a function of strategic intention but also as a structural function of class, caste, and race dynamics. Whether those who are seeking power are always doing so deliberately and consciously is not the issue; because what they are doing is a historical and structural duty of the caste and class that is organically contained within them, and except for the few exceptions who are able to see this and – perhaps - transcend it, the actors are only playing out their roles in history. In their view, they are promoting what they consider to be progressive politics; the question in a larger frame however, is what the politics they are practising is really doing, in terms of social transformation.

Even as it is also playing many some very useful and interesting roles in terms of social process therefore, I believe that there is much to argue that precisely because the WSF is serving as – and by some is being used as - a forum for the coalescence of dominant classes, castes, and races, within national societies and in a global context, it is also tending to only reinforce the status quo, in these structural terms and in a larger frame and a longer term. I acknowledge that it is also creating some opportunities for historically and structurally marginalised and oppressed sections – for women, for indigenous peoples, for Dalits, for peoples of other sexualities, and others – to come together, but these are small compared to the larger dynamics that are at play.

This is happening notwithstanding the WSF's professed commitment both to social justice and to horizontality, as spelt out for instance in its Charter of Principles : "The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks only organisations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world, but intends neither to be a body representing world civil society nor.....".²²

As I also suggest above, the exclusive focus here on so-called 'civil society' – supposedly all-inclusive but in reality, I argue, heavily structured and exclusive – is also instructive. The all-embracing meaning that is given to the term 'civil', which is how it is usually defended, has of course been given by those who drafted this Charter – but it is not coincidental that all the individuals who drafted it belong to civil society and that all but one of the organisations

represented on the drafting group were of civil society, and where it is an intrinsic and inevitable part of their vision to see the term as all-embracing.

The crucial issue here is the meaning and reality of 'civil'; and where we also of course need to keep in mind that a mere declaration in a Charter or manifesto is not necessarily an indication of reality, and is often just a veil for it.

The apparent 'success' of the WSF must therefore be politically read against this objective and this dynamic, and the formation and successful spread of the WSF understood as an important step in the struggle of this class to consolidate its influence and power over not only civil society, including the state, but also over society at large and in particular over those who I term the 'incivil', who are the majority in most societies – and where, historically, it is civil society that has oppressed, marginalised, and structurally excluded them; at all levels, local, national, and global.

The possibility that this is happening does not make it less relevant to probe deeper; it makes it only more necessary. It is moreover equally important, to register that the reality of these dynamics and of the deep apparent internal contradictions that so many have pointed out does not in any way reduce the significance – and influence – of the WSF. To the contrary, its apparent 'success' despite these major contradictions, and its arguably growing power despite the fact that it declares in its Charter of Principles that it eschews power, only make the questioning more relevant and more urgent, and make it that much more important for all of us to try to interrogate and comprehend the WSF more deeply. Just what is the nature, and what are the meanings, of its 'success' in the face of contradictions? And how can it be so successful even when it eschews power?

At a simple level, it is the vigour and growth of the WSF as a 'movement' and as a 'process' that are precisely what make it so successful: That attracts people to it and that also generates so much interest in 'what makes it tick'. (My colleague Peter Waterman suggests that it is because the WSF has discovered 'the secret of fire'; I will come back to this.)

'What makes it tick' is in fact a slightly inappropriate metaphor for me to use, because in the course of my arguments, I suggest that the Forum is better understood as a cloud rather than a clock – but this essay is an attempt to do just this: To go behind the surface of the phenomenon called the WSF – behind the ticking, behind the fire –, in order to better understand its dynamics.²³

As I see it, the primary significance of the phenomenon called the WSF lies both in the simple fact of such large numbers of people getting together – the further meanings of which I try and explore in this essay – as well as in the **political culture** that this initiative represents and that it is attempting to explore and forge. Beyond this, it is the **concept** underlying this culture – of it being a space (very literally, a forum or arena) that is open – that is most crucial to this understanding. And the real 'success' of the space that is called 'the Forum' is that it is permitting a scale of talking across boundaries – and therefore of cross-fertilisation – that has rarely even been dreamt of before, and that it is thereby powerfully contributing to building a culture of open debate across conventional walls and boundaries.

But first, and as above, we must see that this is all happening primarily within 'civil society', and that this process is only strengthening civil society in its drive for hegemony (or even what some of its thinkers call 'counter-hegemony'); and second, even if we can agree for a moment that the WSF is – despite its internal contradictions – both significant and also 'successful' in terms of its own vision, I believe we still need to try and understand **how** all this is happening. As above, we need to do this in order even if only just to understand it as a significant social and political phenomenon – but more crucially, in order to be able to intelligently and strategically take part in the Forum and engage with the intense debate that periodically erupts about the nature and future of the Forum;²⁴ and for those who are engaged

in the task of building other worlds – including, perhaps, by resisting the power of civility and of civil society –, it is necessary to understand it in order to be able to resist it more effectively, and/or maybe even to draw lessons from this phenomenon for their own struggles.

In this essay, I offer three work-in-progress suggestions towards such an understanding – suggestions that are not independent and unrelated but interdependent and intertwining. The next section of this essay is a broad overview of what I understand to be some of the main features of how the WSF has evolved over this past decade, to provide a base for my analysis. Those who feel that they already ‘know’ the WSF can, if they prefer, go straight to the subsequent sections but keeping in mind that the base I establish is of course important for the particular suggestions I offer. Sections III, IV, and V put forward my three proposals for how we can perhaps better understand this extraordinary phenomenon. And Section VI tries to pull these proposals together.

II

The WSF over Ten Years : Learning by Doing ?

The formal history of the WSF has it that it was conceptualised during 2000 as a counterpoint to the World Economic Forum. Without going into details here, there is reason to think however that what became the WSF was in fact in planning for some years before this, and that it was clearly and carefully conceptualised over some time by members of progressive civil societies as an instrument of counter-hegemonic world politics.²⁵ Insofar as this is the case, the organisational form and culture for which the WSF is today so widely celebrated, of being an open space,²⁶ was therefore also conceptualised as a means towards this end. Part of our search to understand must therefore be to understand what this form and culture is, and what its implications are for social justice and change; and part, why this form and culture were chosen - what it offers – and how it has been developed, over time.

As a consequence of this and of the strategic role that was assigned to it by its founders in the war of position against neoliberalism, the emphasis in the WSF during its first years, in 2001 and 2002, was on **opposition** – opposition to what was then termed ‘neoliberal globalisation’. But the ferment of the first year also led to the articulation of what became the Forum’s evocative slogan, ‘Another World Is Possible !’, which heralded the major shift that was already taking shape in the Forum at that early stage, from opposition to **alternatives**.²⁷

Following the 2002 Forum in January of that year however, the emphasis also moved decisively to include opposition to war (though not so much to alternatives to war). In October 2002, a US-led alliance of nation-states launched war against Afghanistan in supposed retaliation for the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre and other symbols of imperial power in the US. The European Social Forum that had coincidentally long been scheduled to take place in Florence, Italy, in the very next month, November 2002, was marked by a huge demonstration against the war on Afghanistan and against the war that the allies were then already threatening against Iraq. The 2003 world forum that followed soon after in Porto Alegre in Brazil, in January 2003, then provided a space for anti-war movements from many parts of the world to meet and to plan, among many other things, what turned out to be rallies in many parts of the world on February 15 2003 protesting the war, involving an estimated 15 million people, which is said to be the largest ever such demonstration in history.

(From even this stage of this crude overview, one can get an idea of the value for those in movement of the sustained space that the WSF was by then already beginning to offer, and where all concerned surely drew lessons from this experience.)

In addition to the above already ambitious agenda, during 2001-3 the initiators of the WSF also intentionally globalised the Forum by causing to be organised, in January 2004, the first world meeting of the WSF outside Brazil, in Mumbai, India. This was preceded by intense planning for the Mumbai Forum, including the holding in India in January 2003 of an Asian

Social Forum, which was a rehearsal for the organisation of the world forum in the country the following year. (In truth, it was also conceived as a chance for Indians – the Indians of India - to prove to the-then mostly Latin American and European leaders of the WSF, who then knew little about India, that they were capable of managing this.)

Although the Mumbai Forum was otherwise a major celebration of diversity, marked by strong participation of women, Dalits, and Adivasis (indigenous peoples), it also marked, because of some very specific political and conjunctural reasons,²⁸ a strong reversion - in terms of the evolution of the WSF process as a whole and of the war of position that had been undertaken - to a stance of opposition, as distinct from alternatives. The opposition however was now not only to economic globalisation and to war – as was the case of the second ESF that was held in Paris just two months before the Mumbai gathering, in November 2003 - but also, because of the depth and complexity of the context in which the Forum was now taking place, to patriarchy, caste, and religious fundamentalism.²⁹ The process of critical reflection also (or perhaps consequently) intensified at this meeting,³⁰ as had also been the case at the Paris ESF.³¹

The subsequent edition of the Forum, held once again in Porto Alegre in Brazil in January 2005, was the context for several major new initiatives, some of which the organisers said were the outcomes of what they learned from the experience of the Mumbai Forum³² : One, in initiating a process of online participatory planning, to decide on the themes for the Forum; two, moving the Forum from the very institutional base where it had started, the PUC (the Pontifícia Universidade Católica, the Catholic University) to being scattered in theme clusters all around the city centre, along the shores of the Guaiaba River – and, learning from the relatively low-cost planning for the Mumbai Forum, held in tents; three, also apparently learning from the social composition of the Forum in Mumbai, creating a space for the first time in the history of the WSF in Brazil for the marginalised and incivil in Brazilian society – in this case, for indigenous peoples and for the *quilombos*, the runaway slave communities of Brazil; four, pushing what had historically till then been the heart of the Forum – big meetings held in stadia and auditoria, addressed by famous personalities – to the margins (and even dropping the earlier huge plenary sessions), and conversely bringing the earlier margins of the Forum, the so-called ‘self-organised activities’ (workshops, seminars, and panel discussions, organised by autonomous organisations) to the centre; five, also bringing the Youth Camp – which had till then been located far away from the Forum site – into the very centre of the theme clusters; and six, by giving individual participants the same status and privileges as organisational delegates (till then, they had been given lesser privileges³³).³⁴

The 2005 Forum – the fourth in the WSF process – therefore marked a steep rise in its learning curve.

The 2006 edition of the WSF pushed the boundaries even further. Rather than holding just one single world meeting, as had been the practice so far, ‘the World Social Forum’ this time was simultaneously organised in three places across the world – on the three continents of the South (Africa, Asia, and Latin America) and in three (colonial) language regions (French, English, Spanish) : In Bamako, Mali; in Karachi, Pakistan; and in Caracas, Venezuela. In other words, the Forum in 2006 was more truly a world affair and, to again use a term I tried using back in 2002, for the first time became truly manifest as ‘an efflorescence across the world’. This ambitious idea of a simultaneous efflorescence had to be modified a little by the necessity of postponing the Karachi edition until March 2006 (because of the relief and rehabilitation work following the devastating earthquake in Pakistan in January), but the essential idea remained.

In specific terms, this meant that in 2006, three ‘world forums’ took place in different parts of the world, but with a central event registration process where those who wanted to

organise events at 'the WSF' opted for not only themes, as per earlier practice, but also where in the world they would like to organise their events.³⁵ At one level, it was therefore this collectivity – taking place in different places across the world – that was 'The World Social Forum' for that year; though in practice they were each called a Polycentric Social Forum. In many ways, this step, of moving from a single-centric Forum to a polycentric one scattered across the world, was as important a step in the WSF's evolution as the holding of the Forum in Mumbai in 2004.

2006 marked the end of the fifth year of the WSF. Since then, in the second half of its first decade, the Forum has continued to vigorously evolve, at many levels. At a world level, a full world meeting of the WSF was held in Africa for the first time in January 2007, in Nairobi, Kenya, in a declared attempt to draw together 'forces of resistance and alternatives in the continent most ravaged by both colonialism and neoliberalism'.³⁶ In 2008, the WSF dematerialised itself, exploded out of its boundaries, and for the first time was held as a 'Global Day of Action', where instead of a single meeting being organised in one part of the world, a call was issued by leading participants in the WSF process (mostly however, members of its International Council) to all those who wished to take part in 'the WSF' to organise events and actions on their home ground; taking the decentralised experiment of polycentric fora in 2006 to yet another level.³⁷ In truth, this also happened however because of the resistance that had grown by then within the WSF community to having annual world meetings – which was by then proving hugely demanding on all those who took part – but it still needs to be seen as an imaginative response and design.

And in 2009, for the first time the world meeting of the WSF process in Brazil was organised elsewhere than in Porto Alegre, which had by then come to known as its birthplace and 'home' insofar as this was where it was first held, and successively for three years. This time it was organised in Belém, at the mouth of the Amazon river and of Amazonia, and for the first time, a world meeting within the WSF process was given a thematic focus : First, the global ecological and climate crisis, with Amazonia as a symbol of what is under threat, and second (though in a rather understated, complex, and arguably colonial way), the future of indigenous peoples – who are among the main inhabitants of Amazonia.³⁸ Along with this, two major new experiments were also undertaken for the Belem WSF : Belem Expanded, towards enlarging participation in the WSF 2009, which was an institutionalisation and systematisation of the practice started in 2005 of planning the Forum in a participatory way, and OpenFSM, the construction of a permanent virtual open space "to build another possible world".³⁹

As many others have pointed out, the scale of the WSF process has also been growing, dramatically. Starting from an estimated 15,000 participants at the first WSF, in 2001, by 2004 and 2005 the world meetings attracted 150,000 people each time, and well over 100,000 even in 2009 – and importantly, as pointed out in the previous section, where this participation has been dominantly middle class, and coming from dominant sections of civil society within national societies, whether in Brazil, Europe, or India.

Over the years, these 'world' meetings of the WSF process have also come to be accompanied by a proliferation of social fora at regional, continental, national, and local levels – ranging from the European Fora every year since 2002, the Asian Social Forum in 2003, and the Forum of the Americas every two years from 2004 to, for instance, the Québec Social Forum in 2007 and the US Social Forum in 2007 and then 2010, as well as thematic fora such as in Colombia in 2003 on Drugs and Militarisation.

These more focussed events – perhaps precisely because they were more focused – have also made their own very significant contributions to the 'world' social forum process, and to movement at national, regional, and world levels. The Forum of the Americas, for instance, has been a key platform that the indigenous peoples of the Americas have used to converge

and to advance their struggles more generally, and are widely understood to have contributed to their multiple very significant contributions in the region over the past many years, including to regime change in Latin America and to the Cochabamba Conference on the Rights of Mother Earth in 2009.⁴⁰ And where both organisers and participant-observers of the Social Forum process in the USA argue that it has played - and is playing - a key role in the coming together of the incivil and of the left in the US.⁴¹

Moreover, and as Sonia Alvarez has argued, the WSF has also been learning as it has travelled, both leaving its global footprint locally where it has taken place and also being impacted on, sometimes profoundly, by its local manifestations.⁴²

In addition, the world meetings of the WSF process have also come to attract a wide range of other civil events and processes that see themselves as complementary to the politics of the WSF. This has included the World Forum of Mayors and Local Authorities since 2002; the World Education Forum since 2003; the Feminist Dialogues since 2004; the World Forum on Theology and Liberation every two years since 2005; and in 2009 and 2011, a World Forum on Science and Democracy. Each of these initiatives is fertilising world civil politics in its own way, and holding their meetings at the same time as the World Social Forum has surely both made financial and logistical sense for them so that their members could take part in both gatherings and also because the world meetings of the WSF in turn became opportunities for exchange and cross-fertilisation between these various and otherwise independent initiatives.

But while all of this is undoubtedly important, it is necessary to also see and to underline that each of these complementary processes has come from within civil society, and never from incivil society. The organisation of these complementary initiatives has therefore both deepened the civil foundations and roots of the WSF and contributed to the widening and deepening of the global coalescence mentioned in the opening section. And where significantly, this has happened not only at the formal and super-structural level – with, say, members of these various initiatives being represented on the International Council of the WSF in one way or another, or where member or participant organisations in these initiatives have organised events during the WSF – but also in the manner that this essay will explore in further sections, of the random and nonlinear interaction that takes place in such gatherings, as clouds and swarms, where powerful open-ended synergies take place. We will return to this.

Lending a very different dynamic to the WSF, the organisation of social fora ‘locally’ has also - over the years - generated a range of affiliated, oppositional, and/or autonomous zones and spaces around the Forum. This has ranged from Mumbai Resistance in 2004⁴³ to the autonomous zones that have especially characterised the European Social Fora⁴⁴ but that also took shape at the polycentric forum held in Caracas in 2006.⁴⁵ In my understanding, this phenomenon of oppositional alternatives, in its various forms – even though often superficially appearing to be a challenge to the Forum – has only enriched and strengthened the social forum experiment, and should in fact be seen as an integral part not of the WSF itself but of the dynamics of the culture of open space that the WSF practices.⁴⁶

On the other hand, it is again significant that these sometimes somewhat incivil oppositional and/or alternative fora and practices have remained essentially local and sporadic manifestations. Unlike the complementary civil processes, which seem to have only thrived and grown as a result of their juxtaposition to and synergy with the WSF, the oppositional processes have not – to my knowledge – yet coalesced to form an alternative or a challenge either at the regional or the global level, and either to the WSF or to the structural injustices that they too were against.

Given that I have emphasised the dominantly civil character of the WSF process, it is important for me to acknowledge that the Forum of the Americas and the US Social Forum have been two major exceptions to this rule. Here too however, it so far seems to be the case

that the organisers of both these processes have preferred to restrict their politics to the domains where their Fora were formed, and have not yet tried using the world process to widen their reach.

This has been only a quick and sweeping summarisation of some of the main features of the WSF experience over its first ten years, 2000-2009. While in formal terms it was conceived and configured as an instrument of contemporary counter-hegemonic politics, and while it has become fairly prominent in these terms, I suggest that its greater significance as having been a very major, and a very successful, initiative of civil societies from across much of the world, North and South, in terms of the longer-term politics and objectives of civil society; and as an initiative that has been learning, evolving, and gaining strength as it has gone along.

However impressive it may seem however, even this narration does little justice to the vigour and virility of the process that has unfolded over this past decade; and more important, we do not yet have an idea of **why** it has been so vigorous, or of **how**. As I understand it, to fully appreciate the strength of the WSF we need to try to push much further, to comprehend the dynamics underlying the astonishingly vigorous, vital, emergent, and evolving culture of social mobilisation and politics that this represents.⁴⁷

Over the next three sections, I put forward three proposals for doing this; three complementary and intertwining proposals – but where I hope that it will become clear that the whole is incomparably greater than the mere sum.

III

Foraging in Open Space : Convergence, Exchange, and Synergy ⁴⁸

My first proposal for understanding the WSF, and in particular for understanding why it is proving to be as ‘successful’ as it is simply that it is a space – an ‘open space’, in its own terminology - where members of the human species can converge, exchange, and learn about the world around us (or, to use a very telling term used in some movement circles, be contaminated), and aspire together to build new worlds; and beyond this, that this happens through processes such as the exchange of pheromones.

Taking a step back, it becomes immediately evident that the World Social Forum has taken shape precisely at a time of enormous, planet-wide churning – and indeed, that it is a part of this churning, and very much a manifestation of it. There is a ferment all over the world today, both in the South and the North, whether as the self-styled ‘global justice movement’ or as various forms of fundamentalist movement, or as the so-called ‘Arab spring’; and in many other forms.⁴⁹ This is in part impelled by what has been misnamed ‘globalisation’ – in the form of economic liberalisation - and as a reaction to the vision and reality of a “McWorld” that has been foisted on the world;⁵⁰ and in part a reaction to the mendacity of those who have preached and forced ‘development’ and ‘democracy’ on the world.⁵¹ More recently, this has come to be further impelled by what has come to be popularly called the ‘climate crisis’ where people everywhere – as sentient beings – have become both consciously and subconsciously aware of the acute and precarious imbalance that has been created in our world, and of the threat that this is implying to life itself.⁵²

This ferment is also a consequence however, of a much greater and more widespread consciousness not only of conditions other than one’s own but also of causative factors and of how others think, at places and levels quite remote from one’s own. In other words, a far more ‘global’ and more organic consciousness is today emerging across the planet, and is shared in different ways and to different degrees, and on different issues, by a much larger number and by a much more varied number (in terms of gender, class, caste, and race) than ever before in history.

This condition of a wider consciousness is a specific consequence of many things, but perhaps especially because, on the one hand, of incomparably greater possibilities of global

travel and communication than even half a century ago, and for a far wider range of social classes than ever before; but on the other, also because of immeasurably greater pressures on peoples all over the world to migrate to safer lands, because of the increasing severity of economic, social, and political crises – and now, also because of the emerging crisis of climate change and the additional pressures it is bringing especially on more vulnerable societies, including in terms of social conflict and war.⁵³

This travel and exchange, moreover, has been both real and virtual : Of so-called ‘travel’ (because of much ‘cheaper’, more ‘affordable’ travel, and even if unsustainable, because of continuing massive oil subsidies) as well as the massive increase in forced and so-called ‘illegal’ migration (because of increasingly unsustainable conditions for ordinary working peoples in many parts of the world, on account of the effects of neoliberal globalisation); and equally on account of tv and instantaneous information and of the extraordinary recent advances in information and communications technologies, especially through internet and mobile phones. As a consequence, whole new transnational communities are taking shape in our times.⁵⁴ And in turn, the objective and subjective conditions now exist for the rapid progressive crystallisation – even explosion – of transnational and ‘global’ consciousnesses.⁵⁵ The simultaneity that we now take almost for granted means that in many ways, we are already today, for the first time in history, not only capable of but also – many of us – already now constantly engaged in both space and time travel, whether we are conscious of it or not.

With this as a background, there are 2-3 aspects to my first proposal. The first is very simple. It is that the Forum – not only the annual / now bi-annual world events but also the regional, continental, national, and local events that are taking place year round, and importantly, also the online World Social Forum that is taking place 365 days a year – is ‘successful’ because it is acting as a sustained and seemingly permanent public space where countless people all over the world who are aware of and concerned by what they see going on around them, as above, are being able to converge, meet, exchange, infect each other, and dream – both individually and collectively, and both in formal alliances and coalitions and in the countless random and autonomous collectivities that form through free affinity.

As I have argued elsewhere, the Forum may not be quite as public or open as some of us would like to see it as being, and it is also deeply structured in class, caste, and other terms,⁵⁶ but it is nevertheless relatively open, and relatively public; and it is this simple quality, combined with the features outlined above, that helps to make the Forum as successful as it is, at least for those who are from civil societies.

But while important, I suggest that this quality of ‘openness’ is not enough, by itself, to understand the Forum or its ‘success’; and so the second aspect to this proposal – and to the essence of my argument - is that there is a very significant dynamic that lies behind, or beneath, this apparently rather innocuous, and even vague and seemingly ‘romantic’, assertion, that the Forum ‘provides a space’, that it is ‘open’, and that ‘people’ benefit merely by converging in that space.

In short, I want to put forward the thesis that that the Forum is a space where we, as human beings - like other living beings do in their contexts - communicate and exchange information at levels other than the obvious, but which are no less ‘rational’ than the obvious. Building on work by Steven Johnson and Arturo Escobar, I suggest that the Forum is playing roles in (world) politics and in (world) political space today that the urbanist Jane Jacobs argued in the 1960s that public spaces such as footpaths play in the emergence and lives of great cities : Of being spaces where ordinary, ‘local’ / locally-rooted individuals, going about their everyday work and lives, and who may not necessarily have complete knowledge about what is happening in the wider ‘global’ world, communicate with each other and exchange information both at conscious and other levels; and crucially, where the actions of all those who participate

in the WSF process thereby begin to add up to a larger whole.⁵⁷

It is perhaps useful for me to immediately clarify that I am not by any means suggesting that this kind of exchange and dynamic is unique to the WSF; in principle, it is true of any major gathering, whether political, religious, spiritual, or cultural - and where it is of course the religious and spiritual that are more known for the communion that can take place there.⁵⁸ Here, my point is merely to try and elicit **how** this communion takes place (and so it is possible that these thoughts might also have some relevance for understanding what takes place in other great gatherings and spaces, as well).

In this understanding – updated and expanded by research since Jacob’s seminal work, and going beyond her proposals -, each one of us not only collects information but is also the carrier of information, which we give out as we move around doing what we know as our life and what we understand as our work. We exchange information not only by formal modes of communication but also through looks, glances, eye contact, smell, sound, touch, and physical behaviour, and also, like ants and other insects, by exuding and leaving behind pheromones or their equivalent. And we also go to such places to forage.

Pheromones are trace chemicals that contain vital information about other histories and future actions. Scientists are helping us recognise that above and beyond the physical reality of, say, ants moving in lines to ‘do their work’, in what appears to us only as an extremely ‘organised’ and ordered manner, they also do so in a way where the roles and life paths of individual ants, which live for only a very short time, are integral and inseparable parts of much larger patterns, and ‘order’, that go well beyond their individual lives; and where these roles converge to collectively form the larger whole that we now see as the social life of ants.⁵⁹ Crucially, one of the key mechanisms by which this convergence takes place is the release and collection by individual ants of pheromones, which both informs and progressively transforms their work and also makes the actions of individual ants integral and meaningful parts of much larger wholes, in both space and time.⁶⁰

These patterns and dynamics are now being increasingly read as being applicable not only to ants but also to larger and more complex beings, and some authors such as Johnson are speculating as to whether – for instance – the subconscious interactions on sidewalks that Jane Jacobs and others argued in the 60s make up the life of great cities are not part of the same process. I believe that this is true also of the WSF.

(Most immediately however, this discussion must surely make us also ask the question : If this is so, what then might be the larger social life of human beings ? What might be the nature of such a larger order ?)

Seen in this way, this exchange of ‘information’ would seem to be so vital that it may even be a good deal of what makes us human; and that in our cases as a species, is an integral part of the larger consciousness that differentiates us from other living beings.

This characteristic moreover also intertwines with another uniquely human capacity : Being able to see the open. As Giorgio Agamben has helped us to understand, human beings - unlike anything else in the world, including any other living being – have both the unique understanding that the world is openable and also the unique capability to comprehend that the world is something that we, as beings, have the capability of opening, acting on, and changing.⁶¹ And it is, I suggest, these twin, complementary dynamics – of exchange and the perception of our potential - that make the WSF, as an open space, so synergistic and therefore so powerful.

This is not to suggest that all that we do is predetermined by such exchange, but that a substantial proportion is, much more than we are conscious of. I am not competent to present a comprehensive or precise picture of how this takes place, and nor is the purpose of this essay; but since we do now know that chemicals we exude do play crucial roles in how the human

species relates otherwise, for instance sexually, and that we as human beings can 'read' and develop preferences through this, it is more than plausible that something like this also takes place in spaces such as the social fora, quite likely also in sexual terms but also at social, political, and cultural levels. It therefore becomes meaningful to apply this line of thinking in our attempt to understand what makes the Forum tick.

It goes without saying that this suggestion clearly needs to be backed by more research and reflection, but if it has any validity then it has profound implications for the meanings of 'movement' and of 'mobilisation', of 'convergence', and the building of alternatives, alternative futures, and other worlds. This insight may not be enough by itself to change the world, but it is, I believe, an important part of the new politics that we are seeing emerging around us : A more horizontal politics, and a more open politics, where autonomous thought and action play a far greater part than they have done (or, perhaps more accurately, been allowed to play, by those who led) in politics historically.⁶²

Indeed, the WSF is arguably providing the most significant such public space in the world today. It is a footpath the likes of which has never been seen before. While the more particular manifestations of the emerging global movement, such as the big demos in Seattle in November 1999 (and thereafter in many other cities over the subsequent 3-4 years), or the worldwide protest demonstrations against the Iraq war in February 2003, or the Million Women March in 2004, have also provided important spaces for this exchange, I suggest that the WSF has become so 'successful' because precisely it has been institutionalised as a process and thus is able to provide a more permanent space, across time and place. And beyond this, its main influence on world politics has been and will be in terms of the content, principles, culture, and practice of open space.⁶³

IV

Emergence

My second proposal regarding understanding the Forum and its 'success' as a process and as an institution – which is completely complementary to the first, and intertwined with it - is that it is constantly learning, and constantly reinventing itself, almost as if it were alive. In short, it is what biologists call an emergent phenomenon. This, in my understanding, is an absolutely vital aspect of the WSF and of its 'success', and also opens and makes more rigorous Peter Waterman's suggestion back in 2003 that the secret of the WSF's success (even back as early as that in the process !) was that it had discovered 'the secret of fire' :

I am concerned about the future of the Forum process, but not worried. Pandora has opened her box, the genie is out of the lamp, and the secret of fire for emancipatory movements is now an open one. This secret is to keep moving.⁶⁴

True, perhaps; but the question is : What, in turn, is the secret of 'keeping moving' ? This doesn't happen by itself, nor is it only a question of 'an optimism of the will', to use one of Waterman's favourite quotes from Gramsci.⁶⁵

The work I have already referred to, by Johnson and others, represents contemporary thinking about the unity of natural, biological, and social life. Over the past few decades, there has been an explosion of new knowledge being generated about how biological life takes shape and, among other things, the collective dynamics of biological life. Starting from investigations in the 60s into how slime moulds move and behave, to studies by Edward O Wilson and others of the behaviour of more complex organisms such as ants,⁶⁶ intersecting widely with emerging fields such as cybernetics and artificial intelligence, whole new ways of looking at the world are becoming available to us.

What Johnson has done is to extrapolate patterns of similarity between these phenomena and how our brains work and how cities work. This makes these understandings -

so far more relevant to (and understandable by, and of interest to) scientists – both more accessible by ordinary people and also, crucially, more relevant to our ordinary lives.

The term that is most commonly used to describe this phenomenon is ‘emergence’. This refers to patterns of self-organisation that all kinds of living beings seem to exhibit, from the most ‘simple’ single cell metabolisms to more complex beings. As Escobar explained, writing in 2003 :

These examples [of self-organisation] evince the existence of bottom-up processes in which simple beginnings lead to complex entities, without there being any master plan or central intelligence planning it. In these cases, agents working at one (local) scale produce behaviour and forms at higher scales (eg the great anti-globalisation demonstrations of the last few years); simple rules at one level give rise to sophistication and complexity at another level.

Emergent behaviour ... usually shows a mix of order and anarchy, self-organising networks and hierarchies (eg, myriad encounters on sidewalks vs rule-governed behaviour, to mention the example of cities). The important issue is to recognise the self-organising potential of diverse agents or multiplicities.⁶⁷

Two crucial – and controversial - aspects of self-organisation and emergent behaviour are the apparently ‘random’ interactions that take place between entities in such processes, as Escobar mentions in this quote, and the seemingly ‘weak’ nature of the interactions and links that are established. It is however vital here that we look past our conventional understandings of the terms ‘random’ and ‘weak’, and past the prejudices that go with them, because work in the related field of network studies by Graeme Chesters and others suggests that the apparently ‘random’ encounters and ‘weak’ interactions that take place in such processes contain hidden strengths and possibilities, and that it is precisely these qualities that give networks their strength. Unconventional though they might be, I believe that these proposals offer us great insight into not just the WSF but also the everyday social life of human beings.

To quote Chesters :

When analysing the relationship between the dialogical spaces of global civil society and collective action, we must look to processes and to form, for it is within this hidden architecture that something of the dynamic strength of the alter-globalisation movements can be grasped.⁶⁸

Escobar has argued that this process of self-organised emergence – which he argues is fundamental to the alter-globalisation movements – and its key characteristic of organic horizontality, are transforming politics. Along with Nunes and others (and acknowledging also that Escobar wrote the above as early as in 2003), I would go beyond this and say that in large part because of the factors discussed in the previous section, of travel, migration, and new technologies, this process is transforming everyday life as a whole, in all societies.⁶⁹

But keeping here to politics alone, this argument constitutes a deep challenge for all kinds of traditional politics, including the ‘progressive’, all of which - whether on the right or the left – are based on command structures that are largely vertical in character. This verticality is part of the culture of politics and social relations that most of us know, have been brought up with, and are most familiar with, and that all of us therefore tend to reproduce in our organisations and institutions (as well as families and communities), sometimes even against our best judgement : The politics of power and of the capture and retention of power, and where some (usually a very few) give vision such that those few lead and others follow. Self-organised, emergent politics is radically different, based on principles of horizontality, equality, and open-endedness. Fundamentally, it is about self-realisation as the path to social transformation; it is – to use the differentiation developed at length by John Holloway – more about power-to rather than about power-over.⁷⁰

(Please stop for a moment and give this proposition a thought.)

In her writings on the then rapidly emerging ‘global justice movement’ during the early

2000s, Naomi Klein pointed out that the traditional mode of politics – including the handing down of vision by some to others – was by then already disintegrating. (She might then have been referring more to politics in the North than in the rest of the world, but recent and current movements in so many parts of the world show clearly that this has now become relevant to a far wider landscape today.) She argued that in contemporary conditions, where individuals and groups have access to so much information, the obsession that traditional organisers of movements have with ‘vision’ – implying a singular, centralised ‘vision’ – is, ironically, precisely what prevents both them and also those who see themselves as their followers from ‘seeing’.⁷¹

Klein illustrated her proposition by referring to how the big demonstrations at Seattle and Washington DC were organised. Writing in 2000, just after ‘Seattle’ and during the wave of ‘global actions’ that were taking place, she wrote :

Although many have observed that the recent mass protests would have been impossible without the Internet, what has been overlooked is how the communication technology that facilitates these campaigns is shaping the movement in its own image. Thanks to the Net, mobilizations are able to unfold with sparse bureaucracy and minimal hierarchy; forced consensus and labored manifestoes are fading into the background, replaced instead by a culture of constant, loosely structured and sometimes compulsive information-swapping.

What emerged on the streets of Seattle and Washington was an activist model that mirrors the organic, decentralized, interlinked pathways of the Internet – the Internet come to life.⁷²

Carrying this argument forward, I suggest that it is precisely through the sharing of common and horizontal spaces that spontaneous, autonomous actions are enabled and empowered – and through which much larger movements and actions are given genesis. And in the context of this essay, that it is this that is the great strength of the World Social Forum.

Instead of the traditional hand-down (or trickle-down) approach to the gaining of vision and understanding, individuals and groups taking part in such a space – by visiting it, by moving around in it, by living it, and crucially, by seeing and smelling each other and by exchanging information and pheromones – **gain their own insights** (their own multiple, overlapping, and interacting insights) as to what the larger picture is; and not one singular ‘vision’. At one level, this is a function of the extraordinary and unique ability and power of human beings to synthesise multiple points of view, to grow through this, and to emerge with their own vision – which however is organically related to the visions that others are simultaneously developing; and then beyond this, the sharing and exchange of these seemingly ‘individual’ autonomous visions in a multiplicity of ways and at a multiplicity of levels, as discussed in the previous section. And once this interaction and exchange goes past a certain critical size, this explodes into a galaxy of autonomous but organically related and – crucially - **resonant** actions that we then come to perceive collectively as ‘a movement’ – or movements. But the crucial difference is that these movements, unlike line command movements, are like clouds, or swarms, or flocks, and not like clocks.⁷³

Pushing this idea further, to fully appreciate this we therefore also need to get past our obsession with the idea of authorship and agency in movement - and, in this area as in others, of ‘intellectual property rights’, not merely in a legal sense but in their social and political senses, which are far more fundamental. This is not to say that individuals, and particular organisations and institutions, do not come up with ideas or give vision (and usually as a result, exercise power); it is simply to also put in place the role and power of autonomous actors and the relations between them, how much the ideas and vision that individuals come up with are functions of collective process and of exchange, and how much the emergence of new institutions and processes also takes place through such random collective processes.

Thus, the Forum, and other initiatives such as the Forum, must be understood not only as things that have been ‘designed’ and constructed by some individuals with great prescience

– which is also there -, but also as ‘movements’ (in the sense of swellings, waves) that have been thrown up by the sheer force of the churning going on in the world. Individuals who appear to play such roles, such as the eight Brazilians and their friends who are always portrayed as having designed and founded the WSF,⁷⁴ therefore need to be seen not as originators or founders but as vehicles of larger forces and movements – as the pencils of history and, as a part of this, also of the dynamics of social structure, and yes, with all the trappings and markings of existing social structure.⁷⁵

Another way of understanding and expressing this is that the Forum was formed and exists as a **convergence** of the intentions of the people involved in these dynamics at various levels; and that it therefore, at any given point in time, represents the current net manifestation of these forces. Indeed, the Forum itself, by virtue of something that has been thrown up by the forces of history – and that too, in successive waves of history -, must be seen as an integral part of the extraordinary emergence of movement over recent decades, locally and globally, that I referred to at the outset of this essay.

To try and illustrate this by analogy, I want to briefly step sideways and suggest that this principle also applies to architecture, and to what architecture is really all about. As we all know, we are taught and conditioned - as children, but in many ways throughout our lives - to see and judge architecture (and also music, art, people; everything) as being ‘beautiful’ or ‘ugly’; and to see ‘it’ as something static, as an object. But I would like to suggest that what we consequently understand as beauty or ugliness is only the physical manifestation, the surface reality, of what we (appear to) see, and fails to take into account the social, economic, cultural, and political forces that have created – and that therefore underlie - what we see; and that architecture is not an object.

Architecture, I suggest, is something much wider and deeper than what we see; and that it – what we see, and experience, as ‘architecture’ - needs to be seen as being a reflection and manifestation of the structure and architecture of society itself.⁷⁶ (It is indeed in this sense that the term is also used when referring to – for instance – ‘the architecture of institutions’, and that Chesters as quoted above used the term when he said “...we must look to processes and to form, for it is within this hidden architecture...”.) And it is in this sense that the Forum can and should be seen as a great piece of architecture of our times, created not by any one person or by a few people with one vision but rather as the net result at any given time of all the forces that are constantly swirling in it and giving it its shape; and indeed in a larger sense – precisely because the WSF is today so large - as a manifestation and reflection of the structure and architecture of national and global society that is emerging in our times.

Finally, there is one further suggestion contained in the above : Subliminally aware as a species that objective conditions and opportunities, such as the availability of space and time travel technologies, exist today; genetically equipped as we are with the ability to see the open and to ‘open the world’ and to change it, as discussed above; and instinctively appalled by the threat to our very existence and to the health of *Pachamama*, of *Dhaarti Ma*, our Mother Earth,⁷⁷ human beings are today – individually and collectively – bursting out of our local and ‘national’ confines, impelled both by the instinct to survive and the will to change things. Much of what has taken place at the ‘global’ level over the past decade in terms of what we call ‘social action’, and one way of understanding what is happening – such as the extraordinary phenomenon of global actions that we have witnessed over the past decade, the flowering of the World Social Forum, and the extraordinarily rich contributions by indigenous peoples of the Americas in this period – can be seen as a result and manifestation of this cloudburst that is taking place in our times.

Seen this way, the WSF is both a vehicle for this explosion of emergence and an expression of it; and it is continuously being formed, replenished, and renewed, like an anthill

and like a cloud. And just as in the case of all great architecture, the ontological meaning and role of the Forum is to allow us to comprehend the larger world we are a part of, and through this experience to relate to it in new ways.

Once again, I clarify and underline that I do not mean to suggest that self-organised emergence is a simple, unidirectional process, or that we simply act out predetermined lives, engineered by the pheromones that we are the vehicles for. Most certainly, deliberate, directed action and intentionality also play a strong role, cutting across this general pattern. This is also what makes us human. But the pattern remains.

To be more specific, and with specific reference to the Forum, on the one hand it is – very much - intentionality that has led to the crafting of the WSF's Charter of Principles; to the creation of the WSF as an open space that we have discussed so far; and equally, and in particular, to the powerful experiment that is today taking place in the WSF process in the USA – where those who have taken the lead in the process have, in their understanding of the Forum as an **emancipatory** space and process, intentionally biased it in favour of grassroots movements (and of those I call the incivil); and where they have, through doing this, in fact turned the idea of the WSF as an open space on its head.⁷⁸

On the other hand, intentionality has also been manifested in the WSF as a struggle 'for the Forum', at multiple levels.⁷⁹ Perhaps the most evident is the struggle that has been going since the second WSF in 2002 between those who would like the Forum to remain as they say it was conceived, an 'open space', and those who wish to turn it into a 'world social **movement**', with more defined vision, objectives, programme, and structure.⁸⁰

Intentionality, therefore, cuts both ways. Within the Forum itself, there is a constantly resurgent culture of conventional politics – of takeover, control, and so on – that is playing itself out. But the forces of emergence also continue to be at play, and any 'other worlds' that may come will come out of this complex interplay of intentionality and of emergence.⁸¹

V

The Power of Openness

My third and again complementary proposition regarding the success of the WSF is an expansion and underlining of a point already made : In short, that it is precisely its openness and inclusiveness, its randomness and open-endedness, and the seemingly 'weak' ties that it is constituted of – and, I suggest, restraint - that are its strength and its power. And conversely, I argue that any reduction or enervation of this openness and diaphanous quality will lead not only to it drying up, and thereby to the loss of the vital roles it is playing – including its ability to inspire and to spawn new ideas -, as discussed in the previous two sections, but also to its losing the qualities of synergy and resilience that it displays. The great task of the Forum and of those who take part in it must therefore be to constantly struggle to retain and sustain this openness and to open it up further; to constantly push the boundaries of the process, at a multiplicity of levels.

Since I have already laid out much of my ground in the preceding sections, this section will be brief, but I urge you to read what I say here into what I have already said, and permit the ideas to intertwine and synergise.

Again, there are 2-3 aspects to this. Continuing from the previous section, the first is the question of its effectiveness. One of the key and persistent controversies about the WSF is whether such a loose, open process can ever be 'effective'. I have already cited Graeme Chesters to argue that the apparently random encounters and weak interactions that take place in such spaces contain hidden strengths and possibilities. I will now quote at length from his work to suggest that it is **precisely in its openness and in its diaphanous, web-like structure** – which is directly complementary to the processes of convergence and of emergence we have so far discussed, and works along with them -, that the strength,

effectiveness, and power of the WSF reside :

I want to argue that an over concentration on 'networks' can sometimes mask or reduce our understanding of the complex form and potential of new spaces of dialogue and encounter that are shaping global civil society (GCS) – eg the World Social Forum. ... Metaphorically, much of this work [on networks] treats networks as so-much 'plumbing', a series of conduits connecting nodes within which exchanges occur. Resultant network maps tend to emphasise the most prominent flows and marginalize minor ones. This can lead to an emphasis upon strong, established links characterised by entrenched 'habits of mind' - dominant discourses if you will.

Instead, I want to suggest that *in terms of social change at critical junctures it is the 'weak ties' that are actually crucial to maintaining and innovating network relations* , and that *it is in the operation of these weak ties that the resilience and potential of the WSF resides*. ... These processes of physical interaction that characterise global social movements – the protest actions, encuentros and social fora are further understood to be dynamically interconnected and co-extensive with a digital commons that underpins computer mediated interaction and communications and which gives the 'movement of movements' its rhizomatic character.⁸² (Emphases supplied.)

Second is the question of the power of **resilience**. After all is said and done, the WSF is *a priori* a political process, albeit an unconventional one, and it was – in its early days, which significantly coincided directly with 9/11 and the outbreak of the war on terror, but apparently even today – considered a possible threat to the establishment.⁸³ It is also important to recall that it was founded in Latin America, which is a region that has a long tradition of the severe repression of 'social' and political activism and activists.

Elsewhere, I have suggested that it is precisely the WSF's non-centralised structure that might be its strength in terms of resisting if not nullifying the possibilities of disorganisation and repression.⁸⁴ In his remarkable essay, Chesters lays out **how** this happens and explains how it is exactly this quality, and this strength, that allows it to do so – and therefore how crucial this is to the functioning and sustainability of the WSF as a political process. Read this small quote from Chesters along with the others given from his work in this essay (and best, read the essay as a whole) :

These movements display 'small-world' characteristics, they consist of hubs and nodes that are typified by a penumbra of 'weak ties'. In network analysis, this structure demonstrably allows for rapid communication and is resilient to all but the most focused of attacks.⁸⁵

And third are the qualities of **inclusiveness, open-endedness, and non-centredness**. The original organisers of the WSF clearly understood the necessity of this process-oriented and open-ended character of the Forum right from the beginning, and embedded it in the Charter of Principles of the new process. Finalising the Charter within six months of the very first manifestation of the WSF process, on the one hand they emphasised precisely these characteristics :

2. The World Social Forum at Porto Alegre [in January 2001] was an event localised in time and place. From now on, in the certainty proclaimed at Porto Alegre that "another world is possible", it becomes a permanent process of seeking and building alternatives, which cannot be reduced to the events supporting it.

By doing so, and as Chesters points out, citing Peter Waterman, they discovered – as already mentioned - the secret of fire :

Waterman describes this as akin to discovering the "secret of fire", a secret which he elucidates as the capacity to "keep moving", to constantly challenge any process of capture or stratification .⁸⁶

On the other hand, they also underlined – in the Charter and in their practice, as briefly discussed on Section II of this essay – the fundamental importance of not centralising power in the WSF. They formulated and included several remarkable principles to try and resist the power that a world process such as this would inevitably tend to accumulate; including Article 5

(“The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks only organisations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world, but intends neither to be a body representing world civil society.....”) and Article 6 (“The meetings of the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body. No one, therefore, will be authorised, on behalf of any of the editions of the Forum, to express positions claiming to be those of all its participants. The participants in the Forum shall not be called on to take decisions as a body, whether by vote or acclamation.....”, but also in several other Articles.⁸⁷

Collectively, these principles – and their subsequent practice – are remarkable for their exercise of the principle of **restraint**. In terms of conventional politics, they appear to ‘remove’ power and through this to ‘disorganise’ the WSF; in reality, it is precisely this openness and restraint that has ‘organised’ and disciplined the WSF and imbued it with such great power - of attraction and of inspiration.

But this restraint also has another crucial value; because even as it gathers power to the WSF, it also appears very civil and removes any impression of the WSF being hungry for power, in the conventional sense.

Finally, this character of open-endedness also appears to speak for and manifest a politics and poetics of inclusiveness, and thereby plurality, to a much higher degree than perhaps any other such formation. Without the benefit of this full analysis back then, both of the dynamics and of the contradictions, I think that it was more or less this understanding that led some of us to an early attempt to formulate, in specific relation to the WSF, a tentative definition of open space as a political concept back in 2005 :

The central idea here is that an open space, rather than a party or movement, allows for more and different forms of relations among [social and] political actors, while remaining open-ended with respect to outcomes. It is *open* in that encounters among multiple subjects with diverse objectives can have transformative political effects that traditional forms of movements, coalitions, and campaigns, with uniform themes and goals, exclude.⁸⁸

In short, we argued back then that this concept offered scope for a much wider range of actors to take part in and contribute, crucially including those not necessarily involved with politics or movement. In other words, it seemed far more inclusive as a process and network; and it also seemed to be something that could keep spreading and opening up.⁸⁹

Elsewhere, I have argued that the three core principles that underlie the WSF’s concept and practice of openness and of open space are **self-organisation**, **autonomous action**, and **emergence**.⁹⁰ Even though I have earlier argued – with the aim of trying to influence future developments - that there were severe contradictions within the WSF process precisely in these terms,⁹¹ and even though I today argue that there is also a severe undertow to the WSF as an organisation of global civil society in terms of the wider and deeper democratisation it says it aims for,⁹² I believe that the combination and interaction of these core principles has led to what even its detractors allow to be nothing less than one of the widest, most energetic, and powerful social and political experiments ever to take place, and one that permits us to begin to perceive the question of power and politics in a very different way.

VI

Synthesis and Synergy

What then are the meanings and implications of the three proposals I have put forward in this essay ?

Over the past decade, the WSF – along with the concept of a ‘global civil society’ – has come out of seemingly nowhere, to occupy a lot of a lot of people’s imaginations (including mine). While the merits and demerits of both remain debatable, there is no question that they command attention, and if for no other reason than this, we need to understand them. But there are also other, and deeper, reasons to do so.

First, I have argued that it is precisely the fact that the WSF has grown so enormously over this past decade, becoming a major world institution that has attracted, involved, and inspired millions of people from many parts of the world, and on which a great deal has been written – mostly by people from civil society - and where many, again all from civil society, have argued that it is of great historical moment, that makes it essential for us to try and understand it closely. Among others, we must ask the questions : Why is it so celebrated by civil society alone, and not so widely by those outside the margins of civil society ? And – keeping in mind the reality and success also of the Forum of the Americas and of the US Social Forum - under what conditions have those outside the margins of civil society taken strong part in the WSF, and made it their own ?

Second, I have argued that it is essential that that we lift the veil and see the WSF and civil society for what they more essentially are, in terms of power and political process : In terms of power (including state power), and most crucially that it is not a question of the WSF merely being ‘dominated’ by the civil. The reality is that the leadership of the WSF is now coming to represent a now near-global coalescence of the leadership of what see themselves as progressive sections of the national and global bourgeoisie, and that this leadership is today increasingly forming a transnational social class that is actively seeking to exercise power over society at all levels, local national and transnational; and where I argue that this is happening not only strategically but as a structural function of class, caste, and race dynamics. Whether the individuals involved are doing so deliberately or consciously is not the issue; or the fact that they are only promoting what they consider progressive politics. The question is what the politics they are practising – including through the WSF - is really doing, in terms of social transformation and in a larger frame.

Third, and while several people have already written on inversions within the WSF, these tendencies tend to be seen only as ‘contradictions’, which – in common usage – tends to be understood as ‘unfortunate internal weaknesses’. It is vital to register first that these are not in fact ‘contradictions’ but **reflections** of the structural character of the WSF and of ‘global civil society’, and second, even if one prefers to see them as contradictions, that the reality of these deep internal contradictions is not in any way reducing the significance and influence of the WSF; to the contrary, the presence of these contradictions is actually strengthening not only the WSF but also the hands of those leading it. Consequently, the apparent ‘success’ of the WSF despite these profound ‘contradictions’ and its arguably growing power – which it says it eschews - only make questioning it more relevant and more urgent, and make it that much more important for all of us, wherever we stand on the WSF and on what I argue is happening, to try to interrogate and comprehend the WSF more deeply than we normally do. We need to comprehend just what the nature and meanings of its ‘success’ are.

In this essay, I have put forward and outlined three processes towards doing this – processes that I suggest are fundamental to the WSF and to understanding what is making it so alive and so ‘successful’, not just in terms of size but also in political-strategic terms : **Convergence in open space** – and with attendant processes of exchange and synergy; **emergence**; and **openness**. As is hopefully by now evident, these processes are highly interdependent, both requiring and generating the others, and though each plays its own powerful role it is the **synergy** of these three processes that leads to the WSF being what it is and having the power – of attraction, involvement, and inspiration for some – that it so evidently has.

These dynamics have been successfully used to build the Forum and the power that it has. At the minimum, other movements can learn from this experience – but only if they are willing to allow the power of openness to exist.

Beyond this, I have argued that the secret of the WSF and of the ‘alternative’ that it is

offering us in the particular times we live in, with profound changes taking place today in social-cultural and communicational terms, is that it does not try, or pretend, to formulate any one alternative; to the contrary, it is - in my understanding - showing that it is possible to create, and to sustain, a largely non-directed space where the formulation of many alternatives are possible. It is thereby literally tending to become a free space, for free thought - which in turn has a viral potential. This quality is of profound importance for the practice of politics in today's world as it is emerging.⁹³

I acknowledge that the arguments I have put forward here – drawing as I do on still-evolving research, and then taking large leaps with those thoughts – are tentative; this essay and its proposals are therefore only suggestions, as a part of work-in-progress. But I believe that if we are to at all understand the WSF and processes like it, we have to get out of our disciplinary boxes, imagine what is possible, and put forward and debate such suggestions. I hope that this essay can contribute to some new thinking, and would welcome reactions.

Finally, I perhaps need to repeat that these practices and processes may not be true of the WSF alone – but with this, I also make a wider claim. In terms of both the positive and negative tendencies, this analysis may, I suggest, offer something for our understanding of other transnational and transregional movements taking shape today, including in other parts of the so-called 'global solidarity and justice movement'⁹⁴ but not limited to this. With appropriate modifications to take into account time and place therefore, it is possible that the dynamics I have tried to draw out here may also be seen as common characteristics of emerging experiments in the practice of independent and autonomist civil organisation and movement in the world today - and may offer lessons for the building of new movement, both civil and incivil.

Notes

1 I would like to thank Vipul Rikhi, the content editor for the first version of this essay, for his editing and for his suggestions towards making a very rough collage into something of a coherent argument. My essay has however evolved a lot since then, and I alone am responsible for its present shape, for good or for bad.

2 For the progressive side of civil movement, on civil society in general see Glasius, Kaldor, and Anheier, eds, 2006, and other volumes in that series; on the emergence and actions of transnational and global campaigns, see Lipschutz, Winter 1992; Smith, Chatfield, and Pagnucco, eds, 1997; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Foster and Anand, eds, 1999; Brecher, Costello, and Smith 2000; Notes From Nowhere, eds, 2003; Maeckelbergh 2009; and Pleyers 2010; and for a look into some contemporary structural dynamics in civil movement, see Choudry and Shragge 2011 and Conway 2012.

3 See, for instance, de la Cadena 2010.

4 See, for instance, Meijer forthcoming (2013).

5 See, for instance, Meijer, ed, 2009.

6 For a discussion of the concepts of civil and incivil as I use them, see my essay in a companion volume to this book, The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds , on the concept and reality of civility (Sen, forthcoming (2013a)); and for an earlier version of these arguments, Sen, November 2007. And for details of and discussions on the rise of certain incivil movements, see the essays in the companion volumes to this book, as above and also Worlds of Movement, Worlds in Movement (provisional title), by Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, Jeff Corntassel, André Drainville, Roel Meijer, Andrea Smith, and James Toth (Alfred and Corntassel 2013, Corntassel 2013, Drainville 2013, Meijer 2013, Smith 2013, and Toth 2013; all forthcoming).

7 For instance, Linebaugh and Rediker 2000.

8 For instance, Holloway and Pela'ez, eds, 1998.

9 An important and prescient exception is Abramsky, ed, March 2001.

10 It is of no little interest that the world meeting of the WSF process in its tenth year was held in Dakar. Just off the shore of Dakar is the island from which slaves were shipped across the Atlantic for centuries, Île de Gorée , and that therefore bound Brazil, as well as the Caribbean and North America, with Africa.

11 Among many other things, see (in English alone; there is also a great deal available in other languages) : Sen, Anand, Escobar, and Waterman, eds, 2004 ; de Sousa Santos 2006a; Sen and Kumar with Bond and Waterman, January 2007; Smith, Chase-Dunn, Della Porta, and ors, 2007; Whitaker 2007; Blau and Karides, eds, 2008 ; and Teivainen (forthcoming).

For a listing of what was written on the Forum during its first three years (2001-2003), see : Sen, Waterman, and Kumar, December 2003. The second volume, covering 2004-2010, is due out soon.

- 12 Michael Hardt has compared the WSF with the great Non-Aligned Movement of the 1950s and 60s (Hardt 2002); Samir Amin has argued that it may be the predecessor of a Fifth International (Amin 2006b); and Boaventura de Sousa Santos argues in this volume that it is the harbinger of a new left (de Sousa Santos 2012).
- 13 Sen, November 2007, and Sen, forthcoming (2013a).
- 14 World Social Forum Organising Committee and World Social Forum International Council, June 2001 : “ The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks **only** organisations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world...” . (Emphasis supplied.)
- 15 Daulatzai, December 2004, and Daulatzai 2013.
- 16 Caruso, December 2004.
- 17 Conway, October 2010, and Conway 2011; and Conway 2012.
- 18 Teltumbde, forthcoming (2013).
- 19 Eschle and Maiguashca 2012, in this volume, and Vargas (forthcoming, 2013).
- 20 For instance, Osava 2004, and Alvarez, Gutierrez, Kim, Petit, and Reese, May 2008.
- 21 Sen, November 2007, and Sen, forthcoming (2013a).
- 22 World Social Forum Organising Committee and World Social Forum International Council, June 2001, Article 5.
- 23 This essay, weaving together several strands of thought I have been working and writing on for several years now, is a synthesis of arguments earlier published (Sen, March 2006; Sen, January 2007; and Sen 2010) and subsequent thoughts.
- 24 Including of course, through the publication of the book in which this essay is contained, but also, for example the debate summarised in Sen and Kumar, compilers, 2007.
- 25 Official histories and histories notwithstanding – which usually locate its formation to a meeting in Paris in early 2000 between 2-3 Brazilians with one Frenchman - there is some question about when what later became ‘the WSF’ was first thought of. Kolya Abramsky has shown (Abramsky, August 2008) that the WSF and its slogan ‘Another World Is Possible !’ were in fact already visible at a meeting organised in Paris by ATTAC France and others in 1999, and that the specific idea of a ‘World Social Forum’ had already been put forward even earlier by political economist Susan George – then and till today a prominent figure in ATTAC, which later became a founder of the WSF – in 1997, and then concretised in 1999 :
“The 1997 meeting was an international seminar entitled ‘Surviving in a Globalized World’ in Aachen, Germany, where Susan George, drawing on the importance of Gramsci, gave a talk about the World Economic Forum and mentioned that it would be good to hold a parallel event called a ‘World Social Forum’.” ...
And : “The 1999 meeting, entitled ‘ The Dictatorship of Financial Markets - **Another World is Possible** ’ , took place in Paris during June 24-26 1999, organised by ATTAC in partnership with CADTM/COCAD (Committee for the Cancellation of Third World Debt), DAWN (Development of Alternatives for Women in a New Era), the WFA - World Forum of Alternatives, and CC AMI/MAI (Coordination of Committees against MAI's Clones).” Abramsky, August 2008, endnotes. Emphasis supplied.
The WSF, officially formed in 2001, then later adopted ‘ Another World Is Possible’ as its slogan in 2002-3.
But it perhaps remains true that while the idea of a WSF might have been thought of earlier on, the actual structure and process of the WSF as it has emerged was thought out during 2000, as formal history has it.
- 26 Whitaker 2004. The author of this essay on the WSF as open space, Chico Whitaker, is one of the founders of the World Social Forum. An architect by training, he is widely credited as also being one of the architects of the WSF. For a critical discussion of the political-cultural concept of open space, see Sen 2010.
- 27 But where, as above in note 25, this slogan had in fact been enunciated several years before by Susan George, and who then also published a book in 2004 titled Another world is possible, IF... (George 2004).
- 28 In terms of the political, the leadership of the host organisation of the 2004 WSF, WSF India. has all along been dominated by the establishment Left in the country, which has historically always posed issues in terms of opposition. But beyond this, the specific conjunctural situation in India at that time was that the right was in state power – and the formation of the WSF in India at precisely that time (2002-3) was seen (and posed, portrayed, and used) by some as a platform not only for opposition to neoliberal globalisation but also, within the country, for contributing to build opposition to the right. For a discussion of the relationship of the left in India with the WSF, see Chetia, August 2008; of the left and the WSF with Dalits, Teltumbde 2013; and of the conjuncture in India in 2003-4, Vanaik 2009.
- 29 As discussed in Sen 2004b. The International Council of the WSF however - then still dominated by Latin Americans and Europeans who seemed culturally uncomfortable with this broad formulation - stayed away in its subsequent meetings from recognising this platform of principles.
- 30 Among other things, the Mumbai WSF was the occasion for intense discussions on the politics of the Forum, including the launch of the first comprehensive anthology of essays reflecting on the theory and practice of the WSF (Sen, Anand, Escobar, and Waterman, eds, 2004) and a meeting organised by NIGD (Network Institute for Global Democratisation) on ‘The Politics of the Forum’. The launch of the book was also preceded by a major series of seminars at the University of Delhi organised to prepare for the WSF, titled the *Open Space Seminar Series* . The discussions at these seminars have subsequently been published in a series titled *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* , in three books (Sen and Saini, eds 2005; Sen, ed, 2011a, and Sen, ed, 2012c).
- 31 For a contemporary discussion of this, and of a somewhat different take on the evolution of the WSF, see Waterman

2004a.

32 The Indian architect said to be responsible for the physical planning of the Mumbai Forum, P K Das, was even specifically brought to Porto Alegre to help with the planning of the 2005 Forum. See the essay by Rodrigo Nunes in this volume (Nunes 2012).

33 Sen 2004b; and for a review of the significance of this, Sen, March 2006.

34 See the essay in this book by Rodrigo Nunes, who makes a strong argument for recognising the IYC (International Youth Camp) both as the great unthought of World Social Forum and also that the WSF, in its earlier years, learned a lot from the IYC – but never acknowledged it. (Nunes 2012.)

35 For those unfamiliar with how the World Social Forum is organised, it is centred around a process of organisations (and individuals) around the world proposing events that they would like to organise during the Forum, within a framework of themes that is first decided and put forward by the organisers of the WSF. (More on this below.) The WSF organisers then take the responsibility of organising and providing the space and facilities that are necessary for event organisers to organise their events. The World Social Forum as a whole issues no declarations or manifestos; event organisers are free to issue their own conclusions, and the WSF organisers undertake only to publicise those conclusions without taking any responsibility for them. The life of the Forum is therefore what the WSF calls the ‘self-organised’ activities of its participants, and the spontaneous and free association and exchange between those taking part.

36 There were some severe problems with the Nairobi WSF, and it has been hotly debated. For a rich selection, see the essay by Jean Nanga in a companion volume in the *Challenging Empires* series that looks ahead to the Nairobi Forum (Nanga 2009), and the essays on the Nairobi Forum in this book by Wangui Mbatia and Hassan Indusa (Mbatia and Indusa 2012), Virginia Vargas (Vargas 2012), and Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle and Nicolas Haeringer (Pommerolle and Haeringer 2012). And also the essay by Demba Moussa Dembele in this volume, looking more generally at African social movements and the World Social Forum (Dembele 2012).

37 See CACIM, January 2008.

38 For why I say ‘colonial’, see Conway, October 2010, Conway 2011, and Conway 2012. As I was reminded by the content editor for this essay, Vipul Rikhi, there is of course also great irony in the idea of large numbers of concerned people from other parts of the world descending – in carbon-emitting planes – on a region said to be under ecological threat. But the Belém Forum was even more complex, in terms of its multiple meanings. In order to try to unpack and focus on the complex meanings – and politics – of the Belém Forum, the organisation I work with, CACIM, together with the National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers, India, called a meeting on this issue at the Belém Forum. See the report of the meeting at http://openspaceforum.net/wiki/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=798 . See also my other essay in this book for an attempt to communicate some of this complexity and irony, and to explore some alternatives (Sen 2012d), and in particular, the brilliant subsequent essays and then book by Janet Conway on the coloniality of the WSF and the global justice movement (Conway, October 2010 and Conway 2011; and Conway 2012).

39 ‘FSM’ because this is the acronym for the World Social Forum in Portuguese, the Brazilian national language, and also in French and Spanish. For details of these developments, see WSF International Office, October 2008.

40 www.cmpcc.org .

41 For a detailed reflection on the US Social Forum process by one of its organisers, see the essay by Michael Leon Guerrero in this volume (Guerrero 2012); and for an independent assessment, see Rebick 2009.

42 See the essay by Sonia Alvarez in this volume (Alvarez 2012).

43 Anon, January 2004b. Accessed js 05.10.06 @ <http://ireland.indymedia.org/article/63143> .

44 Juris 2012a.

45 Foro Social Alternativo – Alternative Social Forum, October 2005.

46 For a detailed discussion of these dynamics, see the essay by Jeffrey Juris in this book (Juris 2012a) and also Sen 2010.

47 For another analysis of this characteristic of institutional learning, see the essay by Graeme Chesters in this book (Chesters 2012).

48 This section draws on Sen, January 2005c, the main arguments of which were then published in Sen, March 2006 and in Sen 2007.

49 For an attempt to comparatively present the ‘movements of movements’ today taking place across the world and to deepen conversations between and across them, see the companion volume to this book, *The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds* (Sen and Waterman eds, 2013a).

50 Barber 1995.

51 Barber 1995. See also the essay by Roel Meier in the companion volume to this book, *The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds* (Meier, forthcoming, 2013).

52 Morales Ayma, January 2010, and Lovato, April 2010.

53 Schiermeier, August 2011. See also the discussion note for a workshop organised by CACIM and others at the Dakar Forum in January 2011 titled ‘Confronting the Consequences of Climate Change : Conflict, War, Resistance, and Movement in the Coming Half Century – Looking Ahead : What Do We Need To Do ?’. See CACIM and others, January 2011.

54 Smith and Guarnizo, eds, 1998.

- 55 To paraphrase John Keane's writings on global civil society and extending his sketch past 'civil societies' to include the incivil as well, our planet Mother Earth is today enveloped by dense layers of countless overlapping social networks that together constitute a live, throbbing biosphere. See Keane 2001.
- 56 For a discussion of the limits of openness, see Sen 2004b. And I discuss the question of the WSF and open space in detail in Sen, May 2009 and in Sen 2010.
- 57 Jacobs 1961; Johnson 2002; Escobar 2004. I wish to acknowledge here my deep debt in this essay to the work of Johnson and Escobar. In his book Emergence, Johnson specifically draws out "the connected lives of ants, brains, cities, and software", and also refers in detail to Jacobs's great work. And in Escobar's essay that I am referring to here, he speculates on how this dynamic is transforming life and politics. Escobar argues that other worlds are in fact already here – and suggests powerfully that movements, and the Left in particular, need urgently to take into account what is happening around us.
- Johnson's detailed reference to and reliance on Jacobs's work however, has also made me aware of my own deep debt to her, and has closed important circles for me. Jane Jacobs was one of the seminal influences on me in terms of my understanding of cities when I studied to be an architect and urban planner back in the 60s – and I use the term 'seminal' very purposely, to mean that what she (and some others at that time, like Kevin Lynch (Lynch 1960) or John Turner (Turner and Fichter, eds, 1970)) tried to express communicated to me at many levels, including at a less-than-conscious, root one. I think we often sense when this has happened or is happening to us, and is transforming our lives. We then surrender to it and don't always try to comprehend what is taking place. Now that I look back, that was definitely one of those moments; not epiphany perhaps, but close to it, where something new about the world was revealed to me. Even if I am acknowledging my debts only so many years later, I am deeply grateful to all of them.
- 58 I thank my content editor Vipul Rikhi for reminding me of this important point, which has helped me understand the WSF better.
- 59 Wilson 1971 and 1998, and Wilson and Hölldobler 1990.
- 60 Johnson 2002.
- 61 Agamben 2004. For a discussion of this idea in relation to the WSF and its idea of open space, see Sen 2010.
- 62 For a more detailed version of this argument, see 2010.
- 63 Ibid, and Keraghel and Sen, eds, December 2004.
- 64 Waterman 2004c, p 159.
- 65 Having said this, I of course have to acknowledge that I have myself authored an essay using this phrase, titled 'How Open? The Forum as Logo, the Forum as Religion - Scepticism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will' (Sen 2004b) – but where, and as acknowledged in the essay itself, the last part of the title was inspired by Peter Waterman's comments on early drafts.
- 66 Wilson 1971 and 1998, and Wilson and Hölldobler 1990.
- 67 Escobar 2004. Although Escobar does not specifically cite Jacob's work here (as cited in note 47 above), it is not just interesting but significant that he also uses what happens on sidewalks as an example of the dynamics he is discussing.
- 68 See the essay by Graeme Chesters in this book (Chesters 2012).
- 69 Sen 2010, citing Nunes 2005; see also Nunes 2013 for a somewhat revised and developed version of his 2005 essay.
- 70 Holloway 2002.
- 71 Klein 2000a and 2000b.
- 72 Klein 2000b.
- 73 On movements as clouds and clocks, see Sen 2010; on swarms, see Johnson 2002; and on (morphic) resonance, to which I should have given more space in this essay because of its resonance with what I am trying to say here, see Sheldrake 1988.
- 74 The names of the organisations that the founders represented featured as the authors of the first version of the WSF's Charter of Principles: ABONG, ATTAC, CBJP, CIVES, CUT, IBASE, CIG, and MST, April 2001 – 'World Social Forum Charter of Principles', dt April 9 2001. 2 pp. – Available at http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.asp?id_menu=4&cd_language=2 [Document earlier available at this site.] Published in: Jai Sen with Madhuresh Kumar, compilers, August 2003 – Are Other Worlds Possible?, The Open Space Reader on the World Social Forum and its Engagement with Empire, pp 17-19.
- 75 Keeping in mind also the discussion in note 24 regarding the origin of the WSF, the individuals who are generally credited for 'founding' the WSF are Brazilians Oded Grajew (of CIVES - Brazilian Association of Businessmen for Citizenship) and Chico Whitaker (of the CBJP - Brazilian Commission of Justice and Peace, of the National Council of Bishops), along with Bernard Cassen (Director General of Le Monde Diplomatique and former President of ATTAC in France). Chico Whitaker has often said, in terms of the power to take over and control it, that the WSF was – after its first year or two – already far too big a process for this to ever happen. This is true; but as far as I know, there has been no such similar discussion - by him or by any of the other 'founders' - of the **founding** of the process, but the generally accepted idea is that it was founded by him and some others. (More precisely, though he is widely referred to as this, Chico has actively denied being one of the founding 'fathers', but has half-jokingly suggested in exchange that he could at best perhaps be seen as a founding 'uncle'; and "And if somebody want absolutely to designate a "father", it would be Oded [Grajew], as you know, who had the WSF idea". (<http://openfsm.net/projects/esf-strategy-discussion/blog/2010/07/31/comments-on-the-article-of-chico-whitaker-wsf-discuss/>)).
- 76 Sen, August 1999. The world-famous Taj Mahal in India therefore – and just as an instance – must be judged not only in

terms of its apparent ethereal 'beauty' but also by the reality of the brutal feudal times during which it was built and the extraction and exploitation that made this possible, and also by the historical fact that the thumbs and tongues of the artisans who created this extraordinary beauty were cut, and their eyes put out, on the specific orders of the emperor who commissioned the building, so that they could never create such beauty again.

77 *Pachamama* is the term and cosmological meaning for 'planet Earth' in Aymara and some other indigenous languages in Abya Yala (the Americas); *Dhaarti mata* is the term in Hindi and other North Indian languages, though it has a somewhat different cosmological meaning.

78 See, in this volume, the essays on intentionality in the USSF process by Michael Leon Guerrero and Jeffrey Juris (Guerrero 2012, Juris 2012b).

79 Sen and Kumar, compilers, 2007.

80 For a comprehensive presentation of proposals for a clearer political programme for the WSF, see Sen and Kumar, compilers, January 2007. See also Abramsky 2008 for a powerful and revealing discussion of perhaps the best-known of the proposals, the Bamako Appeal; and Amin 2006.

81 Sen, 2004c.

82 Chesters 2012, citing Granovetter 1973.

83 Several observers took US president George Bush's rant immediately after 9/11 – "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists" (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpPABLW6F_A) - to be in part directed against the global justice and solidarity movement, which was then at its height, and where an extremely popular first WSF has just taken place in January of that year as a part of this rise, far beyond expectations. But this perception of the GJSM and the WSF as a threat to the establishment apparently continues till date. See, for instance, Immanuel Wallerstein's analysis of how and why the WSF held in Dakar, Senegal, in January 2011 was deliberately disorganised on the orders of the President of that country on the fear that it might be the place or occasion for an outbreak of the 'Arab spring' – then raging across north Africa – in his country (Wallerstein, February 2011).

84 Sen 2010.

85 Chesters 2012, citing Watts and Strogatz 1998.

86 Chesters 2012, citing Waterman 2004c.

87 World Social Forum Organising Committee and World Social Forum International Council, June 2001. The full texts of Articles 6 and 7 are as follows :

Article 6, in full : The meetings of the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body. No one, therefore, will be authorised, on behalf of any of the editions of the Forum, to express positions claiming to be those of all its participants. The participants in the Forum shall not be called on to take decisions as a body, whether by vote or acclamation, on declarations or proposals for action that would commit all, or the majority, of them and that propose to be taken as establishing positions of the Forum as a body. It thus does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings, nor does it intend to constitute the only option for interrelation and action by the organisations and movements that participate in it.

Article 7 : Nonetheless, organisations or groups of organisations that participate in the Forums meetings must be assured the right, during such meetings, to deliberate on declarations or actions they may decide on, whether singly or in coordination with other participants. The World Social Forum undertakes to circulate such decisions widely by the means at its disposal, without directing, creating hierarchies, censoring or restricting them, but as deliberations of the organisations or groups of organisations that made the decisions.

88 This definition is taken from discussions within the EIOS (Explorations in/of Open Space) Collective, during 2005-6; see <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=EIOSCollective> . In the EIOS process, we looked at the question of whether and how effectively the notion of open space addresses the question of more democratic ways of conducting and understanding politics and organisation within movements, and to what extent it can also operate within more institutional political processes. During 2007-8, we continued to do this through the CEOS (Critical Engagement with Open Space) process - <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=CEOSProcessIntroLetter> .

89 For a detailed discussion of this and related energies within the WSF, see Waterman 2004c.

90 Sen 2010.

91 Sen 2004b.

92 Sen, forthcoming (2013a), and for an earlier version of my arguments, Sen, November 2007.

93 For my understanding of the changes taking place, see Sen 2010, citing also Nunes 2012.

94 An important example within the 'global justice movement' was the PGA (People's Global Action), which is less active today but played key roles in this movement in general and also in and around the WSF. For the PGA's opening statement back in 1997 – in other words, where it formed at very much the same time as the WSF -, see <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/en/pgainfos/bulletin0.htm>.

SECTION 2

The Globalisation of the WSF : The Globalisation of Movement

2.1 Geoffrey Pleyers and Raúl Ornelas – Alter-globalisation hits New Ground : Bamako and Caracas 2006

2.2 Ingmar Lee – Reflections on the Polycentric World Social Forum, Karachi

2.3 Pierre Rousset – The Karachi Social Forum and Its International Significance

2.4 Demba Moussa Dembele – African Social Movements and the World Social Forum

2.5 Wangui Mbatia and Hassan Indusa – The World Social Forum 2007 : A Kenyan Perspective

2.6 Virginia Vargas – A Look at Nairobi's World Social Forum

2.7 Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle and Nicolas Haeringer – The WSF at Test : Extraversion and Controversies during the World Social Forum in Nairobi

2.8 Michael Leon Guerrero – The Second US Social Forum : What did we accomplish ?

2.9 Sonia E Alvarez – Globalised Localisms : The Travels and Translations of the World Social Forum Process

Alter-Globalisation Hits New Ground : Bamako And Caracas 2006

Geoffrey Pleyers and Raúl Ornelas

After the successful 2005 World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, alter-globalisation activists decided to 'decentralise' the next edition by organising three parallel events in Bamako (Mali, January 19-23 2006), Caracas (Venezuela, January 24-29 2006), and Karachi (Pakistan, March 24-29 2006); individually and collectively called the 'Polycentric WSF' (P-WSF). Through this, the WSF process hit new grounds, hoping to integrate new regions and new people in its process and also to learn from their struggles and to incorporate their debates, knowledge, and dynamism within itself. This essay discusses some interesting aspects and some limits of the Polycentric WSF in Bamako and Caracas.¹

I

Bamako

Far away from its Latin American origins and actors, in January 2006 the P-WSF landed in a place where alter-globalisation was little known : Bamako, in Mali. Among the few Malians that had heard about it, most had a negative image : "Those who break windows and shops", "People who criticise everything", "People who spent their time demonstrating".² To interest the Malian population in the Forum was hence a difficult task that was not fully achieved by the organisers. In this perspective, the daily ten-minute coverage of the P-WSF by the Malian national broadcast channel represented a success. However, the opening demonstration only gathered some 10,000 people (there were over 200,000 in 2005 in Porto Alegre), and was a first instance of weak popular participation. The Forum itself gathered about 15,000 activists, a relative success in an African city, but the organisers had expected twice as many.

Almost 300 organisations took part in the preparation process and people from 113 countries attended the event. The Togolese delegation travelled three days by bus to reach Bamako, and the travel was even harder for the hundreds of Malian peasants and miners, often coming to their capital city for the first time. Due to the difficulty and cost of travel, most foreign African participants were NGO professionals. Besides Malian organisations, French (over 500 activists), Senegalese, Burkina, Moroccan, and Kenyan delegations were especially active and visible. Activists from Belgium, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands were also numerous and often connected with a wide range of local partners. About 500 workshops were held in Bamako; some audiences comprised over 200 activists, but usually between ten and thirty people attended, allowing everyone to take part in debates and discussions. Surprisingly for the organisers, the main event of the Forum was the very committed Reggae concert that attracted 15,000 young people to the national stadium on the Friday evening.

The cancellation of Third World debt, food sovereignty, women, and migration were among the most discussed issues inside and outside the WSF workshops.³ Hundreds of rejected migrant candidates took part in the Forum. A Malian mother summarised one of their main messages : "Young Malians have to migrate because of the extremely deteriorated terms of international trade. If cotton was paid for according to its real value, they wouldn't have to go and seek elsewhere their way to survive".

One of the most interesting places of the Forum was the 'Women's Universe', mostly dedicated to the sharing of experience among African women, notably in self-managed social projects. These include a women's housing project realised in Dakar : "Generally, estate agents come, build some houses and we buy it without any possibility to say our opinion. We want to think ourselves our houses and our neighbourhood, with green areas for kids to play, a health

centre and a school”.

The Peasant Space gathered participants from over forty African countries and helped create and strengthen relations between national, regional, and international organisations, especially through the Via Campesina network. Many farmers insisted on the necessity for specific organisations to represent their needs and requests. In the words of a farmers’ leader : “Before, it has happened too often that NGOs spoke in the name of farmers. We need our own organisation to speak for ourselves”. The Youth Camp was much smaller than at Porto Alegre and far from the Forum’s main venues. Its organisation relied on a dozen Malian and European activists who took many initiatives related to alternative media and some events to honour the memory of the former President of Burkina Faso, Thomas Sankara, whose independent, progressive, and anti-imperialist positions remain inspiring for many young Africans.

Although smaller than the parallel Caracas Forum, the Bamako P-WSF was of special interest for three main reasons. First, it was not controlled by a government or political force, unlike Caracas. The Forum was hence open to a broader diversity of organisations and activists, with no major common political reference except their aspiration to a better and fairer world. Indeed, the Bamako P-WSF’s participants ranged from Malian miners speaking Bambara to Marxists intellectuals, and many European NGO professionals.

Second, the Bamako Forum enabled an encounter between African and European activists. From the opening march onwards, North and South activists gathered around similar issues : African, French, and Belgian trade unions discussed labour rights; fair trade partners met; farmers from various continents gathered under the banner of the Via Campesina....

Alter-globalisation activists from the North and the South discovered similarities between neoliberal policies practiced in their respective countries, and the way they had been imposed. Many NGOs invited their local partners to take part in the P-WSF events and new cooperation projects were launched.

The Forum was also deeply marked by the complex heritage of colonialism and current European – especially French – politics in Western Africa. This was, for example, the reason for the massive presence of in Bamako of the *Centrale Chrétienne des Travailleurs de Belgique* (CSC, a Belgian catholic workers' trade union'), whose representatives said : “We have a big responsibility in what occurs in Africa, much bigger than in Latin America.... This is why we decided to send a large delegation [to] Bamako rather than [to] Caracas”. Moreover, the P-WSF was held only a few weeks after the France-Africa Heads of State Summit, and at the same venue. The weight and hold of French politics in Africa was hence in every mind. The P-WSF was also, notably, an opportunity to denounce the electoral frauds and repression practiced by the Togolese dictatorial regime, which hasn’t yet lost the support of Paris.

The third and most important challenge at this WSF event was its arrival in Africa. The continent is widely considered “the major victim of neoliberal globalisation and of unfair international trade”.⁴ Although limited, African participation in the WSF has progressively improved since 2002, thanks to the funding and efforts made by Northern NGOs that allowed some African activists to travel to Porto Alegre and Mumbai. Even as Africa took a more important place in global public spaces and media throughout 2005,⁵ this WSF was an occasion to integrate Africa in the globalisation of resistances and to prepare for the 2007 WSF in Nairobi (Kenya).

The Bamako P-WSF was also an opportunity to listen to African voices, usually little heard in the global movement. They proclaimed that Africa was not a poor and passive continent awaiting Western help. African people aspire to a massive change that would allow them to “live with dignity”. The same message was delivered all over the Forum : “We have to change ourselves to change Africa” (an activist in the Youth Camp), “We have to take our responsibility, in solidarity with peoples from the North but without always waiting for white

peoples before moving ourselves and making things change” (a speaker at the African Visions workshops). This posture entails a different way of relating to Northern activists and NGOs within a movement where dependence on the North remains strong. From international trade to democracy and music, people expressed a strong will to become actors in their own lives and in their own continent. As a Malian activist put it : “With globalisation, they wanted us to think that people couldn’t do anything on their own territory. This is not true ! We have to fight against this widespread idea !”.

II

Caracas

Although the 2006 P-WSF in Caracas was significantly bigger than the one in Bamako, still with 50,000 participants its scale was much smaller than the previous WSFs in Porto Alegre and Mumbai. As in Mali, the opening march didn’t gather more than 10,000 demonstrators and had only limited Venezuelan participation. Among the foreign delegations, the Brazilian and Cuban – in which figured the National Assembly President – were most active and visible. The general pattern of this Forum recalled the WSFs before 2005 : Big conferences with alter-globalisation celebrities and social movement leaders, and smaller ‘auto-organised’ activities set up by participating organisations that were more open to discussions and debates.

The Forum in Caracas was deeply marked by the political situation in Latin America. Strong struggles have animated the continent in the last decade and several of its governments claim to belong to the political left. The victory of Evo Morales in Bolivia was of special importance due to the intensity of the social conflict and the opening of a wide range of possibilities for the newly elected government. Most Bolivian ‘social **and** political movements’⁶ considered the presidential elections as one more attempt to resolve some of the major problems faced by the Bolivian people. The Bolivian popular struggles had become crucial references in the continent and, with the victory of Evo Morales, there was a sense of Latin American struggles moving towards the institutional political arena and the taking of political power.

The relationship between the alter-globalisation movement and this wave of so-called ‘progressive governments’ was thus the major issue of discussion throughout the WSF.⁷ In many aspects, the Caracas meeting seemed like an offensive by the state-centred left⁸ to take over the WSF process. The Forum began with some sharp declarations by President Hugo Chavez who emphasised the necessity to “politicise” the P-WSF to avoid its becoming a “carnival”. Such insidious – and insulting – words about the Forum generated strong reactions. Under pressure of the debate, Chavez had to soften his arguments some days later. He addressed the Forum participants and called on them to reflect more on the historical moment that Latin America was experiencing, with several “progressive governments” in power. The Venezuelan and the Cuban delegations enthusiastically promoted stronger relations between the WSF and such progressive governments. They sought to unite the Latin American “left impetus” and create a strong “counter-hegemony” to face “US imperialism”. This conception raised widespread criticism and polemics. Indeed, the WSF’s Charter of Principles clearly exclude political actors and governments from the process. However, unofficial relations with local parties have been strong in Porto Alegre and Mumbai, and their support is often crucial for funding and other logistical matters.

Several more horizontal spaces than this were available in Caracas however, allowing participants to talk about the variety of resistances around the world and to share their alternative experiences. This dynamic was at the centre of an autonomous Alternative Social Forum set up by libertarian activists.⁹ With limited funds and resources and only a dozen activities, this place became a point of criticism of the official Forum’s vertical and ‘authoritarian’ organisation. But its limited size allowed in-depth debate and discussions that

had been forgotten in the 'official' WSF's major events.

Furthermore, this P-WSF gave indigenous people the opportunity to demonstrate against the Venezuelan state energy policy. In some regions of the country, the state and global private corporations have developed common projects to extract coal and build new infrastructures. Such projects will deeply affect indigenous territories and may restrict indigenous peoples' liberties. The Forum was hence an occasion for many international activists to learn more about some paradoxes of the Bolivarian revolution, notably the very high social and economic cost of coal production for exportation. Interestingly, a delegate of a Venezuelan indigenous community made it clear that "the mobilisation was against the government and not against Hugo Chavez".

III

Top-down Fora : The Political Culture of the WSF on New Ground ?

The success of the 2005 WSF in Porto Alegre relied on its decentralised organisation, giving more initiative to thousands of participants and less to the International Council and elite activists. Consequently, rather than massive crowds listening to famous intellectuals, hundreds of tents were set up to host smaller and more participatory meetings. After introductory speeches, many assemblies split into smaller groups, giving everyone the chance to express their opinions. This dynamics opened the Forum to other actors and to bottom-up processes, giving the WSF a refreshing momentum.

The WSF's challenge in 2006 was how to land on new grounds. One of the easiest ways to achieve this was to rely on elite professional activists who were already highly integrated into international networks, or on the country's political power. Indeed, the Bamako and Caracas P-WSFs were both dominated by activist leaders and had more 'political' orientations than previous Forums. Considerations of a more participatory event, with active roles played by grassroots people, remained secondary.

Bamako

The organisation of the Bamako P-WSF relied on a small group of professional activists whose central figure was Aminata Traore, well connected to international activist networks and former Minister of Culture of Mali. Most of the organising team members were well entrenched in international alter-globalisation and NGO networks, and appeared much closer to their European fellows than to their country's grassroots activists. During the press conference and main events, they reproduced discourses very similar to those of international leading activists in Porto Alegre a year earlier. Meanwhile, most local activists formulated their struggles and debates in very different ways, being much more preoccupied by local issues and problems. The preparation process was thus mostly top-down, with little place for grassroots initiatives.

The Morila delegation and its dismissal by Forum organisers was an example of the pitfalls of such a top-down structure. Three hundred people came to the P-WSF from a remote Malian region called Morila to denounce the astounding damage caused by mining exploitation on the surrounding population's health and living conditions. A few months before the P-WSF, some of their fellows had been jailed after a demonstration. Although their situation was a crude illustration of extreme exploitation and environment deterioration caused by international corporations and neoliberal globalisation, their claims were not relayed by the Forum leaders, who may have feared annoying the government that helped organise the WSF. Weak popular participation in the Forum, and the fact that many people of Bamako imagined the Forum was "an event for Western people" and "an encounter of NGO leaders" (personal interviews) were further indicators of the gap that separated local people from the elite activists organising the Forum. A Malian student participating in the Youth Camp summarised the situation by drawing parallels between the WSF organisation and Malian national politics : "What is missing here is the confidence between the leaders and the population. The leaders

have ideas and come to expose them to the people, but they never listen what people would like !”.

The so-called ‘Bamako Appeal’¹⁰ was another illustration of the top-down logic that dominated the P-WSF. No assembly was organised during the Forum to discuss or approve this document. An assembly dominated by Marxists and committed international intellectuals, gathered around the charismatic Samir Amin, considered and approved the document in the days preceding the Bamako P-WSF. The organisers adopted a rather vanguard attitude, somewhat along the following lines : ‘Our aim is not to think about practical issues but to raise concrete propositions and a definition of actors that would be able to uphold this kind of proposition’. Indeed, the official aim of the Appeal of Bamako was to be “a contribution to the formation of a new historic and popular subject”.¹¹

Caracas

In Caracas, divisions between the movement’s elites made the situation even worse. The ‘progressive governments’ of Latin America consider the WSF an essential space in which to develop counter-hegemonic strategies, but many other participants oppose this ‘politicisation’ of the WSF. The debate between these two tendencies was omnipresent during the Caracas P-WSF, especially among Latin-American activists.

From its very opening, there was no doubt about the strong pro-Chavez colour of this Forum. During the opening march and discourses of the Caracas P-WSF, speakers took every opportunity to reiterate their solidarity with the ongoing “Venezuelan Bolivarian revolutionary process”. J Torres, representative of the Venezuelan Organisation Committee, insisted on the necessary independence of the sixth WSF from all political banners, and especially from Chavez’ government. However, he admitted some errors made and limitations faced by local organisers, stating that “the Venezuelan people do not have the culture of the Forum as developed as the one of the Brazilian people”. But in another speech, the same person declared that social movements should consolidate their successes in the struggle against neoliberalism, war, and militarisation by “linking themselves to real, ongoing processes”, clearly referring to progressive governments.

This political position generated great tensions between the WSF’s leading activists. In the name of the first Social Forum of the Americas held in Quito, in 2004, Irene León insisted on the virtues of the WSF as a place for diversity and the search for alternatives. She addressed some crucial but delicate questions, which the WSF International Committee has not yet gone over : “What is the Forum ? What does it want to be ? An annual fair of meetings and alternatives in debates ? A place to endorse common struggles ? How should the WSF autonomy and self-management be understood ?”. She did not try to answer these questions herself, and instead insisted on the importance of a collective process to look for answers.

Likewise, Cândido Grzybowski, a Brazilian founding member of the International Council and a long-time WSF spokesperson, insisted on the need for the Forum to face current debates and to choose a clear orientation. His personal opinion was that the Forum’s participants move progressively towards a citizen culture able to transform power and economy. New methods should be developed to allow participants to work together, preserving diversity yet also avoiding fragmentation. Indirectly, Grzybowski took a position against the subordination of the WSF to external agents, including progressive governments. He wished the Charter of Principles to remain the major reference, and that the Forum continue to work as an open space. In this perspective, he listed a few recommendations :

Everyone should voice their opinions and ideas about the future of the Forum.

Differences and divergences between discussants should be encouraged.

How the Forum should react to upcoming progressive governments should be openly discussed and debated.

The WSF should definitively have political influence. However, this should not take the form of adopting a single common position, but comprise a variety of initiatives taken by organisations, which others can choose to follow or not.

The existence of a closed International Council that does not represent the Forum's diversity has always been problematic. However, since 2001, the WSF has never been subjected to such heavy pressure as that by social forces that consider the arrival of Lula, Chávez, Kirchner, Vázquez, and Morales as a historic opportunity. Their attempts to appropriate the Caracas P-WSF raised several tensions that may even lead to a major split of the Forum.

IV

Widening Gaps and Open Spaces

The widening gap between a growing worldwide movement and some leaders that keep control over its key political and organisational decisions represents an inherent inconsistency in the WSF. Elite activists played a major role in the P-WSFs in Bamako and Caracas. Whether through the Appeal of Bamako or the celebration of Chavez' 'revolution', politically oriented, committed intellectuals – especially Marxists and anti-imperialists – have been more influential than ever before in the alter-globalisation movement. While the movement contests dominant and elite-driven globalisation, it is itself partly ruled by 'cosmopolitan elites'¹² with a top-down conception of social movements and activism.¹³ Like other international social movement elites, cosmopolitan alter-globalisation activists sometimes "represent themselves as speaking for 'the people' without creating either deep grassroots or means for ordinary people to speak through them".¹⁴

With the strong involvement of President Chavez in the Caracas WSF meeting, it was not surprising that the hold of political actors on alter-globalisation was tight in Caracas. Likewise, the fact that the WSF relied on local activist elites in Bamako was expected, since this was its first experiment in Africa. Certainly, the Bamako and Caracas meetings gave less space to grassroots creativity and citizens' initiatives than the 2005 WSF. Nevertheless, these events have been opportunities to develop several autonomous initiatives. Therefore, in both Bamako and Caracas, African and Asian delegates insisted on the necessity to organise meetings in other regions of the globe, to allow more people to access the Forum's debates, and its spirit.

Besides allowing for long discourses by political leaders, and on texts, trying to fix the claims and alternatives of a movement which is in perpetual evolution, the 2006 P-WSFs also – and foremost – struggled to be open spaces dedicated to "free and relatively undirected exchanges between people of many different persuasions, backgrounds, contexts".¹⁵ Thousands of activists shared their claims, hopes, and alternative experiences. The Bamako meeting in particular was an opportunity for countless exchanges between Northern and Southern activists, and for strengthening international relations with local partners. After the Forum, many European activists travelled to Malian towns and through its countryside to share grassroots activists' experiences and ideas. For thousands of alter-globalisation activists, the Forums of 2006 were exceptional opportunities to discover new regions. Moreover, the P-WSFs brought dynamism and greater unity to local civil societies and allowed the international movement to learn from local activists, receiving fresh insights and a new impetus.

During the Bamako P-WSF, activists of the whole Southern African region showed a real enthusiasm to host the 2007 WSF in Nairobi. Indeed, throughout the year, several preparatory and discussion meetings were held with grassroots activists. In July 2006, an exciting meeting gathered local activists and national and international committed scholars at Durban's Centre for Civil Society.¹⁶ Its debates and dialogues contributed to better mutual understanding, and towards narrowing the gap between international committed intellectuals and grassroots activists. However, the 2007 WSF in Nairobi (Kenya) ended up largely facing the same problems as the 2006 meeting in Bamako.¹⁷ The distance between grassroots citizens and the WSF

organisers remained, and most local popular movements kept their distance from the Forum.

Notes

- 1 For reports on the Karachi Forum, see the essays by Ingmar Lee and Pierre Rousset in this volume (Lee 2012, Rousset 2012) – *Eds*.
- 2 Comments heard in conversations in Bamako, a few days before the WSF opening.
- 3 On the other hand, the issue of the war was almost totally absent in Bamako.
- 4 Aminata Traore, former Minister of Culture of Mali, in Bamako, 2006.
- 5 Anheier, Glasius, and Kaldor 2006.
- 6 Linera 2004.
- 7 *Alternatives Sud* 2005.
- 8 Holloway 2002.
- 9 Foro Social Alternativo Caracas, 2006 ('Alternative Social Foro Caracas, 2006'). More information available on <http://fsa.ve.tripod.com>.
- 10 Sen and Kumar, January 2007 .
- 11 Forum for Another Mali, World Forum for Alternatives, Third World Forum, ENDA (Senegal), and *ors*, January 2006.
- 12 Friedman 1999, pp 391-411. Friedman characterises *cosmopolitans* as elites who encompass the world's cultures. The burgeoning of alter-globalisation meetings and the integration is leading to the formation of a global affinity group of elite and cosmopolitan activists. These people soon form stronger relationships with one another than with their homeland fellow activists and receive large responsibility in and credit for the global movement. Many cosmopolitan elite activists lose much of their connections to the lives and considerations of local people.
- 13 Pleyers 2008, pp 72-90.
- 14 Tilly 2004, p 152 .
- 15 Sen 2005, pp 26-41.
- 16 Centre for Civil Society, Durban, January 2007 – 'Politics of the WSF : A debate in Durban'; Centre for Civil Society Workshop on the World Social Forum, 23 July 2006 – Discussion following the panel 'The Politics of the WSF'; and Sen and Kumar 2007, Chapter 8.4.
- 17 *Eds* : For depth discussion of the Nairobi Forum, see the essays in this volume by Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle and Nicolas Haeringer (Pommerolle and Haeringer, 2012); Wangui Mbatia and Hassan Indusa (Mbatia and Indusa, 2012); and Virginia Vargas (Vargas, 2012); and also Dowling, 2009.

Reflections On The Polycentric World Social Forum, Karachi

Ingmar Lee

It was originally planned that the Polycentric World Social Forum (P-WSF) would be held simultaneously in Karachi (Pakistan), Caracas (Venezuela), and Bamako (Mali) in January 2006, but while the other two took place, Karachi had to be postponed to March following the disastrous October earthquake in northern Pakistan. I've just returned home from this momentous gathering and my experience at the Karachi P-WSF Karachi is now melding together into a big blur, from which I can extract some overall impressions. The big blurry picture is, of course, interspersed with myriad clearer details, many of which warm the heart and inspire. Energetic, exuberant, flamboyant, and celebratory are the adjectives which come to mind to describe the event. With its theme slogan of "Another World is Possible", it was a very joyous meeting. There was an overall impression of gender balance, and although there's no doubt that the event attracted the most progressive women in Pakistani society, rural and tribal women were also widely represented. Women spoke out freely and worked together with men. Men participated in women's forums, women and men marched together, and there was gender balance in the facilitation of meetings.¹

I

Getting There

I tried very hard to get to Pakistan by train, but there was no information available from Indian Railways about the Thar Express. This new 'Peace Train' between Jodhpur in India and Karachi in Pakistan started running again in February 2006 – rail service between the two cities had been shut down after the Partition of India in 1947 – but, for some reason, India is keeping it secret. An alternative was to take the train up to Amritsar, then cross the border at Wagah, and then a short bus trip to Lahore and a 16-hour bus ride from there to Karachi. Finally, and instead of all this, after two days of wrangling for visas and plane tickets in Delhi, I flew into the beautifully austere Jinnah Airport at Karachi. Upon exiting the airport, the first view of Pakistan is a flashy McDonald's joint, which the new airport surrounds like a crescent moon.

I arrived just in time for the start of the plenary of the Karachi WSF; luckily for me, it started several hours behind schedule. There was a raucous, red-flag-waving demonstration crashing the front gates to get in though the banner-festooned sports stadium was already packed with a boisterous crowd of about 10,000. I found myself a spot on the carpeted floor in front of the stage just in time for the introduction of the evening's keynote speakers, who included the well-known political commentator Tariq Ali and the Palestinian activist Jamal Jumah, as well as others from Brazil, Cuba, South Africa, and India. As the speakers were introduced, hundreds of terrified doves were shaken out of large sacks behind the stage; many of them careered straight into the crowd.

Before the speeches began, the first of three powerful Qawwali bands came on stage. Qawwali is a sacred music made famous around the world most recently by the late Pakistani singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, who is beloved and revered in Pakistan. Qawwali is also greatly respected and appreciated by Hindus, and is amongst the best aspects of the irrevocably intertwined Muslim-Hindu culture that binds the subcontinent's history. Given the large and mostly Hindu contingent from India, this was a great choice of entertainment and the bands really got things going. Men and women in the crowd got up and danced. Some people even climbed right on to the stage, dancing joyously, clearly intoxicated by the music.

The speeches that followed were all intensely fiery, delivered with a podium-pounding

anger rarely witnessed in the West and, although the translations were excellent, certain details of the speeches were clear enough to an English-speaker like myself whether they were in Urdu, Portuguese, Hindi, or Spanish : George W Bush is the biggest terrorist scumbag ever to defile the planet. The crowd was energised and engaged, shouting out comments, and there were waves of call / response chants rolling around the stadium. No speaker droned on too tediously, and the speeches were interspersed with performances by the Qawwali bands and a frenzied troupe of kerosene-guzzling fire-blowers. The evening ended at midnight with a finale of fireworks launched dangerously from right on the roof, over the stage.

I had arrived straight from the airport and hadn't made any hotel arrangements, so it was pretty wild trying to grab a rickshaw as the crowd streamed out of the event. Eventually I got one to take me down to the train station where I figured I'd have the best chance of finding a hotel within my \$5-a-night budget. Sure enough, I found a room at the Al-Faisal hotel, complete with squatter-toilet and hot running water and, as expected, perfectly comfortable. Karachi gets very few foreign tourists, thanks no doubt to the dreadful Travellers' Alerts posted by western embassies warning of bombings, drive-by shootings, kidnappings, and beheadings (like it's safer for an experienced traveller to be walking around any city in the US). So, although people were a bit surprised to have me walk into their *kebab*, *nan*, and *chai* joints, as soon as I sat down all the men went back to their dinners. It's all men at midnight, and restaurants are busy all night.

II

Seeking the 'Big Picture' at the Karachi WSF

There are no high lands around Karachi, nor are there any tall buildings from where one can get a true sense of the enormity of the city. There was some indication of its size, however, in the approximately 20,000 people a day that visited the Forum, primarily centred at the KMC Sports Complex, located somewhere in that flat megalopolis of 15,000,000 people. Each day, there were more than 120 activities to choose from, held in 50 giant *shamiyanas* (open-air tents), including cultural expositions, rallies, seminars, music, testimonies, workshops, theatre, conferences / panels, film screenings, exhibitions, dialogue tables, assemblies, and celebrations. There was also an excellent food and crafts fair, which continued for the duration of the Forum, featuring items from all over Pakistan. There were perhaps less than 100 white-skins there (I met one US American), and accordingly most of the discussion was conducted in Urdu, which was, quite generously, often translated into English. Nevertheless, I enjoyed listening to the Urdu, Sindhi, Seraiki, Punjabi, Hindi, Balochi, and Pashto speeches simply for the beauty of the language and the animated passion of the speakers. I enjoy the spectacle of public speaking – good speakers communicate far beyond their words, and given that we're all oppressed by the same things, and the many familiar thematic keywords, I could get a fair gist of what was being said. However, translators would have been good and, for me, the Forum came together much better during the intermissions.

The language of anti- and alter-globalisation dissent has widely permeated into the farthest regions of the world, and farmers, tribals, fisher-folk, and others at the lower echelons of the class cline have been well-familiarised with concepts like globalisation, gender-equity, environmental degradation, militarism, George Bush and the USA global hegemony project, Peak Oil, GMOs, and the evils of the WTO and the IMF. The Pakistani street is, I would say, much more aware of global geo-politics than its CANWEST-Global-benumbed counterpart in Canada. There were many accomplished public speakers, but there were also just as many who faced the mike for the first time. It was wonderful to see tribal women get up on stage and, with hearts-in-mouth, make their case. Inevitably, after their initial stage fright, they were able to relax and speak their piece.

The idea for the World Social Forum (WSF) was born out of the enormous, unprecedented grassroots demonstrations at the Seattle WTO meetings in November 1999. It was founded in 2001 by community organisers, youth groups, and academics as an alternative to the establishment World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland. The Seattle demos were enormously motivating and successful, but they were spontaneously organised (if organised at all), leaderless, free-structured, free-flowing, individualistic, non-committal, and non-dependent on funding, all of which are, of course, anathema to the NGO or any other structured human organisation. There is some kind of catalytic critical mass convergence that arises from time to time, bringing people together to demand change. We need to learn to recognise, predict, and make those catalysts happen. Nobody has ever defined what exactly worked at Seattle, but I believe it set a prescient example of how a clear majority of humanity can become focussed and channel its energies and imagination into action that can change the status quo. It reiterated that humanity can spontaneously mobilise to powerful, non-violent action, beyond any of the extant, status-quo social organisational structures. Yet, action is simply not enough without a new vision for the world.

Objections have been voiced that many of those seeking a change in the world do not know what they are looking for. Naomi Klein, the author of No Logo, attended the first Forum and wrote, "After a year and a half of protests against the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund, the World Social Forum was billed as an opportunity for this emerging movement to stop screaming about what it is against and start articulating what it is for".² President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, where one of the three P-WSFs was held in January 2006, also expressed the same fear when he appealed during his speech to the Forum for "serious political discussions" and the need for direction. I didn't hear a whole lot of visionary discussion at the Karachi Forum. There were countless NGOs presenting their efforts and railing against the powers that be but, other than a sense of solidarity, no discussion arose by which the global activist community might grow their movement. I didn't see any 'Big Picture' emerging.

My own work at the Forum was as a delegate conducting a workshop on the seemingly insurmountable obstacles encountered in the effort to protect the Earth's last forests. Although environmental issues had a low profile at this Forum, understandable given Pakistan's location near the epicentre of the impending geopolitical catastrophe being wreaked by the US' current and threatened invasions, still there was a good deal of interest, including two demonstrations over plans to dam the Indus led by a large and loud group of angry women from Sindh. Many of the obstacles I mentioned involved what has been identified by some as a problem within the procedures and direction of the WSF itself : It's turning into an NGO-dominated event, overshadowing its grassroots roots. Just as the environmental movement is being disempowered by collaborationist NGOs negotiating compromises with government and industry, the WSF is apparently swinging towards entrenchments that transform flexible, energised, grassroots action-oriented efforts into professional, celebrity NGO pyramidal power structures.

The criticisms of the 'NGO-isation' of the WSF, levelled by Arundhati Roy (who declined to attend) and repeated by Tariq Ali (who stayed only for his own speeches and then flew back to England) are valid. In an interview with Amy Goodman on Democracy Now!, Roy explained her non-attendance :

Well, actually, I'm not headed there, because – I know that my name was announced, but that was done without anybody asking me. And, you know, I'm really thinking about all these things too much to be able to go and speak at the World Social Forum now, because I'm very worried about, you know, all of us who are involved in these things, spend too much of our energy sort of feeling good about the World Social Forum, which has now become very NGO-ised and, you know, a lot of – it's just become too comfortable a stage. And I think it's played a very important role up to now, but now I think we've got to move on from there, and I've already said this at a previous World Social

Forum job, and I really don't want to, you know, carry on doing something when the time is over for it, you know ? I think we have to come up with new strategies.³

These criticisms were circulating at the conference, and hopefully they have been heard by whatever there is of a WSF management hierarchy. One hopes also that there will be some flexibility and a maturation of the event to include these concerns as a central aspect at future Forums. But, on the whole, for Pakistan, even as an NGO-fest, the WSF justified itself simply by getting so many activists together, many meeting each other for the first time, to see each other's projects, to recognise the importance of dissent, and to feel solidarity with their neighbours – more than 5,000 Indians are said to have been present. Although there was a professional and international presence, by far the greatest majority of participants were Pakistani and South Asian volunteers, and grassroots activists. This Forum was valuable for everyone who showed up. Demonstrations and mass rallies are very empowering and inspiring. These qualities are in short supply in a world overwhelmed by apathy, inertia, and despondence.

Nevertheless, considering its heavy leftist component, the WSF could easily become another redundant status-quo power-pyramid – yet another self-feeding, bureaucratised, celebrity-professionalised, fundraising compromise / collaborationist gab-fest. I must say that nothing appeared more ridiculous than the tired old all-expenses-paid union flacks pontificating in the crowd of Kashmiri, Sindhi, Baloch, and Palestinian activists, advocating labour solidarity as a panacea for all ills. One hopes that the WSF can rise beyond such predictable, insidious entrenchment. As a person involved in the battle to protect ancient forests, I see no difference between those right-wing corporate lackeys who destroy forests and those left-wing labour lackeys who demand the job of cutting them down. Not to mention that in my own city of Victoria BC to have a union job is to live a bourgeois life of entitlement – to belong to an exclusive elite far removed from the incessantly growing ranks of the desperately poor. While some might say that it's unfair to compare abject Canadian poverty with that of Pakistan, I would contest that.

People with union jobs in Canada get very comfortable salaries and detailed job descriptions. Once entrenched in that job, knowing exactly what their job boundaries are, they will not lift a finger beyond these limits. They grow old at their jobs – very few young people enter their workforce, which completely kills any efficiency or initiative. For example, the University of Victoria is being overrun by an invasive species, but when student volunteers take the initiative to remove these species and improve the organic health of the campus, the union steps in and demands that its employees have the right to that work. Of course, this work is a very low priority for the university, at their price, so the species spreads. There are 1,500 homeless people living on the streets of Victoria, yet this is by far the wealthiest city in Canada. Union jobs are for a special, closed-circle elite.

In fact, I argued against precisely this idea of a 'perfect' Canadian democracy at a workshop at the Karachi Forum on The State of Federal Democracy in Pakistan : The Reality and the Rhetoric. One of the three speakers was a Canadian professor, Bruce Toombs. He described the Canadian 'Federal Democratic System' in great detail, going over the evolution of the Canadian parliamentary process, which he described as a "work in progress", never initially envisioned in its present form. He referred to the *Front de Libération du Québec* (Québec Liberation Front) as "terrorists", now reintegrated into Canadian society; and described the French / English issue as Canada's main source of tension. It appeared that Dr Toombs was trying to hold up Canadian democracy as an example for Pakistan to emulate. I was shocked that he made his entire presentation without once mentioning that what is called Canada was peopled for thousands of years prior to the white arrival or that the colonialist adventure that produced Canadian 'democracy' has been as genocidal for First Nations as the Zionist

occupation has been for Palestine, the focus of so much angst at the Forum. So my first real work at the WSF was to stand up and remind Mr Toombs of the context in which he was speaking – that nearly everything that motivates people to action at WSFs is directly related to the awful legacy of colonialism. I also provided a recent example of Canadian ‘democracy’ at work from the province of British Columbia, where, in 2001, the neocon Gordon Campbell government won 77 of the 79 seats in government with less than 50% of the vote.

III

The WSF, Pakistan, and the Thinking Majority

Pakistan is directly affected by the US global hegemony project, an issue that no amount of democracy can resolve. The direct link between the US trans-Afghan pipeline scheme and its intended route, to be ploughed across Balochistan to deliver central Asian oil to the Arabian Sea, and the Pakistani junta’s military atrocities in the area is well recognised. Balochis have always been fiercely independent and their country comprises 43% of what’s called Pakistan. It is also the shortest route to the oil-ports and this, of course, is the only reason that US Americans and their Canadian lackeys have ever had the slightest interest in Afghanistan. The US neocons badly want a north-south pipeline across Balochistan, but they will not tolerate the proposed east-west Peace Pipeline that would deliver Iranian natural gas to India and would require peaceful, stable good relations amongst all involved. And it seems that the US, Pakistani, and even Indian governments have not recognised that no matter how much violence is exerted, if the Balochis don’t agree to a pipeline, it won’t happen. Having recently insulted the country by his stingy, fortified ‘visit’, immediately following a gushing sojourn to India, US President George Bush should recognise that the Goodwill to Muslims political capital he invested in the Pakistani earthquake has been amply upstaged by the 1,200 Cuban doctors – 600 women and 600 men – who continue to toil in the disaster zone.

The overwhelming feeling of solidarity pervading the Karachi P-WSF was especially important given the extremely precarious and divisive political situation in which it was held. For Pakistanis to meet so many fellow activists was more important than discussions of the Big Picture. Although some people might believe the pipe dream that what ails Pakistan – multiple independence struggles, environmental and natural catastrophes, widespread poverty and illiteracy, and the leadership of an unelected, uniformed USA-puppet General commanding a military junta – can be solved through an existing democratic process, they are wasting irreplaceable time. It’s abundantly clear that no politics can deal with, or even recognise, what will happen to Pakistan’s economy (or that of any other country in the world), once the price of fuel doubles, triples, or quadruples, as it may well do this very year. There exists no political system that can deal with this, nor has existing system even begun to consider it.

Not a single status-quo extant political system, nor any of its players currently arrayed along a left / right cline, is offering anything to check our path-dependent, headlong rush to global catastrophe. No Robert’s Rules meeting can produce the required course of action. A clear majority of humanity understands clearly what is wrong with this world, yet is completely stymied by the zero political options available to turn around this hell-bent march to destruction. Members of this human majority can spot each other in crowds of thousands, regardless of nationality, class, colour, or creed. There is a desperate need for a new political paradigm, and that’s what needs to be discussed at these kinds of Forums. The WSF – and I don’t know of any bigger gathering of people who are trying to believe that “Another World is Possible” – should be the place where this discussion happens; and hopefully, sooner, rather than later, they’ll start focusing on methods that get results.

Notes

1 For a discussion of the Polycentric Forums that took place in Bamako and Caracas, see the chapter by Geoffrey Pleyers and Raúl Ornelas in this volume, ‘Alter-globalisation hits new ground : Bamako and Caracas 2006’ (Pleyers and Ornelas 2012).

2 Klein, March 2001.

3 Roy with Goodman, March 2006.

The Karachi Social Forum And Its International Significance ^{1, 2}

Pierre Rousset

After Bamako (Mali) and Caracas (Venezuela) in January 2006, Karachi constituted the third wing of the World Social Forum (WSF) in its 'polycentric' version of 2006. Meeting from March 24-29 in the main industrial centre and port of Pakistan, it proved to be a success both in terms of numbers and politics. The attendance – more than 30,000 – was twice what was predicted, and the Forum represented an event with many new aspects for this country.

There were certainly a good number of organisational problems, from the spectacular absence of any dustbins on the meeting site (a sports complex) to the cancellation of seminars or unforeseen changes in the programme – which the Pakistani press has dwelt on. But the organisers had not had an easy task.

The destructive earthquake of October 2005, in the north of the country in Kashmir, delayed the Forum, initially planned for the end of January. For several months, financial resources and activist energies were devoted to aiding a population which had been very hard hit and was threatened by the rigours of the Himalayan winter. Moreover, the social and citizen-based dynamic that contributed to the success of previous Forums was not self-evidently present in Pakistan.

I

Pakistan : Land of Expansion of the WSF Process

In its original homeland (a part of Latin America, and southern Europe) the launch of the WSF in the early 2000s benefited not only from a new historical context (the emergence of resistance to capitalist globalisation) but also from the renewal of unifying tendencies during the 1990s, already involving a notable diversity of social actors. The WSF process has enlarged and strengthened these tendencies, but it has also profited from the dynamic of convergence that was already underway.

In other countries, in the lands towards which the WSF has been expanding since its launch, it is rather the existence of a world process that serves as reference. It is this that allows the initiation of the dynamic of convergence that is so specific to the Social Forums, and which constitutes their 'trademark'. It is always difficult to seek to understand the characteristics of a country that one knows very little of but, at the risk of caricaturing a necessarily complex reality, it seems to me that such has been the case in Pakistan : The impetus, here, came from the international dynamics of the WSF.

The experience of the Karachi WSF is all the more interesting to analyse because it took place in a very diversified country (as much in its social structure as in its regional and national identities); under a military regime; placed on the Afghan front line of Washington's 'war on terror'; subject to the growing pressure of religious fundamentalist currents, called here 'sectarian movements' and capable of murderous violence; ³ in a region dominated since the Partition of 1947 by Indo-Pakistani antagonism, which has now become a nuclear stand off. ⁴ And significantly, it was also the first time that a Forum of this scale was meeting in one of the biggest Muslim countries in the world.

Neither the holding nor the success of the Karachi WSF was, therefore, in any way banal. The success has to be analysed in terms of its specificities. Doing so is of course primarily the job of the Pakistanis (and/or of those who know Pakistan well); but the perceptions, without any pretensions, of an old habitué of Forums may nonetheless be useful, at least to raise certain specificities which are most apparent to a 'foreign' onlooker.⁵

I would like first to briefly summarise what, in my eyes, gave the event its significance.

II

Vocabulary of a Success

The first element of success, and a major one : The Karachi WSF opened a democratic and secular space between the pressure of the military regime and that of fundamentalist, conservative currents. The site of the Forum was alive; it was a permanent theatre of demand-based demonstrations.

Musical groups and poets gave emotional power to the political speeches. In the seminars, some of the women wearing shawls or veils (in Pakistan, there are many who wear no headgear) removed them. Women were numerous, and mixed company was the rule in the spaces and platforms of the Forum. The atmosphere was joyous, the speech and behaviour liberating.

Second element of success : Diverse popular movements effectively appropriated the democratic and secular space opened by the Forum – fisherfolk from the Karachi region; peasants from the province of Punjab; trades unionists struggling against privatisation; nationalists from Sind (where Karachi is located), Baluchistan (in the west) and Kashmir (in the north); and myriad women's organisations. As at the WSF in Mumbai, in neighbouring India, in January 2004, the participation of **movements as collectives** was quite visible in the Forum, impelling the space much more than is often the case in Europe or Latin America (where participation is more individual). The WSF in Karachi thoroughly merited the name of Social Forum. It expressed the radicalism of democratic and social demands.

Third element of success : The demand for solidarity was forcefully affirmed on the most burning questions. Since the Partition of 1947, Pakistan and India have lived in a situation of open war or armed truce. Despite administrative difficulties, an Indian delegation was able to get to Karachi, just as a Pakistani delegation had attended the WSF in Mumbai. The situation in Kashmir was the theme of seminars and an important plenary, where combatant movements from both sides of the 'Line of Control' met for the first time in public. ⁶ Even if dialogue has not really been firmly arranged between them (that's an understatement), the event was striking.

Fourth element of success : The presence of youth and the return of politics. Hundreds of young people, particularly from Karachi, participated in the Forum as volunteers. For many among them, it was their first political experience (even though sometimes perhaps a little disorienting, it seems, because of the number of changes in the programme). More generally, the Forum allowed a reaffirmation of the authenticity of the political terrain in the face of a military regime that sterilises it in the name of the imperatives of national security, and fundamentalist movements that sterilise it in the name of religious imperatives. The Forum reopened the debate on the place of politics, and this was not the least of its results.

Muslim identity is not necessarily and above all religious. It can be nationalist and cultural as seems, for example, to have traditionally been the case in the (regional) national movement of Sind. But the Pakistani state was constituted on a confessional reference base. A policy of official Islamisation was subsequently pursued, particularly under the military dictatorship of General Zia, which made Islam more than ever before a state religion, with far-reaching implications on the conception of law, for example. But, because Islam itself is very diverse in Pakistan, this assertion of a single state religion only exacerbated sectarian conflicts between Muslims. The experience of the Karachi WSF allowed us to perceive, in such a context, the centrality of the secular demand – which is a necessary condition for the realisation of social unity between the exploited and the oppressed, normally divided by religious references.

Fifth element of success : The Forum constituted a new stage of a regional process in South Asia, begun in India during the Forums of Hyderabad (2003) and Mumbai (2004). ⁷ It also

initiated a unifying dynamic in Pakistan itself, which should continue; after the experience of the Karachi Forum, discussion was immediately opened on the regular organisation of a Pakistani Social Forum.

III

Some Problems

The tensions, contradictions, and setbacks in the Karachi Forum should also be analysed. I will limit myself with raising five here – first mentioning organisational problems (like deficient information on programming) that probably made life difficult for individual, ‘unorganised’ participants :

The *Muttahida Quami Movement* (‘United National Movement’, MQM) : The relationship of the WSF with governmental institutions in the towns or countries where Forums are held has nearly always caused problems. In Karachi, tensions crystallised especially in relation to the attitude to be taken by the Forum to the MQM, the ‘Mohajir’ movement,⁸ which dominates the municipality and which many formations of the Pakistani left judge ‘ethnacist’. Eventually, the MQM was not integrated in the Forum’s programme.

Integration : Certain movements that should logically have participated in the Forum did not do so. This was notably the case with the feminist organisations of Lahore. The process of integration into the dynamic of the Forums of all concerned components was therefore not complete. This problem probably goes back as much to questions of functioning (opening of structures) and orientation, as of ‘visibility’.

Visibility : There was a striking contrast between the composition of the platform during the Forum’s opening ceremony (where there were no social movements present) and the place occupied by movements in the space of the Forum itself, and in a number of seminars. This absence, and contrast, was even more accentuated in the minimal ‘international visibility’ of the Pakistani Forum (at least before it was held). But this problem of representation and visibility in the Forum - of the gap between the composition of central platforms and the movements that ensure the social character of the Forums - is obviously not particular to Pakistan.

On the left : This polemic on the nature of Social Forums divided the Pakistani left. Some political movements supported the process from the beginning, particularly the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP), whose activists were perfectly at home in the Forum. The Awami Tehreek (from Sind) was also very active. A little before the Forum, a front was set up between six leftist organisations,⁹ which probably facilitated broader participation of left forces in the Karachi Forum.

International representation : Internationally, fifty-eight countries were ‘represented’ at the Forum in Karachi; but, besides South Asian ones, national delegations were generally small. These were generally made up of people already concerned with Pakistan or the region (with exceptions, particularly the Latin Americans). The French delegation was probably the most numerous from outside Asia. From the *Centre de recherche et d’informations pour le développement* (‘Research and Information Centre for Development’, CRID) to ESSF, via the *Frères des Hommes* (‘Brothers of All Men’), the French were, over all, already present in Asia. In addition, the presence at the Karachi Forum of important union centres like the *Confédération générale du travail* (‘General Confederation of Labour’, CGT) and the *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (‘Italian General Confederation of Labour’ CGIL) should also be mentioned.

From this perspective, the Karachi Forum was an essentially Pakistani affair, with a significant regional dynamic but limited global participation. It was supposed to be a wing of the WSF, but it was not 'taken up' by the components and international bodies of the WSF in the same way as the Forums of Bamako and Caracas. Very significantly, on the very eve of the Forum in Karachi, the International Council (IC) of the WSF met – but in Nairobi, not Karachi.¹⁰ While it was certainly a good idea to carry forward, and without delay, the African dynamic created by the Bamako Forum to prepare for the 2007 WSF in Kenya, it would have been preferable to hold the March 2006 IC meeting in Karachi, and the next, planned for October, in Nairobi. In Pakistan, the consequences of the lack of international support were strongly felt, including on the financial plane, and the Pakistanis clearly posed such organisational problems at a meeting during the Karachi Forum at which some members of the IC were present.

Given the difficulties and the stakes (national and regional) of the Pakistani Forum and the complex geopolitical context in which it was taking place, the WSF in Karachi particularly merited strong and unqualified international support. It was also a unique occasion to learn from a pioneering experience. But Asia remains the poor relation of solidarity in Europe and Latin America. Despite the role played in the WSF process by Indians since Mumbai, in the case of Karachi the international bodies of the WSF reproduced, instead of correcting, this very unequal perception of the world.

IV

Provisional Conclusions

The above amounts to a partial, indeed fragmentary, balance sheet. All critical commentaries are welcome. But, by way of a provisional conclusion, I will stress the following four points :

The functionality of the Forums

With the emigration of the WSF beyond its Latino-European countries of origin – after Mumbai (2004), and Bamako and Karachi (2006) – the utility of this type of Forum has now been tested positively in very varied contexts. Nothing is universal or eternal, but the adaptability of this form of action (and of the process that supports it) has proved remarkable. It has been tested on the international level in countries where social movements are strong or weak, in favourable and unfavourable political situations, and in highly defensive or counter-offensive conjunctures.

Of course, each Forum has its own characteristics and functions. But the 'Forum / process', 'meeting space / place of impulsion of actions' clearly responds to needs linked to the period and not only to a specific political geography. We already knew this, and Karachi was only a confirmation. The Forums allow the rallying of resistance (in all its diversity) during a time of globalisation when the crisis of socialist reference has not been overcome and when past modes of centralisation (around workers' movements or armed struggles) do not work as before.

The significance of the Pakistani experience

The Karachi Forum illustrates this first point of conclusion. The political situation in the country is not good. There are key struggles, sometimes victorious, but the trade union and social movement remains fragmented and globally weak. The country is extremely divided. Social structures are often very different according to province, or even inside the same province like the Punjab. The whole history of the Pakistani state since its formation in 1947 is traversed by conflicts between the elites from 'ethnic' groups and provinces for the control of the administration and the army (both dominated by Punjabis, but also Mohajirs). Regional or national conflicts are numerous (Baluchis, Pashtoons, Kashmiris, Sindhis, and so on) and can lead to internal wars. According to the Population Census of the Pakistani Government, 96 per cent of Pakistan's population is Muslim, with all the ambiguity linked to the use of categories of

religious (or cultural ?) appearance against a complex social reality (according to the Census, 100 per cent of the population is identified with some religion but, without doubt, there are also significant numbers of atheists in Pakistan). But we have seen the multiplicity (Sunni, Shiite, Ahmadiyya, Sufis, and so on), and the violence that this 'unanimous' percentage hides.

But despite all this, the Forum in Karachi was a dynamic place of popular convergence. It is this that gives us something to reflect on, and ensures that this experience has national and international significance.

Internal contradictions

A recurrent polemic on the role of NGOs in the process of the WSF re-emerged in Karachi. The 'left' critique of the Forums is often formulated in too abstract, too 'external' a fashion. The success of the Forums has nothing obvious about it; it expresses something new. To be pertinent, the critique should then begin by understanding this and recognising this; it should be formulated in, let us say, a more 'internal' fashion.

Does the evolution of the world of NGOs pose a problem ? Definitely. Some, in the name of global civil society, weaken local or national activist fabrics. In the name of a citizen-based discourse, they stifle social radicalism. In the name of democracy, they monopolise visibility to the detriment of otherwise more representative organisations. But the world of NGOs is not homogeneous; and it is not alone in creating problems. The same is true of trade union bureaucracies, intolerant 'rank and file' movements, authoritarian political leaderships, and of naïfs and cynics, and of (oh how many !) egotistical personalities and manipulative individuals. In short, it is not enough to denounce NGOs alone (many of whom have their place in the Forums) if what we are aiming at is to ensure the popular dynamic of the process.

The poor in society are normally invisible. On the contrary, the Forums should ensure the visibility of the most exploited and oppressed. Since the very beginning in Porto Alegre this has not been self-evident. The gap can be large, inside the Forum, between the 'street' and the platforms. Since 2001, some progress has been made, but the process is not one-way – there have also been regressions.¹¹

Just as the experience of the Forums merits the WSF being defended against a 'left' critique, which is too 'external', it is necessary also to take seriously the contradictions at work among the participants of the Forums. We should neither hope nor wish for a process without contradictions; but for a new Forum to merit the name 'Social', its most audible voice should be that of the most exploited and oppressed; their movements should be at the heart of the process.

Globalisation of resistance

The process of the internationalisation of the WSF began in 2002, with the European Social Forum in Florence. It experienced a qualitative leap in Hyderabad and Mumbai in 2003 and 2004; and Bamako and Karachi in 2006 marked major further steps. (The Caracas Polycentric Forum, also in 2006, occupies a specific place in the deepening of political themes.) This will again be true in 2007, in Nairobi.¹²

All regions of the world are not yet integrated in the same way in the process (there is, for instance, significant weakness of the WSF process in Northern and Eastern Europe), nor represented in the same way in international bodies (in particular, the under-representation of Asia and Africa). But it is very rare to see a movement spread so rapidly in the world (in more than 40 years of militant activity, this is only the second time that I have seen it – the first being the decade between 1965-1975, with 1968 as its peak). This is a remark that also pertains, more generally, to the larger global justice and anti-war movement.

The Forum in Karachi was made possible by the expansion and articulation of this process at a world level; it gave its dynamism to a country and a zone of strategic conflicts. In return, Karachi added new dimensions to the process precisely by being a zone of strategic

conflict. A sole regret : That too few organisations from Europe and Latin America took this opportunity to acquaint themselves with the stakes in South Asia.

Notes

- 1 The original version of this article appeared in *International Viewpoint* , IV377, in April 2006 (<http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/pdf/IV377.pdf>) and then on *Countercurrents.org* on April 29 2006 (<http://www.countercurrents.org/wsf-pierre290406.htm>).
- 2 Editors' note : The original version of this essay was written and published in 2006, and was then mildly revised and content edited in 2007-8. We have chosen to let it remain more or less as published then, in part because of what the author foresaw for the unfolding future and what later then actually took place, such as at the Nairobi Forum the next year, 2007.
- 3 While it is a reality that non-Muslim minorities are sometimes the victims of discrimination in Pakistan, the sectarian violence in the country is above all exerted between Muslim currents, Shiites, Sunni, and so on.
- 4 The territories of earlier 'undivided' India with Muslim majorities that today constitute Pakistan (to the west of the sub-continent) and Bangladesh (to the east) were only separated from India at the time of Partition during decolonisation in 1947. (Eds : What is today known as Bangladesh was then made part of Pakistan (and referred to as 'East Pakistan'), but broke away from Pakistan in a war of independence in 1970-71.)
- 5 Author's note : I participated in the World Social Forum in Karachi on behalf of *Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières* ('European Solidarity Without Frontiers', ESSF). This report is not descriptive (the number of seminars and so on), but rather seeks to share some elements of analysis on this new experience and its significance – taking into account that this was the author's first visit to Pakistan. The report is, then, 'foreign' and does not claim to be based on a real knowledge of the country. It is, on the other hand, informed by the comparative experience of preceding Forums in Porto Alegre (Brazil), Europe, and India.
- 6 Kashmir, in the North, near the Himalayas, is divided in two by the 'Line of Control', which separates the armies of Indian occupation on the one hand and the Pakistanis on the other.
- 7 Eds : The Forum held in Hyderabad (the one in India, not in Pakistan) in January 2003 was the first (and so far, only) Asian Social Forum, and the Mumbai Forum in January 2004 was a world meeting in the WSF process, the first one held outside Brazil.
- 8 The Mohajirs are the immigrants who came to Pakistan during the Partition of 1947 from Indian states with Hindu majorities : Bihar, Gujarat, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and so on. They moved in great numbers to the province of Sind, in the southeast of Pakistan, and to its capital, Karachi.
- 9 The six organisations have set up the *Awami Jamhoori Tehreek* ('Peoples' Democratic Movement', AJT). They are the National Workers' Party (NWP), the Labour Party Pakistan (LPP), the *Awami Tehreek* ('Peoples' Movement', AT), the *Pakistan Mazdoor Kissan Party* ('Pakistan Workers' and Farmers' Party', PMKP), the *Pakistan Mazdoor Mehaz* ('Pakistan Workers' Front', PMM), and the Meraj Mohammed Khan Group (MMKG).
- 10 Eds : Whereas right from the second WSF in 2002, it has been the almost mandatory practice and custom of the International Council of the WSF to meet in the host city of the forthcoming Forum, in the days immediately before the event.
- 11 Eds : In some ways this process came to a head in the year after the Karachi Forum, at the Nairobi Forum. For depth discussion of this issue see, in this volume, the essays by Shannon Walsh (Walsh 2012) and by Wangui Mbatia and Hassan Indusa (Mbatia and Indusa, 2012).

- 12 See note 2 above.

African Social Movements And The World Social Forum

Demba Moussa Dembele

The birth of the World Social Forum (WSF) in 2001 marks a giant step in the struggle of the Global Justice Movement against the neoliberal paradigm. No other social movements have welcomed the WSF with as much enthusiasm, perhaps, as social movements in Africa. Indeed, Africa being the principal victim of a global apartheid that goes by the name of globalisation, any movement opposed to that system would inevitably have a strong and profound resonance for African social movements.

I

Africa, Neoliberal Policies, and Social Resistance

Africa is one of the regions in the world where neoliberal policies have had the most devastating impacts. In the early 1980s the crisis of Africa's illegitimate and unethical debt was used as a pretext for the imposition of structural adjustment policies (SAPs) by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. In the name of 'comparative advantage' and 'export-led growth strategy', trade liberalisation was imposed on African countries, across the board. This led to the collapse of the continent's industrial base, reflected in the decline of many domestic industries throughout the continent, entailing massive job losses.

Even if the real costs of trade liberalisation have yet to be fully assessed, an estimate by Christian Aid indicates that Africa has lost \$272 billion in twenty years.¹ For a country like Ghana, the costs of trade liberalisation in fifteen years are equivalent to a work stoppage for 18 months of the entire working population ! In a country like Zambia, between 1991 and 2000, trade liberalisation resulted in the collapse of the textile industry, which shrank from 38 to 8 factories, in the process shedding 34,000 workers out of 38,000.²

Likewise, financial liberalisation supposedly aimed at 'attracting' foreign investments only aggravated capital flight, which is believed to be the highest in the world in Africa in relation to national incomes. For instance, UNCTAD estimated capital flight at 70 per cent of Africa's combined income,³ and other sources at 90 per cent of its GDP.⁴ Another report indicates that between 1970 and 2004, cumulative capital flight from Africa was estimated at 400 billion US dollars. When one adds the interest earned on this amount, the total capital flight was more than 600 billion US dollars.⁵

The end result has been a constant deterioration in the continent's human development indicators. The average life expectancy at birth fell from 48 to 46 years between 1981 and 2001. The number of people living on one dollar a day increased from 160 million to 340 million during the same period.⁶ Africa accounts for 34 of the 49 least developed countries (LDCs) of the world, among them 14 West African countries out of 16. The latest report from UNCTAD says that in African LDCs, 59% of the people live on less than 1.25 US dollars a day, and that close to 80% live on less than 2 US dollars a day.⁷ This shows that despite all the rhetoric on 'poverty reduction', most African countries are still feeling the disastrous impact of structural adjustment programs. and that the two institutions that have imposed these programmes on Africa, the IMF and the World Bank, in reality owe it reparations for the immeasurable devastations wrought by their policies.

The IMF / WB imposed policies have only worsened since the birth of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The privatisation of state-owned enterprises and public services has accelerated since the mid-1990s. In much of Africa, the key sectors, from industry to financial services, from transport to public utilities (water and electricity), have been sold off to foreign

investors, mostly to multinational corporations or their affiliates. The potential 'benefits' that were supposed to accrue from privatisation remain elusive. The high prices of goods and services have prevented low-income groups and poor families from accessing basic services such as clean water and electricity. Job promises to nationals never live up to expectations. By contrast, these so-called investors continue to make huge profits that are often entirely repatriated, depriving states of precious revenues.

Resistance to the Neoliberal Paradigm

African social movements, especially trade unions and student movements, have put up a stiff resistance to these policies. Strikes, street demonstrations, sit-ins, and other forms of protest have been used in several countries. In Senegal, several strikes followed by arrests and imprisonment took place in the 1980s and 1990s. One of the most memorable battles was against the privatisation of the electricity utility (SENELEC) in 1999. Trade unions leaders were arrested and put in jail for six months. Their struggle galvanised resistance to neoliberal policies and contributed to the defeat of the ruling regime during the 2000 presidential elections. The new regime eventually annulled the privatisation of SENELEC, which is still a public utility.⁸

At the continental and international levels as well, African social movements have made significant contributions to struggles against neoliberal policies and institutions. The Jubilee South network, which brings together organisations of the Global South opposing debt domination and IMF and World Bank policies, was formed in South Africa in 1999. In addition, several conferences on debt WERE held in Africa. In December 2000, an International Conference on African and Third World debt was held in Dakar, Senegal. It was a turning point in the contribution of the African continent to the struggle against the illegitimate debt of the Global South and in the opposition to IMF and World Bank policies. That Conference was also an occasion used by Jubilee South to hold the first South-North Summit, which strengthened ties with Northern organisations that reiterated their support for unconditional debt cancellation and their solidarity with the struggle of their Southern counterparts.

In another instance, the Africa Trade Network (ATN), which predates the African Social Forum (ASF), is a continental network that serves as an umbrella organisation for NGOs and groups opposing trade liberalisation and WTO rules. It contributed to an effective coordination of these organisations' activities and played an important role in raising awareness about the impact of WTO rules and trade liberalisation imposed by the international financial institutions.

Likewise, the West African Network of Peasant Organisations and Agricultural Producers, better known under its French acronym ROPPA, is a network of African small farmers fighting for food sovereignty and the protection of domestic markets. It has built ties with small-scale farmers in Europe, especially in France. It is a member of Via Campesina and has participated in several campaigns against the WTO even before the birth of the WSF.

African social movements are also members of other international networks, such as the ATTAC network, advocating the Tobin tax and opposing the WTO.

All these networks and struggles have helped African social movements familiarise themselves with one another and have brought them closer together in their struggles against neoliberal policies. In fact, despite the cultural and social diversity of African countries, the impact of neoliberal policies has been felt across the board in an uncannily similar manner. Therefore, the key issues around which social movements and NGOs work, such as debt or trade issues, cut across colonial or cultural legacies. For instance, the impact and effects of WTO policies, trade liberalisation, relationships with the European Union, and the debt crisis, are felt in a similar way in Kenya, Tanzania, or Uganda in east Africa, in Senegal and Mali in West Africa, as well as in South Africa.

Also, despite significant cultural differences, the need to strengthen continental resistance to Western domination has brought North and Sub-Saharan Africa together. This has

been helped by the spirit of Pan-Africanism, which has always been a unifying ideology on the continent and was also instrumental in the creation of the African Union.

Other major actions and events have witnessed the active and positive contribution of African NGOs and social movements to the struggle to delegitimise the neoliberal paradigm, among them the memorable events in Seattle in December 1999, which formed the decisive step that opened the way to the birth of the WSF a year later.

II

African Interactions with the WSF

This background shows that even before the birth of the WSF in January 2001, African social movements, and particularly West African social movements, had been actively involved in major battles against the neoliberal paradigm at the national, continental, and international levels. This is why the birth of the WSF was greeted with such enthusiasm in Africa. Its impact was deeply felt in West Africa in particular, the birthplace of the African Social Forum, which held its first edition in Bamako, Mali, as early as in January 2002.⁹ The holding of the ASF in Bamako was a significant development in the history of African social movements, because for the first time organisations, associations, intellectuals, and NGOs opposed to the neoliberal system came together, transcending barriers and divisions that had been internalised in a post-colonial context.

So the ground was already prepared in a sense, by existing African networks, for the creation of the ASF as a **common continental space** to share experiences and coordinate struggles. However, the birth of the African Social Forum and the need to strengthen solidarity to confront a common enemy did not eliminate differences between African social movements. For instance, when the IMF and World Bank proposed the PRSPs (Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers) in 2000, some movements felt that maybe this was something 'new' compared to SAPs and that one should give them the benefit of the doubt, and therefore sit at the discussion table; but where others argued that PRSPs were nothing else but SAPs by another name.

Likewise, there have been disagreements over the content and impact of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) proposed by the United Nations. Some movements argue that the MDGs will make no difference because they are within the neoliberal paradigm and for that reason they do not challenge the IMF and World Bank policies. Other movements, while accepting some of these arguments, hold that Africans should use the MDGs to expose the hypocrisy of the dominant system and challenge African and world leaders to meet some of the commitments made within the MDGs framework. This is why representatives of these movements are working with the Millennium Campaign.¹⁰

At the same time however, these divergences have not undermined the cohesion and solidarity of African social movements. This is especially true in West Africa, where social movements from former English, French, and Portuguese colonies have been able to create a single space where they can share their experiences, coordinate their actions, and work on joint campaigns. For instance, West African NGOs, organisations, movements, and research institutions, working on issues of debt, trade, agriculture, gender, or youth, have formed a large coalition against the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), led by the Africa Trade Network, which is coordinated by the Third World Network-Africa office (TWN-A). This campaign against the 'free trade' agreements disguised as 'partnership agreements' has made a significant contribution to the struggle against neoliberal policies in Africa. Indeed, the campaign has derailed the European Union (EU) goal of opening up African markets by imposing the signing of the EPAs in December 2007. Three years on, the EU has failed to reach that goal, in large part thanks to the work done by affiliates of the ATN in their respective countries and regions.¹¹

The same coalition has also been at the forefront of the struggle against agricultural

subsidies, in particular cotton subsidies. Two Fora on the subject, held in Bamako in 2004 and 2005, contributed to the strengthening of the work of NGOs and social movements before and during the WTO Conference in Hong Kong in December 2005. West African social movements also play an important role in challenging the legitimacy and role of the G8 in world affairs. This is why a Peoples' Summit is held each year in Mali at the time of the G8 Summit, with a strong presence of grassroots organisations.

The important role played by West African social movements in the ASF and in international networks has also been illustrated by several major events that took place in 2005, 2006, 2007 AND 2008. In November 2005, Dakar (Senegal) hosted the third meeting of the Intercontinental Network for Social and Solidarity Economy, which brought together over 1,200 participants. In January 2006, Bamako hosted one of the Polycentric World Social Forums, which attracted more than 20,000 participants from around the world.

In October 2006, Bamako again hosted a Forum on Migrations, which involved the participation of some of the survivors of the Ceuta and Melilla massacre in which Moroccan and Spanish police shot and killed several 'illegal' immigrants in September 2005. In February 2007, a World Forum on Food Sovereignty took place in Mali, one month after WSF 2007.¹² In November 2008, the fifth edition of the African Social Forum was held in Niamey, capital of Niger. More than 10,000 participants took part in that event.

At the national level also, the spirit and objectives of the WSF have inspired struggles and research undertaken by West African social movements and NGOs. Struggles against privatisation of social services such as water, health, or education, as well as against price deregulation and trade liberalisation have taken place in many West African countries. In some countries, social movements have achieved important victories. The fight against corruption and the demand for a more transparent and equitable public spending has also been on the agenda. The birth of national Social Fora has fostered many of these struggles, by emboldening social movements and promoting the coordination of their actions. At the sub-regional level, the West African Social Forum held its third edition in Nigeria in November 2007.

Despite this, the impact of the WSF has been uneven, not only in West Africa, but also in the rest of Africa. There are several countries, in particular post-conflict countries (Liberia and Sierra Leone), where its impact is weak or negligible. Besides this, even though some emerging grassroots movements, such as those of the landless, migrants, refugees, and slum dwellers, have joined the WSF process, there is still a lot of work to do to get them fully involved in the WSF processes in Africa.

Impact of the WSF on African Social Movements' struggles around polity

One of the most enduring impacts of the WSF in Africa has been to help ideologically delegitimise the neoliberal paradigm and lay bare its inability to represent a viable system for humankind and to strengthen the ability of social movements and campaigns to impact on state policy. Indeed, the WSF has strengthened the conviction of African social movements that not only is another world possible, but it is already in the making!¹³

It is this conviction that has guided West African and other African social movements in their struggles and that has enabled them to communicate with policymakers in several areas, and in some cases even to persuade them to align with their positions. For instance, the African Union has joined African social movements in calling for the unconditional cancellation of the continent's debt. A group of eminent persons convened by the African Union Commission joined civil society organisations in claiming that *"many countries in Africa have already repaid their original debts many times over"* and that *"debt repayment is now prejudicing investment in development programmes and projects"*. In the light of these observations, they came to the conclusion that *"the genesis and origins of some of the debt are considered to be immoral, illegal/illegitimate and dubious"*.¹⁴

Likewise in West Africa, Heads of State and the Executive Secretariat of the Economic Community of the West African States (ECOWAS) have called for the cancellation of all member countries' debt, hence rejecting the distinction between 'poor' and 'middle-income' countries, aimed at dividing them. It should also be noted that the former Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo played an important role in the debt campaign, not only in West Africa but also at the continental and international levels. He was in the delegation that submitted a petition by more than 20 million people in September 2000 to the UN Secretary-General calling for the cancellation of "poor" countries' debt.

. On agricultural policies, several African governments are increasingly sensitive to arguments put forth by agricultural producers, who advocate protection for domestic markets and food self-sufficiency at the sub-regional level.

At the national level, members of the ROPPA network have succeeded in convincing their governments to restore protection for some sectors of the food industry threatened by European and US subsidies. In several countries, social movements have been successful in derailing agreements or policies detrimental to ordinary citizens. In Senegal, the fishing community, backed by other social movements, compelled the government to back down in renewing an agreement with the European Union which had led to the depletion of Senegalese coasts and sparked a huge emigration of young fishermen who could no longer feed their families. In Niger, at least on two occasions social movements forced the government to scrap a price hike on staple food that was set to worsen living conditions for the majority of ordinary citizens. In Guinea, a bloody strike in January 2007, marked by the killing of several workers and students, forced the government to accept most of the demands put forth by trade unions and other social forces.¹⁵

African social movements were able to achieve these objectives due to several reasons. First of all, they have succeeded in exposing the inherent flaws of neoliberal policies by showing the gap between the promises and the results. Trade liberalisation and privatisation did not translate into more 'competitive' domestic industries, nor did they bring more foreign investments. Second, social movements have been able to expose the hypocrisy between the ideology of 'free' trade and the actual protectionist policies implemented by Northern governments. For instance, the European Union's 'Everything But Arms' initiative, aimed at allowing quota- and duty-free exports to Europe from the lesser-developed countries, turned out to be an empty promise due to non-tariff barriers.

The campaign of NGOs and social movements against agricultural subsidies by the United States and the European Union, especially on cotton, had a profound impact on West African leaders by bringing to their awareness the extent of the damage caused to the several economies of the region by these subsidies. This is why West African delegates and other African delegates at the WTO ministerial conference in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003 played an active role in the collapse of that conference after the EU and the US refused to make concessions on subsidies. Likewise, they played an important role in getting those countries to make those concessions in Hong Kong in December 2005. Finally, the failure of IMF and World Bank policies, illustrated by the new discourse on 'poverty reduction' and the collapse of market fundamentalism, reflected in the international financial crisis and the growing crisis of legitimacy of the capitalist system, have convinced a growing number of African leaders and policymakers that they should pay greater attention to the critique articulated by social movements and NGOs. So, in a way, one may say that social movements prepared the ground that made it easier for African leaders to join the battle on these fronts.

III

The World Social Forum in Africa

The Significance of the Nairobi WSF ¹⁶

The achievements exposed above have enhanced the credibility and influence of African social movements. After the Polycentric Forum held in Bamako (Mali) in 2006, the first full edition of the WSF in Africa was held in Nairobi in January 2007. The Nairobi WSF was further testimony to the level of trust achieved by African social movements in the global justice movement. It is quite obvious that if these movements had not been active in struggles against neoliberal policies and in the WSF process, and if they had not shown a certain level of maturity in the eyes of other movements, the WSF would not have come to Africa, at least so soon.

The second, and perhaps the more important, significance of WSF 2007 was that it illustrated a deep solidarity with the struggles of the African peoples on the part of world social movements. Africa today is both a reflection of the disastrous failure of the neoliberal paradigm and an illustration of the worldwide opposition to it. The deterioration of Africa's human development indicators and the collapse of many of its states illustrate the impossibility of 'development' within the neoliberal paradigm. Despite all odds, African social movements and peoples have been resisting neoliberal economic policies and have been able to put them on the defensive. It is this contribution by African social movements that other social movements have come to appreciate.

So, in a way, the Nairobi Forum represented another milestone in the struggle against the neoliberal ideology and was one of the most important illustrations of the strengthening of an alternative paradigm.¹⁷ Indeed, as the concept paper for the Africa Social Forum adopted in March 2006 concludes :

Over the last few years, the World Social Forum has come to represent the most formidable bulwark of popular resistance against neoliberal globalisation ... And that, given the high concentration of its victims in this part of the world, Africa could very well turn out to be the graveyard of some of its most oppressive policy dictates and even of global capitalism.¹⁸

The Significance of the WSF 2011 in Senegal

Now, another World Social Forum will take place in Africa, namely in Dakar, Senegal, in February 2011. This is yet another manifestation of solidarity by the global justice movement with the struggles of African social movements and peoples against global capitalism – or global apartheid - which is in disarray following the collapse of market fundamentalism. This is why the WSF 2011 will be held in a context in which global capitalism and its institutions are on the defensive. As a result, the Concept Note for the Dakar WSF set forth three strategic orientations :

Deepening the critique of global capitalism;
Bringing forth all the struggles against global capitalism, imperialism, and all forms of oppression; and -
Promoting people-centred and democratic alternatives.¹⁹

In this context, African social movements will strive to further discredit neoliberal policies imposed by the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO. They will call on African leaders and policy makers to join the battle against market fundamentalism and neoliberal policies that have devastated Africa and much of the rest of the world, as the financial crisis has illustrated. The agenda of African social movements will be to put more pressure on policy makers to reverse privatisation and trade liberalisation; to restore capital controls and protect their markets, in particular small-scale agricultural producers.

African social movements will also call on the African people to join the struggle for alternative development policies based on Africa's own vision of its future. In that context, Africa should move toward food sovereignty and be able to feed itself. It should control its own resources and be able to use them for its own people. Africa should devise its own

development strategy and look at the world through its own lenses. Africa should no longer accept being defined by outside forces. African countries should strengthen their policy space and reject the dictates of international financial institutions and western countries. African countries should put forth new monetary and financial policies in order to mobilise more domestic resources to finance their own development. Africa should build new institutions that can better serve its own development strategy. Accelerating African integration and developing stronger ties with other southern countries must be part of the new African agenda in the 21st century.

To achieve these objectives, African countries and social movements need to throw away the whole set of discredited neoliberal policies imposed by the IMF and the World Bank over the last three decades. Along with this there needs to be a focus on the rehabilitation of the state. The financial crisis in western countries has shown how the state remains an indispensable instrument in the process of economic and social development. Therefore, African countries should follow their lead and bring back the state.

In one of its reports on Africa, UNCTAD insists on the need to reorganize African States in order to make them genuine instruments of development, by helping African governments improve tax collection; formalize the informal sector; stop capital flight; make more productive use of remittances from African expatriates and adopt effective measures to repatriate resources held abroad.²⁰

It is only with a strong and effective State that African countries improve domestic resource mobilization. In fact, such mobilisation requires imposing capital controls to limit tax evasions and capital flight; limiting tax exemptions for corporations and shutting down tax loopholes to reduce the siphoning of domestic savings; and enforcing more effectively income taxation on foreign investors. According to a study by Christian Aid, African countries register potential tax losses estimated at \$160 billion a year for lack of enforcement.²¹

IV

Conclusions

There can be little doubt that the spirit and vision embodied in the WSF have inspired African social movements in their struggles against neoliberalism and for economic and social transformation in Africa. Indeed, the WSF has contributed tremendously to influencing the way African movements view the world, and in particular, their perception of the neoliberal paradigm and the institutions promoting its ideology and policies, like the IMF, the World Bank, and the WTO.²² In short, the WSF has contributed to fostering a new consciousness in African social movements, especially in West African civil society organisations.²³

After Bamako in 2006 and Nairobi in 2007, the WSF 2011 in Dakar, Senegal in February 2011 will be a major step forward for African social movements and NGOs in their efforts to strengthen their cohesion and solidarity with each other and with movements and NGOs around the world, in their shared and common resistance and challenge to the neoliberal paradigm and global capitalism and their quest for people-centred alternatives.

Notes

- 1 Christian Aid 2005.
- 2 Dembele 2005.
- 3 UNCTAD 2001.
- 4 Dembele 2005.
- 5 Ndikumana and Boyce, April 2008.
- 6 World Bank 2005.
- 7 UNCTAD 2010.
- 8 See Dembele, October 2003.

- 9 This preceded by four years the perhaps better-known Bamako edition of the polycentric WSF in January 2006.
- 10 *Alternatives Sud* , 2007.
- 11 African Agenda, 2010.
- 12 Choike 2007.
- 13 Bond 2005
- 14 African Union, May 2005.
- 15 These events took place during the WSF in Nairobi, prompting a march of solidarity called by African social movements and others within the WSF site at Kasarani Stadium.
- 16 This section was written in 2006, before the actual holding of the Nairobi WSF in January 2007.
- 17 *Eds* : For other analyses of the significance of the Nairobi Forum, see in this volume the essays by Wangui Mbatia and Hassan Indusa (Mbatia and Indusa 2012), Virginia Vargas (Vargas 2012), and Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle and Nicolas Haeringer (Pommerolle and Haeringer 2012).
- 18 Methodology Commission, African Social Forum, March 2006; also in : World Social Forum Technical Office, nd, c.2006, p 21.
- 19 Content and Methodology Commission, African Social Forum, July 2010.
- 20 UNCTAD 2007.
- 21 Christian Aid, May 2008.
- 22 Bond 2005.

- 23 Diop et al 2005.

The World Social Forum 2007 : A Kenyan Perspective ¹

Wangui Mbatia and Hassan Indusa

On behalf of the People's Parliament

In its Charter of Principles, the World Social Forum (WSF) is described as “an open meeting place for reflective thinking... by groups and movements that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism”.²

Amongst the members of the People's Parliament in Kenya, this description created an unprecedented enthusiasm and excitement, particularly because the WSF was coming to Africa for the first time; to their very doorsteps, in Nairobi, Kenya. To many of them, it was an opportunity that they knew was not likely to present itself again during their lifetimes, and there was on their part, understandably, an urgency to participate, to be part of, and to contribute to the Nairobi WSF.

Professor Edward Oyugi, of the Social Development Network and Chair of the WSF Nairobi Organising Committee, has described the People's Parliament as a disorganised group, and perhaps from his perspective it is. Despite the fact that they get things done, viewed from the ivory tower a group of people who have met spontaneously every day for the last fifteen years without a CEO to direct their business, office premises, or the potential to buy large four-wheel drive vehicles to ferry their ‘bigwigs’ must appear disorganised. But, in their desire to participate in the WSF, members of the People's Parliament hosted the Kenyan Social Forum (KSF) at the Jeevanjee Gardens in November 2005,³ and were active in the pre-planning meetings of early 2006, before the planning process became closed to social movements and was given over exclusively to a small clique of high-handed intellectuals (and their close family members) with a history of attendance at previous WSFs in Porto Alegre and Mumbai. From the onset, it was clear that the WSF process in Kenya had its ‘owners’, amongst whom the ordinary Kenyan was not included.

Despite this however, and in the spirit of making “another world” possible, the People's Parliament decided to join the “permanent process of seeking and building alternatives, which cannot be reduced to the events supporting it”,⁴ and refused to be excluded from the Nairobi WSF. Members resolved that the WSF was an opportunity that they would not miss, especially since the WSF process “brings together and interlinks organisations and movements of civil society from all countries in the world”⁵

When January 2007 finally drew near however, it became clear to us that something very big was amiss : The WSF in Nairobi was not going to be open to ordinary Kenyans. Our attempts to get a hearing with the organisers of the Nairobi WSF proved futile, but members of the People's Parliament were determined, remaining patient and hopeful until, on January 19 2007, the eve of the WSF, volunteers at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre (KICC) registration site denied members access to the notice board because they could not afford the Kshs 500 (US\$ 7) required for registration. Apparently one needed to pay just to view a notice board in the middle of the KICC grounds ! This denial was the final straw that broke the back of the erstwhile enthusiastic People's Parliament, prompting the group to invoke the right “to deliberate on declarations or actions they may decide on, whether singly or in coordination with other participants”.⁶ Considering that the WSF is supposed to be “open to pluralism and to the diversity of activities and ways of engaging of the organisations and movements that decide to participate in it”,⁷ the People's Parliament decided, on January 19 2007, at 2:00 pm, to :

Immediately protest the apparent determination of the organisers of the WSF to deliberately lock out poor Kenyans by imposing a registration fee of Kshs 500 that was

too high, and to work constantly towards ensuring that the fee was removed.

Organise with speed an alternative forum to provide poor Kenyans with an alternative space to participate in the WSF process at no cost.

Work towards ensuring that the outcomes of the discussions held at the alternative forum were included in the WSF declarations.

As we had expected, the WSF in Nairobi provided a rich fabric of experiences, both positive and negative; and in the final analysis, the People's Parliament is the better for having participated in these processes. Despite all the challenges we faced, our participation and engagement in the WSF activities made it possible for members to interact with participants from all over the world, to share experiences with them, and to forge alliances. This essay attempts to document and reflect on this experience.

I

Successes of the 2007 WSF in Nairobi

The 2007 WSF in Nairobi is a solid foundation upon which a lot can be built – in Kenya, and in Africa. The Forum had some positive impact, including but not limited to the following :

It was, till then, perhaps the most impressive gathering of leftist organisations ever to have convened at one place in Africa. It provided, especially to African participants, an unprecedented opportunity “to strengthen and create new national and international links among organisations and movements”.⁸ The WSF even went a step beyond that : It created an environment in which participants were able to socialise and make new friends, to inspire and be inspired, to laugh and to dance.

It had the widest representation of African participants ever to attend a WSF.

It had plenty of activities organised by diverse organisations and movements, and it presented those that were lucky to attend it with the opportunity to hear first-hand accounts of the struggles and achievements of many communities.

It provided some of the least visible groups of society, such as the Dalits of India, with the kind of visibility necessary to make another world possible. There was also a very healthy participation of women and minorities at the WSF. Notable for the Kenyan community, the Gay and Lesbian Network had its first opportunity to come out of the closet.

It made, albeit only for a short while and within the closed gates of the stadium, another world possible – demonstrations and actions in protest went on without the tear-gas that is so usual in Kenya, and despite the heavy (and somewhat peculiar) presence of the police. At least within the Kasarani Stadium, exchanges between groups and people were unhampered.

There was a visible presence of women and of feminist groups, which is a complete departure from ordinary civil society meetings in Nairobi.

II

Failures and Lessons Learnt

Professor Oyugi, Oduor Ongwen, Wahu Kaara, and Taoufik Ben Abdallah, members of the WSF Nairobi Organising Committee, all seem content with the mere fact that ‘it happened’, never mind how mismanaged the process might have been ! The People's Parliament however believes that an opportunity to showcase the immense capacity not just of the Kenyan people but also of the African people, was squandered by shortsightedness, greed, and lack of compassion, compounded by the great arrogance exhibited by the organisers.

Some of the key issues that marred the process are discussed below :

Pre-Event Awareness : There was, decidedly, very little publicity about the WSF in Kenya prior to the event. Little effort was made to provide information to Kenyans before and

during the event; there were no posters, banners, fliers, advertisements, or information desks in strategic parts of towns to direct interested or potential participants to the event. Many visitors noted with concern that there was little indication of the event's magnitude – taxi drivers at the airport were not even aware of the WSF !

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the organisers at least tried to hold preparatory 'regional' social forums in Kenya, to create awareness. At least one such forum was held in Kisumu, but with lacklustre results. Persistent problems of micro-management and nepotism also dogged these regional forums.

Communication : During the planning processes, there was a notable lack of communication between the Forum organisers and other groups interested in participating. In-fighting amongst local organisers eventually made it nearly impossible for outsiders to figure out what was happening, and what kind of support the organisers required.

Fees : There were several severe problems, especially given what ordinary Kenyans earn :

Registration Fees : Set at Kshs 500, the registration fee was unaffordable for the poor masses. At about US\$ 7, the fee was equivalent to about one week's wages; and with sixty percent of Kenya's population living on less than US\$ 1 a day, the fee therefore served to exclude most Kenyans from the WSF process.

Activity Fees : To organise activities and / or discussions at the WSF, organisations were required to pay Kshs 30,000 (US\$ 420, or about a year's earnings), which meant that small groups and movements of poor Kenyans were reduced to being mere spectators at the events. Only big NGOs were able to pay, creating an uneven representation that excluded the grassroots movements and social initiatives of the people.

Exhibition / Vending Fees : It cost about Kshs 60,000 (US\$ 840; two years' earnings) to acquire a small booth to sell food and water. As a result, the opportunity was of course open only to large enterprises owned by the rich. And in order to recoup the exorbitant fee, the cost of the merchandise made available within the Forum site, including food and water, was in some instances increased by more than 500 percent – making it absolutely unaffordable to ordinary Kenyans - and affordable, perhaps, only to rich outsiders, and not to students or activists.

Venue : Located about ten kilometres from the city, the Kasarani Stadium is the farthest of its kind from the town centre. There are at least six other parks and stadiums, all within ten to fifteen minutes of the city centre and of each other, which would have been suitable for the Forum, including Uhuru Park (where the opening and closing ceremonies took place), Central Park (across the street from Uhuru Park), Nyayo Stadium (where Kenyans convene for national celebrations and holidays), City Stadium, Jamhuri Gardens, Kamukunji Grounds (the site of Kenya's political mass actions), and Jeevanjee Gardens (where the People's Parliament successfully hosted over 4,000 participants in an alternative forum).⁹

The long distance from our neighbourhoods also made it very expensive for Kenyans to travel to the WSF being held at Kasarani. There was also a lot of theft and general insecurity at Kasarani (see full entry on **Insecurity** below), despite its being touted for its safety and having a large contingent of police, which put to paid to the organisers' claim that the venue had been chosen for security reasons. In any case, putting people in secure seclusion during the day and releasing them to the mercy of the city's criminals at night defies simple logic. Besides, the People's Parliament organised an alternative space in Jeevanjee Gardens in downtown Nairobi, with no fees and no restrictions on attendance, and during the three days of that forum there was no report of any loss of property or insecurity whatsoever. The secluded and closed nature

of Kasarani Stadium increased insecurity rather than enhancing security. To most participants, the Stadium was one large maze and navigating one's way through the myriad entrances and exits was a nightmare. Being constantly lost made many participants vulnerable.

The venue's closed nature also meant that actions and / or demonstrations made by participants were contained, so much so that none but the participants got any wind of them, resulting in making the participants' actions essentially like graceful dances performed in pitch darkness.

Militarisation : There was a very visible and heavy police presence within and around the WSF at the Kasarani Stadium. But despite this, the police appeared strangely unable or unwilling to deal with the clear lack of security at the Stadium.

Marginalisation of small organisations and social movements : Because of the hefty activity fees imposed on organisations who wanted to participate, many small organisations, particularly those social movements not part of well-established networks, were sidelined in favour of large NGOs, which seemed to have unlimited access to space, time, and funds. This created inequity. For instance, ActionAid alone had twenty-five events at the Nairobi Forum, while the Human Dignity Network had seventy events. What dictated events was not the importance of the message but the amount of spare cash an organisation had. At the same time, the ubiquitous activities of religious groups are a growing concern for many participants.

Not having attended any other WSF, for us there was also a tinge of surprise at seeing the high level presence in Nairobi of the religious groups. Without curtailing the freedom of religious groupings to participate in the WSF it was, nonetheless, a matter of curious speculation about the effect of interaction between, say, the Catholic Church (and where the Kenyan Catholic Church was very active in the Forum) and the women and gay rights movements in issues such as abortion and sexuality, issues on which clear conflicts exist.

Commercialisation : According to the WSF's Charter of Principles, "alternatives proposed at the WSF stand in opposition to a process of globalisation commanded by the large multinational corporations".¹⁰ In view of this, we are still wondering what Celtel, a large multinational corporation, was doing at the WSF, and what prompted the organisers to allow Celtel to sponsor the Forum, provide registration, and limit the participation of Celtel's competitors such that nearly all participants were given Celtel phone lines, and other providers were barred from even selling phone credit at the Kasarani Stadium.

Insecurity : Phones, cameras, wallets, laptops, and other valuables were stolen at Kasarani. The organisers' suggestion that the slum-dwellers who gained free entry were responsible for the insecurity is insulting; the organisers seem to think that poor people own a patent on crime and bad behaviour. Indeed, it is this attitude that informed the organisers' arrogance and made it impossible for the poor people of Kenya to get a fair hearing before and during the WSF. Besides random thefts, the security of the copies of identification documents that were made during the registration process remains a major concern for many participants, especially considering that the fate of such copies is not known, and that Kenya remains a transit point for drug and people traffickers.

Volunteerism : There is need for the WSF to redefine volunteerism. About 400 translators 'volunteered' at a rate of US\$ 100 per day, which is a hefty price to pay. Other professionals volunteered their services for up to US\$ 400 per day. In addition, many other people earned all manner of monies for wearing a green volunteer tag and going round and

round in the Stadium doing absolutely nothing.

Translation and equipment : Despite spending over US\$ 40,000 per day on translation, there was a total failure in translation at the Nairobi Forum,, occasioned either by the lack of, or faulty, FM radio units. The FM radios for use by participants were not suitable and were never tested before 50,000 units were ordered. Compounding the failure was the fact that the radios were not made available to participants efficiently. Instead, several 'volunteers' were seen with boxes of radios, which they were selling to weary participants at Kshs 100 per unit.

Cost of food and water : With the organisers turning a blind eye to the presence and dominance of neoliberal corporations – in contradiction to the WSF's own Charter of Principles -, the price of food and water within the Forum was exorbitant. Participants were exposed to exploitation by commercial enterprises by being denied the choice that comes through competition. On the one hand, Kasarani is very far from any restaurants and hotels that could have offered alternatives, and on the other by the criteria on the basis of which providers were chosen (as above) - so that it was only exploitative establishments such as the five-star Windsor and Norfolk Hotels that finally found space at the WSF.

It is also worth noting that although over 50,000 litres of free water were apparently donated to the Nairobi WSF,¹¹ this was never made available to participants. The organisers argued that it was not "possible" to distribute the water due to logistics. Hogwash. Had the bottles of water been placed at every entrance, participants could easily have taken the water themselves. Besides, it is most likely that the donated water somehow found its way into the market at prices inflated to 300 percent of its normal cost.

Inaccessibility of venues and events : The printed programme of events at the Nairobi Forum was a rare find, and even when one had it, navigating through the myriad gates and events, poorly labelled at best, made it nearly impossible to know what was going on where and when. The end result was that people from organisations, networks, or movements were only able to attend their own events, making moot the whole idea of exchanging experiences. Many of the events turned out to be people from the same networks preaching to the converted.

Speeches : The former president of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, made a very long speech at the inauguration of the Nairobi Forum. Never again should participants of the WSF have to be exposed to over forty-five minutes of the most excruciatingly boring speeches by retired presidents who seem to have time to sing ballads on the side !

Indifference : Processions to and from the slums were a tasteless addition to the WSF menu. The procession FROM the Kibera slums and not TO the slums demonstrated the spirit of the WSF. In Kenya the WSF appeared not to move towards the poor, but to demand that the poor come to it – and then too, at exorbitant rates. The poor people of the world are not for display, not even to the sympathetic multitudes that attend the WSF. Poverty should not be a fascinating event within the WSF, nor should the assumption that poor people have no feelings prevail. Such casual treatment of the plight of the poorest of the poor lowers their dignity and robs them of their humanity. WSF should either actively include poor people in its programme or stay away from their homes rather than march in fascination to slums.

Dishonesty : The organisers of the WSF were consistent only in their inconsistencies. Despite several declarations that registration fees had been waived for poor Kenyans, every

morning at the Stadium it took, the intervention of a group of sympathetic protesters to get the gates opened; and even so, the moment the protestors went into the Stadium, the gates were promptly closed.

III

Recommendations

Parallel social forums were organised both at the WSF that took place in Mumbai, India, in 2004, and in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2007. There were several very good reasons why this happened.¹² These parallel forums are a symptom of a deeper problem and not, as the organisers would like to believe, the cause of problems within the WSF. They exist because the WSF has problems that must be addressed. It is an open secret that the WSF is not as open as it could be and that there is, increasingly, a tendency towards commercialisation. Whoever makes decisions at the WSF has tended to ignore the plight of the local poor, and to assume their willingness to accept the minimum standards. From our experience at the 2007 WSF, we recommend that the following steps be taken :

That the people selected to lead the WSF process be loyal to the WSF's Charter of Principles.

That the WSF organisation process be inclusive, transparent, and participatory.

That all residents of the host country who can demonstrate the need for a waiver of fees be given free access to the WSF.

That the WSF be held in a place where the largest possible number of participants can access it, and not in closed stadiums far from people's habitats.

That the WSF not be commercialised, and in particular that no multinational corporation be given access to the WSF, either as a vendor or as a participant.

That there be some form of affirmative action to facilitate equity in the allocation of time and events in order to enable small groups and social movements to participate at the programme level rather than just as spectators.

That the WSF impose simple rules to curb exploitation such as price limits on food and water, as well as allow small entrepreneurs access to the WSF market places.

That key decisions, such as the venue of the WSF, be left to local organisers to make.

That enough resources be allocated to publicising the WSF before, during, and after the event in order to build solidarity in the host country, and leave a lasting impact.

That proper procurement procedures for tendering of services and purchase of items such as translator radios be laid down and followed.

That accountability and transparency be the guiding principles, especially during the planning process, so that nepotism, corruption, over-handedness, arrogance, greed, incompetence, and negligence are eradicated from the WSF.

That organisers be encouraged to develop tolerance for constructive criticism and diplomacy so that suggestions, corrections, and other similar contributions do not elicit *ad hominem* attacks.

That NGOs organising the WSF be properly vetted to avoid situations in which there is duplication, leading to a small group of people working through many different groups to the exclusion of others; and that proper auditing and local vetting of organisers also be undertaken, to ensure both accountability and wider representation in the WSF process.

Notes

1 Eds : An earlier version of this essay was first published in February 2007 in Red Pepper Online @ <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/> ; accessed js 160907. We warmly thank Hilary Wainwright of Red Pepper for permission to reprint this essay here.

2 See : World Social Forum Organising Committee and World Social Forum International Council, June 2001, Article 1. From here on in the notes, referred to as WSF CoP.

3 See : Oloo, December 2005.

4 WSF CoP, Article 3.

5 WSF CoP, Article 5.

6 WSF CoP, Article 7.

7 WSF CoP, Article 9.

8 WSF CoP, Article 13.

9 *Eds* : The People's Parliament was the core of the alternative forum, and there were colourful banners everywhere declaring this alternative forum to be a part of the WSF taking place in Nairobi. But because this forum was located within the city and the main WSF was taking place far away outside the city, participants had to commute – and to an extent, and because of the distance, time, and cost involved, make a choice about which forum to attend on any given day.

10 WSF CoP, Article 4.

11 As mentioned by Nairobi Organising Committee delegates at the meeting of the WSF's International Council meeting after the Nairobi Forum.

12 *Eds* : For a discussion of the phenomenon of parallel and alternative forums on the margins of the social fora, see the essays by Jeffrey Juris and by Rodrigo Nunes in this book (Juris 2012a and Nunes 2012).

A Look At Nairobi's World Social Forum Virginia Vargas

Evaluating the 2007 World Social Forum that took place in Nairobi in 2007 is not an easy task. The achievement of carrying out a WSF in Africa was a gain just by itself, simply because it widened the perspective of the WSF through its location in a continent, in all its richness and complexity, that has been present in the Forum until now. In many ways, the 2007 WSF was an unquestionably enriching experience that we must celebrate. However, the Nairobi WSF also condensed and precipitated many of the unsolved problems that have been present in the WSF since its first edition in 2001. Besides these, it added some that were unexpected within the dynamics and the political culture of the WSF and its Charter of Principles.

I

Where I Speak From

Our current struggles as African Feminists are inextricably linked to our past as a continent – diverse pre-colonial contexts, slavery, colonisation, liberation struggles, neo-colonialism, globalisation, etc. Modern African States were built off the backs of African Feminists who fought alongside men for the liberation of the continent. As we craft new African States in this new millennium, we also craft new identities for African women, identities as full citizens, free from patriarchal oppression, with rights of access, ownership and control over resources and our own bodies and utilising positive aspects of our cultures in liberating and nurturing ways....¹

Feminisms converging at the WSF are diverse and multicultural, coming from different political streams that feed multiple agendas. This makes them, in themselves, ways to learn about different ways of constructing a movement and generating alliances. The choice of this Forum as a space for sharing and commonness expresses a positioning that holds women's and feminists' agendas as important parts of democratic agendas, both globally and locally. Besides, it implies that these agendas need to go beyond their own spaces to connect, reflect on, and negotiate contents with other social powers and movements that strive for democratic change; this way, they make themselves open to interactions and alliances which could widen the scope of an emancipating horizon, and advance the development of a counter-power alternative to hegemonic powers. These interactions can widen their own frameworks, and also those of other spaces and movements, through a process of continuous dialogue that does not reject discussion and difference. It is not sheer articulation, but a process in which articulation is seen both as a relational and a political practice, which allows participants "not to compartmentalise oppressions, but to formulate strategies to challenge them together on the basis of an understanding about how they are connected and articulated".²

Interactions, alliances, and arguments with other movements are part of WSF dynamics. There are numerous agendas with some shared dimensions. Of these, struggles against the injustices brought by neoliberalism, and the rejection and condemnation of increasing militarism, are most permanent. But neoliberalism and war are not enough to define common paths; there are other political and cultural dimensions strongly linked to liberation processes : Struggles against fundamentalisms and in favour of the recognition of reproductive and sexual rights, abortion, laicism, or sexual options are hot potatoes today – not only for states and other official agents or spaces, but also among democratic movements.

Through all these years of the WSF as a space and a process, some alliances among these movements have been generated with new political positionings. These have been built not on a closed but on an open-minded and negotiating autonomy, and from their own profiles; this is the general tendency in the dialogue with other movements, whose only conditions are

the recognition of the other as a subject of rights, the recognition of equity as a democratic value to be considered by other social movements and agents, and the recognition of sexual diversity as a democratic right and value.

As far as feminisms are concerned, the WSF is a not only a terrain in which to unfold articulations and alliances but also to take stands against power imbalances, in favour of the urgency of democratising gender relations and recognising sexual diversity. This dimension of argumentation is one of the main characteristics of the Forum's dynamics, one that feeds the processes of democratisation insofar as democracy is specifically the negotiation of conflict and not its denial. It also checks the tendency of reverting to a tradition that assumes that to politicise differences is to polarise them.³ Such a tradition, as Teivo Teivainen points out, is still common in the traditional left. In this sense, the politicisation of differences is the greatest act of freedom in the WSF, keeping open dialogue and argumentation with other global networks and movements.

II

The Politicisation of Differences

WSF is a space where feminism finds a fruitful locus to weave its alliances and ideals with other individuals, but also to act and mark its contributions to the democratisation of politics.⁴

This democratisation of politics is sustained by the rejection of a total emancipation; of a dichotomy between socio-cultural and politic issues; of the idea that there are primary and secondary struggles. And it is based in "the relation between sexuality, production and reproduction as matters which are part of symbolic and material planes of exploitation and domination of social relations, and an analytical requirement brought by politicisation of the different dimensions of the conflicts that reveal social movements".⁵ Thus, this process is opened to multiple interconnected emancipations, even as it becomes stronger through democratically arguing the contents and widening agendas. Teivo also subscribes to this perception when he argues that the WSF eloquently shows that there is no totality capable of containing the inexhaustible diversity of theories and practices in the world today.⁶ Undoubtedly, the key political question that arises in this diversity is : Which differences deserve recognition and which must be rejected because they contradict the recognition of this diversity itself ?

The 2007 WSF in Nairobi had undeniable achievements, including the fourth-day dynamics that generated hundreds of proposals for mobilisation and action in 2007 and 2008, culminating in a general but diverse week of mobilisations and actions worldwide in January 2008. This methodology may allow us, as Wallerstein says, to go from "defence to offence", and also begin to dissolve a tension that has been dragging on since the beginning of the WSFs, between the idea of the Forum as an open space for all those who want to transform the existing world system, and the conception of those who want to organise specific political actions from within the WSF.⁷

The development of WSF activities at Nairobi was, however, uneven. Many self-organised panels developed discussions rich in analyses and proposals. Strong positions were taken on topics like HIV / AIDS, water, agricultural reform, and food sovereignty. Nevertheless, activities co-organised by the African Committee and other global movements and networks, which were also oriented to the general public, attracted little participation from within the Forum, and even less from outsiders. Some even said that there were three parallel Forums : One in the stadium, the central place where many of the panels were held; one on the roadway surrounding the stadium, with music, cultural expressions, handicraft shops, mobilisations, and demonstrations; and one in the big tents outside the stadium, immense and generally deserted, where panels open to the public, and co-organised activities took place. "[This] was the geographical sector of the Forum for the interaction with Nairobi's civil society", but which was

insufficiently present in the Forum's everyday life.⁸ Others talk about the existence of yet another Forum, organised by the People's Parliament in the city of Nairobi itself.⁹

To the constant problems of translation, financial deficit, and organisation of spaces, already part of previous Forums, we have to add the other new problems that arose in Nairobi and which, for many, fundamentally challenged the Forum's Charter of Principles. Problems of tertiarisation (such as the contracts for restaurants given to private companies), high registration fees (extremely high for popular movements in Kenya, even if there were quite a few free registrations), and policing, in some cases provided by the military, in a society with a high degree of criminality. The Assembly of Social Movements strongly criticised these tendencies to commercialise, privatise, and militarise the space of the Forum;¹⁰ and to address these problems, the International Council (IC) agreed to draft a document that will lay out 'rules of conduct' for organisers of forthcoming Forums.¹¹

The problems at the Nairobi Forum made evident what then begin to be questions relevant to the Forum as a whole, not only Nairobi. Is it possible to have such a big event without having registration fees so high that they exclude precisely those whom the WSF wants to prioritise? Is it possible to organise events that do not imply significant financial deficits for the Organising Committee (OC)? Must financial problems be the responsibility of only the national committees that organise the Forum? Where can we get resources that will not endanger the Charter of Principles? How much can we raise, and how much do we really need? Is it always going to be the big NGOs, and not social movements, that will have the most chance of organising activities – simply because of the resources they can mobilise? To answer these questions, we need a historical evaluation of the developing process of the WSF over the past seven years.

But the Nairobi Forum also had other problems, which made the movement go backwards in terms of what has been one of its main characteristics – the attempt to build a new political culture among social movements, networks, and social actors; a constant widening of the margins for collective understanding; recognising the validity of other struggles; openness to feminist visions, and the struggles around sexual orientation....

All this constitutes the political, methodological, and epistemological background of the WSF. For this reason, a seriously negative trend for democratic struggles – not only for feminist or LGBTT struggles – revealed itself at Nairobi as a result of the massive and active presence of churches in general, and churches that were reactionary and took fundamentalist positions against women's rights and sexual orientation struggles in particular. This possibility had already arisen in one of the preparatory meetings of the Forum, in which some African participants claimed that sexual orientation issues were not African problems, but Western ones. They were unaware of the reality that we still needed to ensure respect for such people at the Forum, and to limit the presence of anti-democratic groups. Not doing so resulted in an unusual display of churches' stands and, within them, of openly reactionary and fundamentalist churches. This was the first time that a demonstration against abortion took place within the Forum. Also for the first time, when a lesbian spoke during the closing ceremony there was a shameful level of aggressive behaviour from a significant number of participants.

This is a delicate matter. The role of progressive churches in Africa is unquestionable. In countries with weak civil societies, churches are a catalytic factor for organisation and popular initiatives; and many assume a social and political commitment against poverty – though not necessarily against exclusion. Even though church people attended previous Forums, and although there were clear disagreements with them, it is also true that there was always a strong respect for the diversity of attitudes, recognising that spirituality manifests itself in different ways. What linked these diverse points of view was their recognition of and respect for the Forum's Charter of Principles, which explicitly posits the WSF as a plural and diversified

space, non-denominational, non-governmental, and impartial, oriented to consolidating a supportive globalisation that respects the human rights of all citizens.

However, the presence of church people that contribute to social transformation, respecting the Charter of Principles, is one thing; but religious and ecclesiastic expressions that have a limited perspective on human rights and a morality positioned against humanist and libertarian thoughts is something very different. Their daily actions at Nairobi – as they repeatedly tried to deny the recognition of rights, freedoms, and autonomy for certain people, especially women, homosexuals, gays, lesbians, and transsexuals – challenged the Charter of Principles itself. The presence and activities of some anti-democratic ecclesiastical groups, whose everyday actions not only affected women and homosexuals but also the Forum's spirit of democratic plurality, went against the methodology of the Forum itself.

Despite this, the presence of sexual diversity movements at the 2007 WSF, especially African and Kenyan organisations of gays, lesbians, transvestites, transgenders, transsexuals and the intersexed, was nevertheless large, active, affirmative, and enriching. Kenyan organisations had been in contact with Forum organisers not only to organise a caucus on sexual diversity and to register events, but also to contribute to the Forum's success. That is, there was a process in which those movements were involved, negotiating and supporting the Forum. There was indeed already some visibility and presence of this when, during the meeting of the WSF's Methodological and Contents Commission, the point was made that homosexuality is not an African problem.

Undoubtedly, there were also voices of protest, such as within the IC, where a call to promote and strengthen the struggle for sexual rights and reproductive rights as an intrinsic part of the democratic spirit of the Forum was voiced.¹² Likewise, anticipating anti-democratic eruptions, there was a group of networks and institutions that put forward a message on this issue to the IC, which said :

Through this letter we embrace the struggles of our brothers and sisters for sexual and reproductive rights all around the world; they are part of our own struggles. Therefore, evoking diversity, we affirm that these struggles are a fundamental part of the construction of other worlds based on solidarity and justice.... As the struggles for the construction of another world can only be successful if they recognise the diversity of identities and political subjects, we affirm that the World Social Forum is a process open to all that recognise this diversity. Consequently, organisations and individuals that promote the marginalisation, exclusion, and discrimination of other human beings are alien to this process.... We call upon the International Council, and the different Organisation Committees, to promote and facilitate the integration of the struggles for sexual and reproductive rights in every Social Forum around the world. Although we understand the diversity of cultural and political contexts that the WSF might encounter, the right of our brothers and sisters to struggle for autonomy and freedom is not negotiable."¹³

Sexual rights and reproductive rights are evidently, therefore, already among the tenacious axes of argument, globally and locally.

III

Alienation from the Wider Struggle : A Challenge for the Entire WSF

However, there is more. Certain decisions taken by the Nairobi Forum's organising authorities also added a very particular kind of perception that distanced it from new expressions of struggles for widening the margins of democracies that are expressing themselves in different countries. This came through not only as a question of negating a more active incorporation of the visibility of the right to sexual orientation; it also showed itself in analytical and political restrictions on workers' struggles. This situation was created by the fact that the International Labour Organisation's proposal of Decent Work was adopted without debate by the African organisers of the Forum, instead of being considered as only a proposal and not the definitive approach to labour.¹⁴ We must also keep in mind the almost complete non-existence, in Nairobi, of the Youth Camp, which was without doubt a massive strength of previous Forums.¹⁵ In Nairobi, the Camp had not more than 250 people, according to different sources.

These are not insignificant topics and spaces; they are expressions of new matters and new presences that loomed over this Forum, limiting its tendency and capability for thought and self-criticism. This is the reason why these exclusions concern not only feminists, LGBTT movements, young people, or workers, but also the entire Forum and the entire IC. What it is under examination here is not the WSF or the Nairobi Forum but particular practices that can and need to be recognised and considered as lessons learned for a clear statement on the dynamics of organising a Forum, and on ways of democratic operation by the organisers. The WSF's Charter of Principles contains both the scope and also limitations for participation in the Forum, and fundamentalist positions on issues such as women's rights and sexual diversity go against its spirit. We need therefore to state clearly the limitless space that the WSF can provide for all those people, organisations, and movements that agree with the Charter of Principles, and with the political and cultural changes it encompasses.

The task we have ahead of us, in Shannon Walsh's words, is "not to romanticise our solidarities but to analyse our exclusions".¹⁶

Translation : Pablo Fernández de Córdoba, with further work by Peter Waterman and Jai Sen

Notes

- 1 Anon 2006.
- 2 Brah 2004.
- 3 Teivainen 2006.
- 4 Ávila 2003.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Teivainen 2006.
- 7 Wallerstein 2007. This decision of allowing mobilisations and actions, specific or as a whole, of social movements and nets and NGOs meeting in the Forum has been made possible thanks to the decision to carry out the WSF every two years.
- 8 Ferrari 2007.
- 9 Oloo 2007.
- 10 Amin, Kadenyeka, Kamara, and ors, January 2007.
- 11 For the decision that was taken at the meeting of the WSF's International Council in Nairobi to formulate such rules and to establish a Working Group on Assessment and Guiding Principles to do this, see : World Social Forum Technical Office, nd, c. February 2007, pp 2 + 5. To the best of our knowledge however, the final report of this Working Group / Commission has not yet been posted. We have not been able to trace it despite several requests for copies and/or availability information both to the WSF International Office and the main author. For a first draft, see Raina 2007 - *Eds, June 2009* .
- 12 At the meeting of the International Council of the WSF in Nairobi, held immediately after the Forum, Samir Amin was the first to speak and the first to condemn the discrimination against the activists of struggles for sexual orientation, followed later by other members of the Council.
- 13 Letter to the IC, ' Another World is Possible in Diversity : Affirming the Struggle for Sexual and Reproductive Rights' . This letter, initially signed by Programa Democracia y Transformación Global at San Marcos-Lima University, Articulación Feminista Marcosur, Centro Flora Tristán, ABONG, and Instituto Paulo Freire, subsequently received a significant number of additional signatories (Programa de Estudios sobre Democracia y Transformación Global, Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, Red por la Democratización Global – Perú, Articulación Feminista Marcosur, ABONG, and Instituto Paulo Freire, January 2008 [sic; 2007]).
- 14 Waterman 2007b.
- 15 For a discussion of the role of the International Youth Camp in the WSF in Brazil, see the essay by Rodrigo Nunes in this book (Nunes 2012) – *Eds* .

16 Walsh 2007. See also the revised version of this essay in this volume (Walsh 2012) - *Eds*.

The WSF At Test : Extraversion And Controversies During The World Social Forum In Nairobi, 2007 ¹

Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle and Nicolas Haeringer

The 2007 edition of the World Social Forum (WSF) aimed at further 'globalising' this alterglobalist event. After several editions in Porto Alegre, the Forum moved to Mumbai (2004) and then to three different continents (Polycentric edition, 2006) before coming to Nairobi in 2007. Each time, the challenge was to translate a political object into new social and political contexts. The sociology of political exports focuses on changes that occur when political models are exported from one place to another.² The WSF is not an exception, as was proven by the many controversies born during and after the 2007 edition.

Active participants in the WSF process launched these controversies, fed them, and took them over. Indeed, the founding principles of the Forum were at stake, as, in the eyes of many, the way the Forum had been organised broke these principles. For instance, a tense debate arose on the issue of entry fees : They were said to have prevented the poorest from joining. Activists also denounced sponsorship by transnational firms; moreover, they criticised the opacity and the nepotism of the organising process effected by the Kenyan Organising Committee (KOC). These controversies developed through oral reactions and written contributions as much as through protests during the Forum itself.

Once the Forum was over, actors involved in the WSF process have considered these controversies as raising 'ethical issues'. Several practices clashed with what can be considered the **ethos** of the Forum – as defined in its Charter of Principles.³ This normative vision, even if stimulating, is not ours. We will only look at the impact that these controversies have had on the Forum's normative principles in our conclusion.

Our main hypothesis is that the controversies were produced by the transfer of the WSF into the Kenyan context. We suggest that conflicts and divergences linked to the 2007 edition (such as its commercialisation, lack of popular mobilisation, undemocratic nature of the organising process, etc) should also be seen as spaces and opportunities to negotiate and discuss activist extraversions. They arise out of profound inequalities between activists from the North and from the South, inequalities whose existence tends to be denied within alterglobalist spaces because of stress on discourses on horizontality and openness. Moreover, several controversies were amplified by the complex position of international organisers : Should they interfere with the process, or let Kenyan and African activists own it from beginning to end ?

By definition, extraversion leads to the dependency of the African continent vis-à-vis the outside world as much as it refers to the opportunities that it opens up.⁴ A priori, it is compatible with the transnational activism that social forums push for, through cooperation between activists from across the world. However, it also clearly and profoundly contrasts with alterglobalist forms of activism : Extraversion relies on fundamental inequalities among activists. Moreover, it reflects (not to mention prolongs) asymmetry (not to mention dependency). Notwithstanding the transnational cooperation that is so much a part of the Global Justice Movement (GJM), the different forms of dependency between the African continent and the outside world (including through activism) generate specific forms of cooperation and modes of action that eventually contradict the way that alterglobalist activists see their own practices. Thus – we suggest – the controversies that arose in Nairobi around 'heretical practices ' should be a way to **understand** and **negotiate** what the acceptable forms of cooperation are. By negotiation we imply the possibility of reaffirming, even partially,

a common activist **ethos** , as much as it requires the recognition, even implicitly, of inequalities and dependencies between activists that contradict alterglobalist principles.

Through the analysis of three main controversies, we will see that extraversion and its effects were at the heart of the arguments exchanged. Each camp proposed one way to interpret adjustments required by the test of extraversion.

The first controversy deals with deficiencies in the organising process. Here, the actors are mostly Kenyans. The negotiation it opens addresses the place of different Kenyan groups and activists in transnational networks – connections being a key resource for African activists. Local dynamics also contribute to explain this struggle for the monopoly of extraversion in Kenya.

The second controversy is around the access of the poor to the Forum. Kenyan groups led this controversy, together with South African and European ones. In fact, the debate about the participation of the poor, which arises at every edition of the Forum, is a key one to justify the WSF's role and utility. In this case, the sense of guilt and the ignorance of some foreign activists were used to fuel the controversy. Finally, the last controversy concerns the Forum's commercialisation : Market logics that spoiled the activist and non-profit spirit of the Forum. It also indicates the economic dependency of African activism.

I

Democracy and the World Social Forum Organising Process – Defaults and Deficiencies
The Porto Alegre Charter says that democratic principles should guide the Forum throughout its organisation and realisation. Kenyan organisers, however, have been accused of contravening them : It has been said that they acted in an authoritarian manner, excluded several groups and activists, and may even have been corrupt.⁵ At first internal, the criticisms became public through several releases and communiqués. Publicity grew dramatically during the Forum, notably through a speech made by a Kenyan activist, Wangui Mbatia, during a meeting organised on the eve of the Forum by the Centre de recherche et d'informations pour le développement (CRID), a French NGO. Supported by activists from the No Vox network, the young woman was given a space to deliver a speech that denounced the way in which the Forum had been organised, and to present the consequences this had had on the participation of the poor. Other activists later raised even more explicit accusations, forcing organisers to answer, and giving them the opportunity to counter-attack. One of the members of the KOC reiterated the criticisms very vividly a few weeks after the Forum.⁶

Whereas the criticisms were very serious (authoritarianism, corruption, nepotism, etc), the answers were often weak and indirect.⁷ For instance, the organisers justified the concentration of the decision-making process in the hands of very few persons by the difficulties they had in mobilising volunteers. Answers to accusations also consisted of attempts to discredit those who raised them. The fact that this controversy was mostly between Kenyans probably explains the relative weakness of the justifications. Unlike in the other controversies, foreign activists have not been directly involved in this conflict. An Indian member of the WSF's International Council (IC) explained that the IC's fear of being accused of being paternalist prevented its full involvement.⁸ So what was really at stake was the balance of strength within the Kenyan activist space.

Indeed, the logic of co-optation, and social or political affinities linked to the history of Kenyan activism, largely determined participation in the organising process, no matter if this bypassed the WSF's democratic principles. The narrow access to transnational networks induced by the specificity of extraversion explains why charges were so dramatically formulated, and highlights the monopolisation of the Forum in Kenya by a few individuals. Indeed, extraversion turns international contacts into a crucial resource. Thus, it can push actors to competition or lead to the personalisation of activist practices, rather than to

cooperation.

Co-optation and monopolisation of the transnational space

Forced or deliberate logics of cooptation and exclusion have narrowed the scope of the Forum's organisers to a few individuals. By reading minutes of the KOC's weekly meetings, we have been able to distinguish five different groups. Three activists composed the heart of the secretariat. Relatives or well-known activists formed the second group. Volunteers and staff members from the two organisations which supported the process — the Social Development Network (SODNET) and Southern and Eastern African Trade Information and Negotiations Institute (SEATINI) — composed the third group, whereas volunteers from Eastern Africa and ENDA-Tiers Monde (the key organisation of the African Social Forum) formed the fourth. Finally, international volunteers, mostly in charge of technical issues, composed the last one.

Mutual acquaintance and co-optation is fundamental to explain how the first two groups were formed. Four members of these groups were active opponents (and eventually political prisoners) of the Moi regime in Kenya during the 80s. This common experience explains their bond. Beyond this, a few of them were also militants in the same organisation. They were jailed or chose exile together. Tight links only partially explain, however, why the organising process relied only on so few activists, but it is probably enough to understand why they chose not to unveil the malfunctioning they experienced long before the Forum took place; members of these two groups, belonging to close political generations, showed their loyalty to each other, even if they talked informally about divergences and conflicts.⁹

Members of these first circles had also been socialised into transnational networks since the mid 90s, participating in World Trade Organisation (WTO) counter-summits and also in some United Nations conferences. One of them had been a member of the WSF's IC since the beginning, whereas two others joined it before the 2007 Forum. There is no doubt that this transnational experience was a central resource that gave credibility to the Kenyan candidacy to host the WSF's world meeting, and later on, also to the organising process. Living in Kenya (as opposed to have long been in exile) was also considered an important factor in legitimising some activists over others.

The process of the monopolisation of international connections, which did not start with organising the Nairobi Forum, was another way in which many activists were excluded, with varied impacts. For those already connected to other transnational networks, exclusion was nothing more than a disappointment. Indeed, activists included in other networks had not developed much interest and ambition in organising the Forum as they did not need it to create more contact with foreign organisations. However, they participated actively through workshops. Members of big NGOs such as FEMNET (a pan-African network of feminist associations), the Kenyan leg of the FIDA (a federation of female lawyers), and the Kenya Land Alliance expressed their disappointment not to have been involved in the preparatory process, but could afford to not take part in the organising process.¹⁰ But for others, the exclusion meant losing the chance to acquire a status at national and international levels. Whereas the former group concentrated on their own seminars and workshops, it was the latter that launched the debate on the lack of democracy within the KOC. Indeed, controversies were centrally linked to the relation that Kenyan activists have with transnational spaces.

Ambiguous positioning, overlaps, and African activist extraversions

Those who started the controversy about exclusion and authoritarianism used the WSF as a lever to appear as 'virgin' activists, and took full advantage of this perception. By playing on the ignorance of foreign participants as well as on the mistakes made by Forum organisers, they managed to get themselves on the international stage, and be considered as fully part of the alterglobalist movement. On the other side, several members of the KOC have used the controversies as opportunities to create some distance between them and the most criticised

organisers.

For instance, the Kenyan Confederation of Trade Unions (COTU) managed to use the Nairobi WSF very well as an opportunity to come back actively into the Kenyan activist space after several years of absence, not to say banishment.¹¹ The COTU sent an open letter to the IC a few weeks before the Forum started, claiming that it had been excluded from the organising process. Notwithstanding this claim, the Confederation was very visible during the opening march, and organised many activities during the Forum. This active participation contrasts with the Confederation's rather weak activity over the last decade. Its history as the trade union wing of the former one-party system had delegitimised it in the eyes of Kenyan civil society. When new sectoral trade unions came to be created, with the support of NGOs, it was marginalised. The WSF was thus an opportunity for the COTU to find a new virginity in the eyes of foreign participants, who were very eager to collaborate with an organisation that could claim to be heir to both Makhan Singh and Tom Mboya.¹²

Wangui Mbatia is another good example of how to acquire activist virginity through the Forum. She is a brilliant speaker, and was able to catch the attention of both the media and Forum participants through her fiery denunciation of the Forum and its organising committee's slump. Confronted by the rise of this new emblematic figure supported by radical activists (notably from No Vox¹³ and the Comité pour l'annulation de la dette du Tiers Monde, CADTM), some Kenyans started to raise acerbic criticisms against her. Beyond attacking her capacities and experience as a lawyer, sordid rumours about her past started circulating, in order to disqualify her as a legitimate speaker.

Despite this, the Nairobi WSF witnessed her birth as an international activist. She came to light, as mentioned above, during an evening organised by a French NGO platform on the eve of the Forum, when, speaking in the name of the People's Parliament (or Bunge la Wananchi, in Kiswahili), an organisation of ordinary citizens and poor people of Nairobi,¹⁴ she brilliantly denounced the entry fees to the Forum. Later on she joined, and sometimes initiated, several protests during the Forum, which were widely reported in the national and international press. In the many interviews she gave the press or researchers, and also in her organisation's assessment of the WSF, she always specified that her criticisms were not aimed at calling the WSF into question. Rather, her objective was to stimulate participation in the Forum. Thus, the criticisms she raised did not question the very existence of the Forum, an attitude welcomed by other alterglobalist figures.¹⁵

Mbatia, an activist coming out from nowhere, thus managed, while speaking in the name of the poor, to play the role of an outsider in order to be better included in the movement. Indeed, thanks to her recent fame she is now a part of GJM networks; for instance, she was invited to join and speak at the G8 counter-summit in Germany in June 2007, only a few days after having participated in the IC meeting in Berlin, invited by several German organisations to debate with Chico Whitaker. Thus, one of this controversy's direct consequences was that those who created / led it gained both a greater share of transnational contacts, and greater inclusion in the Forum process.

II

From WSF 2007 to WSF Process – Access and Exclusion from the Space and its Context
Every edition of the Forum aims not only to strengthen links and cooperation among participants, but also to broaden its scope (geographic, social, and thematic, as also political and cultural). During its first editions, the attention paid to the impact of diversity was rather quantitative: It was seen to be achieved through the constant growth in the number of participants, and so in the number of countries 'represented', and in the activities proposed.¹⁶ As expected even by organisers, WSF Nairobi was the first ebb in this tide, because of the costs of transport, lack of funds, etc... But, despite these factors, the organisers were

criticised for having failed to mobilise even local participants, notably from among the poor.

At the same time, however, the origins of this controversy are also specific to the Kenyan activist space, and flow from the logics of extraversion itself, which are then produced by recurrent conflicts between the central actors of the Nairobi Forum. The conjunction of these three dynamics explains why the controversy became so intense.

From mobilisation for the Forum to mobilisation in, and in some ways against, the Forum

Whereas members of the People's Parliament initiated this controversy, it broke out into the open thanks to the support it got from transnational radical activists. Eager to denounce any elitist dimension of the Forum, they immediately decided to support the position of the People's Parliament, and from that time on both mutually co-opted one another, both within the Kenyan and in transnational space. Once it had got political support from these international organisations, the People's Parliament was able to host its own activities in the park where it usually met. The members of No Vox soon considered these activities as being an 'autonomous space' to the Forum : The People's Parliament initiative was organised outside of the Forum 's venue, with lesser means. Thus, No Vox could easily read this initiative with its own experience and practices of Social Forums; indeed, the No Vox network has always been involved in Social Forums "one step inside, one step outside". Simultaneously, members of the People's Parliament also initiated and / or joined protests in front of the Forum's gates, in order to obtain the right to enter for free. On the Forum's fourth day, radical activists invaded and took over one of the restaurants within the Forum because its owner was a relative of the then internal security minister, whose "political story [was] not clean",¹⁷ and handed out food to children from a neighbouring slum who had by then entered the Forum's venue.

Mobilisations organised within the Forum and at its margins, as well as parallel encounters, are not rare in the history of the Forum. Every edition has been an opportunity for direct actions, while autonomous spaces, and, sometimes, counter-forums attract participants from the 'regular' Forum.¹⁸ Nevertheless, how these actions evolved in Nairobi, as well as the deployment of criticisms and the justifications they led to, highlight the way extraversion confronts the forms and modes of cooperation specific to social forums.

In order to justify the actions they initiated, activists and organisations criticised the choice of organising the Forum far from the city centre, at a stadium that one could only reach by expensive transport. They also denounced the fact that the venue was too huge – and thus too expensive – and that it had no activist tradition. On the other side, the organisers responded by denouncing the paternalist attitude of Northern organisations that had come to Nairobi in order to "test revolutionary strategies which they don't manage to implement in their own countries".¹⁹ The main organiser, Edward Oyugi, warned the Northern organisations not to forget that participation of the poor is a recurrent issue that the WSF hardly manages to handle.

The organisers, in fact, never directly answered the criticisms that were raised : Rather, they tried to shift the controversy to another stage. Their arguments aimed at discrediting international protagonists while also reducing the conflict to a secondary issue, even within the Kenyan space. They also answered criticisms regarding the fees by explaining that these were cheaper than those proposed by the IC – and that fees were unavoidable in order to guarantee the Forum's financial autonomy. They argued that, indeed, local organising committees are supposed to self-fund the Forum, that is to try and make Africans the owners of the process, rather than letting Northern funders 'steal' it from them. And that this is what the fees represented.

Several issues explain why this dispute turned out to be so vivid. First, the social limits to the Forum's openness (limits usually denied by most participants) have to be stressed. Research

on the socio-demography of participants in Social Forums has shown that participants are not drawn from globalisation's 'losers', or victims.²⁰ Rather, participants tend to be social movement entrepreneurs or 'rooted cosmopolitans'.²¹ Indeed, participating in the Forum requires mobilising major individual and collective resources, whether financial (to be able to travel to the Forum) or social and cultural. But these are not equally available to all activists. Even superficially, it is evident that such a distortion and division could potentially cause havoc at a Forum held on a continent that is considered as **the** symbol of the disastrous effects of neoliberal globalisation.

In this context, the People's Parliament appears as a group representative of the issues raised by the participation of the poor : It has limited resources (in terms of finance and of connections to transnational networks). Thus, standing at the Forum's margins,²² its members mobilised expertise of one of its few resources and 'scandal' as one tactic of mobilisation.²³

First, the organisation presented itself as an expert on the local social context. It claimed to represent a generic oppression that it would not be the only one to endure but that all grassroots organisations intending to participate in the Forum would also undergo. For instance, the members refused to negotiate lower fees only for their own activists claiming that entry should be free for any Kenyan. They very cleverly managed to present themselves as the counter to the KOC, emphasising the meetings they had been holding for the last fifteen years, gathering participants who barely spoke English, and presenting their organisation key for any successful mobilisation in Kenya.

Second, members of the People's Parliament contributed to raising a public 'scandal', by pointing out a chain of responsibilities. Their argument aimed at showing that decisions made by the Forum's organisers had a direct impact on their own participation and situation. Thus, they built their cause as a generic one, which any participant in the Forum could join and support. The protests they initiated made them very visible and thereby highlighted their other activities. Moreover, by taking the positions they did, they forced Forum participants to take sides. To do so, they used a speech that based its arguments on the question of culpability : For instance, Mbatia said several times to a foreign audience : "We welcome you even if we are not welcome in the Forum",²⁴ and explained that "we participate in the Forum with hungry stomachs" – because they had to spend the little money they had for the registration fees needed to enter the Forum.²⁵

By doing this, they transformed their excluded organisation into a resource group, a legitimate partner in the eyes of foreign participants who were eager to oppose the exclusion of Kenyan grassroots activists from the WSF. From then on, the People's Parliament also turned into a 'resource group' that radical international organisations could mobilise. Indeed, these organisations did not necessarily have local connections. In order to be able to face attacks about their supposed "paternalism"²⁶ or "neo-colonialism"²⁷ they were eager to show their close connections with African groups, if possible Kenyan ones. For instance, the chairman of a meeting attended by very few Africans and aiming at preparing the Social Movement Assembly, explained that "mobilising Africans so that they join the Assembly is a collective task".²⁸ And, during the Assembly itself, the floor was first and foremost opened to African activists.

Importing the Forum and its recurrent conflicts into a specific context

Besides the local competition and the logic of extraversion, this controversy about the participation of the poor also grew out of conflicts and tensions in which central actors in the WSF process are engaged.

Indeed, from the first Forum on, central actors of the WSF have debated its nature and objectives. One of the most recurrent controversies addresses the prohibition of any final declaration : Whereas some have tried to make the Social Movement Assembly the place where to produce a final document, other actors have proposed different methodologies to

collect and 'systematise' proposals discussed during the different activities held during a Forum. The 2007 WSF offered a new context in which to refresh this longstanding debate. The IC had decided that the last day would be dedicated to 'articulations', through the possibility of hosting self-organised spaces for convergence. For the promoters of the Social Movements Assembly (SMA), however, this was nothing but an attempt to hijack their process. Indeed, they had good reasons to think so: The World March of Women had registered an activity for that day that was explicitly titled Assembly of Social Movements. Instead of programming it on the last time slot as is usually done, the Forum organisers decided to place it in the morning when many thematic assemblies were held – as a first step towards the SMA itself. Moreover, because very little information was available, the space dedicated to the convergence was prepared only at the last moment, and only by a dozen IC members. As many as twenty-one spaces were planned, which contradicted the basic idea of building convergences. Thus, the promoters of the SMA came to Nairobi in order to raise the debate – assuming that this would open up a conflict whose latent nature is, in their eyes, an obstacle to change.

Benefiting from the conflict that the People's Parliament had launched, the SMA denounced the slump of the WSF process and argued that the Forum was increasingly monopolised by rich organisers who had less and less connections with grassroots organisations. They criticised the omnipresence of big NGOs and stressed that the Forum was not created for rich organisations. Conversely, the organisers pointed out that the radical organisations had no knowledge of African or Kenyan realities. In reply, SMA promoters argued that they were only supporting a dynamics initiated by Kenyan groups. A letter was then sent to the IC, signed by a few hundred Kenyan self-help groups and by a dozen transnational activists, stating that "It is very easy to discredit people, be it from the South or from the North, who make criticisms. We, the signatories of the text, are activists from the South as well as from the North of this planet, who work to reinforce the WSF and are fighting to root it deep in the struggles for the social emancipation".²⁹

The forms taken both by the criticisms and the justifications express well the composite nature of the controversies being analysed – controversies located at the crossings of logics that are specific to African activism (extraversion) and the forms of cooperation developed within Social Forums (cold but horizontal). The former clash with the latter, as they deny inequalities existing within alterglobalist space.

III

The WSF, Activism, and Money

Lack of money to organise the Forum has been an issue since its first edition. However, this has never really been debated. In Nairobi, the controversy revolved much more around the activists' relation to money. It was addressed through discussions on the Forum's commercialisation, and denounced as being incompatible with alterglobalist mottos – and also through the attitude of several protagonists (interpreters and volunteers who were actually paid), which did not correspond to the classic activist 'ethos' based on pure voluntarism.

*The WSF and the economy of 'alter-tourism'*³⁰

The organisers of the Nairobi Forum were accused of having let commercial firms enter this activist-sanctuary and of having developed a dubious relationship with money. Each side of the criticism refers to a specific principle of GJM activism: The WSF is viewed as a utopia and an alternative space, and alterglobalist activism is considered a non-profit and free engagement. The first of these two principles stresses the necessity of deepening and strengthening alternative practices to capitalism within the Forum itself: To protect the environment, promote fair-trade and free-access to services (water, for example), etc. The sponsorship of the event by a transnational firm such as Celtel contradicted this principle and was used as the basis for criticism. The claim was far from new and thus contributed only to re-activating pre-

existing divides, staked on the Forum's (and its promoters') level of purity. This criticism was probably the most debated because of its routine nature.

A second debate, on how several actors had allegedly financially exploited the WSF, contributed to the controversial climate on the issue of the WSF and money. The following quote, from a member of an organisation that actively criticised the 2007 WSF, refers to this debate : "Is the Forum becoming an opportunity for small and big local capitalists to make business at the expense of alterglobalist tourists, instead of remaining a space of meeting and convergence ? This unacceptable switch leads several organisations (including the CADTM) to state, 'The WSF is not for sale' ".³¹

Beyond Celtel's sponsorship, small businesses or young people from townships also saw the Forum as an economic opportunity. Far from just taking a moralist point of view, it is then necessary to analyse the socio-economic conditions of the production of the WSF in order to understand this 'heretical' use of an alterglobalist event. As far back as 2005, a member of the KOC had already presented the WSF to the press as an opportunity for the Kenyan tourist economy.³² Due to the presence of UN agencies and because of its strategic geographic situation, Kenya has specialised in the organisation of big international conferences. These gatherings are formidable economic opportunities for the tourism sector, which is the most lucrative sector of the Kenyan economy. Thus, national authorities, entrepreneurs as well as some activists, considered the WSF similar to any other international event organised in Nairobi. Big firms were, of course, the first ones to think about the Forum as a potential resource, but where they and the organisers of Nairobi were both seeing the Forum as an opportunity – one for its commercial possibilities, the other for the connections it offered to the international level. Safaricom and, later Celtel, were contacted to sponsor the Forum, which Celtel eventually did, using its marketing experience.

The economic use of the WSF by the press was less expected. Although the Forum's communication strategies started very late, the media team contacted the biggest daily newspaper, the Standard , to build a partnership. During a meeting at the KOC's offices, two 'business executives' from the Standard proposed to sell "mediatic space" to the Forum.³³ After a few initial minutes of misunderstanding, one of them explained, "**We believed that this was a conference like the UN ones**" and kept on trying to sell TV space to the media team, which was outraged. Articles would later report the event, but there was no further involvement of newspapers in the Forum..

Moreover, small Kenyan groups and some activists also tried to take advantage of the Forum. For instance, a well-known human rights activist was looking forward to renting home stays for USD 35 a night. The price was decided by the KOC itself and reflected its vision of its alterglobalist clientele – as a means to gather funds for their organisations. This is not an exception. Other human rights activists also explained, a few days before the event, that they intended to create t-shirts with a small craftsman because "there is no reason for not making some money".³⁴ Much more visible were the small sellers that entered the Forum venue – especially after the gates were opened to everybody. A Kenyan journalist reported the following dialogue, expressing the opinion of small sellers towards this gathering: "A garment seller, Ms Margaret Kamau, and a craft seller, M Simon Mwangi, ask the government to organise such events more frequently in the future, in order to strengthen their business".³⁵

It is clear that there were several understandings about the nature of the Forum, some of them being irreconcilable. They were, however, less obvious in the case of the resources it could generate. The Kenyan economy, based on tourism, contributes to the development of a 'mass-craft', and this craft found a captive, generous, and enthusiastic clientele within the Forum. Thus, the Forum's 'commercialisation' was a way of appropriating the mobilisation by a very large spectrum of actors.

The root of blame : Routine and perverse effects of international aid

The material conditions explaining these ‘ heretical ’ practices do not exhaust the arguments used by the protagonists of this controversy. Indeed, in its reports, the KOC answers the accusations of having sold the Forum to corporate firms by mobilising two different arguments. First, calling in commercial funds was a way to be independent from external resources, in particular from Northern activists. Moreover, the practices criticised as incompatible with the Forum’s spirit (such as paying volunteers) were results of a progressive corruption of African activism by international assistance, which tends to commodify social relationships. Here, the justification plays with the culpability of Northern NGOs. It also relies on a criticism of the perverse effects of international cooperation – on which most NGOs agree.

First, in order to make Northern activists feel guilty, the local organisers described how humiliating contacts with Northern funders were. The report from the secretariat states :

“Resource mobilisation was slow and, at times, a frustrating and humiliating affair. Even before we embarked on setting up structures of the WSF 2007 Organising Committee **some donors treated the organisers as if they have had a record of serial embezzlement of funds. To this extent it was a case of ‘guilty until proved otherwise’.** Members of the Organising Committee were subjected to forensic interrogation that nearly led to the abandonment of the undertaking”.³⁶

This aims at explaining the deficit of the Forum, but also at making Northern activists who raised criticisms responsible for it : While the alterglobalist discourse denounces the perverse effects of international aid and its unequal system, this criticism argues that such practices are pervasive within the Forum itself. The unveiling of this aid's consequences on the economy of voluntarism completes this first argument.

Indeed, volunteers working for the WSF have definitely been considered as the archetype of the distance Nairobi organisers took with the activist ‘ethos’ : Many participants accused them of being not ‘true’ volunteers but paid service-providers. Actually, organisers agreed on an indemnification scale, in order to stimulate the participation of young people – approximately 5 Euros per day. Some of the young ‘volunteers’ were students, while others were chosen from slums, on the recommendation of their leaders – but thus, they were not real volunteers.³⁷ These young slum dwellers found in the Forum a remunerative activity like any other. Forum organisers argued that there was no other way to mobilise the youth as they were victims of a depoliticised environment, and subjects of the penetration of the capitalist spirit in all social relations in Kenya. They also stated that the spirit of voluntarism was absent from social spheres, which were perverted by external funders whose money undervalues such engagement and turn it into a means for survival.³⁸

Here again, the targeted organisers used the argument of the perverse effects of routine practices of development aid projects.³⁹ Those who usually benefit from external assistance (peasants, small sellers, etc) indeed resembled these volunteers who were strangers to the event they were involved in. Organisers not only turned the criticism around, but used the volunteers as scapegoats : They became responsible for several fraudulent practices, such as selling water which was supposed to be free. The volunteers’ greed was then made out to be the reason for other malfunctioning : Several commissions would not have worked because their facilitators did not receive the money they were looking for.⁴⁰

Through these arguments, the organisers managed to endorse the activist ethics : They re-affirmed their adhesion to GJM principles while foisting the responsibility for their breaking on the structural inequalities of South-North relations. Thus, the principles were actualised while the protagonists appeared as having no responsibility for the malfunctioning of the Forum.

Conclusions

These three controversies that we have analysed illustrate different aspects of the challenge that organisers of, and then participants in, the Nairobi WSF, faced : The insertion of an event with a transnational vocation into a context where forms of cooperation are specific, and sometimes even contradictory, to the principles articulated by the Forum.

While emphasising the importance and the role of the context, our argument has been to underline how the resources available to activists, the organisations involved, their actions repertoires, and career and activist biographies interact with and contribute to shape these mobilisations.

Thus, the 2007 WSF can be defined at a two-sided test for the Forum. The first tested its capacity to broaden the network of cooperation for which it is supposed to be the frame – that is, its capacity to include actors who were standing at its periphery, let alone those who were excluded. While putting strong ties (cooperation is organised before it takes place) together with weak ones (engagement is built on the basis of a cooperation that isolated actors initiate), the Forum creates a grey area, where actors can start competing against, or even confronting, each other openly, as opposed to its declared vocation, which is to facilitate cooperation. As soon as controversies gained importance and put the cohesion of the Forum at stake, protagonists endeavoured to dilute their criticisms. Thus, the debates that took place on these issues during the IC meeting that directly following the Nairobi Forum were much calmer than might have been expected and where searching for a renewed consensus.⁴¹

The second test concerns the incorporation of the Forum into a system of cooperation and a structure of existing ties whose principles clearly diverge. On the one side, extraversion networks, whose structures are vertical and asymmetric, and, on the other, more horizontal networks, which tend to hide any form of inequality.

What is then at stake are not only the rules and normative principles as such,⁴² but also the endurance and the depth of the consensus on which cooperation is based. Tests are moments when the possibilities for the existence of further cooperation are checked. The challenge is either to reaffirm the principles that inform the Forum or to elaborate new ones. This zone, where consensus is negotiated, is the space where groups can appear as representing a generic oppression, a resource-group, and, eventually, a new node in the GJM infrastructure of exchanges and cooperation.

The Forum's unstable and fluid nature, and also the role of reflexivity in these processes, only amplifies the changes and adjustments that are required. Whenever they deal with abstract normative principles, debates can contribute to hardening the Forum, even if it was initially meant to remain plastic. Very paradoxically, such tests can result in a growing proceduralisation of the Forum's modes of government. On the other hand, it is quite probable that new procedures alone will not be able to avoid future controversies, nor prevent further adjustments. Indeed, at its Nairobi meeting after these controversies erupted, the International Council decided to initiate an evaluation of the whole process of relations between different levels in the Forum, in order to produce a practical document of organising principles that would complete the Porto Alegre Charter.⁴³

Perhaps we need to look at what happened at Nairobi in the manner suggested by one member of the IC, as “ protest organised within the Forum [...] not [as] a shame but [as] a chance” .

Notes

1 This chapter has been written as one output of a collective survey (coordinated by Professor Johanna Siméant, University of Paris I, La Sorbonne) made during the World Social Forum in Nairobi. The aim of the survey was to understand the links between material constraints, activists' socialization, interactions between the participants in the WSF and the stake of African representation in the Forum, not only in terms of numbers but also in the content of the debates. A wide scale qualitative

methodology was seen to be most appropriate. A team of 23 French and 14 Kenyan scholars carried out collective ethnographic observations in 130 workshops of the WSF, along with 150 interviews with African activists at the forum. The ethnographic observation was aimed at observing the composition of the audience, the content, language and rhetorical form of the debates and the way in which Africa was referenced by speakers. A standardized observation sheet, combined with photos and sometimes recording or filming, was used as a support for the small ethnographic reports, which included analytical elements summarized after the workshops or the observations. The interviews had a biographical part, and another more oriented to the practical aspects of the participation in the WSF. The authors would like to thank the whole team for sharing information and comments.

2 See Dezalay and Garth 2002. [See also the essay by Sonia Alvarez in this volume – *Eds*]

3 WSF 2002.

4 See Bayart 2000 .

5 The WSF's Charter of Principles states, however, that "The WSF does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings" (Article 6). (World Social Forum 2001.)

6 Oloo, March 2007.

7 Organising Committee of WSF 2007, April 2007.

8 *L'Humanité* 2007a.

9 With the notable exception of the report mentioned above which was sent long after the end of the Forum.

10 Interviews by one of the co-author and by Aurélie Latourès, member of the research team.

11 See Oloo March 2007, pp 9-10; and Pommerolle 2002, p 301-311.

12 Both of them were figures of the Kenyan anti-colonial movement.

13 www.novox.ras.eu.org is a network of 'have not' organisations (homeless, unemployed, clandestine migrants, etc).

14 According to Wangui Mbatia (interview with the authors, January 25 2008), the People's Parliament was created at the beginning of the 1990s. It is an informal organisation of ordinary citizens meeting at the Jeevanjee's Garden, a small public park in the centre of Nairobi. The People's Parliament began to join wider national campaigns at the beginning of the new century.

15 People's Parliament 2007.

16 20,000 participants attended the first Forum and came from 117 countries. 400 activities were organised. 150,000 participants attended the Forum in 2005, came from 151 countries and could choose between 2,100 activities. These figures may not be accurate but the general increasing trend is obvious.

17 Organizing Committee of WSF 2007, p 50.

18 Such as 'Mumbai Resistance' in 2004. See International League for People's Struggles (ILPS) and others, September 2003. And for a discussion of the phenomenon of autonomous spaces in relation to the WSF, see the essay by Jeffrey S Juris in this volume (Juris 2012a).

19 Intervention during the meeting of WSF's International Council in Nairobi, right after the Forum. Participant observation by the authors.

20 Both at the World Social Forum and the European Social Forum. See <http://www.ibase.org.br/fsm2003/ingles.htm> for a discussion of the 2003 Forum and <http://www.ibase.br/modules.php?name=Conteudo&pid=1142> for a discussion of the 2005 Forum; and Agrikoliansky and Sommier 2005.

21 Tarrow 2002.

22 Whether People's Parliament was 'in' or 'out', the KCO was debated during the WSF. Wangui Mbatia acknowledged, however, that People's Parliament had been included in previous Kenyan alterglobalist Forum. It seems then that the organisation is, at the same time, 'in' and 'out' of the alterglobalist space. This ambiguity explains why it was so easy for People's Parliament to connect with No Vox, which shares this ambiguous relationship with the Forum.

23 While not attending the KCO meetings nor being in contact with IC members, they were not able to claim for free entry fees inside the organising structures. On similar internal logic about the making of the programme before the European Social Forum, see Éric Agrikoliansky and Dominique Cardon 2005.

24 Intervention of Wangui Mbatia at a preparatory meeting of the Social Movement Assembly on the eve of the Forum. Observation by one of the authors.

25 Intervention of Wangui Mbatia at the evening organised by CRID on the opening day of the Forum. Observation by the authors.

26 Intervention of Onyango Oloo during the International Council meeting in Nairobi. Observation by the authors.

27 Intervention of Edward Oyugi during the International Council meeting in Nairobi. Observation by the authors.

28 Participant observation by the authors.

29 Collective contribution to the debates within the International Council of the World Social Forum to take place at Berlin from May 29th to 31st 2007, sent on the 22nd of May on the IC mailing list. The signatures of the Kenyan self-help groups were added on May 28. The letter was sent twice, the second time with only "new signatures" as a head, then the very same letter plus 4 new signatures on May 26th + "registered Kenyan groups" (sent by Wangui Mbatia, KENGO, Kenya).

- 30 These words are borrowed from a critical observer of these practices; see next footnote for reference. Here, our aim is only to describe and analyse these economic logics.
- 31 Bonfond 2007.
- 32 Daily Nation 2005.
- 33 Observation by one of the authors, January 10 2007.
- 34 Informal talks with these activists, during January 5-20 2007.
- 35 Daily Nation 2007.
- 36 Organizing Committee of WSF 2007, p 23.
- 37 As reported in L'Humanité 2007b
- 38 Organizing Committee of WSF 2007, p 31.
- 39 See, for instance, de Sardan 1995.
- 40 Organizing Committee of WSF 2007, p 60.
- 41 A French participant stated that: "We should not question the organisers too much as we will have problems with our partners back in France." Observation by one of the authors of a preparatory meeting to the Social Movement Assembly.
- 42 Which are defined in the Porto Alegre Charter (for instance : The forum "does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants").
- 43 Raina, October 2007 – *Eds* .

The Second US Social Forum : What Did We Accomplish ?

Michael Leon Guerrero

I

Unprecedented Challenges, New Opportunities

Two of the greatest historical challenges ever to face a generation are before us now. The global economy is facing the most severe crisis in nearly a century, with 50 million additional people worldwide descending into poverty over the past two years. And the backdrop of the economic collapse is an ecological crisis that grows increasingly urgent and threatens to be fatal to life on the planet. In both cases, economic and political leaders have been at best slow to respond, at worst complicit in creating the crises. Drastic and fundamental changes are needed, yet it is becoming increasingly clear that political leaders in the industrialised countries are failing to define the bold and necessary steps to overcome these challenges.

In addition, racism is on the rise globally, with right-wing and fascist organisations gaining a base of support and political influence in Europe and the US. Left political leaders in Latin America are fighting a wave of assaults by the Right – in some cases at the ballot box (Brazil), in others at the point of a gun (Honduras, Ecuador). Migrants from the Global South and Eastern Europe are being persecuted throughout Europe and the US. Immigration has become one of the main battlegrounds in US politics. Over 14 million undocumented people currently live in the US - hailing from all corners of the globe, but primarily from Latin America. The repression against immigrants has been intense – ranging from brutal exploitation in the workplace to beatings and assassinations by vigilantes and border patrol. Workplace raids have not subsided under Obama, who continues to militarise the border region and supports laws that grant the power to enforce immigration law to local and state law enforcement. This has emboldened racists like Sheriff Joe Arpaio in Arizona to conduct his own raids and to imprison and humiliate immigrants.

Lost in the public debate over immigration are the root causes – particularly displacement caused by US wars and occupations and trade and economic policies. Rarely is the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) referenced, despite the fact that this resulted in the displacement of 6 million farmers from the Mexican countryside. This social devastation has been by design, creating a massive low-wage workforce that would power the factories migrating from the US and the border region between the US and Mexico to the interior of Mexico. By the 1990s General Motors was the largest employer in Mexico, leaving behind hundreds of thousands of unionised workers in the US and employing Mexican workers at one-tenth of the cost.

At the beginning of the decade many of the US factories left Mexico for even lower wages in China. Within a few short years hundreds of thousands of people were left unemployed and landless in the US-Mexico border region. Two major trends then took place – a massive increase in migration to the US, and the expansion of the drug trade. Although trafficking of drugs through the US was a major feature of the trade, internal markets throughout Mexico and powerful and deadly cartels proliferated. Violence in border cities has exploded, first with a wave of killings of hundreds of young women in Ciudad Juarez. Now assassinations and random violence has become commonplace throughout the country as rival drug cartels fight to control their markets and political influence. The US and Mexico governments then declared a 'War on Drugs', investing billions in military infrastructure within Mexico and the border region.

Meanwhile in the US, workers have seen a steady decline in their wages and benefits

and an increase in their dependency on credit. As Samir Amin has written, the global economy has been in decline since the 1970s – the result of a new imperialist globalisation by oligopolies in the US, Europe, and Japan and exercised through the control of technology, financial markets, and the planet's natural resources. The crisis only deepened and accelerated under the administration of US President George W Bush.¹

Deregulation of the banking industry under Bush and the US Congress opened the door for devious and exploitive predatory lending schemes. Millions of people began to buy homes as a stable, long-term investment with unreasonable and unsustainable loan agreements. As many of these millions defaulted on their loans, the entire system of global finance began to unravel in 2007. Official unemployment in the United States reached double-digit figures for the first time in three decades, and will remain at that level for quite some time. Many people lost their homes to foreclosure. Meanwhile public services and the tax base had been stripped away for two generations by neoliberal economic policies, so many local and state governments were not prepared to support the needs of a new generation falling into poverty and homelessness. Thirty-seven of the 50 states were experiencing a budget crisis. By the fall of 2008 it became clear to everyone that capitalism was in crisis and so was the Presidency of George W Bush.

A Peoples' Victory, But Not a Peoples' Administration

In November 2008, a ray of hope briefly shone in the United States. Barack Obama was elected as the country's first Black President. Obama was the first in the 219-year history of U.S Presidents who was not a white male. Obama's victory was possible for two primary reasons : The backlash towards the most unpopular President in the nation's history. George W Bush set new standards for incompetency and arrogance, thrusting the country into an unpopular and failed invasion and occupation of Iraq, bungling the federal response to the devastation of the city of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, and leading the world into its worst global crisis in nearly a century. By 2008 independent and liberal factions of the Republican Party's base were jumping ship and the Right was divided.

The other major factor in the success of Obama's campaign was the mobilisation of millions of new and infrequent voters - particularly youth and people of colour (Black people voted in unprecedented numbers and over 90 percent in favour of Obama). The Obama team modernised the campaign process by using new online tools like Facebook and Twitter. They also executed a brilliant media strategy. But it was the grassroots organising effort where popular power was most evident. People not only voted, they mobilised, organised, and raised money. Obama was able to raise more funds than any Presidential candidate in history – most of it through small contributions. As news of the victory spread on election night, spontaneous celebrations erupted in inner cities throughout the country. Obama's campaign was a true peoples' victory, and demonstrated the potential of the progressive forces in the US when we can bridge our differences, organise at scale and find common cause to win.

Although the election was emphatically a peoples' victory, Obama's is not necessarily a peoples' administration however. Upon taking office, the President attempted to set a tone of bipartisanship and political cooperation in order to pass comprehensive legislation to confront the economic crisis and address pressing social issues like healthcare, immigration, and climate. He allowed the reins of the economic agenda to remain in the hands of neoliberals like Federal Reserve Chairman Timothy Geithner and former Reserve Chair Paul Volcker, assuring that free-market philosophy would continue to guide economic policy. Military strategy, particularly towards the Middle East remained unchanged, with US armed forces being redeployed from Iraq to Afghanistan. Meanwhile Obama's bipartisan efforts on domestic policy quickly collapsed, forcing the Democrats to act unilaterally to pass the President's legislation on healthcare and financial reform, but not without significant compromises to corporate America.

The organising and online infrastructure and the millions of volunteers were organised into a new formation, Organizing for America.² This formation was however made an adjunct to the Democratic Party and the Obama administration agenda. This was a lost opportunity to create an independent movement force for progressive reform.

The backlash by the Right and conservative forces to Obama's election has been fierce. Racist hate crimes have increased. White supremacy organisations have proliferated, and the rapid rise of the Tea Party has pushed the political agenda of the Republican Party (and subsequently the Obama administration) further to the right. The Tea Party (TP) has co-opted tactics developed by Move On and the Obama campaign – using online social networking tools to organise social gatherings promoting libertarian economic principles. Other forces have joined the movement as well, including groups promoting a socially conservative anti-immigrant, anti-gay, and gender rights agenda. The TP is well resourced by corporations and billionaire investors, and where Fox News is giving the organisation 24-hour visibility across the country. Unlike Organizing for America, however, the Tea Party has organised on the margins of the Republican Party, forcing the Republicans to answer to a more radical right-wing agenda. This strategy has had a major impact on the 2010 National Elections, unseating moderate Republican Congressional leaders and state governors in the primaries and replacing them with extremely conservative candidates to challenge Democrats in the 2012 General Elections.

II

Where are we ?

Politics within the US is thus becoming increasingly polarised, with the liberal centre forces losing ground within both major political parties. But while the Right was swift and effective in consolidating its forces after being routed in the National Elections, Left or progressive forces in the US continue to demonstrate inability to mount a strong offensive, failing to build on the momentum of the Obama electoral victory.

For decades the Left has been experiencing setbacks and decline in various sectors. Union membership has receded for many years. Labour has been under open and relentless assault by the Right, that targets the unions as the cause of all social ills - from the decline of economic productivity to public deficits and the failures of the public school system. The AFL-CIO (the American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industrial Organizations) then split into two rival federations in 2006. There are some promising developments in the labour movement, such as in the 'excluded workers' sector (mainly immigrants who are not protected by the National Labor Relations Act – farm workers, domestic workers, taxi drivers, formerly incarcerated and many more), but these efforts have yet to reach a level of scale to radically change their relationship to the broader labour movement, government, or employers.

Community organising has remained somewhat dynamic but localised mainly to municipalities and state-wide efforts. Important victories have been won to improve living and working conditions, but have not built momentum to achieve larger victories at the federal level. The largest national, grassroots organisation of poor and working people, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, was rocked by scandals including charges of voter fraud, and closed down in 2009.

For decades churches and faith-based networks were powerful allies to social movement efforts. In recent years however, conservative influences have taken hold in many churches, and membership has declined as well as support for social justice programmes. The Pope's purge of many liberation theologians in the Catholic Church in the 1990s silenced many of the most active clerical voices in support of popular movements within the US and internationally. Right wing evangelical churches have also gained strength during the past two decades, and the conservative Christian movement has become a mainstay in US politics ever since – effectively promoting an agenda of fear and hate by attacking gays, women's rights, and

immigrants, and winning at the ballot box.

Equally, left organisations and parties had been in decline for decades, the result of political divisions and counter intelligence programmes by the federal government. They were spied upon and infiltrated, and their movement leaders incarcerated and assassinated.

Meanwhile, social movements have continued to struggle with internal differences and divisions, and even more so since after Obama was elected. The immigrant rights movement, for instance, has been divided. With several efforts to pass comprehensive immigration reform in Congress, the movement has been caught up in an intense internal debate over what should be compromised in the interest of achieving legal status for the millions of undocumented people currently living in the US. In the end, a comprehensive bill is likely to fail, leaving the movement bitterly divided with no results. Similarly, the peace and justice movement lost momentum when Obama set a timetable to withdraw troops from Iraq. The movement has not coalesced around the redeployment of troops to Afghanistan, or the continued maintenance of 800 of US military bases throughout the world. The movement has historically been divided over the question of whether to include Palestine in the agenda of the movement. And One Sky, the powerful national coalition organised to win comprehensive legislation on climate change and green jobs, recently and publicly announced that it has failed – blaming its failure on focusing its energy and resources on a legislative strategy at the cost of building a grassroots movement committed to reforming climate policy.³

III

Another US is Possible !

It is within this context that the second United States Social Forum (USSF2) was convened in Detroit, Michigan, in June 2010, and must be understood. In a sentence, the USSF2 was a very significant achievement for progressive movements in the US. Roughly 18,000 people attended, representing 1,800 organisations. Just as its predecessor in Atlanta in 2007,⁴ the USSF embodied the rich diversity of ages, races, gender identities, and cultures of an authentic people's movement in the US. The enthusiastic response to the USSF was a reflection of the desire of people fighting on the frontlines daily against social and economic repression to be part of a broader movement for transformative social change.

The social forum process was brought to the US in 2003, when the International Council (IC) of the World Social Forum (WSF) convened in Miami, Florida, coinciding its meeting with the National Gathering of Jobs with Justice (JwJ).⁵ JwJ had been involved in the IC since its inception, participating in the first WSF. At the first WSF, in 2001, social movements in the US were primarily represented by policy and solidarity organisations and the AFL-CIO. Important sectors representing the poor, the Indigenous, and people of colour constituencies were almost absent. Along with Los Angeles-based Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE) and 50 Years Is Enough (50YIE), JwJ put out a call for greater participation by grassroots organisations to participate in the WSF process.

In 2002, a delegation of about 40 organisations was organised to attend the second WSF in Porto Alegre, Brazil. SCOPE, JwJ, and 50YIE led the delegation that also included the SouthWest Organizing Project (SWOP) from Albuquerque, New Mexico, the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE), the Tennessee Economic Renewal Network (TERN) and Community Voices Heard (CVH) from New York City. The delegation was financed by small, private foundations – the French American Charitable Trust, Solidago Foundation, and the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock.

The experience of attending and participating in the WSF in Brazil was a significant learning moment for the organisations that participated. I was on this delegation. The scale of social movements represented at the WSF inspired us. Site visits were also organised to visit communities developed by the Landless Peoples' Movement (MST) and to communities active

in the process of Participatory Budgeting organised by the city of Porto Alegre. The backdrop of the WSF led to some deep and honest reflection by the US delegation about the state of organising in the US. We agreed to meet again upon returning to the US to discuss potential collaborations moving forward. At a more personal level, my visit to the Porto Alegre forum was a transformative life experience that led me onto a path where I have since then continued this work for nearly a decade.

In the summer of 2002, many of the groups who had gone to Porto Alegre along with other allies convened in Chicago, Illinois, and founded Grassroots Global Justice (GGJ), with two primary objectives :

- 1) To strengthen national movement building efforts in the US by overcoming the fragmentation of the movement by sector, issue, region, race, and culture, and –
- 2) To provide a vehicle for grassroots, base-building organisations in the US to engage proactively and strategically at the international level, including through the WSF.

GGJ was guided initially by a small steering committee. The Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) based in Ohio and North Carolina, the Southwest Workers Union (SWU) of San Antonio, Texas, Project South (PS) of Atlanta, Georgia, and the youth organisation Just Act based in Oakland, California, also joined the effort as members of the steering committee. I served on the founding steering committee on behalf of the SouthWest Organizing Project of New Mexico. In May 2005, GGJ officially became a national membership alliance, with 40 charter members.

For the first few years GGJ utilised the social forum process as the primary vehicle to accomplish our objectives. We organised delegations of up to 150 grassroots community and rank and file leaders to the WSFs, and sent representatives to observe IC meetings. The IC also engaged us in discussions about organising a United States Social Forum or a World Social Forum in the US. On both counts, GGJ resisted the call. In the case of organising a WSF within the US, we felt that visa restrictions would limit international participation – and so negate the very idea of such a social forum. The groups also felt that a USSF would be premature because of the lack of awareness of the social forum process among grassroots organisations in the US. The consequence of doing so would be that the effort would be led by policy and solidarity organisations that lacked a base in the most marginalised communities in the US. There was also some level of scepticism by some that the USSF would be no different from other national conferences – a large gathering but with little possibility of clear outcomes.

At the 2003 IC meeting in Miami however, and after a year of preparatory discussions within the US, GGJ presented a proposal to convene a national exploratory meeting of US grassroots organisations to determine whether a USSF would make sense. This meeting was convened in Washington DC in April 2004. About 50 groups attended and agreed that there was a critical need to strengthen national movement building, and that the WSF's open space format could be a good vehicle for bringing movements together under a broad tent. An initial National Planning Committee (NPC) and working groups were established, and a target date of summer 2006 to convene a first USSF.

The NPC chose Atlanta, Georgia, as the host city for the USSF – breaking with an important social forum tradition. Till this point, WSFs and European social forums had all been organised in cities with progressive governments that would provide infrastructure and financial support to the forum. Although Atlanta was home to a mostly Black population with a rich tradition of social justice organising, it was however based in one of the most conservative states within the US, and it was always clear that the USSF would not be able to count on much government support for the effort. The thinking behind locating the meeting in Atlanta was radically different.

Funding for the USSF was a major challenge due to a lack of interest by foundations.

NPC member organisations, many of whom were GGJ members, committed their own resources and staff time to the effort. Resourcing the USSF and the level of investment by poor organisations has been an ongoing challenge for the USSF. This partially contributed to the fact that the NPC did not meet face-to-face until August of 2005. At that meeting a regional process of organising was agreed to and national organisers met with members of the recently established Atlanta Organizing Committee (AOC). Within two weeks of that meeting however, Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, resulting in the devastation of New Orleans and several other coastal towns and villages. Atlanta, one of the nearer cities, became an important centre for many of the hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the floods. So the USSF was postponed for one year to allow local organisations to focus on relief efforts. The plight of the Gulf Coast would also be a theme that would define the organising process for the first USSF.⁶

Two other characteristics of the Atlanta USSF – and in time, of the USSF process - would however be controversial. One was the agreement by the NPC to focus outreach efforts on organisations building a base in Indigenous and communities of colour. A ‘We Believe’ document was adopted to that became, for those in the US who were organising the WSF process there, an addendum to the WSF Charter of Principles :⁷

(We) Believe the USSF should place the highest priority on groups that are actually doing grassroots organizing with working class people of color, who are training organizers, building long-term structures of resistance, and who can work well with other groups, seeing their participation in USSF as building the whole, not just their part of it.

This intentionality led to charges that the USSF was being exclusive and was violating the principles of the social forum.⁸ For the NPC however, the *We Believe* principles acknowledged that an open space did not necessarily imply a ‘level playing field’ and that in order for the USSF to represent the diversity of the US, those communities historically marginalised from national political spaces had to secure their place at the table from the beginning. These principles gained even more importance when the Northwest Social Forum (NWSF), planned for Seattle, Washington in the fall of 2005, was cancelled. Charges of racism and of a lack of recognition for Indigenous leadership and youth were cited as the reasons. This was a major setback as the NWSF was the broadest, most deliberate process to convene a social forum in the US to that point. Given that Seattle is in the heart of the northwest region, and the fact that the Battle in Seattle in 1999 had galvanised the Global Justice Movement, this cancellation was particularly disheartening.

But we pushed on, and the regional forums organised in Raleigh/Durham, North Carolina (the Southeast Social Forum) and Ciudad Juarez (the US-Mexico Border Social Forum), and the DC Metro Area helped to redefine the character of the USSF. These were mostly attended by poor and working class people of colour, and built critical momentum towards Atlanta.⁹

The USSF also generated controversy over the decision to recognise the social movements assembly process as integral to the forum. There has been an historical tension in the WSF often named as the **space vs movement** debate. The divide is often characterised as a struggle between non-governmental international agencies and social movement organisations, although in reality the division does not play out so cleanly. The question focuses on the core purpose of the forum – whether it be a space for dialogue and convergence where political positions cannot be taken in the name of the forum, or whether the forum should function as a convening to sharpen political unity of the movement and plan global strategies to challenge global capitalism. Historically the divide has played out where a social movement assembly is convened at each forum that is not formally recognised as part of the forum process. Organisations then sign onto a joint statement or calendar of action, but these positions do not

represent the forum.¹⁰

The USSF process however recognised that the space and movement functions are both core to the social forum, and for the Atlanta Forum established a Peoples' Movement Assembly (PMA) Working Group to organise the process. The formula that came to be articulated was that PMA would honour the open space principle by not taking positions in the name of the forum and where the USSF would acknowledge the PMA as a core part of its programme. A first PMA was organised in Ciudad Juarez at the Border Social Forum, with a summary statement developed based on feedback from the different thematic areas of the forum.¹¹

The PMA at the Atlanta USSF was however not well organised, and resulted in one of the most tense and controversial moments of the forum. The Indigenous delegation organised a takeover of the stage when one of their presenters exceeded the allotted time for presentation and had the microphone taken from him. The Indigenous people occupied the stage for several minutes. Indigenous women stepped up to make a call for unity and appreciation and understanding for the struggles of all oppressed peoples. A ceremony was conducted to 'reset the space'. In the end the incident was a defining moment for the Atlanta USSF. In the past, such inter-racial tensions would have destroyed the potential for unity and for moving forward. But at Atlanta, everyone remained in the space and committed to continuing to build together.¹²

IV

USSF Atlanta : A Movement Milestone

The first USSF, in Atlanta, was a significant achievement for grassroots social movements in the United States. It created a space for a convergence of movements, sectors, geography, race and cultures committed to social, economic and environmental justice. Over 12,000 people attended. Participants came from every state in the US, including Alaska and Hawaii, as well as the islands of Guam and Puerto Rico. Sixty-eight countries were represented. The wide variety of nearly one thousand activities captured the vibrancy and diversity of political activism in the US. Along with panels and workshops, there were Indigenous ceremonies, a family reunion picnic of formerly incarcerated people, theatre, art, music, a children's social forum, and even a soccer tournament to promote racial unity.

The forum was a community unto itself that modelled multi-culturalism, racial diversity, and youth leadership (over 20% of participants were high school or college age), and was an empowering space for all sexual identities. In the plenary sessions we heard firsthand experience from people directly involved in key issues defining our times, including the efforts to rebuild the Gulf Coast, the US war and occupation of Iraq, the impact of fossil-fuel dependency and extraction on Indigenous lands, and the plight of immigrant communities.

Especially given the political context and historical juncture at which it was taking place, as outlined in the opening section, the Atlanta USSF provided space for new social and political innovations and initiatives to take shape and emerge. Examples include the founding of the National Domestic Workers Alliance, encompassing 20 domestic worker organisations in six cities, the Southern Strategies process convened by Highlander Center, bringing together organisations from throughout the Southeast and Appalachia to share and collaborate on organising strategies, the Organizers Roundtable in New Orleans which continues to meet monthly to share information and mutual support, the South-by-Southwest process organised by Southwest Organizing Project, Southern Echo, and Southwest Workers Union, convening grassroots leadership to understand the rich history of struggle in these areas and develop state strategies to build power, the Poor Peoples' Agenda process, convened by Project South and other Atlanta-based organisations, the founding of the national Solidarity Economy Network, as part of the international movement to promote just economic relationships, the emergence of the Right to the City Alliance, working for housing and development rights for inner-city poor

and working people. Because of the scope and scale of the USSF, we continue to hear of other unique and exciting initiatives that emerged from the Atlanta USSF. These stories are yet to be fully documented.

The Rocky Road from Atlanta to Detroit

Besides the critiques about intentionality and the PMA, there were also criticisms among the organisers that began to surface during the organising process and in the wake of the first USSF. Criticism mainly came from the Atlanta Organising Committee (AOC) and the anchor organisation for the Atlanta USSF, Project South, which also served as the fiscal sponsor for the USSF. The group issued a *Report from the Anchor Organization*¹³ that detailed the organising challenges and accomplishments of the AOC and levelled a number of criticisms towards the NPC, alleging, among other things, that :

(the AOC was)... *consistently second-guessed and our recommendations dismissed on the national level ,*

(that) *Though Black leadership was often dismissed and disregarded throughout the process, the National Planning Committee depended on the risks and organizing efforts of these same leaders,*

(and) *After so much work and investment to make the Social Forum happen, the Atlanta community got left holding the bag. There was no concerted effort, nor was there space or time to design anything on the local level, to support and rejuvenate the volunteers, staff, or participants. The social forum did not, in the end, strengthen Atlanta organizing as much as we had hoped.*

The report lacked constructive reflections on the weaknesses of the local organising process and the challenge of the local leadership being held by just one anchor organisation, particularly when the organisation was also playing a lead role at the regional and national levels. The report put forward recommendations in a number of areas, including the formulation :

Entry Strategy = Community Protocol, Exit Strategy = Preparation and Support and Recommendations for the Local Anchor.

The Project South report set the tone as we organised the second USSF for an often contentious relationship between the anchor organisations in Detroit and the NPC, but assured that the question of the local-national dynamic remain at the forefront of USSF planning discussions. One key result was an addition to the goals of the USSF. The four goals from 2007 were also adopted for 2010 :

Create a space for social movement convergence and strategic discussion.

Advance a social movements agenda for action and transformation

Build stronger relationships and collaboration between movements

Deepen our commitment to international solidarity

And a fifth goal was later added by the DLOC and NPC :

Strengthen local capacity to improve social conditions and develop community and organizing infrastructure of Detroit¹⁴.

The site selection process was also modified with the NPC requiring that five local organisations anchor the local organising process. Two site visits were organised by the NPC in advance of the final site selection. One-on-one discussions and community meetings were organised to assess the host organisation's capacity to host the USSF.

V

Detroit : A Symbol and Moment of Crisis and Hope

In this section, I present and critically assess and discuss the achievements of the Detroit Forum

in terms of the goals adopted for it and also of the historical juncture at which it took place, within the US and globally, as laid out in the opening section.

Few cities symbolise the collapse of the US economy like the city of Detroit. It has been described as “New Orleans without the flood”. The economic crisis has been unfolding in the city for decades. Due to corporate outsourcing and off-shoring of auto production and the decline of manufacturing, unemployment rates are among the highest in the nation – an astounding 22% according to government statistics. Once stable middle-class neighbourhoods have been devastated. Empty lots and abandoned houses are common features in the Detroit landscape. 30% of Detroit is vacant land. City revenues have been stripped as taxes have been eliminated and public infrastructure has been privatised. The site of the 2010 USSF was decided to be Cobo Hall, one of three remaining facilities that generate revenue for the city of Detroit.

Organising infrastructure in Detroit has also been hit hard due to the crisis. Unions struggle with declining memberships, community-based organising groups suffer from a lack of resources. Building a stable membership and volunteer base becomes increasingly difficult as people struggle to find work or relocate to other cities in search of jobs.

Despite these enormous challenges, the spirit of struggle and pride in Detroit continues to thrive. Farms and hundreds of community gardens have been sown in the vacant lots. Local food industries are being started. Vibrant music and poetry movements are flourishing. Detroit is an historic city for popular movement and organising. It is home of the United Auto Workers, now majority owners of Chrysler Corporation. The League of Revolutionary Black Workers in the 1970's (LRBW) transformed the UAW and the labour movement in Detroit. It is also home to movement icons James and Grace Lee Boggs who founded Detroit Summer, a multi-cultural and intergenerational youth programme. The city was the last US stop on one of the Underground Railroad routes, by which thousands of Africans reached freedom from slavery. The city also shares a border with Canada and is a central location for several Indigenous nations.

Detroit's organising legacy was embodied in the Detroit Local Organising Committee (D-LOC) and the four groups that anchor the administration of the USSF : Centro Obrero, East Michigan Environmental Action Council (EMEAC), Michigan Welfare Rights Union, and Southeast Michigan Jobs with Justice. A number of national-local connections were made during the planning process, including work brigades with volunteers from San Antonio, Atlanta, and other cities travelling to Detroit in the months before the forum to help build infrastructure for local organisations. Food justice organisations also made connections with Detroit-based organisations including EMEAC, the Restaurant Opportunities Committee, and Detroit Black Food Security Network. A Detroit Peoples Movement Assembly was also organised where a direct action at a local waste incinerator was planned for the USSF. Hundreds of USSF participants mobilised to the action on the last morning of the forum.

Detroit Women of Color United (DWCU), which coordinated the cultural activities at the forum, and GGJ also partnered to collect books from USSF delegates to establish a Liberation Library in Detroit. DWU, EMEAC, ROC Michigan, and others are currently organising to establish a Detroit Grassroots Cultural Arts Center that would house the library, a theatre, a film editing studio, and local organisations.

A Renaissance of the Grassroots Organising Sector ?

The USSF process - from Miami to Atlanta, from Atlanta to Detroit - has highlighted an emerging identity of a grassroots organising sector in the US that has been taking shape for generations. These are community and worker organisations that are building upon the legacy of the movements of the 1960s and beyond – the civil rights movement, the labour movement, and the peace and justice, women's, gay rights, environment, Indigenous sovereignty, and Third World movements. They have been engaged in the difficult, essential task of building a social

force for progressive change, community by community, workplace by workplace, around a basic set of progressive values. They have survived the past three decades which were defined by Reaganomics, US military expansion, right-wing media and vastly more powerful corporations that have assaulted worker rights and wages, stripped environmental regulations, ravaged public services and budgets, and commodified almost every living thing on the planet. For a generation they have seen their communities get poorer, while the rich have got much richer.

Yet these grassroots organisations have managed to hold their ground and build strong local institutions and community-based power, developing grassroots leadership within poor and working class communities. They have built coalitions, networks, and alliances to achieve greater scale and impact, but despite this, the sector has remained fragmented and lacking in overall identity. Overcoming these limitations has been one of the biggest contributions of the USSF process over the last seven years.

Groups like Southwest Workers Union, SouthWest Organizing Project, Miami Workers Center, Causa Justa/Just Cause, Labor/Community Strategy Center, People Organized to Win Employment Rights, People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights, Project South, East Michigan Environmental Council, Michigan Welfare Rights Organization and many others stepped up into leadership of the USSF, committing enormous amounts of time and resources to building a broader movement. In the process they have advanced the conversation about movement building, overcome historical political differences, and established a new basis for political unity.

The outfall of this is that there are now important new national movement formations that have taken shape, like the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ), the National Domestic Workers Alliance (NDWA), the Push Back Network, the National Day Laborers Organizing Network (NDLON), and the Right to the City Alliance. They join older, more established national networks like Jobs with Justice (JwJ), the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN), and the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR) that have provided the base for the USSF process from the beginning. Several of these networks have convened a process called the Inter-Alliance Dialogue (IAD) to develop a process for more effective coordination and mobilisation.

Other notable developments at USSF2 included the Excluded Workers Congress, convened by NDWA (which was founded at the first USSF), JwJ, and NDLON, that brought together workers who are not protected under US labour laws. Farm workers, taxi drivers, domestic workers, day labourers, restaurant workers, workfare workers, workers in 'right to work for less' states in the South, and others are beginning to shape a common vision for a renewed labour movement and a new framework for labour laws, rooted in human rights. Peace and Justice groups like Peace Action and Iraq Veterans Against the War also came together with communities fighting US military bases in places like Guam (We Are Guahan), Korea (Nodutdol), and the Hawaiian Independence Action Alliance, as well as with community-based coalitions like the 25% Campaign in Massachusetts which is calling for diverting 25% of the US military budget to address social needs.

Many organisations convened on immigrant rights issues. NNIRR held its national gathering on the eve of the forum. A strong delegation to the USSF came from Arizona in the midst of the struggle taking place there against the racial profiling law SB1070.

Climate justice was a central theme of the Detroit USSF, with groups like Movement Generation Ecology and Justice Project, IEN, Communities for a Better Environment, and many others organising workshops and a large assembly to build greater alignment on climate justice organising – joining a growing chorus of international voices demanding bold action by national governments to establish a new global economic and political regime based the rights of

people, nature, and the earth. .

Organising a Labour Movement for the 21st Century

Labour's participation in the 2010 USSF also deepened and expanded. The American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) was an active member of the USSF National Planning Committee, reaching out to national leadership and union locals throughout the Midwest. The American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) also joined the NPC, mobilising hundreds of members in the Detroit area. JwJ continued to be one of the important national anchors of the USSF process, and Southeast Michigan JwJ was key to labour's participation locally.

For the first time there was a series of conference calls to organise labour participation at the USSF organised by the AFL-CIO and JwJ. Overall, there were labour participants in attendance from a number of unions including : The AFL-CIO (national and locals), AFSCME, UE, United Steelworkers (USW), Ironworkers, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), Service Employees International Union (SEIU), UAW, and American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE). Jobs with Justice, Labor Heritage Foundation, and Working America also brought delegations that included rank and file union members and leaders. Newly elected United Auto Workers President Bob King joined Metropolitan Detroit AFL-CIO President Sandra Williams and United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers (UE) Local 1110 President Armando Robles in leading workers in the opening march.

The Detroit USSF provided union members with an understanding of the breadth and depth of the broader social justice movement that the labour movement can relate to. The presence of a number of workers' centres and national networks also created opportunities for labour to share and learn strategies to build power for working people. For example, the Excluded Worker Congress brought together some unions with workers' centre networks to explore organising strategies for various sectors of excluded workers.

The USSF also re-affirmed for labour the importance of building power with community. According to an AFL-CIO news blog, King also participated in a workshop on the importance of faith, labour, and community alliances, stating "Unions should reach out to faith and community groups at all times to build a new social movement".¹⁵ The Social Forum sparked many interesting discussions on building a broad multi-racial working class movement, including the many challenges we face as a movement in doing so.

GGJ members UE (United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers) and Domestic Workers United spearheaded a PMA on *Plant Occupations and other Strategies for Organizing and Defending Workers' Rights*, resulting in the following resolutions :

1. We call for full and fair employment, with a major government investment in creating good jobs and retooling the economy, funded by taxing Wall Street and the wealthy, and we support the National Day of Action for Jobs and Public Services being organized by Jobs with Justice in Fall 2010.
2. We call for respect for the basic human rights of workers to organize, for the repeal of Taft-Hartley, for reform of the National Labor Relations Act, and for full restoration of the rights to organize, bargain and strike to all workers; and we support mobilizations to advance this workers' rights agenda.

A PMA in Support of Democratic Trade Unionism in Mexico was organised by UE and co-sponsored by the Authentic Labor Front (FAT) of México, GGJ, Jobs with Justice, and Centro Obrero. This is part of an effort to take solidarity with the Mexican independent trade union movement to a new level that is both broader and deeper. The participants resolved to support unions currently under attack by government and

corporate repression. This includes the miners union in Cananea, target of a recent government crackdown that dissolved the 3,000 member local, and the Mexican Electrical Workers Union.¹⁶

Internationalism Revisited

The USSF2 also highlighted the fact that a new progressive peoples' movement in the US will be informed by the international community. Pablo Solón, the Bolivian Ambassador to the United Nations came to the USSF to present the Cochabamba Accords. This document was developed by social movements and the Bolivian government at the Cochabamba Conference in April 2010, the Peoples' World Conference On Climate Change And Mother Earth's Rights – which was a peoples' response to the back-room deal created by the Obama administration in Copenhagen in December 2009. The Copenhagen deal once again handed over the reins of climate change policy to the corporations who benefit most from a profit and carbon-based economy. Bolivian climate negotiator Angelica Navarro described Copenhagen like this : “I’m not a banker or an economist, but I really felt that developed countries were negotiating a trade or economic accord and those of us on the other end were negotiating an environmental accord ... we were worlds apart.”¹⁷ Cochabamba was a declaration that saving the planet ultimately rests in the hands of the people, not in the markets, stock exchanges, or corporate boardrooms.

The Andean nations are also promoting the concept of ‘Buen Vivir’ (Living Well, or Well-Being) as a fundamental principle for a democratic society. As Miguel Palacín of the Coordinating Committee of Andean Indigenous Organizations (CAOI) explained at the USSF2, “We don't want to live better. We want to live well, and everyone should have the right to live well. This means we must protect the rights of all people, Mother Earth and all living things on the planet.”¹⁸

Dignitaries from social movements throughout the world attended the USSF – hailing from India, Brazil, South Africa, Senegal, the Philippines, and many other nations. Powerful, international grassroots alliances were represented including the World March of Women, Via Campesina, CAOI, and India's New Trade Union Initiative. Colleagues from Haiti, Honduras, and Palestine (with Jamal Juma joining one of the plenaries via videoconference) were present to make clear that the plight of their societies continues, as does the peoples' resistance and organising. They helped contextualise the conditions in the United States within a global reality, and the US-based organising within a growing, global peoples' movement. In short, the USSF at Detroit also helped grassroots organisations build and deepen ties with their international counterparts, forging solidarity relationships that are reciprocal and opening the door for common strategies at the global level.

A Peoples' Agenda

The PMA process was organised much more proactively and effectively for the second USSF. Organised by Atlanta-based Project South and the Southwest Workers Union of south Texas, the PMA gathered political statements, declarations, and resolutions for action from nearly 50 grassroots gatherings organised throughout the country in the year leading up to the USSF. Another 50 were convened at the forum itself. The results were synthesised in a late evening assembly and presented on the last day of the forum. The outcome provides a foundation for a peoples' agenda and an action calendar for the next year.

The preamble of the Detroit Peoples Movement Agenda begins :

We can build a better world. Working together, we can create a world that respects the human rights of every human being, nurtures creativity and health, promotes unity, solidarity and peace, and uses resources in a way that protects the earth and affirms life...

It also includes a vision for greater unity to build the movement :

Each one of us must dig deeper to understand each other's culture and history and to build respectful relationships across difference...We can realize our dreams to treat each other as equals and to build alliances and relationships across our commonalities and differences.

The document goes on to synthesise feedback according to the 13 issue tracks developed for the forum.¹⁹ A number of key national days of action were also collected by the PMA process including national mobilisations on July 29 2010, the day that SB1070 is scheduled to take effect in Arizona, a call by the IAD networks on August 29 2010, commemorating the anniversary of Hurricane Katrina and calling for Quality Jobs, Immigrant Rights, and Climate Justice. A national march for jobs on Washington DC was also planned on October 2 2010, and international actions on the anniversary of the US invasion of Afghanistan on October 3-7.

Redefining Philanthropy

The role of philanthropy in our movement is a subject of intense debate in the US. Many social justice organisations rely primarily on support from private foundations to support their work. Critics claim that this dependence compromises the autonomy of the movement, ultimately creating dependency on wealthy philanthropists who determine the movement's agenda based on their funding priorities.²⁰ GGJ has been working with organisers and allies in the funding world to better understand the foundation landscape, current funder strategies, and their impact on our movement. Because of the dependence of many of our organisations on foundation dollars it is clear that we cannot continue to relate to philanthropy in isolation and in competition with one another. We need to develop collective strategies to organise resources on a movement scale while also developing independent, grassroots models to sustain organising.

Especially in the context of the challenges created by the recession, allies within the funding sector played an essential role in mobilising support for the USSF in 2010. Of the roughly \$1 million raised to organise the first forum in Atlanta in 2007, 60% came from the movement (organisational contributions, registration fees, and passing the hat collections), and 40% from funders. There were also enormous in-kind contributions by organisations that anchored the planning process that were not accounted for. At Detroit in 2010 this percentage was reversed. Out of an overall budget of \$1.5 million philanthropy will account for about 60% of those dollars. Grassroots organisations and unions that carried the first USSF on our backs in 2007 were not in a financial position to do so this time around. Some of the core foundations that sustained the Detroit Forum included Jessie Smith Noyes, Solidago, Ben and Jerry's, Surdna, Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program at Shelter Rock, French American Charitable Trust, New World Foundation, Needmor, and Wallace Global Fund.

Working behind this, the Funders' Network on Transforming the Global Economy (FNTG)²¹ convened a Funder/Movement process over the past three years (2007-10) to mobilise funder support for the USSF process. Since the Battle in Seattle in 1999, FNTG has been convening and educating funders around the social forum process and the wider Global Justice Movement, and mobilising support for US-based groups to connect with our international counterparts. Funders convened their own PMA at USSF2, committing to work within their own institutions and with others in philanthropy to bring increased funding to the grassroots organising sector of the social justice 'ecosystem' through more effective communications, coordination and leveraging.²²

On the Horizon

We made tremendous strides in Detroit. There is a growing sense of unity and what could be the roots of a powerful peoples' movement – new national formations, international relationships, the foundation of a peoples' agenda, a calendar of action for the next year. But the growth and maturation of the grassroots sector is far from reaching its potential. There was a deliberate effort by USSF organisers to reach out to the Midwest region in particular (40% of registered participants at Detroit were from the Midwest), but participation in the process overall is still strongest in the coastal regions and major cities. From the beginning, USSF organisers have been clear that the USSF had to be built upon the leadership of people of colour and Indigenous organisations. It is also clear that there is still much work to be done building with poor and working class white communities. They are increasingly disenfranchised, unemployed, and homeless, and ultimately involving them is key to building a peoples' movement in the US

The progressive grassroots movement in the US also is confronting a number of strategic dilemmas. As organiser and scholar Bill Fletcher, Jr pointed out in his post-USSF commentary : “The diversity of the USSF... presents certain challenges. Though the USSF, and its multiple constituencies, represent a clear alternative to the evil represented by the Tea Party movement, what it does not contain is a coherent direction in order to contest for power.”²³

This represents a major Achilles' Heel of progressive movement in the US. Although the USSF represents the potential to forge a broad, strategic unity of diverse anti-neoliberal and anti-capitalist forces, there is still no unifying vision, agenda, or strategy for action to build this unity or to build political and economic power. Left political forces that promote a more transformative, fundamental change in US politics remain largely at the margins and remain largely fragmented.

Unfortunately the balance of time is not in our favour. On the one hand we need the time to continue to strengthen relationships, build movement infrastructure, and continue to define a peoples' agenda. Yet we are two years away from one of the most defining National Elections in generations. The Obama election in 2008 was a peoples' victory, but the administration has not necessarily been the peoples' administration. We continue to lose political ground in key areas, and we are likely due for another 'movement moment'. As the stimulus money from last year is spent down, census jobs are cut, and overall job growth is coming to a grinding halt, it is likely that we face another severe economic downturn. Obama will be forced to decide whether to fabricate a new stimulus, thereby deepening the deficit or opt for the real solution - redistribute wealth by taxing the rich and ending US wars and occupations. But the latter is not likely to happen as long as the administration is beholden to global capital.

This drama is also playing out amidst the backdrop of the most severe global ecological crisis that human history has known. Whether the balance of time can be shifted in time to prevent even more devastating climate disruptions will also depend on the strength of a peoples' movement built on a global scale.

Given what we are up against on the Right, the re-election of President Obama in 2012 will be core to advancing progressive initiatives in the coming years. But those initiatives will only advance if Obama is responding to a progressive social force. So we must build a vibrant, independent peoples' movement, squarely rooted in progressive values and committed to long-term systemic change, but that is large enough in scale, aligned enough strategically and resourced adequately to effectively contest for economic and political power locally, regionally, and nationally.

But the USSF and the social forum process have also demonstrated the potential of how we can empower ourselves and our communities. I am one of many thousands of people who

have been transformed by this process. Many people who I have met for the first time years after the first USSF describe the experience in the same glowing terms. The Forum experience gives us a glimpse of what another world can be.

Today, in the Andes and other parts of Latin America, governments are defining a new vision for society. Whether it's the concept of Buen Vivir (Well-being or good living) or socialism for the 21st century, people are actively defining a new direction based on core principles of creating a society that allows everyone to realise our true potential as unique and creative human beings, while recognising our responsibilities to society and the Earth.

Whether we in the US can build such a movement within the next two years however, is unclear. It would mean that there would have to be a stronger alignment not just among the grassroots organising sector, but also with other key sectors particularly labour, policy groups, and philanthropy.

The project we embarked upon through the USSF is the project of our generation and for those that follow. Our vision has to be long-term, but our action is required right now.

As we do this, we should also take a moment to celebrate the Detroit USSF. It inspired us and challenged us. It provided a window into the beauty and complexities of the thousands of communities organising for another world around the country. It proved once again that we can share political space on a mass scale, engage and work through historical differences, develop tactical and strategic alliances, and create new practices for relating to each other. It captured the many forms of expression of the peoples' movement through art, music, theatre, film, and story-telling. It represents an important cultural shift that could transform movement building in the US and our relationship to the world. It was a peoples' victory, and an important milestone in building a peoples' movement in the US.

Notes

- 1 Amin, September 2009.
- 2 See <http://www.barackobama.com/> .
- 3 One Sky, August 2010.
- 4 For reviews of the 2007 USSF, see : van Gelder, July 2007, and Rebick, July 2007. A compilation of media coverage of the 2007 USSF can also be found at: <http://www.ussf2007.org/en/news> .
- 5 www.jwj.org .
- 6 For a more detailed discussion of the organising process for the first USSF, see : Guerrero, Luu, and Wiesner, 2009.
- 7 *Eds* : For a comparison, see the equivalent document prepared in the course of the WSF process in India, the 'WSF India Policy Statement : Charter of Principles - World Social Forum India' (World Social Forum India, July 2002a).
- 8 *Eds* : See, for instance, the discussion in the essay by Jeffrey Juris in the volume (Juris, 2012b).
- 9 van Gelder, September 2006.
- 10 For a good summary and the contribution of the USSF to this debate see : Ponniah, July 2007.
- 11 Border Social Forum, Assembly of Border Social Movements, October 2006.
- 12 *Eds* : For a further reading of the significance of this moment, see Osterweil 2008.
- 13 Project South, February 2009. A copy can be downloaded from the Project South website : http://projectsouth.mayfirst.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9&Itemid=21 .
- 14 US Social Forum Website : <http://www.ussf2010.org/about> .
- 15 Gonzales, June 2010.
- 16 In October 2009, the government occupied electrical facilities and liquidated the company, firing over 40,000 workers.
- 17 Ali, May 2010.
- 18 Palacín, June 2010.
- 19 All of the resolutions are posted at : <http://pma2010.org/resolutions> .
- 20 *Eds* : For an analysis coming from movements, see : INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, eds, April 2007.
- 21 Formerly known as the Funders Network on Trade and Globalization.
- 22 For more information on FNTG and the results of funder discussions at the USSF, see <http://fntg.org/about/index.html> .

Globalised Localisms : The Origins, Travels, And Translations Of The World Social Forum Process ¹

Sonia E Alvarez

I

Local Accents – The Somewheres of the Everywhere

Since its first edition in January 2001 in the southern Brazilian city of Porto Alegre, the World Social Forum (WSF) has come to be regarded by many as the premier global gathering of social movements that oppose globalised neoliberalism's *pensamiento único* or 'monolithic thought' and identify with the WSF's unifying motto, "Another World is Possible". The Forum indeed has facilitated the confluence – if not necessarily the strategic convergence – of a broad and heterogeneous gamut of progressive movements, NGOs, and networks of all imaginable types from all corners of the world.²

For the handful of Brazilian and French activists and Brazilian Workers' Party (PT) leaders who originally thought of the WSF in early 2000, staging a proactive dialogue on concrete alternatives to neoliberal globalisation in a country in the Global South was a critical political and symbolic move. Moreover, holding the inaugural WSF event in a city then governed by the PT – a leftist radical democratic party, which by the 1990s had become a major reference for the international left – and selecting a venue that had become a 'cause célèbre' among progressives around the world,³ would lend credence to one of the core ideas that the WSF sought to advance : That "another world was (already) possible", and was not only being imagined by radical social movements across the globe, but actually being constructed in places like Porto Alegre.⁴

Bringing the until then largely Northern-based Global Justice and Solidarity Movement (GJ&SM) to Brazil, moreover, would also help foreground the egregious consequences of neoliberal policies for subaltern social groups and classes in the Global South. The WSF, some of its founders further hoped, would infuse the global movement's political grammar with more pronounced 'Southern accents'.

Yet when I attended what would be my first of four (global) WSF events, the third WSF (Porto Alegre, January 2003), to try to analyse what till then I'd imagined to be a "counter-hegemonic world public",⁵ however, I was struck by the many ways in which specifically 'Brazilian accents' seemed pervasive in the Forum's 'ways of doing politics', in its guiding ethical-political principles, its political methodology and organisational dynamics, and its discourses on participation, representation, diversity, and democracy.⁶ During the late 1990s, I'd been interested in theorising how the growing transnationalisation of Latin American movement discourses and practices had impacted the dynamics of local and regional movements – specifically feminist movement fields.⁷ My observations at the 2003 WSF inspired me to reflect on the flip side of the cross-fertilisations that characterise contemporary global-local movement flows, to think about how local movement practices and political cultures might influence so-called 'global' movements, and to pursue the question of how the WSF, and the GJ&SM more generally, might have been informed by local and national, specifically Brazilian, movement struggles.

As the WSF underwent a 'passage to India' in 2004, I decided to track its eastward flow, to try to ascertain if its markedly Brazilian accents would still be evident, and to assess the extent to which the Indian social movement context, in turn, might similarly leave its imprint on this innovative global movement process. As I will discuss briefly in the final sections of this essay, both my hypotheses seemed to have held up under observation at the 2004 WSF in

Mumbai and beyond.

As I became one of a growing number of globe-trotting WSF scholar-analyst-participants, and followed the global gathering back to Brazil in 2005 and then to Nairobi in 2007,⁸ I noticed that what I'd come to regard as a kind of Brazilian 'political export' – a locally grown **political methodology** which, I will argue, has informed the Forum's enduring principles and core dynamics – had been significantly inflected and gradually transformed by 'local sedimentations', if you will, as the WSF flowed through diverse locations, with distinctive histories and modalities of social struggle, reflecting a vibrant **local→global movement process**. In this latter regard, perhaps the WSF's most important contribution to activist politics has not been the global meetings themselves but the preparatory processes for those meetings that, since 2001, have spread and transformed the Forum's political methodology to and through an immense and diverse array of local, national, and regional settings. Most recently, I attempted to better apprehend local appropriations of the methodology-process duet that I had found to be typical of the WSF global events by participating in and analysing WSF gatherings closer to home, first at the Western Massachusetts Social Forum (Amherst, Massachusetts, April 2007), and then at the first US Social Forum (USSF, Atlanta, Georgia, June-July 2007).

Analyses of 'global social movements' and 'global civil society' most often **assume** that flows of discourses and practices are unidirectional : Moving from North to South.⁹ Yet reverse South-North travels and translations, as well as South-South ones, have become more prominent in the GJ&SM since the initiation of the WSF process in 2001. Though that movement may now well be "**everywhere**"¹⁰ and seems to be a product of the cycle of 'global protests' that seemingly sprung from **nowhere**, it grows out of and is nourished by the discourses and practices of movements in many localities, many places, many **somewheres**.

By focusing on one of those 'somewheres', Brazil, I hope to draw attention to the mutual constitution of the local and global in transnational movements. I want to suggest, following Jane Jenson and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, that all globalisations, including global social movements, are, in a sense, "extensions of particular localisms".¹¹ The practices and discourses of local and national movements in particular places, that is, always leave imprints, **sedimentations** that travel along movement streams across local, national, regional, and global scales to other places, where they are translated and again transplanted by both local and transnational actors. In a cumulative process of cross-scale, transborder cross-fertilisation, these sedimentations help refashion the discourses and practices of the so-called global movements of which those place-based movement struggles are **constitutive**.

If we look for 'globalised localisms' in transnational social movements in the way I'm suggesting, then we can view the pre-Porto Alegre GJ&SM as something of a US American 'political export'. The Seattle WTO protests of 1999, the emblematic, indeed now mythic, 'foundational event' of the anti-globalisation movement, after all, were deeply inflected by the **accents** of the younger, largely white, anarchist-leaning, direct action movement of the US and Europe.¹² "To the political mainstream," as L A Kaufman argues, "the clashes in Seattle seemed to materialise from nowhere.... But while the left was ostensibly languishing (and parts of it certainly were), another history – another kind of radicalism – was unfolding". Seattle, she maintains, "was the culmination of a thirty-year-long process of political reinvention : The creation, in the decades after the 1960s, of an effective, decentralised, multivocal radicalism based on direct action".¹³

Many US activist-intellectuals track Seattle's roots to the militantly confrontational, expressive, theatrical, and campy practices and radical discourses of direct action groups such as ACT UP and the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power,¹⁴ which were emblematic of a "new style of urban politics in North America" and formed part of the growing direct action movements

that that took shape in the US and throughout much of Europe during the 1990s, relying on three key practices : “... theatrical but disruptive [actions], reclaiming urban space, and confrontations with the police”.¹⁵ These three Northern practices travelled South to the first WSF in Porto Alegre, where they found resonance and melded with others that were distinctively Brazilian.

II

The Local in the Global : The Brazilian Re-Mix of Transnational Activist Strands

The cross-section of Brazilian social forces that convened the WSF and their pre-existing international linkages facilitated the coming together of a rather different mix of radical movements and NGOs than had been evident in the GJ&SM so far – the first of three Brazilian accents that I will argue have been imprinted on the WSF. Along with the direct action strand of the GJ&SM that featured so notably in the string of protests, staged mostly in the North, against the WTO, the IMF, the G7 and G8, and the World Bank,¹⁶ Brazil’s WSF re-mix brought into more prominent view **two other strands of global-local activism**, which had not previously engaged, in any sustained way, with the expressions of the Northern GJ&SM in the late 1990s.

The first of these was composed of the Brazilian and Latin American counterparts of the radical, direct action sectors of the GJ&SM. This wide range of nationally- and locally-based social movements and region-wide networks had focused on protesting the local consequences of globalised neoliberalism, rather than targeting ‘globalisation’ as such. The WSF also brought into view a second strand of global activism that had been present, but less prominent in the GJ&SM until it travelled to Brazil – a strand made up of policy-focused, development-oriented NGOs, civil society organisations (CSOs), and transnational advocacy networks that had become involved in Global Civil Society (GCS) through their extensive engagement in the UN Summit processes of the 1990s.

As I noted above, I’d become interested in the WSF in part because it appeared to represent the polar opposite of the GCS that had become a favoured child of international donors, inter-governmental organisations (IGOs), and international financial institutions (IFIs) over the course of the 1990s. GCS has been widely acclaimed by scholars and public officials alike for its key role in promoting democratic governance, social justice, and sustainable development on a world scale.

International philanthropic agencies such as the Ford Foundation, IGOs, particularly those part of the UN system, and IFIs like the World Bank, have been among GCS’ most enthusiastic supporters, extolling its virtues as a cost-efficient, instrumental ‘partner’ of national governments and international institutions in combating poverty and fostering democracy and development on a world scale. And those international institutions have become active sponsors and often direct funders of many of the most visible or politically prominent actors in GCS – especially Northern-based international NGOs and transnational policy advocacy networks. Indeed, IGOs and IFIs summoned GCS to ‘dialogue’ in policy forums and civil society advisory groups, and many among these more ‘civil/ised’, more collaborative strands of GCS enthusiastically heeded their call – investing quite heavily in transnational advocacy aimed at influencing and reforming global institutions and policies in the hope that those reforms would have a boomerang effect on national and regional policies and programmes.¹⁷

Consequently, the dynamics and discourses of significant sectors of GCS came to **mirror** those of IGOs and IFIs. GCS increasingly became a **reflection of the hegemonic international system, its discourses, its logics**. Arguably, many came to talk like the UN, walk like the World Bank, and dress like the IMF. By contrast, the WSF has focused on challenging and undermining the workings of hegemonic global institutions. In We Are Everywhere : The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism, the editorial-activist collective Notes from Nowhere described ‘the

movement' as follows :

We are the globalisation of resistance... together we are the inversion, **the mirror opposite** of a strata of concentrated power from above, in which decisions that affect billions of human lives are made at a transnational level where the market is king. We embody the real world below....¹⁸

Such allusions to constituting a new force of 'globalised resistance from below' – or as Cockburn put it, "a new radical movement in America and across the world, **rambunctious, anarchic, internationalist, well informed, and in some ways more imaginative and supple than kindred popular eruptions in recent decades**"¹⁹ – abound in the GJ&SM's self-representations. But because of its origins in the Brazilian *campo democrático-popular* or 'popular-democratic field',²⁰ the WSF process – though tracing its lineage to the broader global resistance movement – is in fact a **hybrid** of these two streams of transnational organising. It is **a reflection of both reflections, a refraction of both the mirror image and the mirror opposite** of the hegemonic international system, if you will, of both the previously 'collaborative', but increasingly more transgressive and politicised GCS, and of the till 2001 largely Northern-led "rambunctious" GJ&SM. Because of the Brazilian imprint on the WSF, moreover, this latter strand now encompasses a wide range of anti-neoliberal movements that have blossomed in the Global South.

The local counterparts of **both** these global streams were represented on the Brazilian Organising Committee (BOC) and found among the scores of local movements, NGOs, and national networks involved in all the WSF's Brazilian editions. The more "rambunctious" local counterparts of the GJ&SM represented in the founding BOC included the *Movimento Sem Terra* ('Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement', MST), a massive (some say one million-strong), peasant- and small farmer-based, radical direct action movement viewed by many as the largest and most important social movement in Latin America today.²¹ Another radical counterpart was the *Central Única de Trabalhadores* ('Workers' Union Central', CUT), the militant labour confederation which grew out of the 'new trade unionism' of the 1970s and whose public sector employee affiliates, in particular, staged defiant strike actions throughout the 1990s.

The local counterparts of GCS were also well represented (some say over-represented) in the original BOC. These included the *Associação Brasileira de Organizações Não Governamentais* ('Brazilian Association of NGOs', ABONG), which boasts over 400 member organisations nationwide, and the *Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Econômicas e Sociais* ('Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Analysis', IBASE), one of the oldest, largest, and better-resourced Brazilian NGOs, was also part of the more well-mannered side of the Brazilian WSF re/mix. Like many of those affiliated with ABONG, it has long invested in the promotion of popular movements and in advocating for meaningful citizenship and social justice. The *Comissão Brasileira de Justiça e Paz* ('Brazilian Commission for Justice and Peace', CBJP), a lay organisation linked to the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops, with extensive links to Church-based popular movements and human rights groups throughout Brazil, brought its progressive Christian international connections and Liberation Theology roots to the WSF table. A relative newcomer to the Brazilian NGO field, *Associação Brasileira de Empresários pela Cidadania* ('Brazilian Entrepreneurs Association for Citizenship', CIVES), representing the then incipient 'radical democratic' sectors of small and medium business sectors committed to promoting a development model that furthers social justice, also comprised the BOC, as did two small NGOs, also of recent vintage, both linked to international NGOs outside Brazil : ATTAC-Brasil, the local branch of the international organisation of the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for Aid to Citizens, and the *Rede Social de Justiça e Direitos Humanos* ('Justice and Human Rights Social Network'), a small NGO founded by a 're-patriated'

Brazilian who had spent nearly a decade working with Global Exchange in San Francisco.²²

By all accounts, the BOC was assembled in a fairly spontaneous, though hardly arbitrary, fashion, grounded in prior knowledge and political relationships. Cives' Oded Grajew, the widely corroborated origin story goes, first came up with the idea of holding a World Social Forum as a counterpart and counterpoint to the annual World Economic Forum in Davos. He discussed the idea with his Brazilian colleague, CBJP's Francisco Whitaker, who like Grajew was then in Paris on NGO business, and they took their brainchild to a meeting that Grajew had scheduled with Bernard Cassen of ATTAC-France and Le Monde Diplomatique, who heartily endorsed the idea and reportedly suggested that the global counter-Davos meeting should be held in Porto Alegre.

Upon Grajew's return to Brazil, several of my interviewees reported, he and Whitaker began contacting friends in other NGOs who had been significantly involved in 'global work' during the 1990s, to see who would *topar*, 'be game', to take on the organising of such a global event. By some accounts, the would-be counter-Davos meeting was originally imagined as an international NGO seminar that would gather prominent activist-intellectuals on the left to discuss "proactive" alternatives to the reigning global neoliberal order. But the inclusion in the BOC of militant mass-based organisations such as the MST and the CUT was, as one interviewee put it, "*incontornável*", impossible to by-pass. And it was **they**, along with the *Rede Social* which had a sustained working relationship with popular groups, along with the radical left sectors of the PT, which then headed the governments of Porto Alegre and Rio Grande do Sul and were substantially subsidising the event, who reportedly insisted on transforming the WSF into a broad-based, more participatory event.²³

Though the 'founding' Brazilian organisations of the WSF were something of a motley crew and had not previously collaborated in organising a joint event of this magnitude, according to José Corrêa Leite of ATTAC-Brasil and member of the original BOC, all eight were "groups composed of *petistas*" ('members of the PT'). Though none were organisationally linked to the PT, all formed part of a loosely articulated alliance of popular movements, trade unions, NGOs, and Church-linked organisations that make up what I have been referring to as the popular-democratic field, whose *centro nevralgico*, or 'nerve center', has been the PT.²⁴ This political field, as we shall see, provided the life blood of the WSF process in Brazil.²⁵

Pre-existing international linkages of each strand with organisations and networks outside Brazil, especially in Latin America, also helped shape which activist streams within the broader GJ&SM flowed towards the WSF process. Many activists from the militant Latin American anti-neoliberal and pro-democracy movements that had emerged throughout the region from the mid-1990s onward – for whom the combative MST and CUT and the tradition of militant popular organising in Brazil were key referents – were drawn to the WSF process in substantial numbers. The massive participation in the WSF of movements like the Argentine *piqueteros* ('pickets of the unemployed') and indigenous peoples' movements helped foreground the quotidian struggles for democracy and social justice that had been unfolding in Latin America parallel to (and indeed long before) the global protest cycles that marked the GJ&SM in the North. As a direct consequence of the MST's key protagonism in the WSF, both regional and global networks of small agriculturalists have been politically quite visible in the WSF process in Brazil and beyond.²⁶ CUT brought in its 'social unionism' counterparts from across the region and around the world, drawing especially on alliances constructed through the Coordinator of Southern Cone Trade Union Centrals, with affiliates in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, and Paraguay.

Many WSF participants were also drawn in by the PT's own diverse and broad-based local and international field of political connections. Many European participants in particular "identify politically with the PT and have ties with everything within the PT, governments,

legislators, etc. And they had ties with the PT in Rio Grande do Sul and Porto Alegre.... So you have Raul Pont, Tarso Genro, Olívio Dutra, all the sectors who participate in the PT in RGS, they have their own field of connections at the international level”.²⁷ ATTAC-France, which had an active hand in organising a number of the Global Days of Protest, along with its Brazilian branch and the *Rede Social*, provided a vital bridge between the BOC and the Northern-based organisations that had been at the forefront of those protests in 1999 and 2000.

Finally, ABONG and its scores of NGO affiliates, along with IBASE, drew in activists from that other strand of transnational activism which had been integrated into GCS during the 1990s, people who one of my Brazilian interviewees facetiously referred to as “*os orfãos da ONU*” (‘orphans of the UN’). Throughout the 1990s, many Brazilian NGOs affiliated with ABONG and others that made up the BOC and the Brazilian Council of the WSF had struggled to balance their continued engagement with the local popular-democratic field with their growing participation in national and transnational policy arenas.²⁸ NGOs nevertheless have gotten a bad rap from the more “rambunctious” sectors of the broader GJ&SM, as exemplified in the this statement by Notes from Nowhere : “We have... witnessed the clamouring of certain NGOs for recognition as legitimate dissenters. We should take note of The Economist, which wrote : ‘The principle reason for the recent boom in NGOs is that Western governments finance them. This is not a matter of charity, but of privatisation’”.²⁹ Given their central role in the BOC and in the dense web of local and national Brazilian groups and networks involved in organising the first three global Forums, however, NGOs were a particularly visible and political influence in all WSF meetings in Porto Alegre.

The Forum’s political re-mix, then, emerged from the confluence of two distinct streams of transnational organising and from the synergies and resonances of these with different sectors of the Brazilian popular-democratic field. As CUT’s Gustavo Codas explained :

The Forum in reality comes from two different dynamics. There are more moderate sectors and the more *bagunçados* (‘disorderly’).... *Grosso modo* , we could say that the Forum has two wellsprings, two streams of origins... we have one origin that comes from the resistance to neoliberalism, very influenced by direct action groups, which though not all being young have a significant composition of young people, groups of a new political culture, much more horizontal, in network, who refuse to be represented, who refuse to structure themselves like we normally structure our organisations. This is going to have great repercussions in the structure of the Forum. And there is another stream which is the stream that comes from the UN conferences.

In fact, he recounted, the CUT’s international Secretary had gone to Johannesburg and returned with posters from a group that was conducting a campaign to “Liberate civil society from the conferences of the UN”.³⁰

But the marked presence of NGOs in the WSF process is arguably due precisely to the fact that many very much want to be “liberated from the UN conferences”, that many have become increasingly disillusioned with the transnational advocacy processes centred on influencing IGOs and IFIs and invested heavily in the WSF as an alternative arena for transnational activism. Moreover, as Codas further suggested, many in the NGO / GCS field, as well as many among the more “rambunctious” currents, brought together by the Brazilian WSF re-mix, in fact straddle both forms of global activism : “Those two streams don’t have a clear dividing line, because there are organisations that really transit between both things, let’s say... between the UN and the streets”.³¹

Such straddling is made clear in a ‘Document for Debate’ produced by ABONG for its 2003 General Assembly :

Over the course of the 1990s, Brazilian NGOs were heavily engaged in the UN’s cycle of social conferences and they wagered on the deepening of the socio-environmental agenda and the universalisation of human rights and on monitoring the agreements emerging from those conferences. The ideological discourse that accompanied globalisation certainly contributed to disseminating the hopes vested in multilateralism. At the turn of the new

As a consequence, the document concludes, it's "time to revise our strategies.... time to undertake a profound revision of ABONG and its affiliates' strategies and alliances for acting in the international field, counting for [that revisioning] on the accumulation [of experience] stemming from the investment of ABONG and its affiliates in the World Social Forum".³³ Indeed, ABONG views the WSF as a key new arena for global activism : "The WSF represented the culmination of mobilisations against the consequences of neoliberal globalisation, [a process] of unquestionable historical relevance. There thus occurred the necessary emergence of a counterhegemonic movement, and consequently NGOs the world over have been challenged to position themselves with clarity in the hegemonic camp or in the counter-hegemonic camp".³⁴

Similarly, several of the core feminist NGOs that spearheaded the Latin American parallel preparatory processes for the Cairo and Beijing UN Conferences and their respective +5 'sequels', now grouped in a coalition called *Articulación Feminista Marcosur* (AFM or Marcosur Feminist Articulation, a word-play on Mercosur), also sought to position themselves more squarely in the "counter-hegemonic camp". They directed many of their energies toward participating in and influencing the WSF process, viewing it as an indispensable space of action for feminisms.³⁵

For the AFM, the WSF is a logical 'world public' in which to pursue several of its core goals : "To strengthen the articulation between social movements, and in particular, to use the feminist presence established within these joint spaces to empower and influence the whole of society".³⁶ It views the WSF as "a plural space with proposals for an alternative globalisation, where many new strategies and concerns of globalised social movements, such as feminism, converge".³⁷ But feminist pressure in the WSF process, they insist, is crucial because "it is... a complicated site of alliances with other movements whose orientation to feminism is not always one of acknowledgement".³⁸

As with advocacy-focused NGOs more generally, Latin American feminist NGOs' engagement in the WSF process stems from the fact that the various +5 conferences, intended as follow-ups to the Rio, Vienna, Cairo, Copenhagen, and Beijing summits, made it clear that the feminist and other progressive movements' project of influencing official international spheres had yielded meagre results. If it was possible to incorporate some of (the most digestible) elements of the feminist, human rights, or environmentalist agendas into the international accords and platforms of the 1990s, it was also increasingly apparent to many that any possibility for more significant changes in the rights and life conditions of most women and men were in effect blocked by the intensification of neoliberal globalisation, the ever more dramatic rolling back of the State, structural adjustment processes, and the concomitant erosion of citizenship and social policies.³⁹

Many of the Latin American feminists most invested in addressing the material consequences of globalisation identify with what some call 'the anti-capitalist camp' of the WSF rather than with the UN-linked GCS. The Brazilian branch of the World March of Women against Violence and Poverty (WMW), for instance, was centrally involved in the Forum process from the outset. In a flyer distributed during the 2003 WSF, the WMW declared that they were participating in the Porto Alegre event because they had "supported demonstrations that have taken place all over the world, which have been against militarism and the neoliberal politics denoting a commodification of life, because we believe feminism is fundamental to renew[ing] the sense of those fights. And it is within the process of fighting for everyone's freedom, that feminism rejuvenates [itself] each and every day".

The confluence of diverse strands of global feminist organising in the WSF process has

not necessarily resulted in political convergences, however. Important divergences are evident among feminists and others in the internally heterogeneous movement streams that have come together in the WSF process. Still, conflicting positions meet each other through the Forum process, dialogue, debate, differ, and sometimes articulate tactics and strategies in common agreement.⁴⁰ And it is precisely the potential working through of divergences among heretofore parallel streams of global activism that is arguably one of the unique 'imprints' of the Brazilian WSF process on the broader GJ&SM.

III

The WSF as a Brazilian Political 'Export' :The Local Origins of a Now Global Political Methodology

The two other Brazilian imprints on the global WSF process which, due to space constraints, I'll touch on more briefly, are implicit in the story I've told. These previously divergent streams of global activism were able to come together in Brazil precisely because the local WSF process drew on a long-standing local history of cross-sector, broad-based alliance-building among popular organisations, other progressive social movements, NGOs, radical trade unions, and Church-linked community-based and human rights groups. The Brazilian WSF thereby reinforced cross-sector alliance-building efforts, "the much lauded co-presence, if not coalition" between "Teamsters and Turtles", which has been heralded as the hallmark of the GJ&SM since its inception.⁴¹ Those coalitional practices and radical democratic discourses were encoded in the WSF's Charter of Principles, thereby providing a **political methodology** that has facilitated similar cross-movement alliance-building efforts in the wide range of local, national, regional, and global places and spaces where the WSF process has unfolded.

Brazilian cross-sector coalitional practices began to be forged during the over twenty-year-long struggle against military authoritarianism, and in subsequent efforts to 'democratise democracy'. The progressive Catholic Church worked closely with a range of urban and rural popular movements during the dictatorship to promote human rights and social justice, and also offered safe harbour for the militant left opposition. Popular-Movement Assistance NGOs were key political articulators of this broader opposition field, serving as nodal points in what became a capillary web of pro-democracy activism.⁴² The PT itself was also key to constructing and sustaining a politics of articulation among trade unionists, leftist intellectuals, feminists, environmentalists, Black movement activists, and many disparate movements, proclaiming itself to be the "institutional expression to social movements", a party that would incorporate but not instrumentalise or co-opt them.⁴³

In post-authoritarian times, cross-sectoral alliances have been sustained through ongoing efforts to combat neoliberalism and deepen and extend democracy. For instance, the popular-democratic webs shaped in resistance to military rule were re-articulated in the form of the *Plenária Pro-Participação Popular na Constituinte* ('Pro-Popular Participation Plenary') to promote citizen participation in the Constitution drafting process of the late 1980s.⁴⁴ Drawing on this as well as on previous broad-ranging articulations of NGOs, popular movements, trade unions, Church-linked organisations, and a revitalised student movement fostered mass support for the impeachment of President Fernando Collor in 1992. The massive protests staged throughout Brazil, often led by youth sporting colourful costumes and painted faces – who came to be known as the *caras pintadas* ('painted faces') – prefigured the campy, theatrical practices that would mark the GJ&SM and, later, the WSF.⁴⁵

Resistance to neoliberal policies in the 1990s was spearheaded by the CUT and MST, always with cross-sector support.⁴⁶ Popular-movement assistance NGOs were central to that support, even as they became increasingly engaged with the UN summit processes, beginning with the World Conference on Development and the Environment (held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992). Hundreds of local NGOs, along with other sectors of Brazil's popular-democratic field,

were involved in the national preparatory processes for this and the further string of UN conferences in the 1990s and their +5 and +10 sequels in the 2000s, providing 'global venues' that reinforced the cross-sectoral articulation of local and national movement groups and NGOs.

A distinctive activist political culture emerged from these multiple intersections and joint campaigns. The capillary connections among diverse social actors came to configure a *campo ético-político* – a demarcated 'ethical-political field' of shared "references and differences for collective action and political contestation",⁴⁷ with distinctive 'ways of doing politics' forged out of manifold personal, organisational, and political entanglements, interactions, and exchanges. Liberation Theology imprinted this field with a discourse of horizontalism and direct participation, one that shunned liberal notions of representation and 'vanguard' leadership alike⁴⁸. That discourse appealed to many from the former guerrilla and contemporary militant left groups looking for ways to rearticulate their revolutionary politics with the burgeoning popular movements and the new trade unionism that spread across Brazil during the 1970s and 1980s. Feminists, environmentalists, and anti-racist activists, many of whom had broken organisationally from vanguardist sectors of the left, also infused this ethical-political field with calls for movement autonomy, egalitarian social relations, and participatory politics.

As Ana Maria Doimo argues in her incisive study of popular movements in Brazil, such fields were not fashioned through formalised, inter-organisational networks; they instead rested crucially upon "interpersonal relationships that link individuals to other individuals, involving connections that go beyond specific groups and transversely cut across particular social institutions, such as the Catholic Church, Protestantism – national and international – the academy, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), leftist organisations, trade unions and political parties".⁴⁹ Brazil's WSF re-mix was modelled and creatively built upon those historic cross-sector linkages.

Fátima Melo, BOC member from FASE, a major development NGO, explained how "historic" Brazilian coalitional practices influenced the political methodology that would become the "trademark" of the WSF :

[T]here was a demand on the global plane for a more proactive face to the anti-globalisation movement and on the national level something existed that is difficult to find in other countries, which is our political trajectory, the trajectory of NGOs, social movements, the trade union movement, the Church.... The impact of Brazilian organisations on the Forum I think is this mark of cross-sectoral alliances, the mark of broad-based alliances of our political culture... it's a fundamental mark of the World Social Forum. And I think that today you see the Forums that take place in Europe... the whole construction of the Forum in India... [presume] the construction of those sorts of alliances. ⁵⁰

ATTAC-Brasil's Corrêa Leite similarly insisted that :

[I]t was possible to do something representative of this sort in Brazil and not in another country because there exists a frame of political unity on the Brazilian left that doesn't exist in other countries.... So the civil society of the Brazilian Left, it had a unitary frame... you have organisations of the importance of the CUT, the MST, ABONG, capable of working together on a joint project, and that required that previous twenty-year history which wasn't present in other countries. ⁵¹

That very local history and the specific 'political culture' characteristic of the popular-democratic field deeply influenced the WSF's Charter of Principles – a third important local imprint on the global WSF process. Developed by the BOC in 2001 after the first WSF meeting, and debated and approved at the founding meeting of the International Council (IC) later that year, the Charter provided a distinctive political methodology that has since informed many new modalities of 'anti-globalisation' activism. It laid out a set of political, procedural, and organisational guidelines which would have to be endorsed by all subsequent local, national,

regional and / or thematic events held under the WSF banner.

Though modified in discussions with the WSF's IC, the Charter is very much imbued with the discourses of Brazilian popular movement and leftist, specifically PT, political fields. As Fátima Mello remarked, "we didn't want the WSF's BOC to become a central committee of the anti-globalisation movement.... that has always been and continues to be our greatest fear. It has to be an open space. So the proposal of the Charter of Principles was the way we saw of ensuring that, of creating a minimum system of rules, of values, to which those who participate in the Forum must adhere".⁵²

Chico Whitaker of the CBJP – the Brazilian Commission of Justice and Peace, a body of the National Council of Bishops - also a member of the BOC and considered to be one of the founders of the WSF, similarly noted that the Forum was supposed to be a space where "whoever is fighting for a new world could come together, exchange experiences... that exchange of experiences, very horizontal, is very much of Brazilian social movements".⁵³ He further recounted that "when we drafted the first proposal... we put a thousand things in... like no political parties, no armed organisations, no final document, openness, respect for diversity, respect for people's self-organisation... and this is a very big contribution of the experience of Brazilian popular movements... particularly those influenced by the Church". Core elements of the 'ethical-political principles' that have informed the politics of Brazil's popular-democratic field thus feature prominently in the WSF Charter.

And these guidelines came to configure a political methodology adopted, though always translated and adapted, in the hundreds of WSF-related local, national, and international events that have been staged worldwide since 2001. As BOC member Maísa Mendonça put it :

[W]e began to perceive that this 'forum method' began to multiply... and to help, concretely, in some countries and organisations that had never before worked together, to come together, work together.... We have no way guaranteeing that that will occur, but it's a proposal and I think that whoever takes it on winds up making that methodology happen, perhaps not in the same way in all places, but in a general sense, the idea of the forum permeates in all these events.... I see the Forum as a catalyst, a catalysing element whose results one sees in various countries in different forms.⁵⁴

IV

A Movement (In) Process :The Travels and Translations of the WSF

If distinctly Brazilian 'ways of doing politics' were sedimented in the WSF process early on, what happened when the global Forum travelled elsewhere ? Key tensions have of course emerged as the WSF became increasingly *mundializado* ('globalised'), as it has been appropriated and translated by participants whose politics emerge from movement cultures in a wide variety of **somewheres**. Corrêa Leite noted, for instance : "Of the elements of the Charter of Principles, where is the focus of greatest tension when the Forum goes outside Brazil ? It is the question of [prohibiting] the participation of political parties. And why isn't that a focus of tension in Brazil ? Because everybody's in the PT... so there is no tension".⁵⁵ In the absence of a PT-like "nerve centre", partisan strain and tensions over movement autonomy have abounded in local and regional transplantations of the WSF.

India

Distinctive local Indian and South Asian movement and leftist political cultures, and later their counterparts in Africa and the US, have marked what has become a 'world movement process', rather than a mere series of events. I draw select examples from these other 'somewheres' in an attempt to illustrate how local sedimentations have transformed Brazil's political export.

In Indian social movement fields, a variety of Marxist and Marxist-Leninist parties have a significant presence. Such parties, reliant on more 'verticalist' structures and party-linked mass organisations, along with development-focused NGOs, were well represented on the Indian Organising Committee (IOC) for the fourth WSF. Their mobilisation efforts through numerous

regional and local meetings held throughout India in the months preceding the global gathering help account for the massive presence of urban and, especially, rural activists from the 'grassroots' at the Mumbai Forum. Though the IOC adapted the original Charter of Principles in forging a consensual political methodology, this radical 'popularisation' of the Forum, and the more inclusive and extensive preparatory processes that have characterised WSF meetings since Mumbai, are two Indian sedimentations now evident in WSF as **movement process**.

If the Brazilian editions of the Forum had provided the GJ&SM with a 'Southern accent', the Mumbai meeting lent it a decidedly 'non-Western' one. As Sohl Jean, member of the Korean People's Action against FTA and WTO, pointedly stated during one of the plenary sessions of the Mumbai WSF :

The decision to have the WSF in India is very much contributing to the true internationalisation of the WSF process, and balancing out the biased spotlight that focused only on movements in the so-called 'West' until now. Is the methodology in the way the WSF functions or the language in which discourse is formulated inside the WSF still not overcoming the Western orientation of previous anti-globalisation movements ? ⁵⁶

Many of the over 500 Brazilian participants in the Mumbai Forum were in fact deeply shaken by the stark realisation that Latin America is in many ways Western or 'Occidentalised', or, at best, simultaneously Western, non-Western, pre-Western, and post-Western. Most Brazilians and other Latin Americans I talked with in Mumbai also seemed to take to heart their Asian counterparts' admonitions that the WSF's agenda, like that of the larger GJ&SM, had thus far been marked by a 'Western bias', thereby potentially fostering greater South-South dialogue within the movement for another globalisation.

Kenya

But there are limits to the Forum's South-South travels and the Kenyan edition of the WSF revealed some of the difficulties that can be encountered in processes of translation. The Nairobi global gathering has been widely criticised on a number of counts : Political tensions and poor planning and management by the African Organising Committee (AOC); poor infrastructure and lack of adequate funding; excessive reliance on corporate sponsors and even accusations of corruption within the AOC; insufficient outreach, even in Nairobi; and the over-representation of development NGOs and the Christian-charity side of GCS. Less than half the anticipated 150,000 actually attended the event.⁵⁷

The criticisms levelled at the Nairobi Forum, some have claimed, reflected thinly veiled racist stereotypes about Africa : "At every WSF there are fights and conflicts, people unhappy about being excluded or about why certain people were given podiums rather than others. What is troubling is that when it is elsewhere, the problems are just problems, when they are in Africa... well the problems are because it's Africa".⁵⁸ One activist and policy analyst from Harare, Zimbabwe, worth quoting at length, insisted that the comparative weaknesses of African civil society helped account for the particular difficulties encountered in Nairobi :

Anyone who understands Africa will know it is a challenge to organise an event like the WSF if you are not a government, a UN agency or a political party. We don't have the social movements of Latin America and India to carry it and give it that 'people flavour'. Our NGOs (who were the main organisers) are weak and under resourced, heavily dependent on external finance and not as connected to the rest of society as we would like them to be. Often they (being also humans by the way) reflect the same ills plaguing our societies. Our trade unions have been decimated first by one-party rule and then by liberalisation. Our women's movements have been isolated because they are betraying traditional values. Our academics have had to sell their souls for World Bank consultancies so that they can make it to lecture rooms.... And we all agree that our alternative discourses around African development are in disarray and need to be deepened, broadened, re-politicised and reconstituted into a coherent goal. ⁵⁹

The broader GJ&SM was, nevertheless, also permanently marked by Kenyan and other African imprints. If India brought the non-Western to the centre of GJ&SM's discourses and

agendas, the Nairobi Forum heightened the global movement's awareness of issues central to colonialism, post-coloniality, and globalised neo-colonialism. The Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) to be signed between the European Union and former European colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, for instance, was the focus of numerous panels and workshops during the Forum.

But the WSF as methodology-process also arguably had a number of salutary effects on African social movements, potentially fortifying the linkages among diverse social struggles across the region. And it may well be the case that in localities with less vigorous or more thinly spread civil societies, the movement process side of the WSF can flow particularly productively in a global→local direction.

Nairobi represented the largest region-wide gathering of African social movements ever held. The annual African Social Forums had been small, bringing together a few hundred participants; after Nairobi, organisers expected the numbers to increase manifold. Nairobi, many activists insisted, facilitated unprecedented conversations and strategic exchanges across movements, countries, and sub-regions. It provided a "platform for the 'voices of the voiceless', the open discussion of all issues, no-holds barred, and an outlet for all to vent their pent up feelings".⁶⁰ One important example of the WSF's 'platform effect' was the Queer Spot at the Nairobi meeting, a special tent area where many LGBTT events were held and where intensive intra- and inter-regional networking took place. In a context where homosexuality is illegal everywhere but South Africa, the global gathering "provided an occasion for African gays and lesbians, especially Kenyans, to get together to speak out openly amidst international solidarity. The African presence in the stalls of the lesbian and gay tent had not only Kenyan but also Ugandan, South African and Congolese activists".⁶¹ The Nairobi meeting also heightened the visibility and global projection of the recently created African Feminist Union.

USA

I had anticipated that the USSF, held in June 2007, might be an even more pronounced case of incommensurability with respect to the WSF's methodology-process. After all, the US social movement scene is notorious for our hyper-fragmentation into issue- and identity-focused groupings, even within a given movement like feminism. But the coalitional practices and creative organising formats developed by US urban grassroots activists in recent decades appear to have lent themselves well to (re)mixing with, appropriating, translating, and transplanting the WSF's political methodology and movement process.

Across the US, the Social Forum was very much a place-based, articulatory process. All participants I spoke with at the Western Massachusetts Forum, for instance, insisted that they'd never been to a single event where they could interact with a wide range of advocacy groups dealing with such an impressive array of issues and causes. Community-based organisations, immigrant rights groups, and associations of people of colour were at the forefront of the organising process for the USSF as well. Organisers worked deliberately to ensure that the process would not be 'hijacked' by the large, better-resourced NGOs that have monopolised the leadership of many 'global' protest actions in the US in recent times.

A key link to the global WSF movement process in the US was established by Grassroots Global Justice (GGJ), a group dedicated to involving US people of colour and working class people in the Forum. GGJ had taken a delegation to the 2002 WSF in Porto Alegre, and subsequently joined other US grassroots-based anti-globalisation activists, especially immigrant rights groups, at the 2003 Summit of the Americas in Miami. As one Latino USSF organiser put it, "we became a fifth pole" in the axes of power represented in the US anti-globalisation movement; the other axes were the AFL-CIO, the environmentalists, the NGOs, and the Black Bloc / Direct Action groups.

Members of GGJ and other Atlanta meeting organisers were encouraged to stage a USSF

event during their participation in the *Foro Social de las Américas* ('American Social Forum', Quito, 2004). At the beginning, they insisted that the USSF process be grounded in the poor, the excluded, women, people of colour, and only later opened it to all other movements and groups. The effectiveness of this strategy was impressive. People of colour and immigrant rights activists and non-NGO, place-based groups were decidedly in the majority among the over 20,000 participants. Feminist and queer visibility was also marked. And there were over 900 workshops on the most diverse possible themes, but with clear concentration on social, environmental, racial, and gender justice.

The political methodology of the WSF appears to have translated well in this particular US context and recombined in creative ways to strengthen grassroots coalition-building efforts, especially among immigrants and the urban poor. And the WSF methodology was also arguably adapted in ways that privilege the poor, the socially excluded, and the racially discriminated. The experiences of place-based activism in US brought attention to issues heretofore not central to WSF process, especially immigration, sexual minorities, racialised poverty, and environmental justice.⁶²

V

Concluding Reflections

Building on one of the few points of consensus regarding the workings of anti-globalisation movements, that "they operate at various scales (from the local to the global)",⁶³ I have tried to show that as supra-local **movements move** across those various scales, they are marked by the dynamic confluence of place-based and global practices and discourses. And I have tried to tell the story of one global movement, or 'movement of movements' if you prefer, that is **everywhere**, from the vantage point of the place-based **somewhere** where it originated, and from a few other somewheres where it has been continually (re)constituted.

Such place-based stories can shed a different light on the workings of global movements. Other 'global' movements that took shape under UN auspices – like the so-called global women's movement – were also arguably marked by the local practices of Northern based NGOs who imprinted it with advocacy practices honed over decades in liberal democracies. And this Northern-born 'global feminism' has also been gradually transformed as it recombined with the practices of feminists in the Global South over the past decade.

Tracing local sedimentations and their erratic, non-linear flows can help us understand how the particular practices and discourses of global movements like the GJ&SM are constructed and continually refashioned across many places and multiple scales – something we cannot apprehend if we analyse them solely from the vantage point of their most visible 'performances', enacted on 'global stages'.

Sediments from the new urban activism and direct action movements in the US and Europe have clearly flowed through the WSF process. These subsequently recombined with Brazilian, South Asian, African, and US grassroots movements and innumerable other local practices to produce cross-fertilisations that refashioned the discourses of the global movement at all levels. Place-based local sedimentations are gradually diluted, dissolve, and dynamically recombine as they transit across the local, national, regional, and global scales on which the GJ&SM operates.

Notes

1 The present essay draws on in-depth interviews conducted with members of the Brazilian Organising Committee of the World Social Forum, and informal conversations with many other key Brazilian activists centrally involved in the WSF process during August and September 2003, as well as on participant-observation and numerous informal interviews and other documentation collected during at the third, fourth, fifth, and seventh WSF meetings convened in Porto Alegre, Mumbai, Porto Alegre, and Nairobi, respectively, and at local WSF-related meetings in Amherst, Massachusetts, and Atlanta, Georgia during 2007. I owe many of my insights about processes of cultural and political translation to Claudia de Lima Costa and other participants in the Transnational Feminist Politics of Translation in the Latin/a Américas working group. See Alvarez et al

forthcoming.

2 For analyses of the origins, development, and dynamics of the WSF, see Codas 2003; Corrêa Leite and Gil 2003; Fischer and Ponniah, eds, 2003; Loureiro, Corrêa Leite, and Cevalco 2002; Miná 2003; Sen, Anand, Escobar, and Waterman 2004; and de Sousa Santos 2006a. Also consult the 'Memórias' ['Memories'] of all the global Forums held so far at the WSF site : <http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br> . On the WSF's connections with the broader GJ&SM, see especially Seoane and Taddei 2001, and Waterman 2004a.

3 Baiocchi 2005, p 207.

4 Interviews with José Corrêa Leite, member of ATTAC-Brasil and representative to the Brazilian Organising Committee / International Secretariat of the WSF, São Paulo, September 3 2003, and Francisco 'Chico' Whitaker, member of the Catholic Church-linked Comissão de Justiça e Paz ['Commission for Justice and Peace'] and representative to the Brazilian Organising Committee / International Secretariat of the WSF, São Paulo, September 2 2003. On the origins and dynamics of the PT, see especially Keck 1992 and Meneguello 1989. On Porto Alegre and other PT-led experiments in urban democracy in Brazil, see especially Baiocchi 2003, 2005; Abers 2000; de Sousa Santos 1998, p 461; Wampler 2007.

5 See de Sousa Santos 2004a and 2004b.

6 After nearly a quarter century of conducting research on Brazilian and other Latin American social movements, the 2003 WSF felt like 'old home week' for me. And it shouldn't have been surprising that I felt so at home. After all, over 85 percent of the over 100,000 participants at the 2003 Forum were Brazilian. Of the remaining 15,000 or so foreign participants, close to 40 percent came from Latin America, especially from the Southern Cone. A few thousand were Europeans, especially French (7.2 percent), Italian, and Spanish activists, 6.6 percent were from the US, and the remaining 42 percent of foreign participants came from over 130 countries, with only a sprinkling, however, from other regions of the Global South (Fórum Social Mundial 2003).

7 Alvarez 2000; Alvarez et al 2003; Alvarez, Faria, and Nobre 2004a; Alvarez forthcoming.

8 Already by the third WSF in 2003, a number of sessions, panels, workshops and so on were called to critically assess the theoretical and political significance of the Forum itself, and its role in the larger anti- or alter-globalisation movements. A veritable parallel programme of what we might call 'World Social Forum Studies' continued at subsequent global gatherings and was the focus of a series of workshops at the Nairobi meeting in 2007, for instance. The numerous scholarly and activist analyses of the WSF, as represented by this volume, have no doubt also contributed to how the Forum has travelled and been translated across time, space, and geopolitical borders.

9 For a flavour of the debates surrounding Global or Transnational Civil Society, see especially Hochstetler, Clark, and Friedman 2000; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002; Halperin and Laxer 2003; Tsing 2004.

10 Notes from Nowhere 2004.

11 Jenson and de Sousa Santos 2000, cited in Naples 2002, p 8.

12 For narrative accounts and analyses of the direct action, 'anarchistic' thrust of the WTO and other global protests that followed, see especially Epstein 2001; Graeber 2002; Notes from Nowhere 2003; and Shepard and Hayduk 2002; on the relative absence of people of colour in Seattle, see Martínez 2000. On the marginalisation of feminist voices and perspectives, see especially Eschle 2005a.

13 Kaufman 2002, p 35.

14 Shepard 2002, p 11; Wood and Moore 2002.

15 Wood and Moore 2002, 29, p 31.

16 Bello 2001; Corrêa Leite 2003; Seoane and Taddei 2001.

17 Keck and Sikkink 1998.

18 Notes from Nowhere 2004, pp 21 and 26-27, emphasis added.

19 Cockburn, St Clair, and Sekula 2000, p 1, emphasis added.

20 Alvarez 1993 and 1997; Baierle 1998; Doimo 1995; Sader 1988.

21 Almeida and Sánchez 2000; Branford and Rocha 2002; Wright and Wolford 2003.

22 Website: www.globalexchange.org.

23 On the origins of the 'idea' of the WSF, see especially Whitaker 2002; Teivainen 2002; Corrêa Leite and Gil 2003; and de Sousa Santos 2007.

24 At a plenary address, entitled ' *A Sociedade Civil nas Pautas Políticas Nacionais* ' [' Civil Society Organizations in National Policy Guidelines' , in Portuguese], presented at a seminar sponsored by the Brazilian Association of NGOs (ABONG) in São Paulo, on September 3 2003, social theorist Chico de Oliveira argued that the PT gradually constituted itself as the " *centro nevralgico* ['central nervous system']" of Brazilian civil society.

25 For an extended discussion of movements as "discursive fields of action", see Alvarez forthcoming.

26 Interview with Neuri Rosseto, member of the National Directorate of the MST and one of its representatives to the BOC, São Paulo, September 4 2003.

27 Interview with José Corrêa Leite, São Paulo, September 3 2003.

28 Teixeira 2003.

- 29 Notes from Nowhere 2004, p 313.
- 30 Interview with Gustavo Codas, Advisor to the Secretaria de Relações Internacionais da CUT ['Secretariat of International Relations'], São Paulo, September 3 2003.
- 31 Interview with Gustavo Codas, São Paulo, September 3 2003.
- 32 ABONG 2003, p 7.
- 33 Ibid, pp 8-9.
- 34 Ibid, p 5.
- 35 See Eschle 2005a; Alvarez, Faria, and Nobre 2004a; León 2002; and Vargas 2003 and 2009. *Eds* : See also the essay by Virginia Vargas in the companion volume to this book, The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds (Vargas, forthcoming (2013)).
- 36 AFM 2003, p 7.
- 37 Ibid, p 14.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Alvarez, Faria, and Nobre 2004a. *Eds* : See also the essay by Virginia Vargas in the companion volume to this book, The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds (Vargas 2013).
- 40 Alvarez, Faria, and Nobre 2004a.
- 41 Wood and Moore 2002, p 29; see also Ashman 2004; Escobar 2004; Green and Griffith 2002; Notes from Nowhere 2004.
- 42 Alvarez 1993, 1997; Landim 1993; Teixeira 2003.
- 43 Alvarez 1990; Keck 1992; Meneguello 1989; Baiocchi 2003, 2005.
- 44 Alvarez 1997.
- 45 Mische 2008.
- 46 Wright and Wolford 2003; CUT ref.
- 47 Baierle 1992, p 19.
- 48 *Eds* : For a more detailed discussion of the contributions to and influence on the WSF of the progressive Church, see the essay by Charmain Levy in this volume (Levy 2012).
- 49 Doimo 1993, p 44.
- 50 Interview with Fátima Melo, Coordinator of International Relations for FASE, Rio de Janeiro, August 28 2003.
- 51 Interview with José Corrêa Leite, São Paulo, September 3 2003.
- 52 Interview with Fátima Melo, Rio de Janeiro, August 28 2003.
- 53 Interview with Chico Whitaker, São Paulo, September 2 2003.
- 54 Interview with Maisa Mendonça, Rede Social de Justiça e Direitos Humanos ['Justice and Human Rights Social Network'], São Paulo, September 2 2003.
- 55 Interview in São Paulo, September 3 2003.
- 56 Sohl Jean, available at: www.forumsocialmundial.org.br, accessed on April 20 2004.
- 57 *Eds* : For other discussions of the Nairobi Forum, see the essays in this book by Demba Moussa Dembele, Wangui Mbatia and Hassan Indusa, Virginia Vargas, and Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle and Nicolas Haeringer (Dembele 2012; Mbatia and Indusa 2012; Vargas 2012; Pommerolle and Haeringer 2012) .
- 58 Kachingwe 2007.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Adedze 2007.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 *Eds* : For detailed discussions of the US Social Forum, see the essays by Michael Leon Guerrero and Jeffrey Juris in this book (Guerrero 2012 and Juris 2012b).

SECTION 3

Some Critical Issues – in the WSF, in Movement

3.1 America Vera-Zavala – A Space of Freedom : The World Women's Forum

3.2 Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca – 'Skeleton Women' at the World Social Forum : Feminist Struggles for Visibility, Voice, and Influence, 2001-5

3.3 Rahul Rao – Included Out ?

3.4 Taran N Khan – Trio

3.5 Amanda Alexander and Mandisa Mbali – Have the Slaves left the Master's House ?

3.6 Corinna Genschel – Are Social Forums an Opportunity for Renewing Emancipative Gender Politics ? A Feminist Account of the Local Organisation of Social Forums

3.7 Laura Sullivan – Activism, Affect, and Abuse : The Emotional Contexts and Consequences of the ESF Organising Process 2004

3.8 Giuseppe Caruso – Difference and Conflicts in the World Social Forum in India : Towards an 'Open' Cosmopolitanism ?

3.9 Jai Sen – Towards Building the Future Together : An Open Letter to the Puno Cumbre

3.10 Franco Barchiesi, Heinrich Bohmke, Prishani Naidoo, and Ahmed Veriava – Does Bamako Appeal ? The World Social Forum Versus the Life Strategies of the Subaltern

3.11 Shannon Walsh – We Won't Pay to Discuss Our Own Poverty ! Activist Interventions into the 'Open Space' of the World Social Forum

3.12 Patrick Bond – Linking Below, Across, And Against : Rethinking Global Civil Society Strategy

3.13 Jeffrey S Juris – Opening Spaces at the US Social Forum

3.14 Alex Callinicos and Chris Nineham – At an Impasse ? Anti-capitalism and the Social Forums

3.15 Walden Bello – World Social Forum at the Crossroads

3.16 Chico Whitaker – Crossroads Do Not Always Close Roads

3.17 Boaventura de Sousa Santos – A Left of the Future : The WSF and Beyond

3.18 Ronaldo Munck – The Great Counter-Movement : Empire, Multitudes, and Social Transformation

A Space Of Freedom : The World Women's Forum ¹ **America Vera-Zavala**

"After the rape they made us walk home naked. When our men saw us they took off the clothes that they still had and gave them to us so that we could wrap something around us."

The woman starts crying, and she bows her head in shame. The other woman chairing the meeting gives her a warm clap on the shoulder and asks us to applaud for the survivors – the survivors of the massacre in Gujarat in February 2002.

The meeting is a workshop at the World Social Forum (WSF) in Mumbai, India, in January 2004 called 'Religious Fundamentalism, Communalism, Casteism, and Racism - Actually a Globalisation Agenda', organised by the World March of Women and the National Alliance of Women.

The event is packed. People overflow from the large tent and stand outside in the hot sun, listening attentively. A majority are women : Hindu women, Muslim women, Dalit women. Very few men and Westerners have found their way here.

Never before at a WSF have women been so visible, nor has the issue of gender played such a central role. Everywhere, women are talking, dancing, leading, organising, crying, and laughing. The most charismatic names are women, such as Captain Laxmi Sehgal; the big movement leaders are women (Medha Patkar); women deliver the best speeches (the Dalit human rights campaigner, Ruth Manorama); and women organise the most interesting seminars.

I

Women Get On Board

It's hard to analyse why we had to go to India for this to be so. Oppression of women exists all around the world, and the answer that women's situation is worse in India than elsewhere is not good enough. If the situation is better in Europe or in Latin America the more reason for making progress instead of stagnating. Maybe it's the Indian woman's experience of fighting for room in a scarce space that made them successful in taking over the WSF space. I've never seen a society where oppression of women is so cruel, where they are constantly deprived of space, and where war is needed in order to obtain more room. Few times have I been as scared as when I took the train to the Forum one morning and did not go on the women's compartment. There was no space, I thought, before discovering that the space that was given in the other wagons was worse than hell. Women in India occupy not even 10 percent of space, if you look at the space they are given in a train – of ten compartments, one is for women. And somehow they find room.

The WSF is the same; neither women nor the gender issue in general was better represented in the official programme at Mumbai as compared to previous years. The same men dominated the 'star' panels; some who clearly think too highly of themselves participated in several seminars at the same time. Who (to name just one) did not see Walden Bello deliver a speech and then say : "Excuse me, I have to go", and run off to the next seminar ? Naomi Klein once proposed that if you talk at a WSF panel one year, the next year you should listen. I like that idea. The least you can ask of a panellist is at least to stay throughout the whole session.

Many panels consisted entirely of men. Some trendy activists who think they are super-feminists because they know a bit of gender theory, agreed to sit on panels without a single

woman. Everywhere you could see homosocial relations : Men preferring to talk to men, men favouring men when organising a seminar, or editing a book; women forgotten and given the same proportion in the space as Indian women will get on the local train. All of this has existed since the Forum process started, and was apparent in Mumbai – but somehow, here, the Forum was challenged and overtaken by women who decided to occupy more space than they had been given.

I've heard so many people say : "Something must happen to this WSF process. It can't go on like this". But, in Mumbai, in 2004, something did happen. A 'new' issue – women's rights – moved to the centre.

II

Giving and Taking Space

Many 'old' problems remain. The approach to solving them may be through proposals that some will find uncomfortable. It's like the women's compartments. I'm sure that many would oppose the idea of separating men and women travellers. Well, before judging you should be a woman travelling in a train in India. The 'general' compartments consist only of men, many of whom will harass and molest any woman who ventures aboard. It was women themselves who fought to have the women's compartments.

If the 'general' WSF panels consist only of men, who talk about and analyse everything, and the women-only panels speak solely of women's issues – and that continues regardless of how many think it's wrong and people refuse to understand the obvious – perhaps we need to make rules until they do ?. One rule could be that all-male panels are only allowed to talk about men's issues. I'm not suggesting that this would be a positive action, but sometimes radical proposals can make people wake up. Something radical is necessary if the success of the women in the India WSF is to have an impact that will mark the Forum process for more than just the few days it was in Mumbai.

But this WSF should not be remembered primarily as an event where we started to make rules, but as a beautiful political festival dominated by women. According to gender research, women are perceived as 'many' or 'in majority' when we occupy thirty percent of a space. At this WSF, maybe women were represented in accordance to our representation in the world population, around 51 percent. I think that is why many perceived women to be everywhere at this forum.

One of the largest and most important panels – perhaps the most significant of all – was called 'Wars against Women, Women against Wars'. There, Arundhati Roy did one of the most beautiful things anyone can do : She gave away space, space that she has had to fight to get, space that she can today access in a privileged way.

She spoke mostly about the massacre in Gujarat, but also about women doing horrible things to other women. And then she ended her speech much earlier than she had to, to give space to another woman to tell her story about police brutality. That woman was not on the panel, being just an ordinary woman and not a famous writer or activist. But on stage her story was very important to hear. That made me think about our Achilles' heel : Women not showing solidarity with other women. If more women followed Arundhati Roy's example, more women would become visible and be heard.

Something happened in Mumbai that made that year's Forum deserve to be named the World Women's Forum.

Notes

1 This article was first published on openDemocracy on January 29 2004, @ <http://www.opendemocracy.net/debates/article-6-91-1693.jsp> .

'Skeleton Women' At The World Social Forum : Feminist Struggles For Visibility, Voice, And Influence, 2001-5 ¹

Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca

In a powerful piece on the 1999 protests in Seattle, Paul Hawken uses the metaphor of Skeleton Woman to describe the tenacious way in which resistance haunts the neoliberal world order. "Dancing, drumming, ululating, marching in black with a symbolic coffin for the world, Skeleton woman wove through the sulphurous rainy streets of the night. She couldn't be killed or destroyed".² Although Hawken does not focus on the role of women or feminists in this resistance, we find his metaphor evocative of current feminist efforts to haunt and reclaim not only the globalised world order, but also the 'anti-globalisation' or 'global justice movement' itself.³ So in what follows we pluralise Hawken's feminine symbol of resistance in order to explore the concrete resistances of the many living, breathing 'Skeleton Women' active in the context of the WSF.

More specifically, in the first part of the chapter we trace the gendered hierarchies that have shaped this political space and process since its inception in 2001 until 2005, and explore how such hierarchies have served to marginalise feminist actors and discourses. As the Southern feminist network DAWN warned early in the life of the Forum, "in the absence of deep self-reflection, our joint effort to democratise and transform globalisation can inadvertently result in the materialisation of Porto Alegre Men".⁴ In the second part we identify the varied strategies deployed by feminist activists to avert this 'materialisation' and to gain visibility, voice, and influence.⁵ In shining a spotlight on these contestations of the Forum process between 2001 and 2005, our aim is not to undermine its legitimacy or achievements. Rather, we aim at a critical engagement, intended to contribute, albeit in a small way, to the ongoing struggle to ensure that gender justice and economic justice are more tightly woven together in the pursuit of "other possible worlds".

I

Gendered Marginalisations and The Marginalisation of Gender and Feminism

Although the WSF's Charter of Principles⁶ declares that the Forum is not intended as "a locus of power", it is clear that power relations have played out within it. Indeed, it has been argued that the very ways in which it was set up and organised have reflected and reified certain hierarchies. One set of criticisms in this regard has focused on the over-weening influence of certain groups, such as the French branch of the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens (ATTAC) and the local Brazilian Partido dos Trabalhadores ('Workers' Party', PT), or of certain strands of the left.⁷ More serious, perhaps, are the claims that methodological decisions – such as the frequency of the gatherings, the high travel costs, the privileging of official plenaries over smaller or autonomously organised workshops, the distances to be covered between workshops at WSF sites – have all interacted with wider class, racial, and age hierarchies to limit and stratify participation as well as to reinforce the dominance of large NGOs and academic discourses.⁸

In this chapter, we focus on the claim of many feminist participants that the Forum sites and processes have also been shaped by gender hierarchies. At this point it must be acknowledged that women have attended the annual WSF in huge numbers. For example it has been estimated that they constituted just over half the total attendees in Porto Alegre in 2001 and 2003; and slightly under half the total, but more than half the young people, in 2005.⁹ Given the remarks above, it can be assumed that these women were, in general, relatively privileged in terms of their access to resources, educational background, and/or racial and geo-

political positioning. In other words, women - as women - have not been excluded from the general space of the Forum, although their class, age, or ethnicity have made it harder for some to participate.¹⁰ What is striking, nonetheless, is the extent to which women have not been as visible as men as participants in the Forum's main events – and certainly not feminist women, speaking about gendered hierarchies. Relatedly, feminist concerns have not been widely aired or heard within the Forum process.

It is our view that there are four main ways in which gendered dynamics have shaped the Forum. The first can be seen in the **dominance of elite men over the leadership and organisation of the Forum process**, particularly in its early stages. Sonia Correa of DAWN insists that a longer term approach to the history of the WSF reveals feminist input : “The very antecedents of the World Social Forum have to be traced back to the incredible participation of women in the UN conferences, starting in 79... [and] the incredible cumulative process... of the conferences of the 90s”.¹¹ Whatever their influence on the original idea of and energy behind the WSF, however, feminists clearly had little concrete involvement in the organisation preceding the first 2001 edition. None of the eight founding groups were feminist and the key players were “four white men and also more than fifties, older”.¹² Indeed, these men are frequently referred to as ‘founding fathers’ and Correa describes discussion of their roles as a “paternity debate”.¹³ Consequently, the opening press conference of the first Forum, according to Nicola Bullard of Focus on the Global South, “looked like the Last Supper : Twelve men with an average age of 52”.¹⁴ Things had not improved much at the press conference held to open the second edition, which was led by a woman flanked by nine men : “As one woman journalist wisely said : ‘This is so boring ! It happens everywhere. She’s the only woman but she is the one doing all the work !’”.¹⁵ In an important intervention, one of the ‘founding fathers’, Cândido Grzybowski, acknowledged that the organisation of the WSF was not immune from a “structural bias that hinders women from exercising leadership roles”, blaming this on a “Jurassic macho culture... in civil society”.¹⁶

If gendered hierarchies were stark with regard to the leadership and organisation of the Forum in its early days, they have also been evident in a second dynamic: **the dominance of elite men and masculine modes of interaction in the Forum event / space**. While this may be an unsurprising consequence of the male domination of the prior organising process, we also point to the privileging of the ‘plenary’ format for the most high-profile official events as another relevant factor. Reinforcing the celebrity status of prominent activists, usually male, plenaries are often showcases for visceral confrontations or long winded speeches from on high to passive, distant throngs. According to Emma Dowling of ATTAC-UK, women who succeed in these modes of communication “are like men! Masculine in style. They are older women as well, they have been activists for a number of years and they have had to be strategic and acquire a number of behavioural patterns in order to be heard”.¹⁷ Thus it is not surprising that the most high profile plenaries during the first edition of the WSF at Porto Alegre were :

... almost entirely male, with only one or two females. And when you listened to that female she was an honorary male, she was patriarchal, she was not saying the feminist issues you would expect.... And when you did find on the main panels a feminist angle, it was something that had been organised by a feminist organisation, like the Women’s March. And... they were all female panellists.¹⁸

In other words, while ‘women’ were present at the Forum, feminists were not widely seen or heard outside the sessions they organised themselves. Cynthia Peters argues that things had not improved much on this score at the second WSF a year later, with women, including feminist women, still under-represented on official panels as well as in smaller workshops.¹⁹ By 2003, women and feminist speakers were more evident, especially on those panels under the two thematic axes given to feminist groups to organise, on which around half

the total of eighty-seven listed speakers were women, and of those at least twenty-one were feminists or from women's organisations. As for panels under the remaining axes, we calculate that just over a quarter of the speakers were women (thirty-three out of a total of 119) of which only seven were feminists or from women's groups.²⁰

In 2003 however, the panels were eclipsed by methodological innovations : A distinction between plenaries and a few larger, more TV-friendly 'conferences', and the showcasing of 'big names' at the Gigantinho football stadium.²¹ Once again, far fewer feminists featured here, as the big names were "mostly men, and mostly white".²² Naomi Klein, for one, was alarmed by the phenomenon of "big men and swooning crowds"²³ – a phenomenon that was to recur in 2005 when high profile stadium sessions were again held by male celebrities of the left, Lula and Chavez.

A third gendered dynamic shaping WSF politics concerns the **prevalence of ostensibly gender neutral or gender blind characterisations of 'the enemy' and of social change**. We have argued elsewhere that left critiques of globalisation are frequently economically determinist, rendering gender analysis invisible, superstructural, or secondary and making it very difficult to see that gender might be causal of global dynamics and feminism, thus, integral to struggles for change.²⁴ This was echoed in the testimony of several feminists at the 2001 and 2002 WSF editions, who commented on the "lack of a robust gender perspective in the analyses of globalisation"²⁵ and the "clearly sexist language"²⁶ used "outside of explicitly feminist groups".²⁷ Even in 2003, with levels of feminist visibility improving, there were continued repeated feminist complaints of the lack of integration of their concerns into the Forum's dominant discourses. The final declaration issued by the World March of Women lamented that "[t]he struggle against capitalism is still considered to be the primary struggle in the minds of many",²⁸ while a report from Women in Development Europe (WIDE) declared that "gender issues were as usual very marginalized as not being a 'priority' given these troubled times and the more 'serious' issues to tackle".²⁹ Nalu Faria of the Brazilian feminist group Sempreviva Organização Feminista (SOF) pointed out that none of the male participants at a World March-sponsored session on the economy considered gender issues in their talks and that when directly asked about it, "they did not answer".³⁰

A final way in which gendered power relations have operated at the WSF is in the form of **sexist actions that have served to directly intimidate, demean, and silence women**, feminist or otherwise. After the second edition of the WSF, there were complaints of sexual harassment at the Youth Camp along with two allegations of rape;³¹ in Mumbai, in 2004, the Forum was again marred by a rape allegation, this time among the official delegations;³² in 2005 there were a shocking total of ninety reported complaints of sexual harassment in the Youth Camp and, yet again, the last day of the Forum was blighted by claims that one or more rapes had taken place there.³³ These did not receive much attention in subsequent media reports or activist commentary however, and it is difficult to find details about them. We acknowledge that these incidents seem to have been localised and were unlikely to have affected the majority of women on site, and they are undoubtedly less directly causal of the marginalisation of the feminist presence at the Forum than the more diffuse structural processes highlighted above – however terrible they must have been for those women directly affected. But we interpret this repeated surfacing of sexual harassment and violence as an indicator, in the bluntest possible form, of the limited acceptance or integration of feminist arguments and ethics amongst sections of Forum participants. And, like all the gendered hierarchies in operation at the Forum, it has been increasingly challenged by feminists.

II

Feminist Struggles for Visibility, Voice, and Influence

Although it has been argued that feminists were rather "late and light" in their involvement in

the Forum,³⁴ it was not long after the process was launched that feminists began sustained, coordinated efforts to challenge the gendered hierarchies described above. We begin this part of the chapter by examining those strategies intended to **contest elite male dominance of the organisation process**. It was as early as 2000 that feminists first intervened in that process, at a crucial meeting at the headquarters of the Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analysis (IBASE). Activists from DAWN and the Latin American network Articulación Feminista Marcosur (AFM) sought to persuade the organisers that “there is a problem with the panels because there are no women and there are no feminists. The voices there are so male mainstream”.³⁵ During the first WSF itself, feminists then circulated a statement entitled ‘Practicing Gender Justice Now’, which urged “the organisers to practice the democratic principle of gender and regional balance in the constitution of the advisory and organising committee”.³⁶ Activists from the World March of Women who attended that first Forum immediately took the decision to become more involved in the organisation of the next one :

[W]e went there and we found... the same analysis of the World Bank and of neoliberalism and so on.... they lack a gender analysis... so that's what we have to bring in because no one else is going to.... [At that point we decided] we want to be much more in the preparing process and in the conferences... And the World March of Women was one of the international networks that immediately entered the International Council.³⁷

We know that DAWN and AFM joined the March in the International Council (IC) shortly after its formation and, by 2003, another six feminist groups had become members.³⁸ Although these groups collectively constitute less than 10 per cent of the IC,³⁹ they do seem to have gained some influence. Crucially, in the run up to the third Forum in 2003, two of the five thematic axes around which plenary panels were organised were delegated to representatives of the AFM and the World March respectively, specifically Gina Vargas and Dianne Matte.⁴⁰ This organisational momentum continued as the WSF moved to India for its 2004 edition, with the establishment of a Women's Movement Caucus on the Indian Organising Committee.⁴¹ This caucus worked effectively for, amongst other things, more women on the main plenaries and conferences, and for a dedicated ‘women's conference’.⁴²

This takes us to the second set of feminist strategies we want to discuss, those aimed at **ensuring enhanced visibility at the WSF space / event**. Most obviously, feminists have attempted to infiltrate the high-profile plenaries and conferences of the official programme. For example, during the first WSF, the Practising Gender Justice Now statement discussed above was read out by Sara Longwe of FEMNET and others in a highly public “coup d'état [during] the last plenaries” :

We just went to the token women on the panels and said “can you please give me five minutes of your time ?” We did this without announcing to the chairs of the panels to avoid being stopped.... And I read this statement, which in part said “if we are having a new world or an order alternative to neoliberalism, we must get women on board and women's issues on board, and this must start with the representation on the panels and the issues”.⁴³

Since then, feminist groups have demanded actual parity of representation, insisting on “50 per cent women speakers [and chairs] as an aim” in the official sessions, “and alternate women and men speakers in the assemblies and all those things”,⁴⁴ albeit with varying degrees of success. We pointed out above that it was not until the 2003 edition that there was some improvement in the visibility of women in general and of feminist women in particular on plenaries, but this improvement was limited to those sessions organised under the two thematic axes controlled by the AFM and the World March (on which parity was achieved). It was at the Indian edition in 2004, however, that feminists really made a visible mark throughout the official programme. The opening event, for example, included several women speakers whose contribution framed the concerns of the WSF through a gender lens, as we

shall discuss below. Subsequently, approximately 30,000 people gathered at the 'women's conference' a few days later, officially entitled 'Wars Against Women, Women Against Wars', to listen to speakers such as Arundhati Roy, Nawal El Saadawi, and Gayatri, a young victim of rape by the police.⁴⁵ In addition, according to a handout circulated at the Feminist Dialogues, there were a further 144 events organised by feminists and women's groups, both official and self-organised – by our calculation, 11.6 per cent of the total held at the Forum. While still a relatively small proportion overall, it should be remembered this does not include the many 'mixed' panels into which speakers on feminist issues were integrated.⁴⁶

Feminist efforts to gain visibility at the Forum have not been limited to official panels or self-organised workshops, but have also included organising at 'street-level'. For some, the "best feminist moment" at the first WSF was the "diverse and colourful protest" against US abortion policy.⁴⁷ At the second WSF there was a similar demonstration, this time a "noisy, carnival-like rally for the decriminalisation of abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean".⁴⁸ This was linked to the launch of the Campaign against Fundamentalism, organised at this stage chiefly by the AFM, "an impressive (and expensive) media or cultural campaign, including posters on Porto Alegre hoardings, a hot air balloon, tee shirts, masks, public testimonies and professional-looking brochures".⁴⁹ In 2003, the Campaign took a float to the opening demonstration and distributed 15,000 facemasks decorated with the characteristic image of a big red mouth.⁵⁰

Gaining similar grassroots visibility on site at this time was the World March (of Women). Thus, in 2002, one participant remarked that the "World March flags and women wearing March T-shirts are omnipresent on the site... 10,000 flyers have been distributed";⁵¹ in 2003 the March "headed the protest march with its 10-metre tall coloured dolls"⁵² and organised two well-attended workshops and a protest march in the Youth Camp. Nonetheless, it was at the Mumbai edition in 2004 that feminist and women's groups were most visible and audible throughout the Forum site. Indeed, the vibrant street life of the Mumbai Forum was widely remarked upon :

... an explosion of colours and the pulsation of rhythmic music... endless street protests, demonstrations, and rallies of Dalit (so-called 'untouchables' / 'lower caste'), Adivasi (Tribal / indigenous peoples), unionists, workers, and Tibetan monks.... Most remarkable was the visible presence of women from grassroots mass movements of Dalits and Adivasi.⁵³

Or as Lynn Sargent and Michael Albert sum up : "Everywhere women were clearly visible".⁵⁴ In combination with the strong presence of women on official panels integrating an awareness of gender inequality and women's rights into their speeches, this created a significantly more feminist-friendly environment than previous WSFs. As Dianne Matte of the World March put it, "I saw the presence of feminism [in the 2004 WSF in Mumbai] more than I ever saw in Brazil".⁵⁵

Alongside these efforts to permeate the Forum, feminists have also created their own autonomous feminist spaces. As well as creating room for feminist networking and a safe space for feminist retreat and reflection, this strategy can also be seen as a way of enhancing visibility in the Forum because it enables coordination of feminist integration into other sessions and into broader alliances, and showcases feminist speakers and methods. Perhaps the most high profile example at the second WSF was the revived Planeta Fêmea or Women's Tent, first held at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. Organised at the WSF primarily by the Brazilian groups Rede de Desenvolvimento Humano (REDEH) and Coletivo Feminino Plural, the tent "created a space where groups could meet informally, discuss strategies and mount various activities",⁵⁶ "to create a unity but also to be a space of diversity".⁵⁷ For some, it provided an alternative feminist aesthetic : "[it] was very beautifully

decorated, it made a difference, you know. It was a place people wanted to go”.⁵⁸

In 2003, however, the Planeta Fêmea moved to a less central position and was less well used; it has not been organised since. But other autonomous spaces have emerged, including the Feminist Dialogues. Originating in women’s strategy meetings held immediately before and after the 2003 edition of the WSF, the Feminist Dialogues have since been held before each WSF, gradually broadening their organisational base and their regional and demographic inclusivity.⁵⁹ In addition, in 2005, the same cluster of groups associated with the Dialogues organised a Barco de Diversidad, or Diversity Boat, often renamed by attendees as “the women’s boat”... hosting daytime meetings and two parties”.⁶⁰ Simultaneously, the World March set up a women’s space in the Youth Camp, which functioned as a “feminist laboratory”, a “kind of an action centre, an autonomous space for activities... our criteria was only to accept activities proposed by women”.⁶¹

These wide-ranging efforts to gain visibility are closely related to a third set of strategies aimed at **integrating feminist concepts into the analyses circulating in and emanating from the Forum**. Indeed, this has been a central objective of feminist spaces, plenaries, workshops, roundtables, and campaigns on site, and of feminist participation in many mixed sessions with other non-feminist groups. For example, Gina Vargas draws attention to the Diversity Roundtable organised by the AFM at the second Forum, which articulated the intersections of racism and heterosexism with gender and gave a prominent space to Dalits and ‘sexual minorities’.⁶² In parallel, World March participants raised gendered issues at plenary conferences on labour, on the solidarity economy, and on globalisation and militarism, besides organising their own events.⁶³ The World March also managed to ensure that the high-profile Call of Social Movements issued at the end of the second Forum contained a critique of “the central role of... patriarchy in neoliberal globalization”.⁶⁴ Outside the official panels and large assemblies, specific issues of reproductive rights and abortion were dramatically highlighted by the demonstrations mentioned above, as well as in workshops,⁶⁵ and by a widely circulated DAWN supplement, issued just before the third edition, that criticised the Forum’s neglect of abortion, “a critical geo-political issue”.⁶⁶ Yet another innovative example is provided by the sustained efforts of the Campaign Against Fundamentalism to extend the concept of fundamentalism to incorporate neoliberalism, thus targeting all “those religious, economic, scientific or cultural expressions that attempt to negate humanity in its diversity”.⁶⁷ In so doing, the Campaign seeks to challenge economistic discourses that sideline culture and sexuality.

In Mumbai, the dominant discourses and the feminist challenges to them were rather different. First, a concern with fundamentalism transmuted into a concern with communalism, that is, the manipulation of tensions between Hindu and Muslim communities. Second, although activists from the Indian women’s movement were strongly present at the Forum, the feminist label as such was not widely invoked. As interviewee Amarjeet Kaur of the National Federation of Indian Women reminded us, many in India do not “define our women’s movement in that form”,⁶⁸ for complex historical reasons.⁶⁹ Third, a concern with gender inequality, violence against women, and women’s rights was nonetheless widely evident. Thus, for example, at the opening event mentioned above, we heard Lakshmi Sehgal, who led a women’s regiment during the fight for Independence, declare “this time the enemy is an invisible one... globalisation is very much anti-women”. She was joined by the novelist and campaigner Arundhati Roy, who characterised globalisation as “the new imperialism” and declared that “debating imperialism is like debating the pros and cons of rape. Are we supposed to say we really miss it?”. And fourth, thanks to the efforts of the women’s caucus, an explicit concern with ‘patriarchy’ was incorporated into the main themes of the whole event. As Janet Conway concluded on Mumbai, “this more explicit recognition of the multiplicity of oppressions and the expansion of political discourses beyond capitalism and imperialism was, in

terms of feminism, probably the most significant development”.⁷⁰

A final way in which feminists have challenged gendered dynamics at the WSF is by taking **direct action against the sexist treatment of women on site**. Take, for example, the demonstration organised by the World March of Women in the Youth Camp in 2003. This developed out of a workshop on sexist advertising and graffiti : It began with a discussion of the allegations of rape in the Camp in the previous year, and of continuing complaints of maltreatment, and transmogrified into a loud and lively march through the Camp with about forty women and men banging drums and chanting slogans against sexual harassment and violence.⁷¹ In 2005, in the wake of the proliferation of sexual harassment complaints, it was felt necessary to organise another demonstration in the Camp; this time, over 200 participated and the World March worked with the ‘Brigada Lilás’, a group of women wearing lilac armbands who served as safety chaperones to other women.⁷² Sara Koopman reports, however, that this 2005 demonstration met with some hostility from men in the Camp, ultimately crystallising into a competing march in which nearly 100 men, some naked, demonstrated for what they proclaimed to be “sexual liberation”. And as Koopman argues, in the wake of the 2005 edition, “There generally seems to be a ‘will to forget’ these events that seem so contradictory to the image, the discourse and the ideals of the Forum. The rumours of rapes, and the protest march against them, were largely invisibilized”.⁷³

III

Conclusions

So what was the balance sheet for feminists and feminism in the WSF by 2005 ? Overall, the story told here is one of fluctuating feminist fortunes rather than inevitable progression. Clearly, the feminist strategies enumerated above have ensured some significant gains in visibility, voice, and influence since the first edition. A small core of feminist groups did manage to integrate into the IC, and later years did witness the continued development of autonomous transnational networks and spaces. In tandem with the integration of local women’s groups into the Indian Organising Committee in the form of the Women’s Movement Caucus, this degree of feminist mobilisation and coordination resulted in the Mumbai WSF becoming one of the “historical high points”⁷⁴ in terms of the visibility of women in official plenaries and throughout the Forum. Mumbai was also a high point in terms of the influence of feminist-friendly agendas, with a critique of patriarchy widely adopted alongside a women’s rights discourse as part of a broader pluralisation of political priorities at the Forum.

It should not, however, be concluded that Mumbai was a feminist utopia; Lynne Sargent and Michael Albert remind us of the rape accusation and insist “there will never be a truly feminist WSF without massive daycare options, as well as a tripling of the number of toilets for women”.⁷⁵ Moreover, progress seemed to stall in the subsequent edition in 2005, when the Forum returned to Porto Alegre. Most significantly, the IC abolished the distinction between official plenaries / conferences and the myriad smaller-scale seminars and workshops. Instead, the 2005 edition was organised around eleven thematic clusters or terrains.⁷⁶ Most Brazilian feminists we interviewed welcomed this methodological shift as being in line with feminist democratic principles. We have seen, however, that the shift did not preclude the continuation of stadium sessions with male stars. Even more worryingly, it is in the context of this democratisation process that the feminist presence seems to have dipped. As a crude yardstick, our count of events in the 2005 programme primarily for or about women, gender, or feminist agendas yields a total of 116, or 4.6 per cent of the total number of 2,500 sessions.⁷⁷ This is significantly lower than the 11.6 per cent in Mumbai. Of course, it must be remembered that feminists also participated, as usual, in ‘mixed’ events in an effort to integrate women’s voices and feminist analyses into dominant discourses. It is also difficult to quantify an increasingly dispersed process. Nonetheless, the general downward shift seems clear. Finally, 2005 saw not

only an increased incidence of claims of harassment and violence against women in the Forum space, but also continued complaints about the discursive marginalisation of concerns about gender equality outside feminist-organised events. Koopman indicates, for example, that there should have been – but wasn't – discussion of the sexual harassment complaints in the daily Forum newspaper,⁷⁸ while Barbara Klugman claims that sexual and reproductive rights were disconnected from the supposedly 'transversal' themes of the WSF and discussed mainly in parallel events.⁷⁹ In sum, in 2005 the articulation of feminist concerns at the WSF remained dependent on the physical presence of self-declared feminists, and this presence was not as integrated or extensive as that of 'women's movement' activists in India the previous year. Commentary on subsequent Forums confirms that feminist fortunes continue to fluctuate.⁸⁰

What might be the reasons for this fluctuation? Here we think it important to recall the broader social context in which the WSF operates. We began our analysis with the insistence that the WSF is not transcendent of power relations but, like the wider society in which it takes place, shot through with economic, racialised, and gendered hierarchies. Our point here is that these hierarchies play themselves out in context-specific ways at each WSF event.⁸¹ Moreover, we need to remember that the structure of the WSF has changed over time. The adoption of a more diffuse methodology by the IC in 2005, for instance, meant that feminists, or any group for that matter, were not able to influence the organising process and agenda in the same way as before. As Carole Barton of the Women's International Coalition for Economic Justice (WICEJ) put it, "when you don't have that kind of centralisation it is harder to impose equality demands :... [I]t becomes [up to] each group whether they do it or not and I guess it is part of the democratic struggle to make those demands".⁸²

More fundamentally, it must be recognised that the WSF was never intended to be a unifying space or a political actor but rather "an open meeting place" in which the diversity of the movement could find full expression and in which different struggles could find support.⁸³ This makes it difficult, if not impossible, for groups to ensure organisational continuity, and thus clear progression and consolidation of agendas, across different sites. We should not be misunderstood here as blaming the principle of pluralism for the lack of sustained feminist progress at the WSF, although there may be a lesson about the need to provide structural support for less well-resourced groups. Rather, we are simply insisting that each event, and the feminist activism present therein, will necessarily reflect the specific conjunctures of socio-political forces at a particular space and time. To put this another way, each WSF is different, and each time different combinations of feminists have to struggle anew for visibility, voice, and influence.

What is more, there is considerable disagreement amongst feminist groups about how best to conduct this struggle. In our effort here to find patterns across different feminist strategies, we may be guilty of presenting 'Skeleton Women' as if they speak with one voice and act in concert. We have argued elsewhere, however, that social movements are by definition intrinsically heterogeneous and conflictual fields of struggle,⁸⁴ and feminist organising is by no means an exception. There are many differences in ideology, identity, and practice between the feminists at the Forum. Most obviously, there is a divergence between the strategies pursued by the World March and associated groups and those associated with AFM and the Campaign Against Fundamentalism. The former prioritises popular education techniques and the forging of alliances with young women in the Youth Camp and with other groups through the Assembly of Social Movements; the latter mobilises complex academic-influenced discourses around fundamentalism and has focused considerable effort on building the autonomous feminist network associated with the Feminist Dialogues.⁸⁵ A related difference among feminists concerns the utility of the discursive emphasis on 'fundamentalism' by the AFM and associated groups. As one World March interviewee said to us, "maybe it

makes sense in other parts of the world but I don't see how it is important in the context of what we are living in".⁸⁶ Our interviewees made it clear that there is also a continuing debate about the role of the Feminist Dialogues, with some of those involved arguing that its primary purpose should be the building of autonomous feminist networks and others advocating more sustained strategising for interventions in subsequent Forums.⁸⁷

While there has been recent commentary attempting to evaluate different strategies and make recommendations,⁸⁸ as relative 'outsiders' to the specific feminist groups we discuss here, we do not consider ourselves in an appropriate position to do so. Such evaluations / recommendations are, in any case, never entirely objective but always freighted with political partisanship and context-specific considerations. We want, here, simply to emphasise that there is no agreed blueprint amongst feminists on how best to 'feminise' the Forum. Not only does each Forum generate its own gendered hierarchies and movement dynamics, it also requires feminists to make difficult decisions, each time, about what strategies to adopt in response.

The key point we want to finish with here, however, is a positive one. If we look in the right places, and through a feminist lens, we find Skeleton Women haunting the WSF, shadowy, conflicted, but tenacious. As documented in this chapter, feminist activists have fought tirelessly to increase their visibility, voice, and influence at the Forum : By increasing their involvement in its organisational processes; by striving for visibility on site in the form of integration into plenaries and other sessions, vibrant campaigns at street level, and the organisation of feminist spaces; by insisting on the integration of a gendered and intersectional analysis of power relations at every opportunity; and by demonstrating against sexual violence on site. Although we concluded above that these activities had only partial success by 2005, and although it is clear that the struggle continues, sustained feminist pressure has nonetheless ensured that the hegemony of 'Porto Alegre Men' has remained incomplete. The WSF thus remains a key site in which feminists continue to struggle for "other possible worlds".

Notes

- 1 A longer version of this piece (incorporating additional analysis of the European Social Forums) has been published as Chapter 2 of our book, Making Feminist Sense of the Global Justice Movement (Rowman and Littlefield, 2010). We would like to thank the publishers for their permission to reprint the material used here. We would also like to thank the Economic and Social Research Council, along with the Nuffield Foundation and the British Academy, for funding our fieldwork, as well as the translators who helped us on location and the interviewees whose words we draw on here.
- 2 Hawken 2000, p 33.
- 3 See Eschle 2005a for the first exploration of this metaphor.
- 4 DAWN 2002.
- 5 During our fieldwork for Making Feminist Sense of the Global Justice Movement we attended and participated in the European and World Social Forums from 2003 to 2005 (in Paris, Mumbai, London and Porto Alegre), interviewing almost 80 people in and around those events and collecting group documentation. There have of course been many other forums, starting from 2002, in every continent and in many countries and cities, and still continuing at the time of writing.
- 6 WSF 2001.
- 7 See, for example, Research Unit on Political Economy 2003; Hardt 2002.
- 8 See, for example, Klein 2001; Marin 2002.
- 9 Francisco 2001; Grzybowski 2002; IBASE 2005, p 19-20.
- 10 See, for example, Latoures 2007, p 167.
- 11 Interview, Rio de Janeiro, January 10 2005; see also Wilson 2007, p 20-21. *Eds* : See also edited version of Ara Wilson's 2007 essay in this book (Wilson 2012).
- 12 Interview, Magaly Pazello, Porto Alegre, January 23 2005.
- 13 Interview, Rio de Janeiro, January 10 2005.
- 14 Cited in Klein 2001.
- 15 Grzybowski 2002.

- 16 Grzybowski 2002.
- 17 Interview, Dublin, July 9 2004.
- 18 Interview, Sara Longwe, Porto Alegre, January 25 2005.
- 19 Peters 2002.
- 20 See WSF 2003.
- 21 Karadenizli et al 2003; AFM 2003b.
- 22 Huijg 2003b.
- 23 Klein 2003b.
- 24 Eschle 2004.
- 25 DAWN 2002.
- 26 Vargas 2001.
- 27 Rebick 2002.
- 28 WMW 2003.
- 29 Karadenizli et al 2003.
- 30 Interview, São Paulo, January 17 2005.
- 31 Huijg 2003a.
- 32 Sargent and Albert 2004, p 6-7.
- 33 Obando 2005; WHRNet 2005; Koopman 2007.
- 34 Interview, Peter Waterman, October 13 2004; see also Karadenizli et al 2003, p 2.
- 35 Interview, Magaly Pazello, Porto Alegre, January 23 2005; see also DAWN 2000.
- 36 cited in DAWN 2002.
- 37 Interview, Nadia De Mond, November 14 2003.
- 38 The other feminist groups on the IC by 2003 were : The International Gender and Trade Network, REMTE (Network of Women Transforming the Economy), *Rede Latinamericana y Caribena de Mujeres Negras* (Latin American and Caribbean Network of Black Women), *Red Mujer y Habita t* (Network of Women and the Environment), the Women's Global Network of Reproductive Rights and REPEM (Network of Women in Popular Education); AFM 2003a.
- 39 Waterman 2003.
- 40 AFM 2003a, 2003b; DAWN nd.
- 41 See WSF India 2004a, WSF India 2004b.
- 42 *Eds* : For an argument that the Mumbai could have been called the 'World Women's Forum', see the essay by America Vera-Zavala in this book (Vera-Zavala 2012).
- 43 Interview, Sara Longwe, Porto Alegre, January 23 2005.
- 44 Interview, Nadia De Mond, Paris, November 14 2003.
- 45 See, for example, Salazar 2004, p 8.
- 46 As a point of comparison, at the prior European Social Forum (ESF) in Paris, our count of those sessions in the programme that had women (or a category of women), gender, or feminism in the title indicates four plenaries, ten seminars, and twelve workshops : 3.6 per cent of the total. And in London, at the 2004 ESF, the same search of the online programme (see ESF 2004) indicates one plenary, eleven seminars, and eighteen workshops on women's and feminist themes : 6 per cent of the total.
- 47 DAWN 2001.
- 48 Rosenberg 2002; see also Vargas 2003, p 916.
- 49 Waterman 2002.
- 50 AFM 2003b; see also AFM nd.
- 51 Burrows 2002.
- 52 Estima 2003.
- 53 Salazar 2004, p 6; see also Di Giovanni 2004.
- 54 Sargent and Albert 2004, p 6.
- 55 Cited in Conway 2007a, p 57.
- 56 WEDO 2002.
- 57 Interview, Telia Negrão, Porto Alegre, January 22 2005.
- 58 Interview, Thais Corral, Rio de Janeiro, January 17 2005.
- 59 .For more on the Feminist Dialogues, see Feminist Dialogues 2007; WICEJ 2003; AFM 2003b; Duddy 2004a, 2004b; Santiago

2005; Wilson 2007; Gouws, April 2007; Conway 2007b.

60 Wilson 2007, p 15.

61 Interview, Julia Di Giovanni, Porto Alegre, January 27 2005.

62 Vargas 2002

63 WMW 2002.

64 Burrows 2002.

65 See Rosenberg 2002.

66 Correa 2003, p 4.

67 Cited in Vargas 2003, p 915.

68 Interview, Mumbai, January 20 2004.

69 See, for example, Calman 1992; Ray 1999.

70 Conway 2007a, p 57.

71 Beaulieu and Giovanni 2003; Huijg 2003a.

72 See Koopman 2007, p 151; also CMI Brasil 2005.

73 Koopman 2007, p 151.

74 Conway 2007a, p 50.

75 Sargent and Albert 2004, p 6-7.

76 See WSF 2004c; Wainwright, March 2005.

77 See also Haralanova 2005.

78 Koopman 2007, p 157.

79 Klugman 2007, p 89.

80 For example, Amy Latoures calculated that self-organised activities on 'gender sensitive issues' at Bamako in 2006 totalled 13 per cent of total activities, a higher proportion than our similar calculation of Mumbai – but these were concentrated mainly in one thematic area, 'Women's World', not 'mainstreamed' (Latoures 2007, pp 172-3). Latoures argues the proportion was significantly lower in the other venues for the Polycentric 2006 Forum (p 177). See Oloo 2006 and Oloo's interview in Willis 2007 for one man's assessment of the ongoing struggle for 'parity' before and during the Nairobi forum in 2007.

81 See, for example, Oloo 2006 on the East African context shaping the Nairobi event in 2007.

82 Interview, Porto Alegre January 28 2005.

83 WSF 2002. *Eds* : For another take on this issue, perhaps reflecting a change or even an advance in thinking and strategisation within the WSF process, see the essays in this volume on intentionality in the US Social Forum process, by Michael Leon Guerrero and by Jeffrey S Juris (Guerrero 2012, Juris 2012b).

84 For example, Eschle 2005b.

85 Conway forthcoming.

86 Interview, Julia di Giovanni, January 27 2005; see also Rosenberg 2002, Waterman 2002.

87 See AFM 2003b; Wilson 2007; Conway 2007b.

88 For example, Klugman 2007; Latoures 2007.

Included Out ? ¹

Rahul Rao

It might seem odd to write about exclusion at the World Social Forum (WSF), given that it is widely seen – thanks to the vast numbers of movements, organisations, and individuals that it attracts – as one of the most inclusive global public spheres of our time. Nevertheless, as many have emphasised, the WSF is an open but not a neutral space.² Its Charter defines it as “an open meeting place for ... groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism”.³ This renders it a space welcoming of only certain viewpoints – those that tend to be characterised as being of the ‘left’, the ‘global justice movement’ or (somewhat ironically) the ‘anti-globalisation movement’. But there is **another set of exclusions** at the WSF that demand attention – those involving the marginalisation of actors physically present at the Forum, but excluded from meaningful participation in its activities. The (largely formal) exclusions of the first kind bring clarity to the murky edges of the space that is the Forum, helping to define what it is by reference to what it is not, clarifying its non-neutrality ; but the (presumably unintended) exclusions of the second kind seriously undermine the WSF’s claim to being an open space.

Among the formal, definitional exclusions of the WSF Charter are **exclusions of substance** (anyone who does not self-identify as a fellow-traveller in the struggle against neoliberalism and imperialism) and **exclusions of form** (‘party representations’ and ‘military organisations’, whatever they might believe in). Exclusions of form reflect a discomfort with old, hierarchical ways of doing politics – something that has never quite been resolved and manifests itself in a number of ambiguities. The exclusion of political parties at successive WSFs, for example, has always been less than complete. The 2002 WSF received support and funding worth US\$1.3 million from the municipal government of Porto Alegre and the state government of Rio Grande do Sul,⁴ both of which were controlled by the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (‘Workers’ Party’, PT) , now Brazil’s ruling party. The 2003 WSF was “hijacked”, in Naomi Klein’s words, by high-profile appearances by Heads of State Lula and Chavez.⁵ And one has only to flip through the January 2004 issues of the weekly newspaper of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), to get a sense of that organisation’s participation at the Mumbai WSF.⁶

Part of the antagonism between the ‘old’ left, comprising political parties and trade unions, and the ‘new’ left, of anarchist groups, ‘new’ social movements, and decentralised networks, stems from profound differences in methods of political organisation. Specifically, the ‘new’ left expresses a disillusionment with the vanguardist, hierarchical politics of the ‘old’ left, which is seen not only to have failed in its objectives but also as disrespecting individual autonomy.

But the debate is not limited to working methods. At the Mumbai WSF, major disagreements over working with mainstream political actors were evident at the substantive level as well. Participants were deeply divided over the merits of allying with the official global South opposition to neoliberalism, expressed sporadically by states such as India, South Africa, and Brazil, in select issue-areas such as trade in agriculture. While some emphasised the benefits of contingent, tactical alliances with these states (citing the ‘achievements’ of Cancun as an example of successful state-civil society collaboration), others expressed frustration at the neoliberal accommodations that even relatively progressive political forces such as the PT and African National Congress (ANC) made upon coming to power. The complex, often uneasy, relationship between social movements and political parties (and social movements that

become political parties) poses dilemmas within nation-states as well. India's National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM, which counts among its constituents the internationally renowned Narmada Bachao Andolan) was in 2004 considering fielding candidates in the then imminent parliamentary elections.⁷ Ironically, civil society activism in India – which in the 80s and 90s emphasised a disillusioned separation from mainstream politics – now came to be driven by the very unresponsiveness of the state, and planned to infiltrate structures of power.

Talk of 'power' made some people at the Mumbai WSF very uncomfortable indeed. One panellist's reference to creating a "non-power opposition to power" struck me as decidedly odd. Non-violent resistance is an effective tactic precisely because its legitimacy gives one power – power of a different kind from that which one opposes perhaps, but power nonetheless. These different attitudes towards power appeared to be driving participants' varying approaches to questions of tactics and strategy as well as end-goals. For some, power was a bad thing in itself, to be abjured at all costs; for others, there was nothing wrong with power *per se* – much depended on how it was exercised and made accountable. These differing initial premises seemed to colour participants' views on working within or outside conventional structures of power.

The exclusion of 'military organisations' was yet another point of ambiguity at the WSF, and one of several factors that instigated a counter-Forum – the Mumbai Resistance.⁸ Although the WSF Charter's insistence on non-violent resistance is defensible on the grounds of prudence and principle (a debate I cannot do justice to here), the exclusion of groups endorsing violent resistance in certain situations had some curious consequences. While excluding armed groups, the Charter provides for the participation of 'government leaders and members of legislatures' who accept its commitments. For some, this is tantamount to inviting (perhaps unwitting) agents of the structural violence of the state. The dilemma is also, as Peter Waterman frames it, whether "the conditionalities of the Charter have been exercised more against the ultra-left than the parliamentary left and centre ([which are] often complicit with neoliberalism)".⁹ This created a peculiar situation whereby, on the one hand, actors who may have differed only marginally on **ends** (and even so, were moving broadly in the same political direction) but substantially on **means** (ie the use of violence) went to different Forums (WSF or Mumbai Resistance); while, on the other hand, actors who could not be said to have shared ends (and therefore amongst whom a discussion on means – means to what? – was futile) happily congregated at the WSF, with only the most superficial shared commitments.

This also raises the persistent question of what the WSF is for. If the Forum is intended as a space for an 'internal' discussion on questions of strategy amongst those already committed to the struggle against neoliberalism and imperialism, then it ought to be open to all those who share these ends, notwithstanding radical differences over means. It ought to welcome both the 'old' and 'new' left, the violent and non-violent, and facilitate genuine communication between these potential, but fractious, allies. If, on the other hand, the Forum is intended as a space in which to reach out to and persuade those not already committed, then the strong language opposing neoliberalism and imperialism is surely off-putting to those who are concerned about these issues, but do not yet have fully crystallised views on them. As it currently stands, in theory the WSF is rigid about ends and means (making it a narrower space than seems apparent at first); in practice, it seems to be strict on means while permitting greater latitude on ends (hence the presence of both 'reformists' and 'radicals', so long as their commitment to non-violence is sincere). All these possibilities for the future scope of the Forum may be defensible, but there needs to be a more explicit discussion of what would be gained and lost by adopting one or the other position.

The WSF's claim to being an open space was further undermined by a second set of exclusions. Although presumably unintended, these were no less serious in that they precluded

the meaningful participation of many people physically present at the Forum. Too numerous to list exhaustively, I will discuss here only three that I took to be among the most salient.

The first of these was class-based. The 'Profile of Participants' at the 2003 WSF indicates that 73.4 percent of those who attended had received some university-level education.¹⁰ Although corresponding statistics for the 2004 WSF are unavailable, it is estimated that Dalits ('untouchables') comprised about a third of the 100,000 people who attended, suggesting that the social base of the WSF had expanded considerably.¹¹ This did not necessarily translate into broader participation. As George Monbiot remarked, Dalits and Adivasis predominated in the dusty streets outside the conferences, seminars, and workshops, making their presence felt through much dancing, drumming, and demonstrating. Important and empowering as these activities might have been, these groups were severely underrepresented as speakers, except on panels concerning issues of immediate relevance to them. No one at the Mumbai WSF adequately addressed the massive and undeniable divide that existed between intellectuals and professionalised NGOs on the one hand, and the grassroots that they claimed to speak for (or with) on the other.

Linguistic exclusion also impeded participation. While care was usually taken to ensure that information was translated into the three or four most commonly understood languages of the audience, logistical and technical difficulties meant that where real-time translation was unavailable, non-English speakers were forced to make do with summaries or translations of poor quality. On a conceptual level, Boaventura de Sousa Santos writes that "the alternative to a general theory [ie a new 'ism'] is the work of translation" and that what is needed is "translation to enlarge reciprocal intelligibility without destroying the identity of what is translated".¹² Listening to Pakistani anti-nuclear activist Pervez Hoodbhoy at an evening plenary on Religious, Ethnic, and Linguistic Exclusion and Oppression, I was struck by how much more remained to be done. Arguing that concepts such as 'science' and 'secularism' were truly universal, Hoodbhoy seemed to undermine his principal argument by continuing to use these English terms in his otherwise impeccable Urdu translation of his speech. This brought home to me the enormity of the task of 'translation' suggested by Santos, which seems to entail nothing less than rendering mutually intelligible the world of Enlightenment rationality and the many other worlds that do not share its premises and epistemologies. The WSF might contribute to this process by enabling these multiple worlds to interact in an atmosphere of equal respect, even if not agreement. But if it seeks to remain a radically open space, it will need to guard against the monopolisation of its platforms and daises by some, or one, of these worldviews.

Finally, for the disabled, the notion of the WSF as an 'open space' must have seemed a cruel joke. The exclusion of the disabled operated at both a logistical level (disability-related events were sited in shoddy locations lacking proper wheelchair access, disabled-friendly toilets, or volunteers to provide assistance) and a programme level (disability was not represented at any of the plenaries).¹³ One of the more jarring pictures at the WSF must surely have been the sight of 300-odd disabled delegates at the Media Centre, protesting their exclusion from the alternative worlds ostensibly being constructed at the Forum.¹⁴

The notion of the WSF as an open but non-neutral space makes sense to me. But we need to clarify what exactly it is not neutral to, by defining more precisely the exclusions that are intentional and their underlying rationale. And a great deal more needs to be done to remove the exclusions that are unintentional, so as to make the Forum a more open space for its intended participants.

Notes

1 This essay was first published in July 2004 on [Mute — Culture and Politics After the Net](http://www.metamute.org), <http://www.metamute.org>, available at : <http://www.metamute.org/en/Included-Out>. Reprinted here in slightly revised form with permission of the author.

- 2 Whitaker 2004, p 113.
- 3 World Social Forum 2001.
- 4 Teivainen 2003.
- 5 Klein 2003.
- 6 See for example, People's Democracy 2004.
- 7 De Sarkar and Nandgaonkar 2004. The NAPM eventually did create a party known as the People's Political Front, which has contested elections at various levels. See Ramakant 2007.
- 8 *Eds* : The Mumbai Resistance was organised literally across the road from the main entrance to the Mumbai WSF.
- 9 Sen 2004d.
- 10 Osava 2004.
- 11 Wallerstein 2004.
- 12 de Sousa Santos 2004b.
- 13 Meenu Bhambhani, personal communication with author.

- 14 Contractor 2004.

Trio ¹
Taran N Khan

Lunchtime at an MST² settlement, where we've been taken in busloads to see what happens when peasants revolt. Under a tree amidst wine and laughter, I try and make a man understand that I need vegetarian food. My friend Kevin intervenes in his passable Spanish – I catch the words Muslim, *halal*,³ and vegetarian. The man, carrying slabs of barbecued meat on a skewer, shoots me looks of frank dislike and suspicion, until something clicks and he nods, he beams. Pointing to a shed very far away, he tells Kevin “But of course, we have special arrangements for Muslims and Vegetarians right over there”. We all shouted with laughter, I tell Naima later, but she is distressed, puzzled. “But Taran, why didn't you explain to him ? What does a Muslim even **say** to a vegetarian ?”.

Conversations at the Forum tend to often intersect thus. I could well ask Tseretó – what does a Brazilian Indian **say** to an Indian Indian ? This article draws from our crosstalk at Porto Alegre in 2003 and Mumbai in 2004. Our exchanges appear as fragmented snatches of talk between the three of us, jagged and untidy around the edges. Read together, with their interruptions and arbitrary connections, I will attempt to use them as a thread of enquiry into many layers of identity that each one of us has. The WSF connects these issues by being the physical space where these exchanges happen as well as the virtual context for our relationships. It is the one reference point we have, the sole constant in our conversations that span media / mediums, continents, and even languages. In this article, I will attempt to examine how open the Forum is to the expression of various layers of identity – some being more comfortably received than others. Through the combined arc of our experiences, I hope to offer an insight into the nature of the networking sought to be achieved by the Forum, and how these relationships can move from the ephemerality of the Forum to an enduring connection.

My conversation with Tseretó began in November 2002, much before I met him, with the emails that assembled our working group for our film. “Help make a documentary on the World Social Forum” ran the posting on the Indymedia website. The project was an experimental collaboration, by which a film would be crafted from the perspective of protagonists and their journeys through the Forum. The aim was to create a personal account of the Forum by following the protagonists as they encountered new and familiar concerns at the Forum. I was to be one, Tseretó the other. Through the background note on the postings, I found that he was a Xavante indigenous Brazilian and had worked as a videographer for NGOs that dealt with various issues affecting communities like his. Quite a mouthful, but not so different from my own background blurb. A collaboration between two Indians, ran one somewhat superficial interpretation. With a slight edge of competition already between us, we met in the Indymedia house in Porto Alegre in January 2003. I already knew we didn't share a language – and an excruciating half-hour of laborious translation of meaningless commonplaces later, I was convinced that we didn't have a thing to say to each other.

Porto Alegre was bristling with film crews during the Forum. Tseretó and I, carrying cameras, got lost in the crowd of guerrillas wielding representation technology quite easily. Naima stood out, in her headscarf that she prefers to call a veil. A year later, in Mumbai, I asked her if she hadn't felt awkward in Brazil at being the only woman around for miles in her *hijab* (headscarf) But no, she said, I feel stranger here, you know why ? In Porto Alegre, nobody asked me about my veil, they did not even look strangely at me, even though everyone there was wearing very little clothes. But in Mumbai, she said, a city full of Muslims, *burqas*,⁴ and all

varieties of veiled women, she was made to feel singled out. She didn't say it out loud, and neither did I, but we both sensed that behind the curiosity of the glances and the unabashedly rude, aggressive questions she faced, there was deep discomfort among people she encountered in Mumbai with seeing a white woman, a French woman living in London, wearing a costume of the repressed. It was only when, after prolonged questioning, her Algerian roots had been established that an acquaintance of mine heaved a satisfied sigh. "Oh", he said, "she's an Arab. That's why". Stripped of her French credentials, Naima would have been happy, perhaps.

I

Imagining Global Communities : Snapshots of Civil Society

A nation, or the idea of belonging to a nation, is essentially a feat of the imagination.⁵ These imagined communities are cemented and bonded by cultural products, particularly the media. In Anderson's analysis, the advent of print had much to do with the creation and spread of communities over Europe. "Newspapers create imagined linkages between 'communities'; their reading is a mass ceremony which knits together a community in anonymity yet confident of its existence".⁶ The community thus imagined is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship, regardless of the actual inequality or exploitation that may exist within it. A similar sense of affinity, a forging of an extra-territorial community of global citizens united in their striving for "another world", is evident at the WSF and in the writings around it.⁷ There is a heightened awareness of living in a global system, a sense of people no longer being separated by physical obstacles or by temporal distances.⁸ This comfort with movements composed of diverse networks and activists scattered over the globe is one of the features that distinguishes 'New' Social Movements (NSMs), of which the WSF is at present the apex expression.⁹ The practical basis for this new form of "global civil society"¹⁰ lies in the ability of activists to create political links between different, distant events so that they will become more than "distant proximities" or isolated moments of resistance against globalisation. The contribution of the WSF has been to this way of seeing the world – a willingness to perceive connections across contexts, and receptivity to resonances.

The relationship of the media with this movement to create a new form of "planetary citizenship" (as the WSF Charter calls it) is critical. "The Internet enables activist groups and movements to make their ideas available directly to potential sympathisers via websites and to communicate instantly with a large number of supporters via email".¹¹ Notable examples are the Save the Narmada Movement in India and the Zapatistas in Mexico, which used the Internet amongst other means to reach out to a global community of supporters and collaborators, and gain visibility in the international media. Other than creating and nurturing this support base, the objective of (new) media practitioners associated with these movements is to protest against the hegemony of the deeply compromised corporate media and to offer alternative news feeds and images. Again, this community of media practitioners is imagined as being global, democratic, and authentic.

Nowhere in the Forum is the project of imagining another world given more urgency than in this collective of new media warriors. Nowhere are the results of their efforts more immediate; Polaroid-like, the 'reality' of the Forum is preserved for all to see at the end of each day. André Bazin, in his classic essay on the desire underpinning the documentary impulse, wrote, "Only a photographic lens can give us the kind of image of the object that is capable of satisfying the deep need man has to substitute for it something more than a mere approximation. The photographic image is the object itself, the object freed from the conditions of time and space that govern it".¹² Perhaps this is behind the near compulsion to record the Forum, the glut of documentaries, videos, and photographs. The attempt is to establish the "truth" of the Forum by ensuring its permanence through the "incorruptibility of

optics”.¹³ There is tremendous energy, a sense of euphoria at the possibilities, excitement at being part of a movement that is at once inclusive and creative. In this charmed circle of horizontal power, Tseretó and I charged around happily, following our interests through the Forum, helped by our crew. Thrilled at this chance to tell our own stories, each of us perhaps only dimly realised that we were not listening to the story of the other.

Gujarat was on my mind a lot in Porto Alegre, it was my big story.¹⁴ I spoke about the pogrom all the time. While interviewing people or when talking to panellists, I would ask them, have you heard of what happened in Gujarat ? Mumbai is very close to Ahmedabad, the location for the most gruesome sequences of the carnage. At the 2004 Forum in Mumbai, several of the large NGOs and donor agencies working in Ahmedabad mounted an exhibition called Window on Gujarat. Part of it dealt with the pogrom. It was large and impressive; exploring various themes thrown up by the pogrom through professionally designed sets, angst-filled animation pieces, and abstract video frames. Many people saw it, and by all accounts it was a successful and effective installation.

A very little way away however, I ran into Shafi, camped out in a lawn in front of one of the larger halls. I had seen him last on a rain soaked balcony in one of the relief camps in Ahmedabad. A riot survivor, he had come to the Forum to find support for an NGO he and some friends had launched to help others who had lost everything in the *dhamaal* ('riot') and to rebuild ties of trust and harmony in their city. One of the fundamental reasons behind the undeniable significance of the WSF, one that is trotted out most often for the sake of sceptics or observers when they ask "What is the point ?", is that the Forum is an open space for exchange and sharing. Specifically, "as a framework for the exchange of experiences, the WSF encourages understanding and mutual recognition among its participant organisations and movements, and places special value on the exchange amongst them". Further, "[a]s a context for interrelations, the WSF seeks to strengthen and create new and international links amongst organisations and movements of society".¹⁵

The (dis)connect between Shafi and the exhibition that had such an intimate link to his life – which in a sense represented 'his' cause and his story – at a mega-event in support of global networking is significant regardless of the many defences that can be offered for the circumstance. The fact that Shafi remained outside on his patch of green, peddling pamphlets to passers-by already overburdened with paper, is indicative of lacunae that are thrown into sharp relief at the Forum, but are by no means exclusive or limited to it. The social distance between Shafi and the Window on Gujarat is far greater than the few steps between them. The creation of networks and genuine connections, which I return to later, would thus appear to require more than stated aims and shared tent space.

II

Images : Being Muslim at the Forum

Naima has the most amazing story about the way Muslims have integrated into the anti-war movement in Britain. It was November 2002, the third day of Ramadan, and she was part of a protest march against the US occupation of Afghanistan. The march of several thousands culminated at Trafalgar Square, close to the evening hour when the fast is broken. It was the most incredible feeling, she told me, when one of the brothers (in Islam) gave the call to prayer from a platform right there under Nelson's Column. In the very heart of London, Muslims and their comrades of other faiths broke the fast together with dates and water. Then, in one corner of the Square, a group of Muslim men and women gathered to pray.¹⁶

I saw this for myself during those many marches across the streets of London, which would often end with large *jamaats* ('congregations') praying in Hyde Park before dispersing. Talking to one of the members of the Stop the War Coalition, I realised that this level of integrated participation and confidence is not accidental but the outcome of a lot of hard work.

It took a conscious decision to reach out to Muslims after 9/11, liaison sessions with imams of mosques all over the country, confidence building measures, and a visible and consistent anti-racist stance to create the impressive spectacle of Muslim participation I saw.¹⁷ The integration is by no means seamless – there are moments of discomfort with the clothes, appearance, demeanour, and slogans of the Muslim organisations, particularly when the word '*jihad*' is used. However, it is important to understand that there are plenty of Muslims not affiliated to an Islamist group who join the protests since they feel these provide a legitimate platform for their resistance. Crucially, their participation is as Muslims. Also as other things, but the religious cultural component is overtly expressed as part of their identity and their politics.

It is this foregrounding of Muslim-ness that is almost entirely missing from both meetings of the Forum. In Porto Alegre, Naima walks around in her Progressive Muslim Network (PMN) T-shirt, hoping to be stopped and asked what a Progressive Muslim might be. Her idea is to emphasise that being Muslim and being anti-capital / anti-war are not mutually exclusive. Further, that it is possible to have a roster of reasons for opposing the war that includes ideas linked to her religious identity and yet remain altogether progressive. She is thrilled when a few women ask her about her T-shirt, tells me it felt good to perhaps change the way they saw Islam and Muslims, to contribute her bit against the demonisation of Islam. The PMN is the only Muslim organisation I encounter in Porto Alegre, and I was looking hard for more. My search does not imply that I seek to pigeonhole activists according to religion (or any other ethnic / social tag), or that I feel more comfortable associating with activists professing the same faith. Merely that I am intrigued by the absence of spaces for faith-based mobilisation and participation should one choose to attend the Forum (or some part of it) in that guise. This discomfort with practiced, expressed religious identity also has some comic aspects, as when I was repeatedly asked by a British trade unionist if a revolution was really possible "in my religion" without a drink or two. Identity is a fluid concept, a set of hats we change and swap according to our context. My attempt here is to point out the subsumption of one set of hats at the Forum because the context does not encourage their being flaunted.

Further, it is disturbing to see how pronounced this discomfort is with regard to Islamic organisations. The appearance of the Students Islamic Organisation (SIO) delegation midway through the Mumbai Forum produced a reaction that Buddhist monks, Brahmakumaris, and Catholic associations had somehow avoided eliciting. The SIO is not my favourite organisation, and I suspect the sentiment is entirely mutual. Nevertheless the hostility and uneasiness the presence of their modest group of bearded men wearing white tunics and offering congregational prayers in their stall elicited would seem to indicate the presence of the very phobias and images about Islam that so many at the Forum claim to be fighting. This is all the more dangerous since in the trajectory of expansion of the WSF and constituent movements, Islam and Muslims form a significant thread – through 9/11, the US war on Afghanistan, and then Iraq. Rather than airbrushing out the skullcaps and the beards, it may be more sensible for the Forum to try to "build bridges with the world of faith".¹⁸

III

A Kind of Silence – Tseretó Talks At Last

Three days into the Forum in Porto Alegre, I am intrigued by Tseretó's single-minded pursuit of enquiry into the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) movement. Finally his persistence moves me to ask – why, Tseretó? They impress him, he explains in his careful way, taking his time over his sentences. He is interested by the way a group on the very margins of society has managed to gain some degree of acceptance. At the same time he is touched by their pain, at the daily humiliations they face in defence of their way of life. Does he know anyone who is homosexual, someone in his tribe perhaps? No, he says, faintly surprised by my question, but definite. None of his friends or acquaintances are gay. But he can understand

what they feel like, being on the margins of society.

His response provides an aperture through which the relationship between technology, power, and meaning at the Forum can be explored more fully. Gramsci talks of the creation of the “myth” – a dramatic form or idea created by the fusion of political ideology and practice.¹⁹ The myth he proposed was of a modern democratic political party that would construct a new form of society and state. In the context of media practitioners at the WSF, the myth is the result of the fusion of low cost, accessible technology with egalitarian practices and ethics of representation. The drama of the myth (as I have mentioned earlier) lies in the idea that this has created a level playing field; that everyone now has the means to tell their own, authentic stories. This is a powerful idea, one that is being played out in many forms in different arenas. However, as a mobilising / organising ‘myth’ contingent upon the imagined egalitarian community of media players, it is flawed on several counts.

The politics of approaching the Forum as a filmmaker ‘belonging’ to a disadvantaged / marginalised community are far more complicated. Scratch the surface of the horizontal fraternity and the same hierarchies and power structures emerge. Like the rigid hierarchy of the media centre in Mumbai, with its colour-coded badges, stern gatekeepers, and exclusive spaces that would, I am sure, have baffled Tseretó. The deterministic assumption that wider availability of cheap digital technology in the developing world implies a democratisation of representation ignores the fact that it is social structures that determine both access and impact. There is no inherent virtue in technology that will allow it to bypass already existing hierarchies – the digital divide is superimposed on other, earlier divides. Even when the technology comes with no strings attached, as it did for us in Porto Alegre, the tendency is to conform to a pre-conceived agenda – to produce images that correspond to the expected / familiar for the audience. This audience is seldom the same as the constituency the filmmaker herself ‘represents’. The filmmaker positions herself in a ‘behalfist’ mode, speaking on behalf of her constituency, representing ‘their’ problems to an external audience. The authentic stories that emanate from this indigenous source may thus still be skewed, the power equation will remain asymmetrical – albeit in a more subtle, unconscious manner.

I am this potentially flawed source; a possible distorting megaphone claiming privilege for my voice based on the invisibility of my ‘kind’. This awareness comes from the fact that my work derives its substance and vigour from the stories that surround me. Stories from the past, of the journeys taken by women before me. Of my current reality, and the baggage that I carry – of being young and a Muslim in India today. A montage of images flickers each time I try to define this stream of experiences that flows through my work, binding and shaping it in a hundred subtle ways. Midnight raids in the narrow lanes of localities where Muslims live in Delhi, where young men were arrested on suspicion of being terrorists because they used a cybercafé too often. (Every family I know has at least one such story of a young male relative taken away by the police and held under pre-emptive terrorist ‘prevention’ laws. Some returned after months of torture or just imprisonment. Others did not return at all.) I think of a medieval mosque that was destroyed not far from where I live. Conversations that fluttered and extinguished when I walked into a room. The very real fear in my cousin’s eyes when his brother refused to shave his ‘al-Qaeda’ style beard. Explaining to schoolteachers that no, my father did not have four wives, actually. Many people crowded together in relief camps in Ahmedabad, children grown hideously old, a chilling hatred taking root in their eyes.

As a filmmaker, my telling of these stories (in actual and unseen forms) requires a constant alertness, a form of reflexivity that has come to characterise most documentary filmmaking today, in the sense of acknowledging the filmmaker’s own stake in the spectacle being documented. In my case, the internal dialogue runs to a repeated checklist against focusing on issues that would be **perceived** as coming naturally from an Indian Muslim

woman, as being relevant to her as a matter of course. Half a world away from the location of most of my dramas, I am reminded of the different ways in which this almost subconscious resistance works, often against tremendous odds. With his crew from across the world gathered around him, waiting to hear his stories, Tseretó chose to talk of resonances, to locate his work around issues that had meaning outside his immediate context yet were linked in myriad ways to his lived existence.

We had a conversation soon after this, one that required no translators because by some trick of communication, Tseretó and I found we could understand each other even when speaking different languages. We spoke that day of the similarities in the problems faced by Muslim and Xavante youth in getting a job, being accepted by the mainstream, the insidious forms of discrimination they face. We spoke with words but also with our bodies, studying the other closely to grasp the meaning of intonations and gestures. What flowed between us was not language alone, but a form of empathy, which must be the basis of all communication.

The term 'poetics' describes the principles of construction, function, and effect specific to non-fiction film and video. These are described by Renov²⁰ as :

to record, reveal or preserve,

to persuade or promote,

to analyse or interrogate,

to express.

The exigencies of the modes of communication and representation emerging at the WSF would argue for the articulation of a new poetics of contemporary documentary-activist work, which will have as its basis a kind of silence.²¹ Tseretó's silence can be understood in this sense as a refusal to participate in a compromised exchange – it is, in effect, what he has to say. This kind of silence is a refusal to fetishise the object of documentation and a protest against the marketing and colonisation of people and meanings by the camera / person. "The world is closed in a frame and hung for exhibition. It is no longer the world in fact but a world of artefacts, little remembrances or fetishes, and the space for exhibition of these fetishes.... In response to these anthropological and video-logical problems, (we) propose a non-pological immersion, the goal of which is to build human relations through cultural exchange, explore non-captured video and photography, to situate our selves (to frame our shots) not according to the marketability or exhibitionability of our experience but according to curiosity and possibility, and finally to relearn to love to forget".²²

IV

Towards Closure : The Forum As Memory

A fairly representative Forum journal excerpt runs like this : "By the time the Forum opened, I had met Breton French organic farm activists and a famous South African anti-apartheid poet, an accordion playing Communist MP from Switzerland, Italian veterans of the battle of Genoa, and many more".²³

Naima, Tseretó, and I have never met as a group. They do not even know of the other's existence. Yet we are connected in as real a way as the groups mentioned above, if not more intimately. There are many ways of sharing the Forum, which links us and reinvents us from three points in a triangle to a trio. This assertion is linked to a particular way of seeing the Forum, which insists on going beyond the enjoyable yet ephemeral meetings that are so celebrated by journal writers of all varieties. The creation of enduring connections, as I have mentioned earlier, is a matter of sharing more than a space. It demands a proactive effort

towards putting systems in place that guarantee inclusiveness. It cannot be enough to create pretty pictures. The premium needs to be placed on creating a culture of openness and an active pursuit of relationships that endure beyond listings of exotica picked up on travels.

There is also a need to acknowledge the significance of the arena of conflicts related to material reproduction and distribution to new social movements and to the WSF in particular. The view that new social movements (and by extension the Forum) are more concerned with conflicts over abstract issues of cultural reproduction – the struggle over identity, meaning, specific causes – has served as a justification for vacuous and unrooted modes of exchange, functioning, and representation. The result is dilemmas like Shafi's, marooned outside his own meaning. It is important to recognise that "conflicts of race, religion and nationality, real as they are, actually stand for something else, even when they take on lives of their own. These are material conditions, but they reverberate in the economic, political and cultural-ideological spheres".²⁴ This awareness provides the bedrock for the linking of movements into a politically coherent and potent force that gives the Forum its strategic and ideological strength. It is also the foundation on which the flurry of movement and meetings that characterises the Forum can be nurtured, transformed into relationships or conversations that acquire a life of their own in the lived existence of social actors, where they may in some way effect change, prompt action, or take stories forward.

The bond between Naima, Tseretó, and myself in this sense represents a crystallisation of this understanding of the Forum. Our refusal to assume that two filmmakers from the underdeveloped world will 'naturally' have something to share, and our refusal to accept that two Muslim women will connect largely because they are both Muslim, indicates that it is this materially grounded, holistic experience of the Forum that holds us together. Simultaneously our trio stands for the potential that is offered by this gathering of diversity and resonance. Our conversations flow like threads on a spider's web, meeting at odd, arbitrary yet ordered intervals, supporting a whole we cannot see but try to guess at. Like characters in Italo Calvino's *The Castle of Crossed Destinies*, our stories have points that intersect, have moments that may perhaps inspire other stories from a different time, and continue to their conclusions. The sum of our exchanges – which span the unconscious coherence of faith and the self-conscious power of image manufacture – is perhaps most succinctly summed up by an SIO poster that asserts that another world is indeed possible "...but only if God help you".

Notes

1 *Eds* : This essay was first published in December 2004 as 'Trio' , in the *International Social Science Journal* , vol 56 no 182, pp 541-550. Available at : <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/servlet/useragent?func=showIssues&code=issj&open=2004#C2004>. It is published here in an edited form with the permission of the author and the publisher; our thanks to them both.

Author's note : My heartfelt thanks to Naima Bouteldja and Tseretó Tsehōbō for their generous sharing of ideas and experiences. Any inaccuracies in statements attributed to them or misrepresentations of their intended meaning are my responsibility alone. I am also indebted to Kevin Brown and R J Maccani for many of the ideas that are expressed in this article, particularly regarding the documentary project of which they were a part. A special thanks to Giuseppe Caruso for his company on that mad, magical trip across Brazil. A separate tribute is due to the SOAS Stop the War Group, which provided partial financial assistance for my trip to Porto Alegre in 2003.

2 *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* , the Brazilian landless labour movement. This incident occurred at one of their model communes on the outskirts of Porto Alegre.

3 Food, prepared in a particular manner, permitted to Muslims.

4 A long dress, a form of covering commonly worn by Muslim women across the Indian subcontinent.

5 Anderson 1991.

6 Ibid p 33.

7 Waterman 2004, pp 55-66.

8 Virilio as quoted in Vishwanathan 2001.

9 This does not imply that the Forum is composed exclusively of new social movements, or to deny its role as a meeting

ground between old and new social movements. What I am trying to suggest here is that the range of issues and global sweep of the WSF has made it internalise and epitomise the ethics and practice of new social movements.

10 Gill 2000, p 138.

11 Shaw 2004, p 47.

12 Quoted in Renov 1999, p 2.

13 Richter as quoted in Ibid.

14 In February 2002, the Indian state of Gujarat was torn by communal conflagrations on an unprecedented scale, sparked by the burning of a train carrying Hindu pilgrims. The subsequent violence was targeted almost exclusively against Muslims, particularly in the capital city of Ahmedabad, while the state apparatus either remained inactive or participated in the killings. For evidence of the planned and targeted nature of the violence, as well as state complicity in the killings, see Crime Against Humanity : Concerned Citizens Tribunal ; Human Rights Watch Report , “ We Have No Orders to Save You” ; Gujarat Carnage 2002 Report to the Nation by an Independent Fact Finding Mission ; and Gujarat 2002 : The Truth , an exposé by Tehelka magazine, available online at : http://www.tehelka.com/story_main35.asp?filename=Ne031107gujrat_sec.asp .

15 See WSF, June 2001.

16 See Bouteldja 2001.

17 The Stop The War movement has succeeded in building one of the most broad based anti-war movements in Britain, largely through its pro-active attitude in reaching out to various sections of civil society and policy and practice of inclusiveness. It is thus supported by groups that have startlingly diverse views on a gamut of issues, but have come together on a common platform to condemn the war.

18 Sen 2003, p 5.

19 As quoted in Gill 2000, p 137.

20 Renov 1993, p 21.

21 This phrase was first used to describe the documentary project by Kevin Brown.

22 See Brown 2003.

23 Wolfwood 2004, p 81.

24 Sklair 1991, p 231.

Have The Slaves Left The Master's House ? ¹

Amanda Alexander and Mandisa Mbali

The story of the poor goes round and round. But what about the story of the rich ? The story not being told is that of the beneficiaries of slavery and colonialism. The story of exploitation that put us into this dispensation, commodified our own life for profit. They divided and ruled. Can we unite and live ? Can we unite for the world that will be our world ? Let us rise up and begin to tell this story... of why they continue to be rich, continue to plunder.²

I

Necolonialism

At the opening plenary of the Africa Social Forum (ASF) that was held in Lusaka, Zambia, during December 10-14 2004, delegates from across the continent gave varied testimonies that coalesced around a single truth : Recolonisation is worse than slavery.

Activists noted Africa's history of injustices and oppression through colonialism, slavery, and apartheid, but swiftly moved on to the injustices of present-day, post-colonial Africa : Privatisation and cost-recovery, wars fought over Africa's natural resources, heavy debt burdens and conditionalities, unfair trade, and disease. Contrary to dominant accounts of the continent as an almost biblically 'cursed' 'basket case' and Africans as helpless victims, delegate after delegate emphasised that Africa's poverty, wars, and disease pandemics are causally related to a global economic system that is predicated on the poverty of the many.

"The world, it would seem, friends, is at the end of its imagination", Corinne Kumar of Tunisia and India told the assembled plenary. How much further can the tired mechanisms of domination and exploitation be stretched ? Though they are continuously re-disguised, masquerading as World Bank Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) or Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) or Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs), the instruments of oppression remain just as blatant for those attempting to access basic services like water, land, education, and healthcare – with increasing difficulty.

The ideology of neoliberalism unites these policies and has had an immense impact on African life in recent decades. After achieving independence in the 1960s and 70s, many African countries began to build states with burgeoning infrastructure, including strong universities. In 1970, the average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was about the same for Africa, South Asia, and Pacific Asia.³ Post-independence, progress was reversed in the 1970s and 80s when world prices for African exports such as copper, cotton, peanuts, coffee, and sugar fell, combined with the effects of heavy borrowing from international banks, a dramatic rise in interest rates, and a world recession.⁴ The imposition of SAPs, beginning in the 1980s, ensured an increase in the proportion of Africans living in absolute poverty. Through a neoliberal lens, these programmes posited development by means of export-led growth and reduced national spending. SAPs prescribed measures for enhancing exports, trade liberalisation, fiscal restraint in the interests of servicing national debts, incentives to attract multinational corporations, cuts in social spending, cuts in public service, and the privatisation of state assets and basic services. This meant that families were now required to pay school fees, that universities were decimated by funding cuts, and that states were pressed to devote more money to servicing odious debt than to their health budgets.

As Andile Mngxitama wrote in 2004, in his historical sketch of the World Social Forum

(WSF), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) spared nothing to promote SAPs “in the name of development and democracy” :

... even the anti-colonial history and memory was appropriated, as was revolution and socialism. But the African NO! was simply named ‘food riots’; this was a resistance which did not speak for itself and the IMF quickly worked these ‘food riots’ into its four-staged re-colonisation strategy.⁵

South African scholar Archie Mafeje holds that the failure to “deconstruct old paradigms” and replace them with new vocabularies has had a devastating effect on African scholarship. African liberation projects have been set back by decades because African scholars were pushed (through neo-colonial intellectual arrogance) into having to navigate their way towards ‘freedom’ using the loaded jargon of ‘good governance’, ‘democratisation’, ‘poverty reduction’, ‘structural adjustment’, etc. As Mafeje argues, the structural adjustment debates (begun by conservatives in the West) took more than a decade, “yet, no real clarity has been reached besides rebutting some of the neoliberal suppositions of the World Bank”.⁶ African activists are often placed in the same position, and look to the Social Forums as opportunities to bolster vocabularies of resistance that are not framed by the demands of Western capital.

Colonialism is a very old game, and is thus forced to maintain itself through substitutions – substitutions that activists are perpetually contesting. Substitutions of NEPAD for economic liberation, of incessant white tutelage for black independent praxis, of ‘efficiency’ that benefits the few rather than the many, of a blameless past for a counter-hegemonic history, of the language of the powerful for localised terminology and stories, of dignity for the flat notion of ‘equality’. Kumar’s assertions were echoed by many activists throughout the Forum : It is up to the South – and Africa in particular – to champion notions of democracy that are not intrinsically tied to the market economy; to find new notions of power that facilitate, transform, and enhance; to redefine Africa through a discourse of dissent – one that decentres, disrupts, and interrupts all that is dominant.

At the ASF we observed that while African civil society is not uniformly strong across all regions, trade unionists, students, women, and young people are increasingly resisting neoliberalism on the continent – against the grain of their politicians. At a session on NEPAD, a Zimbabwean delegate argued that African leaders, by attending G8 meetings and producing a policy document endorsed by the World Bank and the IMF, are revealing that they “fear freedom, as former slaves who walk back to their masters, not yet ready to leave the master’s house”.

Along with critiques of neo-colonialism and the lack of democracy in international policy-making, African activists were also increasingly outraged at the lack of democracy within the Forum structure. The ASF often replicated prevailing socio-economic, cultural, and political inequalities. In particular, despite the feminist tribunal at the beginning of the Forum, women were often not given sufficient space to participate and raise feminist issues. Plenary sessions and panel discussions were largely devoid of meaningful dialogue and debate. The sole exception, which will be discussed later as a promising alternative, was the Feminist Dialogue, for which women arranged their chairs in a large circle, to form the only space in the entire Forum set up for the horizontal movement of knowledge in many directions.

II

Why the Master’s Tools will never destroy the Master’s House

In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Frantz Fanon predicted the exhaustion of Third World nationalism as espoused by many African leaders.⁷ Indeed, without civil society resistance, Africa’s bourgeoisie and its nationalist leaders may end up becoming the ‘cheap jack’ to Western capitalism and imperialism. As one delegate argued, “the master’s tools [neoliberal policies] will never destroy the master’s house [rich countries’ economic domination of Africa]”.

Patrick Bond poses the question even more directly : Will Africa aim to 'fix' International Financial Institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank, World Trade Organisation (WTO) and IMF, or 'nix' them ?⁸ Or, in terms of the central problematic that emerged at the ASF, will Africa merely substitute structural adjustments with 'home-grown' structural adjustments such as South Africa's Growth, Employment and Redistribution programme (GEAR) and NEPAD ? Are foreign overseers such as the Bank and the IMF increasingly confident that they can count on local overseers to carry out their work ? Has the logic of 'fiscal discipline' become so normalised that Africa's ruling class has yoked itself to fiscal *self-discipline* ?

The social consequences of structural adjustment programmes have been evident in Africa for over two decades. The very real human costs were evident as we walked through downtown Lusaka, where crumbling infrastructure includes the broken storm drains, clogged with garbage, that periodically breed cholera. The Lusaka-based Namibian human rights lawyer who showed us around mentioned that as a result of cutbacks espoused in structural adjustments, and a high proportion of the country's budget going toward debt-servicing, patients at the country's public hospitals must provide their own drips, medicine, bedding, and food.

Indeed, IFI-advocated cost recovery is alive and well in Zambia : Advertisements on Zambian television announced that cut-offs of electricity were imminent for defaulters over the festive season, and electricity company employees who assisted them to reconnect would be liable for prosecution. Jubilee Zambia, part of the international debt cancellation movement, informed us that this year just shy of one-third of Zambia's budget will go towards servicing odious debt. Therefore, it comes as little surprise that Zambia's life expectancy has been reduced by AIDS and other preventable and treatable infectious diseases to a mere 35 years of age. The choices facing Africa's leaders are as stark as the slogan on t-shirts worn at the ASF by activists from the American Friends Service Committee : LIFE or DEBT.

The very real impacts of neoliberal policies on ordinary African people's lives brought debates on how African politicians and civil society organisations should relate to IFIs into sharp relief. African politicians are already engaging with IFIs and G8 countries, and it was clear to many delegates at the ASF that NEPAD can be viewed as the product of such engagements. In this context, an important item on the agenda was African civil society's engagement with IFIs such as the World Bank and Bank-supported programmes like NEPAD.

On the second day, a session was held on Civil Society Engagement with the World Bank, chaired by Kumi Naidoo of CIVICUS, an international umbrella body of NGOs. Naidoo outlined how CIVICUS' board had, over an eighteen-month period, "...embarked on a process of canvassing and documenting civil society views on engagement with the Bank". Naidoo described this as a "painful process" for which CIVICUS had received a great deal of criticism. Nevertheless, according to Naidoo, CIVICUS was powering ahead to host a Global Policy Forum in April 2005, bringing together the Bank and civil society, which would mark "the end" of its engagement with the Bank.

When the floor was opened, activists (drawing in many cases from their own past experiences) railed against engagement with the World Bank. Console Tleane, from the Freedom of Expression Institute of South Africa, argued that CIVICUS was unfairly seeking legitimacy for its engagement with the Bank at the ASF. Tleane pointed out that the conversation seemed awkwardly placed in the agenda of the Forum – rather than scanning civil society views on working with the Bank, delegates were ready to strategise on "how to bring about the end of the bank by April 2005". Kenyan activist Njoki Njehu of 50 Years is Enough, a Washington DC-based NGO, argued that there have been three major civil society attempts to engage with the Bank, including the World Commission on Dams, and the Extractive Industry Review – and they all failed. The Bank's primary objective in trying to engage with civil society is

to boost its public relations (PR), and lend a veneer of legitimacy and transparency to its opaque and undemocratic operations. Indeed, Njehu stated that the Bank has a PR budget in excess of US\$20 million per annum and seventy staff members devoted to improving its image. She went on to question who actually funded CIVICUS' engagement with the Bank, and in fact whether the organisation was truly independent of the Bank and those who support its agendas.

A Senegalese trade unionist in the Higher Education sector argued that the World Bank's policies had destroyed African universities through dramatic budgetary cutbacks and cost recovery. Similarly, a Nigerian activist explained that she had attended a meeting with the Bank on PRSPs as recently as a month earlier and gained the impression that the Bank had already decided on what policies should be adopted in the country and was merely "going through the motions" of holding a meeting with civil society activists. Year in, year out, this NGO representative had been to meetings with the Bank and seen virtually no implementation of progressive civil society organisations' suggestions, except at the most cosmetic level.

Veteran South African anti-apartheid and social justice activist Dennis Brutus argued that CIVICUS was still actively engaged with the Bank and so it was disingenuous to argue that it was 'disengaging' with the Bank, but only after a big meeting in April 2005. Njehu went on to argue that the IMF and World Bank divided NGOs into pliant 'good' NGOs like CIVICUS that it could 'deal with', and critical 'bad' NGOs like 50 Years that it refused to have anything to do with. If the Bank was serious about hearing civil society perspectives it would be prepared to hear very critical perspectives – even those arguing for it to be boycotted by ethical investors on the Bonds market, and ultimately closed down.

Those present made it clear that civil society actors did not need intermediaries such as CIVICUS to bring their views to the Bank. They have spent years communicating their desires to the Bank – at times lobbying, but more often gathering by the thousands to protest at Bank meetings. Tleane argued for activists who did not agree with such engagement to protest at the April 2005 meeting and other events, in a way similar to the Not in My Name campaign launched by left-wing South African Jews opposed to Israeli President Ariel Sharon's policies on Palestine. Mandisa Mbali argued for 50 Years to demonstrate outside the meeting to show that not all civil society actors are in agreement with engagement with the Bank. South African Anti-Privatisation Forum activist Virginia Setshedi then led participating delegates in a protest song against collaborating with neo-colonial forces. Indeed, in an article entitled 'No to World Bank-Civil Society Relations', the African Flame, the daily ASF newspaper, reported on the session as follows :

Without a single dissenting voice, participants rejected any dealings with the Bank. The Bank's bad record on the continent and the tonnes of evidence that indict it for the continued poverty of the African people were cited as the main reasons why any engagement will not be meaningful. The message was clear : there...[was] no way that the ASF would entertain any dealings with the Bank.

Activists in the NEPAD session came to the same conclusions on the potential of neoliberal institutions and policies. Senegalese economist Demba Dembele's rejection of NEPAD, elaborated at the session, was based on two fundamental assumptions : That the West will never develop Africa, and that most African leaders do not care about the welfare of their citizens. Pointing to the fact that NEPAD is premised on the extraction and export of Africa's prime resources and the opening of the continent to exploitative foreign direct investment (FDI), a Zimbabwean economist characterised NEPAD as "creating a Bill of Rights for trans-national corporations". Thus, he concluded : "Our engagement will mean nothing".

III

Finding our own tools : Feminist dialogue

Breaking with the structure of other Forum sessions, in which two or three panellists (usually male) addressed an audience for roughly two hours and finished by fielding a handful of questions, the feminist dialogue was constructed as an actual conversation – open to dissent and debate, and allowing ideas to build off each other. Chairs were arranged in a large circle and, by the end of the session, nearly every woman and man present had spoken their mind. Unfortunately, discussion revolved around gender and feminism in our societies (for example, on women in power having become ‘patriarchs’, and on the need for better, context-specific understandings of gender and feminism in order to avoid negative labelling), but did not touch on feminism and the role of women within our own movements. The participatory form of the conversation embodied a dissent against the structuring of the ASF, yet the critique must go further.

Although women fuel movements (and more isolated moments of resistance) across Africa, they were in the minority at the ASF because the leadership of organisations and movements (i.e. those likely to represent organisations at international forums) is male. Doubtless, delegates would go back to their local meetings where some women might not feel free to speak up. This is the case because patriarchy and other forms of dominance are being re-inscribed within movements for resistance.

As Shallo Skaba, an Ethiopian coffee worker, stated at the Africa Court of Women, “No one is looking for women’s problems. No one considers all that women are doing”. If movements go on as they are, women’s problems **will not** be looked for, much less effectively organised around. One woman suggested during the dialogue that feminism is a political consciousness around power and power inequalities. Let us, then, apply that critical consciousness to the society we resist **and** to the vehicles of resistance that are propelled by our energy, our sacrifices, our limited resources, our courage – but too often not by our decisions and the wisdom of our experiences as women.

Again out of character with much of the Forum, several action items were decided upon. These included gathering and sharing feminist literature from across the continent over an email discussion list and in existing publications such as Feminist Africa, the Centre for Civil Society website and research reports, and WeWrite. Feminist dialogue must be wrestled back from the (mostly Northern) academic spaces which have co-opted and subsequently come to define (and confine) debate. The email discussion list has since emerged, with energy and debate centred around the contributions that African women would make at the January 2005 WSF in Porto Alegre.

Those present also strategised ways to hold women who are elected into office accountable. This is gravely needed, as demonstrated in South Africa where Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang has consistently pushed forward policies that have worsened – and ultimately taken – the lives of poor, black, HIV-positive women. In Tanzania, Fatma Alloo explained, women activists meet with each female politician when they assume office. From the very beginning of her term – and often beforehand, during her campaign – women activists attempt to become these politicians’ primary network and base. Since women so often identify with a system that will ‘protect’ them, the moment that they say ‘No’, they are persecuted. Women activists can thus form alternative forms of protection, and women in high office can draw their power not from the prevailing system of patriarchal control, but from those who understand power’s underbelly.

Finally, activists called for further strategising to help make women economically independent. As one activist from the Gambia remarked, we must make it possible for women to get a divorce if necessary, to have some measure of financial independence. In a global economy where women produce over 80% of resources and own less than 20% of them, the battle for economic sovereignty will be long and difficult. However, we will work to ensure that

women are not further exploited by our own movements, and that we create means for economic independence as much as we can.

IV

Are our tools sharp enough ?

Across several sessions, a number of participants asked similar questions : What are we doing to take the debates here back to the grassroots in our own countries ? People are dying of AIDS in my country, aggressive cost recovery means that water and electricity are being disconnected, trade negotiations are taking place which may ruin livelihoods, how will this Forum take our struggles forward ?

When we asked different delegates how the ASF meetings were organised, they could only answer with even more questions. How, for instance, were the meetings financed ? How was the organising council constituted ?

It should be clarified that when the Social Forum phenomenon began in 2001, there was much celebratory talk about 'space', 'reflections', and 'networks of resistance'.⁹ The WSF and its regional incarnations were spaces where people could share and develop a new language that opposed neoliberalism, and seek alternatives to the harsh rule of global capitalism. Such spaces are terribly difficult to come by; even more so are anti-hierarchical and non-vanguardist spaces, which the WSF strives to provide. These spaces are not to be taken for granted, and so it is a sign of how far the existing Forums are from these ideals that activists are expressing such disdain for 'space'. Debating in undemocratic, unrepresentative situations has frustrated activists, fuelling growing demands for concrete outcomes and declarations. Whether or not it is actually feasible or desirable to produce a declaration through consensus within the span of four days, this has become the demand of many who feel stifled in a 'space' that has little room for them at all.

Activists from South Africa's Social Movements Indaba (SMI) questioned the structure of the ASF (an un-elected, self-appointed, "unrepresentative" council) and its "lack of political direction". SMI activists said they viewed the council and the ASF as biased toward NGOs, as membership of the council did not entail representivity, and members of the council had to pay their own way to council meetings. A statement issued and circulated by the SMI expanded this critique :

The underrepresentation of social movements in relation to NGOs is reflected in the political content of the forum. It manifests in the persistence of the notion that the Africa Social Forum is nothing other than a space, in contrast to the perspective that it should have a programme to advance our struggle against neoliberalism.

The SMI went on to argue for a plenary to allow for collective decision-making on the structure and functioning of the ASF, and develop a declaration and a programme of action.

The problems expressed by activists are not unique to the ASF. Other Social Forums have been critiqued for not culminating in sufficiently concrete political outcomes that would advance the struggles of social movements. For instance, in discussing the Boston Social Forum (BSF), Peter Marcuse recently argued that there was insufficient participation of 'grassroots activists' (activists who were very poor, on welfare, etc.).¹⁰ In general, there was an expressed need to link the BSF and other Social Forums to "action" with "concrete results".¹¹ As Marcuse argues, while such forums might offer the future "nucleus" of a global social movement, it is too early to speak of a global social movement focused on limited objectives and dealing with broader issues of power and social justice.¹²

Similarly, an activist writing for Schnews on the 2004 European Social Forum (ESF) held in London argued that : "[Activists] came to see if 'another world is possible', yet as expected [the ESF] was hijacked by people whose vision seems seriously at odds with many people involved in grassroots politics".¹³ Many ESF activists questioned the wisdom of replacing one

set of unaccountable political cronies with another.

V

Building our own House : From Undemocratic 'Space' to Action ?

In order for the Social Forums to continue to have legitimacy with social movement activists they must cease to be undemocratic 'spaces' for stifled debate about 'other possibilities' for the world and, instead, move towards sharing experiences and debating strategies, tactics, and common campaigns. In essence, there seems to be a struggle for the soul of the Social Forums : Will they be 'talk shops' or 'think tanks' or 'arenas for planning action', 'campaign launch pads', or 'strategy and tactics seminars' ? As the feminist session of the ASF showed, making sessions more participatory and inclusive could be an important step towards allowing legitimate critiques of the Social Forums and their constituent movements to emerge. In turn, this could allow for more focussed political discussions and outcomes at the Forums.

The stakes are high in this debate. As Setshedi argued : "People are being disconnected at home; what am I doing here if it doesn't advance their struggle ?". Or, as an HIV-positive feminist activist from Zimbabwe argued, "people are dying of AIDS at home, we need to think of a common platform to campaign to improve their access to treatment". Such activists argued that it takes precious time and resources to attend Social Forums, and that they must have something to show for attending such forums.

Although ASF delegates rejected engagement with the Bank and NEPAD, it should not be forgotten that indirect approaches urging such engagement were made through civil society intermediaries. This shows that capturing Social Forums and blunting their impact is a tantalising outcome for the Bank and 'third-way' politicians, which only adds a further sense of urgency to debates about the political direction and future of the Social Forums in advancing the aims of social movements for socio-economic justice. It is clear that social movement activists around the world increasingly wish to "jealously guard"¹⁴ the Social Forums against depoliticisation and from inching towards irrelevant abstraction. Such activists recognise that if they exhaust themselves attempting to debate in undemocratic 'space', they will not seriously threaten the agendas of the Bank or other IFIs. And, the blunter the tools of the Social Forums get, the greater the chance activists will simply dispense with them entirely.

Notes

- 1 This is an edited version of an article that appeared in Pambazuka News, Issue 188, January 6 2005, @ <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/26329> (accessed js 23.11.2006).
- 2 Wahu Kaara, a Kenyan feminist activist speaking at the Africa Social Forum's opening plenary.
- 3 Thompson 1997.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Mngxitama 2005, p 1.
- 6 Mafeje 2002, pp 12-13.
- 7 Fanon 1965.
- 8 Bond 2000.
- 9 Mngxitama 2005, p 3.
- 10 Marcuse 2005.
- 11 Ibid, p 3.
- 12 Ibid .
- 13 Schnews 2004. *Eds* : See also the essays in this book by Rahul Rao, Giuseppe Caruso, and Taran Khan (Rao 2012, Caruso 2012, and Khan 2012), and in a forthcoming companion volume The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds, by Anila Daulatzai (Daulatzai, forthcoming (2013)).

Are Social Forums An Opportunity For Renewing Emancipative Gender Politics ? : A Feminist Account Of The Local Organisation Of Social Forums ¹

Corinna Genschel

Introduction : Why Social Forums ?

“Another world is possible and necessary”. Since 2001, a variety of (global) social movements, organisations, and political actors have met under this motto, taken from the Zapatistas, at world, continental, and thematic social forums. Originally intended as an alternative to the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, the World Social Forum (WSF) quickly developed beyond merely opposing and criticising economic globalisation to offering conceptions of an ‘alternative world’. “The World Economic Forum was an invention of the North; the World Social Forum originates in the South. Where one presents itself as elitist, authoritarian, and closed off to the outside world, the other is intended as a meeting point for social movements from below – participatory, democratic, and open”.²

The WSF’s development was driven by the conviction that resistance to neoliberal globalisation can only develop effective instruments for political intervention if it grows democratically from below. The WSF had to take account of both the world’s various social realities and political perspectives, and different historical heritages (some left-wing). In other words, the goal was to implement a different form of globalisation : A social and political globalisation not imposed from above, but rather providing the means to realise the idea of ‘another world’ through everyday politics devoted to (global) justice. This project required new social and political spaces: spaces that allowed for unfettered exchanges between heterogeneous experiences, democratic debates, political discussions and reflections, and networking and mobilisation.

This notion of an open political space has rendered (world) social forums attractive for feminists. Having experienced the exclusion and marginalisation of gender politics, feminists discovered in the WSF an opportunity for bringing about an exchange between feminism and the left. They also saw the WSF as an opportunity for introducing into global social movements those local and transnational experiences acquired through women’s struggles. After all, the WSF is said to have become “a space where the struggles and propositions of movements, organisations, networks, campaigns, and a variety of social actors can encounter one another, to the extent that they have claimed this space for themselves and developed new perspectives for the utopian imagination – something that was entirely lost in the general social situation of the last few decades”. That, in any case, is what Lilian Celiberti and Virginia Vargas wrote in 2003.³

Of course, not everything that is written and said corresponds to the everyday reality of gender politics. It seems that the more local a social forum, the more traditional and uncritical of gender roles it becomes – at any rate, this appears to be the case in Europe.⁴ Even though feminists have actively participated in the organisation of the various social forums at all levels, issues related to gender politics – or to a fundamental critique of hierarchic gender relations – have only rarely been taken up by others and not so in the case of the various social forums within the European context. With the results that the potential inherent in emancipatory gender politics has been stalled.⁵

This is surely not just a consequence of a general neglect of gender issues within the left. Like everything in life and politics, gender relations are complex – all the more so since they have been profoundly affected by the neoliberal policies of the past decades. It has

become increasingly difficult to formulate feminist demands in leading capitalist nations given the complexity of the issues. Locally organised social forums pose the additional challenge of creating an 'open political space', with all the promises the phrase carries, while simultaneously engaging with the (patriarchal) conditions and the real socio-political actors that exist in a specific place. They form their forums out of the real constellation of present and absent actors with all the consequences this entails. When one acts on the local level more or less continuously, it seems also more necessary to establish oneself as a visible political force, or better a voice, capable of articulating oneself politically. Local social forums, therefore, are exciting and interesting sites since they offer – if followed thoroughly in terms of the interplay of glocal context and agency – more than a glimpse of what social forums can be.

Working within local conditions and relations implies working within the everyday political constraints and exclusions that this form of local practice necessarily constitutes, including the various ways in which issues are displaced because they can't immediately be made sense of socially and politically.⁶ Far more than the annual WSF, local social forums are situated in the very specific political constellations that they help constitute. These constellations involve not just relations of dominance in general, but also the presence of various left forces as they exist. In Berlin, for example, the fact that feminist politics has lost political significance in concrete struggles, combined with the ethnic and social divisions that traverse oppositional civil society as well as the city, creates a situation in which the project of making the social forum an open political space confronts far more resistances than merely the 'willingness' of organisers or facilitators to realise such a project.

Consequently, (local) social forums face the challenge of recognising such contradictions and the complexity of their circumstances, which constitute the social forum's concrete limits, in order to transform these circumstances. It is a matter, in other words, of reflecting on the forms of radical and grassroots democracy possible in a situation characterised by structural inequality. This, of course, is necessarily a long-term project, and will not be always successful. This paper offers some feminist thoughts on some of these local conditions and difficulties.

I

Global Social Ideas and Local Politics : The Challenge of Organising a Local Social Forum
Early in 2003, roughly fifteen people from various currents of Berlin's extra-parliamentary left, some of them feminists, proposed creating a Project for a Berlin Social Forum. Inspired by various successful international social forums, especially Florence, they decided to start an open political forum in Berlin to provide new impulses for left wing, emancipatory, and grassroots politics. It was hoped that these impulses would function as counterpoints to the antisocial and anti-democratic policies of Germany's Red-Green national government and Berlin's Red-Red local government while simultaneously promoting the reconstitution of political counter-forces.⁷ As Dieter Hartmann explains, the context in which this project took shape was characterised by two tendencies :

On the national level, Germany's coalition government, constituted by the SPD [Social Democratic Party of Germany] and the Green Party, was proving that political opposition is not a viable option in times characterised by war, economic crisis, and the restructuring of the welfare state associated with the Hartz reforms and with the Schröder government's 'Agenda 2010'. At the same time, the local government of Berlin, constituted by the most 'left-wing' parliamentary opposition conceivable, an alliance of the SPD and PDS [Party of Democratic Socialism, see endnote 7] parties, was destroying the last remaining illusions about parliamentary reformism. What remained was the despair – made of anger and powerlessness – of those sectors of the population that had become the object of 'budgetary measures'. One reason for this despair was that neoliberalism's cultural hegemony had led to a 'paradoxical situation' in which there existed a hitherto unheard of number of people who believed not just in the distinction between rich and poor, but also in that between rulers and ruled.⁸

Following Hartmann, neoliberal capitalism needed to be understood also in terms of (cultural) hegemony; and in order to overcome its hegemonic hold on society, new forms of

organisation or organising were needed to bring together all those people, projects, and organisations that had been socially isolated, and whose interests had been played out against each other. However, from the point of view of all those who didn't belong to the 'core' of the anticipated new class of and for the left, reflecting on the weakness of social movements was insufficient and needed to be supplemented with consideration of other urgent political exigencies. Forms of domination and lines of social division had changed radically and become more complex. This had not only led to a fragmentation of the social but also radically transformed the conditions of the possibility for political action.

Feminists, for example, were faced with the question of what starting point to choose for feminist politics when *Frauenpolitik* ('women's policy') has become an ideological component of government measures in the form of family policy. Where to begin with feminist politics when gender relations have been subjected to such radical transformations that issues of 'gender' have been both eroded and intensified? ⁹ How to act in a situation in which the primacy of the economy and its concomitant social forms have 'deregulated' and depoliticised gender relations? After all, gender relations have effectively become, once again, a private matter, thanks to the privatisation of social services through 'individualisation' and 'familiarisation'. Finding solutions to the problems posed by the persistently unequal distribution of wages and reproductive – not only household – tasks as well as by the erosion of public goods and services, has become first and foremost a matter of individual responsibility and options. Yet these problems can hardly be articulated as political issues that require social solutions.¹⁰ What is more, this has occurred at a time when the degree of individualisation and personal autonomy is more than ever a matter of class relations overdetermined by ethnic and gender divisions.

From a feminist perspective, it was necessary to take these fundamental social contradictions seriously and intervene at the point when 'social policy' and ongoing social transformations are reduced to the purely economic matter of distributing wealth. In many ways, feminist analyses from past decades have become newly relevant today. They allow for a more precise understanding of the reshaping of work, subjectivity, society, and life.¹¹ Examining questions of economic distribution in the context of cultural and symbolic orders is a prerequisite for exposing the regulatory systems that legitimise and define the specific distribution of goods. Such regulatory systems determine who has the power to distribute (and under what conditions), what is to be distributed (what kind of work, what kinds of goods), and which needs can be articulated and how.¹²

These issues provided the **thematic** backdrop for the contribution that 'we feminists'¹³ made to the development of a local social forum in Berlin. In our interpretation, this was an opportunity to translate open questions into concrete political action, collaborating with others to criticise existing relations of dominance. The concept of an 'open political space' – the central idea behind the social forum project – was the **organisational** backdrop that made constituting a local social forum attractive to us. Anchoring radical and grassroots democracy at the structural level and creating an open, versatile organisation that allowed for the exploration of new paths – this was something we, as feminists, could relate to. Finally, this was also an opportunity to collaborate with others and create something new after the 'old' had either dissolved or been reduced to political forms that had long ceased to conform to our desire for a 'radical movement from below'.¹⁴ This was an opportunity to put into practice ideas and convictions about global, social, and gender equality from the feminist movement, and to develop these ideas and convictions by engaging with old (and new) contradictions.

II

Organising the Project for a Berlin Social Forum : (Gender) Political Lessons
But how to put the idea of a local social forum into practice? What was needed was not just

the idea of offering an open space where different groups, social currents, and individuals could engage with one another on equitable terms, but also a local structure capable of combining this idea with constant accessibility. It was necessary to hold regular meetings to make the Berlin Social Forum (BSF) known, to allow others to approach it, and to intervene in ongoing conflicts actively and publicly – as agents, and not just as a space for encounters. In this way, a structure needed to be invented – a space, approachable and functioning. So, we created a monthly open plenary, (thematic) work groups, and an assembly for coordinating the Forum's activities.

Every local social forum exists within a concrete political constellation, such as the specific policy of a local government. Every local social forum adopts the social heritages of the place where it is organised – and this includes the heritage of left-wing forces. In Berlin, this involved both the ruling politics of social and ethnic division, and the city's persistent East-West divide, consequences of the protracted auto-referentiality and fragmentation of the (western) left and the depoliticisation of much of the larger, extra-parliamentary culture (including the feminist movement and culture). All this meant that the need for creating political forms and spaces to develop an engaged, attractive, intelligent, and open social politics (a politics from below) could not be considered in abstract terms, but had to be realised in a concrete way.

Early on, a variety of people from the left and from the field of social policies came together;¹⁵ most of the participants were German by birth, and roughly a third were women. Even if some of the women were feminists, most of the women didn't come from women's and lesbians' organisations. It is still hard to explain why this was the case : True, there were not many political lesbian and women's organizations and groups left. Those still existing were dedicated to the welfare and / or survival of their projects, some were active primarily in the 'cultural' arena. In retrospect it seems that those potentially interested in a new politics were too overwhelmed by the complexities and ambivalences of neoliberal life and politics to engage in practical politics with the general left, which did not offer inspiring debates in that situation. There were times when the Project consisted only of members of the undogmatic left, and of individuals from the margins of larger organisations and movements (critical trade unionists, former members of the PDS, feminists).

The tension between the two poles of 'open political space' and 'local political agent' determined the conditions for feminist action from the outset. An 'open space' brings with it many possibilities for influencing and shaping politics, but it can also become a catalyst for power struggles over issues related to self-representation, decision-making, and internal organisation. Men from the 'organised left' (the various political sects and parties) were especially quick to use this state of affairs to their advantage, thereby stalling many developments.¹⁶ There is also the opposite danger : That the 'open space' becomes one where decisions are avoided, issues remain unaddressed, conflicts are not resolved, and the transition to forms of practice does not occur. This type of 'space' remains vague and without any short-term effect – which is surely a reason why a significant part of Berlin's extra-parliamentary culture abandoned the Project.

Nonetheless, the Project has succeeded, in recent years, in becoming a specific spatial agent that has either initiated its own specific activities or participated in activities organised by others. In the first year there was the attempt to create a 'social centre' that would give the political space a material corollary. An empty city building was squatted on, but even if it remained one of the rallying points for many different groups, the city 'won' and the idea of a social centre was eventually given up. Early on, the Project also contributed to various Berlin-based activities directed against the neoliberal reforms, specifically against the welfare reforms envisioned in the Schröder government's Agenda 2010 platform. Discussions for the general public, and controversial debates for those people more involved in the project's idea, were

organised on a regular basis to further understandings of each other, as well as on social and political issues in their often contradictory natures.

A Mobility Work Group was founded in 2004-5 following the abolition of the so-called 'social ticket', which provided subsidised access to public transportation. The Work Group followed the forum idea by deliberately bridging the distance between social and political groups. It collaborated with homeless organisations, churches, and trade unionists to stage spectacular activities that were widely endorsed by Berlin's residents. The activities forced the local government to reissue a 'social ticket' for the poor, however its eventual cost was not what was hoped for. Plus, follow-up activities to lower the price of the ticket failed to provoke as strong a reaction from this new 'alliance'. Other public events were organised to draw attention to topics usually bracketed from the socio-political debate, such as gender and migration issues (for example, a feminist critique of the welfare state so that there would be no nostalgic call for the return of the 'old' welfare state). Attempts were made to establish transversal connections between different social actors (such as undocumented workers, trade unionists, and people doing local political work). Uncritical apologist arguments for the (idealised) welfare state were questioned from many point of views – women's, migrants', the very poor, poor elderly, etc – thereby opening up new (discursive rather than practical) perspectives.

The Project has become a forum for forms of political intervention that are still being developed, or that constitute a link between different struggles (from spontaneous resistance to the EU's policy of 'fortress Europe' or neoliberal trade policies to activities that contested the 2006 World Cup and the 2007 G8 summit) and for continuous activities that contest processes of social abjection, poverty, and exclusion in the immediate sense. In preparing the monthly general assembly or plenary, in deciding on specific crucial topics and inviting representatives from other groups/movements, the forum still tries to provide a space for developing new ideas, thus bringing together people who tend to work past each other in their everyday political activities.

In terms of its concentration on feminist concerns, the first year of the Project was used to explore and negotiate the spaces available for women's and gender issues. Relevant themes were introduced, and they have entered the Project's statute.¹⁷ The monthly meetings were deliberately shaped in accordance with the principles of gender democracy, and space was devoted to feminist themes in the form of special meetings and discussions on a regular basis.

In some ways, the organised left (parties and trade unions) reacted openly to the introduction of these feminist themes; sometimes it reacted on the structural level, trying to exclude certain themes and individuals. There have been cases of explicit verbal attacks and sexist behaviour. Critical interventions from feminist perspectives were defined as 'private' matters and thereby depoliticised. The authority of an informal old boys' networks was highly evident in these situations. Their definitions of expertise and efficiency excluded anyone who didn't dispose of such putative qualities as, for example, professional media knowledge and could therefore be 'legitimately' banished from certain circles, such as from the press work group.¹⁸ This convergence of anti-feminism and party-political organisation models oriented towards engaging with the 'general public' was particularly revealing: The same orientation repeatedly stalled attempts to constitute radically democratic organisational structures. Men from the undogmatic left tended to be more open-minded towards the feminist approach. Our common interest in radical democracy allowed for mutual support in the introduction and development of certain themes, in the construction of alliances, and in the distribution of tasks.

Over time, it became possible to draw lessons from some of these experiences. Mechanisms of exclusions could be defined more precisely, and discussions (whether public or internal) could be organised in a gender-sensitive way (how many of the speakers are women,

which issues are considered relevant, and what do feminists have to say about specific topics). During the early phase of the Project, feminists established criteria for gender democratic interaction by organising assemblies in an explicitly gender-sensitive manner. However, only some feminists were still left, who reflected in 'private space' on these processes. Since they had established themselves as relevant actors in other areas of the Project, they could raise their important – though individualised – voices to put pressure on the plenary.

However, because feminist organisations were never involved, as such (and hence were not able to influence the development of the Project and the shaping of the 'open political space'), the persistence and specific skills of these individual though somewhat networked feminists often played an important role in transforming the functioning of the Project. The realisation of gender democracy was oriented towards rendering the active construction of the social forum accessible to groups other than those originally involved – particularly feminist and women's groups. This was especially true during the first period of the organisation process. It was a matter of making the notion of an open political space from which resistance to neoliberal and capitalist restructuring could be organised attractive to feminists and other women. This is also the reason why groups devoted to women's issues were actively encouraged to join – albeit unsuccessfully (see above). It is worth reflecting on what can be learned from the fact that the feminist point of view has not been firmly anchored in the activities of the Project, just as the Project, in turn, has not initiated any significant socio-political interventions related to gender issues.

III

Without a Safety Net : The Concept of Varied Social Forums

The Project has now entered its sixth year and faces the problem of shrinking membership and commitment.¹⁹ Its current organisational mode is not attractive to new members; this is true both for (feminist) women and for members of other groups. The assemblies or plenaries are often dominated by organisational issues. There is little time for politically engaged and well-founded debate, nor for meeting potential collaborators on their own territory in order to pursue common goals. The 'open political space' offered by the Project remains purely formal.

Lack of resources or commitment entails that many tasks are delegated to individuals who tend increasingly to become 'professional politicians'. Themes and experiments of ever new varieties but without new activists leads to a situation in which hardly anyone derives practical benefit from the social forum, or from participating in its process. Newly initiated projects (such as those concerning issues of social policy, and particularly those related to the resistance by apartment tenants²⁰ affected by the welfare cut reform as well as by gentrification) are quickly abandoned when they require either persistent socio-political groundwork or a long-term engagement with 'other', however fragile, social actors. Without meaning to, the Project has come close to becoming one of the many socio-political associations that remain limited and temporary because they take on too many tasks at once, with only limited resources, and therefore don't succeed in catalysing 'movements from below'.

Out of such reflections on the direction the BSF had taken, in mid 2005 participants of the Initiative for a Berlin Social Forum – including the author – started to think about the idea of organising an actual BSF (as a weekend 'event'). Given that the 'open monthly plenary' had become too limited to attract new people who would engage in social forum processes and invent new forms, we thought that even if we were known in Berlin as an existing social forum we should organise a weekend as an open space for those not interested in participating in the social forum on a monthly basis. Invitations for organising a local social forum were made to various groups, individuals, and social currents in Berlin. However, while the first meetings attracted a variety of (small) groups and initiatives of as many as twenty-five (which was more than the 'usual' number of people), organising an open space as a common and open

endeavour was a difficult task. The idea of some open, albeit political, process without immediate, tangible benefits (for example, a campaign, march, or protest) was, and remains, hard to communicate. It seemed too much to envision something that 'lacked' a pre-established form and content, when already struggling to address 'own' political goals and immediate concerns. While activists from different strata might feel frustrated and limited in their political practice, they envision something other than an 'open political space' as a step towards tackling this frustration. Thus, even if we (the initial group) engaged in a long process of organising small scale social forum events on different topics and with the goal of bringing the idea across and inviting people to join, the group that eventually organised the BSF weekend remained limited to the Initiative of the BSF itself (we were eventually just another Work Group of the monthly plenary). That small group, however, decided after some time that even if there were so many difficulties and even if this might mean that there wouldn't be a real social forum given the limited number of facilitators, we would risk it. We had talked about it too long and wanted to know whether a social forum for Berlin, organised as an open weekend event, could turn the tide.

With not even a handful of very committed activists, the first BSF was held in April 2007, with approximately 300 participants and thirty workshops. Various plenary sessions tried to frame these very heterogeneous workshops, and the Forum, addressing issues the Organising Committee thought might bridge groups, interests and debates. These included : How does the G8 summit relate to politics in Berlin (bridging the altermondiales with social struggles in Berlin); how to address and struggle for public goods (bridging campaigners for specific public goods with feminists²¹ and academics who think more generally about the politics of public goods); and how to bridge and address the processes of the increasing precariousness of life in general and of various lives specifically (bridging the many groups whose lives are made precarious, such as unemployed people on welfare, migrants, employed working poor). While the weekend was indeed something of a (limited) success, a year later it is clear that it didn't serve as a means for networking and / or as a basis for further common debate and movement building – at least from the perspective of what the Project for the Berlin Social Forum can witness. Since no real structure was developed during and after the Forum to safeguard its results, the local social forum process remains open (the plenary still works 'the same' or even worse, so this could be read as a negative result).²²

IV

Conclusion

Do the experiences described yet imply that the creation of an open political space is wrong or unnecessary, or is there merely a need for different ways of achieving this goal ? Some concluding thoughts :

It would be wrong to explain away the failure to organise an actual social forum in terms of either the organisational structure of the Project for a BSF or the negligence of individuals. Recent years have shown that what abstract sociological analyses describe as the "fragmentation of the social" and the "structural transformation of politics"²³ has far more consequences for emancipatory practice than we imagined. Social movements with guaranteed continuity cannot simply be produced; they require more than the will of individuals to materialise.

The Project's thematic focus on topical political issues, and on the logic of these issues, does limit the space available for open debates and social critiques. This entails that the Project becomes less accessible for social currents and groups that reject a narrow vision of 'social policy' on the grounds that this leaves no room for their specific

interests and political goals. This in turn means that the specific function of social forums – the construction of new political relations, politicisation, and the raising of new questions – is lost. If the idea that social movements are politically effective only to the extent that they combine different social realities and political perspectives is taken seriously, then there continues to be a need for a **space** in which to question the aporias and political pre-definitions that characterise political debate and the reproduction of majority norms. The question of how the opening of new perspectives can be achieved, given that other social currents and political groups have failed to bring about such an opening, particularly in the area of social policy, remains to be answered. Where can it be demonstrated that emancipatory potential is to be found in the transversal connections between different politics and forms of life, if there is no one to concretely realise such potential ?

Another conclusion follows from this. The experiences gathered in the context of the (Project for a) BSF show that a long-term perspective cannot be derived from politics of ‘ideas that are correct in the abstract’, ‘politics of delegation’, or ‘politics of grievances’ – whether such politics be feminist, autonomist, or oriented towards issues of social policy. It is therefore a matter of creating spaces where social, political, and subjective issues can be articulated in all their contradictory and concrete reality, thereby becoming the point of departure for a critique and practice truly ‘radical’. It may be the case, for example, that new political impulses for resistance against privatisation, and for gender politics, will arise only when positive and negative experiences of privatisation, individualisation, and re-familiarisation are shared, along with attempted solutions, both enforced and freely chosen, within the context of a specific biographical situation. It may well be worthwhile to organise thematic social forums with a focus on specific questions and areas of life, where personal experiences of expropriation and re-appropriation can be reflected so as to arrive at forms of transformation and intervention that provide individuals with immediate practical possibilities. The social nature of political relations can be understood only when room is left for awkward questions and uncomfortable answers, when attention is devoted to issues and demands that are unclear, contradictory, or unconventional. Only when such spaces exist can alternative political, social, and cultural projects develop along with the vision of a different “quality of life”.²⁴

We should learn from our experiences in the context of the Project for a BSF. There should not be **just** a proliferation of social forums, but also a thematic, temporal, and spatial focus, albeit one that does not impose a priori limits on political practice. This would mean conceiving of social forums not so much as singular events but rather in terms of a series of thematically focused events that combine to form a common body of knowledge and experience. It is quite possible that the seeds for an everyday (gender) politics – one that begins from the common but diversely articulated need for a better life – are to be found here. Such a project can only succeed if it is taken up by a variety of individuals, groups, and social actors, such that they all contribute their own ideas and forms of organisation and action – creating a space for themselves and fighting to make it their own.

While this text has dealt only with the specificities of a local social forum in Berlin, we

need not understand it in terms of the conditions in Berlin alone but as part of social forum processes in general. In about 2003, a network of local social forums was started at the European as well as at the WSF level, which also created space at the international forum events to meet and debate the politics (potential and constraints) of local social forums. These meetings, and also the two German local social forum network meetings in 2005 and 2006, made apparent not only how crucial the networking of local forums is to understanding one's own limitations in a broader context, but the experiences and analyses (though far too few) of local forum politics showed how important these experiences are for a sustainable WSF process. Since the fifth ESF in Malmö (Sweden) has been organised not by a national Swedish board but by a variety of functioning local social forums in Scandinavia, this ESF will show whether this connection between local and European social forums can function in a new emancipatory and democratic way, opening up new potentials for social forums worldwide.

Acting in the local within a glocal context, local social forums demonstrate the hard work needed to establish 'another world' (and even that another world is possible) as well as the necessary constraints to doing so. However, local social forums have the potential to make a real connection between the global and local, as they are lived at all levels and dimensions of the everyday. Exposing this potential and the constraints necessary to their fulfilment could help politicise the world we are forced to live in, and make it worthwhile to struggle for another world.

Notes

1 This paper was originally written for a German discussion in 2005-6 about gender politics and / or social forum processes and published as a policy paper by the German Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (www.rosalux.de). Thanks to the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation it was also translated into English to be distributed at the ESF in Athens 2006, as well as at the WSF in Nairobi in 2007. Even though there are some local social forums in Germany and even though we had two national meetings of German local social forums in 2006 and 2007, there is little written about local social forums and their processes. This is all the more true for texts about these issues available in English. For the purpose of this anthology the paper has been slightly revised and brought up to date.

2 Brie, Krüger, and Adolphe 2004, p 11. Space does not allow for more detailed consideration of the WSF here. For a useful overview of the various positions, activities, and conceptions, see Anand, Escobar, Sen, and Waterman 2004. The above quotation is taken from the introduction to the German edition of this anthology, *Eine andere Welt : Das Sozialforum* .

3 Quoted in Alvarez, Faria, and Nobre 2004b, p 272.

4 Alvarez, Faria, and Nobre 2004b .

This is an observation and not something that has been empirically demonstrated. In fact, there exists little systematically organised material by which such a demonstration might be undertaken. It is possible that my hypothesis derives from my European perspective; the programme of the African Social Forum held in December 2004 does seem to suggest a different reality.

5 On this point, see the critique formulated by Articulación Feminista Marcosur (AFM) 2005. Unfortunately, AFM texts appear only sporadically on the internet (www.choike.org , www.whrnet.org). The AFM campaign "Your mouth is fundamental to fundamentalism" attempted to draw attention to the links between neoliberal globalisation and the constitution of religious, cultural, economic, and social fundamentalisms, exposing these as a central risk to struggles for global justice. By means of their wide concept of fundamentalism, the authors set out to expose relations of dominance and forms of inequality that are overlooked in conventional left-wing approaches. The authors combine various dimensions of the struggles for justice on all levels of society.

For a new collection on the relations between the WSF and feminism see Journal on International Women's Studies 2007, which offers an vast variety of work.

6 The mobilisation against the G8 summit this year could be read as a sign of this difficulty. While the 'altermondialistas' tried hard to make a case against G8 politics as **the** symbol of neoliberal globalisation, the campaign didn't succeed in connecting this politics with the everyday struggles against social abjection and for a "better world".

7 The term Red-Red government means a government composed of the Social-democratic Party (SPD) and the Socialist party (*Die Linke* , 'The Left'). The latter was formed by unifying (in 2005) the radically transformed socialist party of the former GDR's Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), with the left and labour oriented 'protest-party' Labour and Social Justice – The Electoral Alternative (WASG), which was initiated after the obvious neoliberal turn of Social-democratic (and Green) politics

under the Red-Green government.

8 Dieter Hartmann 2004. To explain the German welfare reform – termed ‘Agenda 2010’ – executed by the Social democrat-Green government here would lead too far away from the paper. However, briefly, ‘Agenda 2010’ was meant to be an ideological and material break from the German welfare tradition (which I do not mean to be nostalgic about) – it consisted of cutting unemployed people from unemployment benefits after twelve months and therefore making them ‘welfare recipients’. It also meant that people lost the individual benefits they had before by establishing ‘households of need’, therefore cutting away many women, especially from the East, from their individual entitlements. Ideologically, it was framed as ‘demanding and supporting’, meaning ‘the state’ could demand that people would be proactive in finding employment and only then would they be entitled to welfare. Of course, this meant that people could be forced to take any employment, thus it became a state-enforced safeguarding strategy for the capitalist cheap labour market. For the first activist oriented analyses of this in German see Grottian, Narr and Roth 2003; or Hirsch 2003.

9 Brodie 2004.

10 Lang 2001.

11 See such diverse authors as Fraser 1997, Sassen 2001, Sauer 2003.

12 Fraser 1997.

13 ‘We feminists’ suggests that we entered the Project for a Berlin Social forum as an entity. This is not true, we didn’t know each other before hand, but realised within weeks that we had found feminist comrades who also wanted to engage in a new form of politics because what was left of the traditional women’s movement couldn’t (and didn’t want to ?) adequately address the issues we faced.

14 The ‘dissolution of the old’ here also refers to the former feminist or women’s movements – while the ‘movement current’ of feminism has more or less ceased to exist (and small parts moved on to other social movements), the professional currents have, more or less, stopped raising their voices about all these radical social transformation or, rather, maybe some of them still work on the huge transformations ‘Germany’, class relations, and gender politics are going through, but only a few engage as feminist intellectuals, as political voices, or in social movements.

15 See Section I for a short introduction to the historical context. What was new after the Red-Green government introduced its neoliberal programme of social ‘reforms’ was the forming of new – formerly political inactive – social groups and individuals who were, and felt deeply, cut off from social welfare, and went on to the streets. This created a new potential for alliances and new spaces.

16 *Initiative für ein Berliner Sozialforum* (‘Project for a Berlin Social Forum’) 2003b.

17 www.socialforum-berlin.de .

18 People from feminist or queer groups were appalled by this practice. Groups or individuals who were not politically active for as long, or worked in a different style, would have needed a much more organised and deliberate group policy to counter these practices in the long run, and eventually left the forum.

19 *Eds* : This essay was written in 2007.

20 There has been a specific housing project with tenants asking for help in fighting the house owner. The author was involved in this struggle for a couple of years, supporting the tenants in their struggle for decent and affordable living, and working with them on approaching the issue in a broader, political way. It was not so much the limits of the tenants’ struggle that stopped a potentially successful struggle but the (structural) inability of the Project for the Berlin Social Forum to link this to a broader political agenda (in this case, subsidising private ownership for individual profits) and thus to other forces.

21 It is noteworthy here to say that even if there were feminists on the panels and even if feminist activists were asked to offer workshops or just join the forum, only some individuals showed up. It seems safe to say that most of the remaining feminists in Berlin don’t see something relevant in the social forum as it is. The question of how the local social forum in Berlin could also become a site for inventing new gender politics seems to be more open than ever.

22 The author herself drew her own conclusion. After six months and no relevant change or even discussion, after a huge campaign against the G8 summit which sucked all energy by promising the illusion of immediate power (as often is the case in short term campaigns without real connections to local and daily life politics), the author decided to stop her work for the Project for a Berlin Social Forum since it ceased to be a potential site for developing such a Project **and** process of social forums.

23 Scharenberg and Schmidtke 2003.

24 Dieckmann 2004.

Activism, Affect, And Abuse : Emotional Contexts And Consequences Of The ESF 2004 Organising Process ¹

Laura L Sullivan

I have never procrastinated so much in my life about the writing of a text as I have with this essay. Upon reflection, as I finally face what has been underneath this delay all along, I realise that it would be more accurate to say that I have never dreaded to such an extent what I would have to recall and feel in order to write and think about the topic, namely the emotional dimension of the organising process of the European Social Forum held in the UK (UK-ESF) in 2004. And now I recognise this dread, for it is familiar from many experiences in my past, some from quite a while ago, and some more recent : It is the dread of returning to the scene of abuse.

And this language is accurate, for this is precisely what the UK process of organising the European Social Forum was from the start. I am reminded of a definition given by a leader of a seminar on sexual abuse and incest that I attended years ago; she advocated that we define incest in the broadest sense, as “a betrayal by a person or people in power”. This conceptualisation of ‘incest’, then, would include abuses of power by institutions and their representatives. From this perspective, the frequent expressions of those of us who were disempowered in this process, that ‘we were screwed’, takes on a deeper resonance.

I invoke this scenography of abuse not to overly personalise the experience, but as a way to connect the individual and collective levels of the role of emotions in the UK-ESF organising process. In this essay I will highlight key points and instances of conflict and focus upon the emotional aspects involved, contextualising these with descriptions and analyses of the specific power dynamics involved, the political groups wielding and not wielding power, and the situatedness of power abusers within political parties and government structures.

I will offer two concepts to help untangle these emotional dynamics : ‘Internalised oppression’ and ‘restimulation’, both borrowed from the theory and practice of Re-evaluation Counselling.² ‘Internalised oppression’ refers to the way members of oppressed groups internalise the messages directed at their group, begin to believe they are true, and act out these messages, hurting themselves and other members of their group. Internalised sexism is one example. A less familiar but nonetheless salient instance relevant to this situation is the internalisation of the oppression of activists. ‘Restimulation’ occurs when a situation in the present reminds a person of some hurtful experience in the past which s/he has not healed, and brings back the feeling(s) associated with these old hurts. In this reading, recipients of the controlling and hostile behaviour of UK-ESF central organisers were often restimulated to past hurts, such as those which occurred in school, in our families, and in other social groups (eg, ‘cliques’).

While a consideration of the history of the Social Forum movement is beyond the scope of this article, it is important to keep in mind that some of the specific power struggles experienced in the UK-ESF organising process have been encountered before in efforts to organise Social Forums at the world and regional levels. In particular, there has been a growing tension between the emphasis on openness and democratic process in the WSF’s Charter of Principles³ and the actualities of various organisations and groups working together on the ground in organising Social Forums.⁴ Another central area of tension has been the Charter’s forbidding of the participation of governments and political parties and the role that these have nevertheless played, to varying degrees, in all the world and regional Social Forums.

The primarily (and problematically) London-based UK-ESF 2004 organising process took these pre-existing tensions to an extreme not previously confronted. From the start, this process was consistently characterised by fear-driven abuses of power and attempts to control, manipulate, and exclude those whose political affiliations and organisational methods differed from those of the central organisers. These attempts, which spring out of particular political viewpoints and particular plans and visions for large-scale emancipatory social change, simultaneously have an emotional basis. As recipients of the hostile, manipulative, patronising, and controlling behaviour of these central organisers, we – other members of the ESF Organising Committee – found ourselves negotiating much on the emotional front as well. Participating in this process engendered many feelings in us, including fear, humiliation, shame, shock, sadness, frustration, fury, outrage, betrayal, powerlessness, and feeling overwhelmed.

I

Setting the Context

The factions at the forefront of seeking approval for an ESF in the UK were visible from the start. Broadly, on the one side were the London Social Forum (LSF) and other grassroots organisations, who approached the organisers of the Paris ESF in the fall of 2003 with the proposal for a UK-ESF in 2005 (and not in 2004, which was ultimately the case), allowing enough time for thorough and effective organising. On the other side were some large UK trade unions, the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), and people associated with the Mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, and the Greater London Assembly (GLA) – later revealed to be members of a 'secret' party called Socialist Action (SA). Members of this contingent were keen to have the bid to host the ESF in London approved for 2004. With this group's assurance that the process would be transparent and inclusive of grassroots and other less institutionally powerful organisations and groups, the Paris ESF organisers gave the go-ahead in late 2003 for the planning of the UK-ESF and the event's occurrence in 2004.

From the start, UK-ESF organising meetings were a shambles. Agendas were not pre-circulated; chairpersons were drawn exclusively from SWP / big union / GLA / SA camps; and speakers from other circles were either cut off or disallowed from speaking entirely. Shouting matches and complete chaos often ensued.

I joined the organising process in January of 2004, just after the first of such meetings. While some participants, for example members of the anti-authoritarian / libertarian 'group' the Wombles,⁵ were quickly disillusioned, others – newcomers like me, some members of the LSF, and folks from other grassroots groups – decided to stay on board and see if there was any room for negotiation with those who at that time seemed fully in control.

At this point, let me stop and stress that already the different choices – in this case about the question of whether or not to participate in the organising process at all – were informed not only by different levels of knowledge of and previous experience with the power dynamics in interactions amongst the already-emerging 'sides' in this arena, but were also influenced greatly by different emotional states and responses. The disillusionment and frustration, even infuriation, that many long-time activists from social centres and other alter-globalisation efforts experienced at this point led them to pull out and already to turn their attention to organising 'alternative' spaces (which have become increasingly visible and important to Social Forums in general, and were, at this very time, central to the WSF held in Mumbai in January 2004). Those of us who chose to stay and try to engage were feeling some initial shock, disbelief, and frustration at the tactics of the people controlling the organising committee. But we also were investing in hope, which led us to try to bring negotiation and democracy back into the organising process.

I should also say that some of us just found it very difficult to believe that people who were (supposedly) on the same overall 'side' – something broadly conceived of as 'the left' –

could be so seemingly irrational, so unreachable. To have come to that conclusion that early would have felt defeatist, and so we were led to becoming committed to persistence. Another feeling that came into play was the belief that the UK-ESF itself had the potential to be such an important event for so many thousands of people, that to cede the official process to the people who were so rigidly controlling it seemed a shame. We literally believed that by staying involved, we could influence not only the organising process, but the flavour, inclusiveness, and – equally important – the political scope and focus of the event. We hoped to counter the increasingly apparent desire by the organisers for a conservatively liberal event that would marginalise and exclude refugees, homeless people, sex workers, etc, as well as people and groups whose efforts are aimed specifically against the current neoliberal regime of capitalism.

Thus, right from the earliest meetings, there was an interrelationship between people / groups in power, process, specific decisions taken, and participants' emotional experiences. In particular, one issue that characterises all activism was urgently on the table : The question of when to engage, and when to leave a process or group and to do something else or work with other people / groups. This is also frequently framed as the question of whether or not to 'give up', a phrase that is particularly telling, with its tone of resignation and defeat. This negotiation, this 'giving up', echoes with what many if not most of us experienced in our childhoods. While a generalisation, it is still true that most of us as young people experienced surprise, shock even, to find that the people around us, our parents and caregivers first, and later teachers and other authority figures, treated us in hurtful ways, frequently as a displacement of their own distress. As young people, we often felt compelled to reach out and try to engage with these very shut-down adults who were in charge of our care, and in our first years, of our very survival. This impulse was both one of working to ensure our survival and also one of still believing the best about human beings, wanting to help these people be more present and open to life and to connection.⁶ But for many of us, at some point while we were growing up, and frequently as a product of being hurt / damaged / traumatised, with little emotional support to assist with healing, we 'gave up'. We gave up fighting for the attention and love of the people around us. Some of us became 'tough' and tucked away our sense of abandonment, or isolation, or hopelessness. Others of us became stuck in the sadness, hopelessness, or disappointment. Perhaps rage and the desire for revenge was a response of others of us to these kinds of dynamics.

So those of us who in January and February of 2004 decided to 'stay in' and who attended weekly meetings that took on an increasingly farcical if simultaneously Stalinesque character, were, in part, motivated by hope, by a desire to 'not give up', as well as by the real belief that we would make a significant difference to the many people who would be enabled to attend the more politically radical and inclusive ESF which we intended to make happen.

Backstory : Beneath my personal involvement

Several particular moments from the UK-ESF organising process were also key emotional moments for me, and I will use them as narrative contexts for making larger points about the affective dimension of this process. One of these pivotal moments was certainly the highly charged meeting of the European Assembly that took place in London over the first weekend of March 2004. In order to describe the events of that weekend and my experience of it, I will first provide the 'backstory' to my personal involvement in the UK-ESF organising process.

Prior to 2004, my life in London primarily revolved around doing research and writing my PhD dissertation. I had decided to defer and delay getting involved with many specific activist groups and efforts until that document was done. I had, however, been part of one London-based group, a loose network of folks interested in the intersection of politics and spirituality. Calling ourselves 'Spirit Matters' (after the title of one of US activist / rabbi Michael Lerner's books),⁷ we had put on one-day events that combined talks, debates, group

discussions, and experiential elements such as dancing, music, and yoga. At the time that we decided to branch out, at the start of 2004, someone forwarded an e-mail to the Spirit Matters organising committee about the UK-ESF organising process. Not only a lovely and inspiring invitation, this letter also articulated the politics in quite an anti-capitalist fashion and emphasised inclusiveness to a great degree.⁸ Some of us went along to investigate, and we were shocked by the chaos and oppressive treatment that we saw at the meetings (which contrasted greatly with the loving, inviting, and hopeful tone of the initial letter we received). Knowing nothing of the political and power context and history involved, two of us, who have experience in counselling and mediation and who saw that the heavy-handed chairing of meetings was pivotally influential in the resulting chaos and resentment, sent a letter to the UK-ESF organising committee and volunteered to offer our skills. We offered to chair meetings and to facilitate training workshops in democratic and consensus-based chairing / facilitation. We received no response.

At the next meeting of the Organising Committee (OC), we decided to reach out again, in person. There were again shouting matches and emotional conflicts, mostly concerning the declaration issued by GLA staff-member (and prominent member of Socialist Action), Redmond O'Neill, who proclaimed that the previous working groups – who had been in place for a few months and many of whom had undertaken significant amounts of work already – stood abolished. The meeting was chaired by the then president of the RMT (Rail, Maritime, and Transport Union), who was abrupt, authoritarian, and expressed favouritism in allowing some people to speak, and for long periods, while denying these privileges to others. We spoke with him afterwards, acknowledging first the difficulty of chairing a meeting where there was so much tension. For a moment – about five seconds – he was 'real', that is, we could see the fear in his eyes, and he spoke about his anxiety and how hard chairing the meeting had been. Then the guardedness and rigidity went back up, and that was it.

This rigid, hard, severe stance was displayed by many of those 'in control' throughout the UK-ESF process and we were met repeatedly with a similar rigidity, coupled with overt hostility for the people who had tried to have their voices heard at the meeting. Clearly, our skills as mediators and negotiators of emotional conflict were not at all desired; those 'in power' merely wanted the dissenters either to acquiesce to their plans or to leave the process. My colleague in Spirit Matters decided she would no longer participate in the official organising process, while I continued to go to the weekly OC meetings as well as those of the Programme working group. Knowing no one, and at this point having little knowledge of the history of context for the tensions, I attended meetings and soaked up what I could about the various 'players' and their political allegiances, which I quickly realised were also parallel with the differences in style and treatment of others at meetings. Each week many people tried respectfully to raise questions or to propose policies, and each week they were shot down, either dismissed outright, or told there was not enough time to address their concerns.

I began to realise that an abuse of power on a deep level was occurring yet was being denied. That is, there was a pretence by those in power that there was no abuse happening. Yet everyone knew that it was, and those without power were not only subjected to this denial and pretence; we also were forced to **witness the abuse**. Frequently actors from the 'side' in charge would scream at or shame very directly and personally actors who had tried to shift the power dynamics, to interject new ideas, or to suggest that the process itself be made more 'democratic' (comments which were received with particular vitriol).

What I want to flag here is that within the context of these official meetings, a space supposedly characterised by inclusiveness and consensus, those of us not in control – that is, we were not from the organisation hosting the meeting, we did not chair the meetings, and we had no say in the agenda nor how it was discussed or implemented – not only saw the most

egregious abuses of power, we also **had many feelings** about these abuses, including the sadness, fear, shame, and sense of powerlessness one experiences while watching someone else be abused.⁹ In addition, the fact that I did not know the other attendees of the OC meetings at the beginning of the process in January and February 2004 meant that I was also alone with my feelings. I was informing Spirit Matters, as well as other members of an editorial collective I am part of (for a London-based magazine called *Mute*), about what was happening at the UK-ESF OC meetings, and I felt some sense of duty as a kind of reporter. But as the weeks went on, I increasingly dreaded each Thursday night meeting. Now I can see that I dreaded re-experiencing the sense of powerlessness, the frustration, and the grief and shame of watching abusive treatment go on unabated (and actually worsen each meeting). There was also a sense that surely, this abusive atmosphere would change, and every week I entertained some hope that perhaps it would, this time, be different. It never was. Nonetheless, I carried on going, and took copious and detailed notes, not really sure why I was doing so nor what purpose the notes might serve.

II

Abuse and Affect

When the Horizontals came to town ...

After several weekly OC meetings, the European Assembly (EA) took place over the weekend of March 6-7 2004.¹⁰ Just before this, I was surfing the Web and came across the documents of the 'horizontal', who were calling a gathering on the Friday night preceding the Assembly for everyone interested in trying to make the organising process more democratic.¹¹ I went along, and the attendance of over fifty people, many from continental Europe, as well as their passion, gave me hope for the first time since I had joined the organising process. This meeting itself did not run entirely smoothly, as there was so much to be decided about how to intervene during the Assembly that people became anxious. The man who had volunteered to chair the meeting became overwhelmed with the massive requests for speaking, and began to be short with some people and to cut them off abruptly (including me at one point). Many people directed their questions at me, as I had attended most of the OC meetings, and I sought to give them enough information with which to make their suggestions and decisions. The chairperson started rolling his hands, indicating 'wrap up' to me, when I was speaking. I felt hurt and shamed (being restimulated to school and other past incidents). But what was wonderful was that, unlike in the official ESF organising process, I was able to speak with him after the meeting, and not only did we connect, he apologised for his behaviour and I was able to detach from my earlier feeling of taking it personally, and even to laugh about it.

To describe the role of humour in making it through this experience of being part of the official UK-ESF organising process would require a whole essay in itself; suffice it to say that it was essential for our emotional survival. In sum, after this meeting of the horizontals, the first face-to-face meeting after exclusively virtual communication, I think most people felt what I did : Excitement, and a sense of connection, collectivity, and purpose. Despite the slight tension and the tight time frame with so much on the agenda, we had managed to come out of the meeting with a consensus to distribute two documents at the Assembly : The original 'Call for Democracy', and another short document that highlighted the abuses of power going on within the organising process and listed simple and reasonable requests for changes within it.¹²

On Saturday morning, this excitement of the horizontals was in the air. We greeted each other warmly; I felt I had 'found my people'.¹³ However, as the SWP / GLA-SA folks placed their numerous stacks of handouts on the tables, a few of us horizontals became concerned : Where were our documents ? In the midst of focusing on the content of them, had we made sure that specific people would ensure their printing and distribution ? No, we hadn't, we realised. And then all of a sudden, other horizontals arrived, documents in hand, and began to distribute

them to the ultimately two hundred-plus people who attended the Assembly (again, held at the GLA). This kind of spontaneous taking charge of things as exemplified by the way these documents materialised that morning seems a strong feature of horizontal organising processes, indicative perhaps of a sense of being empowered to **do**, rather than wait for someone else to do for you or to tell you to do. It certainly brought smiles to our faces, as we prepared for the meeting proper.

The chairing of the Saturday morning EA meeting was again autocratic, aggressive, and about as far from 'consensus' as you could get. Our plan had been to propose that 'democracy and process' should be added to the agenda – as the first item to be discussed. Two of the first five speakers seconded our suggestion, ie that issues concerning 'process' be discussed first. The chairs agreed to other recommendations for additions or changes to the agenda, but as for our proposal, they pretended it was part of the discussion of the proposal to host the ESF in the UK – in other words, part of the 'bid' that the 'Europeans' were being asked to support – and subsequently declared that it would go down as 'process' discussed with the proposal / bid, and acted as if the issue was closed.

It was at this point that I decided that I had to say something. I could not just let it go. I gathered my courage and went to the microphone to speak, thinking I was first in the queue and would be part of the next group to speak (they were taking speakers in groups of five). While I was standing at the mike, the chair seemed to pretend that I wasn't there, and announced that someone would give the welcome. I waited behind him, assuming I would be able to speak next. But again the chair announced that someone else would speak to formally present the proposal for hosting the ESF in the UK. I was hesitant, and the man (from the Tobin Tax Network, ATTAC) said to me personally, "Look, you can be the next one to speak". I was about to say okay, but I thought, *No, this is ridiculous – I want to object to the silencing of our proposal that the process / issues of democracy be discussed first.* So, I said no and insisted I be allowed to speak before him. The chair looked at me, furious, and angrily snarled, "You are occupying the microphone for ten minutes now – you are blocking the process". It had only been a minute, maybe two, but of course his tactic did not involve accuracy; it was an attempt to shame and silence me (and by extension, us, the horizontals).

I was quite taken aback, to say the least. As the next two speakers who presented the details of the proposal spoke, I stood behind them, at the front of the large room with a few hundred people seated before me, and felt on the verge of tears. I had to use all my experience of counselling and healing and tell myself that I could not cry at this moment, that I would have to get support for that later. As they went on for quite a while, I had plenty of time to regain my composure. I was allowed to be the first person to speak after these two had presented the proposal. I made it clear that it was not my intention to disrupt or block the meeting. I spoke to the issue of the facilitation of meetings, which had plagued the organising process from the start, and I mentioned that several weeks earlier some of us from my group had offered our skills as facilitators and mediators and had been told there was no structure to accept our offer but that chairs would rotate. I emphasised that this did not happen over the course of the next several weeks. I then spoke to what had just occurred – three of five speakers' proposals of changes to the agenda were agreed to by the chairs; the other two speakers' proposal to speak first about 'process' had not been agreed to by the chairs, and was just unilaterally denied its own place. The chairs objected loudly – "There was consensus !", they shouted; "Everyone agreed !". But plenty of people shouted back, "No, we didn't !", and "No, there wasn't !". So, I just said that I found it completely unacceptable that chairs could railroad through however they desired and that what I saw was not consensus in any fashion, and I requested that they define 'consensus' as it would be applied at this gathering.

The rest of the morning people continued to speak not only to the actual proposal to

host the ESF in the UK (issues of venue, budget, accommodation, and the like), but also to the issue of process. What was so wonderful was how many people from other European countries said that our list of suggestions was reasonable and voiced support, and also how many of them spoke against the proposed registrations fees (which were quite high – £20 unwaged, for example) and which had been one of our main points of complaint.

Later that day, the SWP / ‘big union’ / GLA-SA leaders huddled together in the front of the room and finally agreed that this issue of ‘process’ deserved its own working group that afternoon. Over 50 people crowded into a room for this working group, and after some chaos and shouting and general lack of progress, someone from France suggested that each ‘side’, ‘vertical’ and ‘horizontal’, choose three people and these six would have a discussion and see what negotiation could occur. A few of the Europeans would facilitate and mediate, and we would stay on until a resolution was reached (by this time the other working group sessions had ended, and the rest of the assembly had gathered again for the closing discussion).¹⁴

We retired to our respective corners – this was becoming quite dramatic ! – and hurriedly chose our three people : Massimo De Angelis, for his knowledge of the political theorisation / contextualisation and his skill at articulating the ‘big picture’; Javier Ruiz, because of his association with Indymedia,¹⁵ and autonomous and other networks; and me, because I had been at almost all the meetings and had the knowledge of the nitty-gritty details (and the notes !). The ‘verticals’ chose Hilary Wainwright (from *Red Pepper* magazine – and it should be noted that she was one of several folks in the process who at this point wasn’t really allied with either ‘side’); Chris Nineham (who used the front group Globalise Resistance in this process but who is a very involved member of the SWP); and Peter X (about whom we knew little at the time, but later learned is a member of SA). Europeans from France and Italy in particular were facilitating. We used the ‘fishbowl’ technique, where only the nine of us (three verticals, three horizontals and three facilitators) who were in the inner circle could speak, with any observers welcome and around us in another circle. We agreed to start with ‘their’ document and to go through each point.¹⁶

We had got through only a few points, agreeing on changes and additions, when a GLA representative came in and said they would be locking the building in ten minutes – we had to leave the room. We were determined to carry on and decided to find a nearby pub or restaurant to do so. The search for this venue itself was hilarious, and I thought would have been good for inclusion in a video of this whole crazy process. After much wandering, we found an Italian restaurant down the way from Tower Bridge, and dug in again, the nine of us at a table, with observers all around us.

We managed to go through the whole document and agree to additions, deletions, and rewordings. There were compromises on both sides, as well as discoveries of many places of mutual agreement. We were honest about our concerns and insisted that they be kept on the table. There was, for the first time, genuine dialogue between folks from the ‘sides’ who had been in conflict with each other for so long. From the people ‘representing’ the Organising Committee at this meeting, there was acknowledgment of all the problems, such as negative facilitation of meetings, lack of communication, etc. With the exception of the recalcitrant Peter X, we both heard each other about many important issues. We spoke honestly and openly about our fears and concerns. Given the dynamics that occurred earlier in the day, it was pretty amazing.

After a few hours, we had finished going through the UK-ESF organising document. There was not enough time then to address our document of short points, but we agreed mutually that someone from ‘our’ team would stand up the next day at the European Assembly with ‘their’ document, present the changes to the audience, and voice support for these changes. Then someone from their ‘team’ would stand up and say that they supported the

spirit, of our (other, longer) document, 'A Call for Democracy in the ESF process'. The two people chosen to do this were Chris Nineham and Javier Ruiz.

We felt such a sense of relief and excitement. Only then and in later discussions that night was it revealed to us that they had actually thought that our intention was to make sure that the ESF did not happen in the UK, and that we had come to block the whole process. This was their fear, and it indicates how much fear distorts : They were not hearing us accurately for a long while, and they chaired meetings etc from the place of this fear. So they actually seemed shocked when they realised we did **not** want to sabotage the process, but only to increase the democratic and inclusive character of its organisation.

The energy after this smaller process group meeting was incredible : People who had been yelling at, or furious with, each other only hours before were walking along the riverfront hugging each other. 'Mixed' groups of both horizontals and verticals (as well as those located more in-between these two positions) retired to another pub and another restaurant, sharing with others the 'good news' of this breakthrough. Then, across 'sides' and various affiliations or political investments, we were able to have some real exchanges about details of how we would proceed. I left feeling astonished at the turn of events, quite positive, but, I felt, not in a naïve sense. Hopeful, for the first time since I became involved. I also felt proud to have been a part of this collective effort by the horizontals – we pooled our knowledges, resources, thinking, suggestions, and energies, and it worked. I appreciated all of the work done behind the scenes to get us to that point : The creation of web sites; the attendance of meetings; the thinking about language, proposals, and strategies; the booking of rooms; and the arrangement of accommodation. It seemed a truly collective and collaborative effort.

I was not able to attend the EA on Sunday, as I was leading a long-planned workshop elsewhere on that day ('Emotional Support for Activists', for some of the leaders of a London group that works to support the non-violent resistance in Palestine). Actually, this workshop also provided the only space for me to release my emotions around the ESF organising process. The tradition in which I am trained, Re-evaluation Counselling, promotes the idea that everyone has distress and that leaders are facilitators who also need support for emotional healing.¹⁷ Thus, at groups and workshops, the leader also takes a turn for a 'session', as I did that Sunday. In my twenty-minute session, I went back to the previous day's experience, remembering that moment when the chair yelled at me and the rest, and I was able to release much grief, fear, and anger (through crying, shaking, and sweating, respectively). After releasing some feelings, I recalled a woman in the front (someone I didn't know) who had shouted, "We don't want to hear you !". This memory, especially, brought up much shame and many tears. At the end of my session, I'd cleared much of what had been restimulated. Some of the activists at this workshop indicated their appreciation for my willingness to 'show myself' and my struggles with feelings around tensions in activist circles. Indeed, I believe we need many more spaces like this in which to acknowledge, release, and process the hurts that get restimulated during social change efforts, and one reason for writing this piece is to open a space that places value on the affective experiences including trauma that might be encountered in activist practice.

I was told that at Sunday's meeting of the EA, Javier and Chris expressed their support for each group's document (as described above), and the amendments to the proposal for the UK Organising Committee to host the ESF in London which were read out to the assembly (ie the changes we had so laboured over the previous evening) were accepted. Javier and Chris hugged. Amazingly, Javier was asked to be one of the facilitators of the meeting that afternoon. While we were clear that it was just a start, a first step in what would have to be an ongoing process, we felt this negotiation was significant. Most of what we achieved addressed the meta-level of process, for example, language about a 'spirit of trust' and 'an atmosphere of mutual respect', or the meta-level of inclusion, for example, language of 'networks' and 'local

Social Forums' being added to organisations as participants in this ESF organising process and the event itself. There were many specific items and issues that remained to be addressed, and the 'spirit of trust' and real consensus had yet to be created and implemented. But I and many other horizontals felt that enough progress and real dialogue had occurred that we could recommend wholeheartedly that folks from all backgrounds, including those who were previously excluded from the non-democratic nature of this process, could jump on board and become involved with the UK-ESF organisation. Indeed, in an email to the 'democratise the ESF' e-list, I urged others to join working groups, attend meetings, post ideas, and reach out to other groups.

When I re-read what I so passionately expressed (and believed) at the time in this email, I feel sad and somewhat angry. Disappointment, and some sense of regret, not to mention the resurrection of that internalised critical voice saying : *You should've known better than to trust them*. This is what abuse and a betrayal of trust does; it makes one doubt oneself, and feel 'stupid' for being conciliatory and trusting. However, from the space outside these feelings, I can also observe that : First, we (the horizontals) did not have enough information at this point to realise what was likely to happen; second, given this, it made sense to try to reach out and work through things with the 'vertical' folks; and third, there was another dynamic to the power structure that came through much more forcefully after this experience and which was largely responsible for the continuation of abuse and lack of democratic process : Namely, the entrenched position and power of the rigid, secretive, and hostile members of the Socialist Action 'party', linked to the Mayor and the GLA.

Dashed Hopes and More Abuses of Power

In the meantime, given the information we had and what we had experienced, we found ourselves feeling hopeful, positive, and eager to move forward. We envisioned being able to work within the structures of the process more successfully after the Assembly experience, and we also sought to bring in more people with horizontal leanings to support one another at these meetings.

The reality starkly contrasted with our expectations.¹⁸ From the time of the 'breakthrough', the SWP-SA alliance was already swinging into action, and working hard to prevent any real changes being introduced into their plans, or into their way of organising (which for them, went hand in hand). Over the next few weeks, several of us attended not only the OC but also the weekly Co-ordinating Committee (CC) meetings, and meetings of all the working groups. What we discovered was that the CC – unlike what had been proposed (namely that it would be a committee to co-ordinate tasks, such as phone calls, between the then weekly meetings of the OC) – functioned effectively as a kind of Central Committee. It actually took away the power from the OC. Most decisions about the organising process and the ESF were made in these meetings; we saw this straightaway, which is one of the reasons we fought so hard to have the meeting time changed from 10 am on a weekday morning, which was hardly enabling of 'inclusion' for those of us who were also holding down day-jobs. In this and in every other contribution, changes were prevented from being implemented. Attending these CC meetings was like showing up for dinner, invited, but only under external pressure. And the metaphor is apt in another way, for we were, the entire time, treated as unwelcome guests. (I should add that, as became clearer over time, many SWP members were more flexible and willing to engage with us, in contrast to the incessant rigidity and hostility of the SA contingent.)

There is no way to really capture the flavour or the abusive nature of these meetings. At times, there was pretence, as we all feigned being civil and 'on the same page', while underneath the surface anger and mistrust seethed and fermented. The verticals resented our presence. We resented their control and the betrayals of promises. Members of SWP and SA

came to meetings with already agreed upon agendas, and they blocked any other ideas. They used several tactics to maintain this control and rule out other options : Dominating the chairing of meetings; refusing to add items to an agenda; putting items at the end of the agenda and never getting to them; saying a particular subcommittee was already working on something; twisting our proposals so as to frame them as asking for the opposite of what we intended; and, when all else failed, eschewing the usual condescension and patronising, and instead being directly hostile and shaming.¹⁹

There also were institutional elements that held up these strategies in ensuring control. Certainly the foremost of these was the role and involvement of the GLA. Almost every OC meeting, and all CC meetings, as well as several (usually unannounced) outreach meetings to particular constituencies, were held at the GLA. The minute-takers were GLA staff. Email was received and answered by GLA staff. A GLA staff-person, whose specialisation was not IT, was put in charge of the tender for the web site (the battle for the web site not to be given to a corporation had long been lost). Not only the central involvement of the GLA, but also the physical presence of the City Hall building that houses the GLA, were eerie to experience. For one thing, there was this sense of an odd split and conflict between the awareness on the one hand, that it is against the Charter of Principles of the WSF for political bodies to be directly involved in a Social Forum, and on the other, the feeling of being part of something exclusive and important (the work of the 'London Mayor's office and the GLA'), a feeling reinforced by the gorgeous, contemporary, and comfortable City Hall building itself. In this way, the weekly experience of undergoing the security search at the GLA mirrored this double aspect, this schizophrenia. On the one hand, one felt the **wrongness** of it all : Not only the continual reminder of the fascistic 'war on terror' that characterises the contemporary moment and the accompanying proliferation of security searches all over the west, but also in the way that security searching before an ESF organising meeting acted as a reminder that the GLA should not have been involved at all – and it certainly should not have become the de facto Central HQ for organising the ESF, which it was for months. On the other hand, undergoing the security search was part of the ritual, part of feeling included and even perhaps 'important', and as everyone went through it, occasionally a moment that levelled the 'horizontal-vertical' separation. For me personally, being searched was a moment to gather myself, to try to retain some sense of hope and empowerment regarding the meeting ahead, and to try to remember everything we wanted to address that day.

What happened between the first weekend of March 2004 and the end of May 2004, which signalled the end of my involvement with the UK-ESF organising process ? Accounts more detailed than mine can be found on the web, for example at esf2004.net.²⁰ Suffice it to say that the transgression of 'process' – the abuse, underhandedness, secretiveness, manipulation, and even downright lying – increased dramatically.

Two other dynamics occurring during the spring of 2004 are important to consider. First, the verticals often arranged 'closed door' secret meetings with individual horizontals, which echoed the oppressive 'Central Committee' mentality that pervaded the whole process and which were blatant attempts to create divisions **within** the horizontals. Needless to say, none of these divisive tactics worked, because we shared everything with each other and increasingly experienced a vital sense of solidarity. However, as the verticals chose their 'favourites' to consult with, and worked blatantly to ostracise others (including me), we were often left with feelings reminiscent of the school playground, with its hierarchy of insiders and outsiders. In any group setting, including those within activist efforts, we must acknowledge and negotiate these feelings of 'not being liked' and of being excluded.

Second, all of the feelings that we experienced as a result of the abusive and irrational way that these meetings were conducted made it very difficult for us to continue to think

clearly. This is another dynamic that warrants consideration in activist efforts, as we need to address the emotions we experience in such situations and figure out ways to help each other retain and reclaim clear thinking.

Emotional Overload and Disaffection

Looking back, I would characterise the period between the March European Assembly and the May-June disaffection of almost all the horizontals as one of trying to keep our heads above the water. We rapidly clocked how naïve our position had been following what we perceived as the 'breakthrough' of the Assembly. We regrouped and came together to try to strategise how to work at all within the process. On the one hand, we did have many meetings in-between the official ones, starting with a meeting held during the first European Creative Forum on 10 April.²¹ All of these gatherings were characterised by much laughter and camaraderie, as well as concrete achievement. However, not only were the documents and plans that came out of these meetings blocked on every front at the 'official' organising meetings (we produced outlines for the web site structure, a list of keywords that would facilitate workshop / seminar proposal merging, proposals for norms concerning minutes, and many more documents that were all ignored or rejected), but we also found ourselves with no real outlets for the emotions that we were experiencing in this process.

In general, I noticed two responses to these abusive meeting experiences by those of us who were not in control : Bitching sessions detailing all the (admittedly pretty unbelievable) transgressions of 'democratic process' and even of dignity and respect; and, drinking copious amounts of beer at pubs (and often the two were combined). As I don't drink, I often joined in (or even initiated) the bitching – a typical way that one reaches for feeling some kind of power in a situation in which you have little. However, I was also often feeling much more than anger, and I felt there was nowhere to go with these feelings, no way to express, in a London pub, the sadness of watching people behave so cruelly, or the shame of having been forced to witness the abuse of others.

The London Social Forum did sponsor two workshops on 'Emotional Intelligence for Activists' during the spring of 2004, led by a colleague and myself. These were useful spaces for a handful of horizontal folks to receive support for our feelings around the organising process : Spaces where these feelings could be articulated, and where those who wanted could have sessions to release directly the feelings and hurts that had been restimulated by being part of organising the ESF. Yet these spaces were few and far between. People needed sustained support along these lines, and we found ourselves not only emotionally overwhelmed, but also completely overstretched in terms of time, energy, and resources just dealing with all the meetings. This feeling of being overwhelmed and overextended, which often translates into being 'burnt out', is very common for activists. It is often accompanied by difficulties in setting boundaries and maintaining balance (time for self-nurturing and the rest of 'life' as well as explicit activism), by feelings of guilt (that sense that one is never doing enough), and by feelings of urgency ('We must work hard and implement radical social change NOW !').²² I believe that we need to work together to create space and time for support in working through and releasing these feelings, as part of all our activist efforts, as well as organising Social Forums. The saturation point is different for all of us, but without the actual release of the emotions that are triggered in these situations – whether from the abusive treatment of those in control such as the SWP-SA folks in this case, or from the abusive and oppressive treatment of the police and other state forces in other instances – we become overwhelmed, feel hopeless, find it hard to think, and eventually feel that we have no other choice but to withdraw from the particular effort or process entirely.²³

This is precisely what happened when very late one night, Emma Dowling and I found ourselves entertaining an idea that up until then we had not allowed ourselves to explore.²⁴ On

April 27 2004, at two in the morning, we composed an email message over the phone and sent it out to several horizontals with whom we'd been working closely.²⁵ We asked, "Why don't we walk away?", acknowledging that we were "burnt out, overworked, frustrated, attacked, broke, and overwhelmed". That about sums it up. And where the use of the term 'broke' pointed to another key dimension of this organising process, one not at all divorced from emotional concerns, namely money. The verticals were almost all being **paid** for their participation in this organising process. Most horizontals, in contrast, were not only **not** being paid, but were spending money that we did not really have to spare (at least this was definitely my case), as the expense of travelling to meetings, having coffee, drinks, and meals before and after meetings, and printing and photocopying documents, all of which often added up to quite a lot over time. This is not to mention the 'cost' of our time and labour, which was considerable. A kind of 'class divide' was thus replicated in the very structure of the organising process itself, with the folks from big unions, the SWP, and SA (whatever the front groups of members of the latter two organisations) being externally supported, flown to meetings of the European Assembly outside the UK, and being paid for their days of attendance of the CC. Horizontals instead found ourselves at a disadvantage when it came to time and resources, a dynamic exacerbated by the key role of the GLA, whose staff, photocopying capacity, public relations machine, etc were at the disposal of the verticals 24/7. Again, this reinforced the sense that we were the unwelcome guests, poor relations who were reluctantly tolerated but were blatantly disrespected, as poor and working class people often are. (As with so many other things, this was ironic, given that many of the groups the verticals 'represented' purport to support the liberation of the 'working class' and the eradication of exploitation and poverty.)

By this time many of us noticed that the organising process had become the main topic of our dreams at night. Or, more accurately, I should say nightmares. It was an almost universal experience for the horizontals who were regularly attending meetings to have frequent nightmares about the ESF organising process. Certainly mainstream frameworks for activism don't address phenomena such as these! My interpretation would be that: One, these nightmares reflected the state of post-traumatic stress that we were in; and two, because we were not getting a chance to release any of our constantly triggered emotions – since we were not dealing with these emotions effectively in our waking lives – they came out while we slept. They were sparks of messages trying to get our attention and to let us know how deeply we were being affected, and what emotions needed to be acknowledged and released. Fear, shame, sadness, anger, and the feeling of being attacked and powerless, were some that were revealed in the themes of our nightmares.²⁶

My 'Final Straw' Moment ...

As it turned out, the 'walking away' of the horizontals didn't happen straightaway at the end of April after our email. We decided to give it another go, and geared up for the next OC meeting, set for the 16th of May. We had a plan we felt was foolproof. An agenda for the meeting was in circulation, and we met beforehand to discuss the proposals we wanted to make with regard to each issue. In particular, we intended to insist that the issue of the staffing of the office be discussed, and we were going to protest the way it had been handled thus far: There had been no open call for secondees to the office staff, and two people from SA and SWP had simply been 'appointed' by the verticals. A union / SWP member was one of the meeting's co-chairs, and he opened the meeting with a proposal that the agenda be changed, with programme concerns being addressed first, and allotted two hours. We saw this as a blatant attempt to delay addressing process and practicalities (finances, office staffing, accommodation, the nature of the legal company, the web site), and an abuse of power by the chair. He attempted to railroad this proposal through time and time again, and instead of acknowledging that there was no consensus to accept a proposed change to the agenda, a debate about it was allowed to

go on for 40 minutes. In the end, the programme was discussed anyway within the report back from the Istanbul European Assembly, and when I and others tried to raise a point of order to object to this, we were ignored and then shot down straightaway. Even three hours into the four-hour meeting, the chair continued to insist that the programme themes be discussed, despite many people's objections and requests that these be more appropriately dealt with in the Programme Working Group and elsewhere. The programme content was still being discussed with less than an hour of the meeting to go.

Any objections raised or alternative viewpoints to the verticals' proposals met not only with hostile responses, but also with a strategy that the verticals repeated numerous times throughout the organising process : Namely, a passive aggressive restating, inaccurately, of the horizontals' proposal or objection, accompanied by a false characterisation of a person's / group's position. For example, when over a third of those attending the meeting objected to the chairs proposed agenda change, Alex Callinicos (SWP / front group Project K) took the microphone and in faux lamentation mode, said, "I find it amazing that people do not want to talk about the programme ... ". Later in the meeting, he declared, "These people who constantly go on about process are in fact really wanting to get power. It is a power struggle". This accusation was of course laughable – the horizontals did not want power, but a proliferation of democratic possibilities in the organising process.²⁷ It was also a prime indication of the pot-kettle mentality that pervaded the verticals' discourse throughout. I also want to highlight the first accusation here, ie the **twisting of the objections** over giving the programme two hours of time that afternoon, into the implication that we didn't care about the programme, which was simply untrue.

Two other things occurred at this meeting that added to its elevation to surreal heights of abuses of process, and that contributed to our already great feelings of frustration. First, in cases in which there was no consensus for the verticals' proposals, the chair or another vertical would immediately call for a vote 'only by members of affiliated organisations'. This request not only violates the WSF's Charter of Principles but also goes against the agreed upon 'For a UK-ESF Organising Committee' statement hammered out at the March EA negotiation (as described above); besides, it added insult to injury, in that many organisations had not been able to affiliate at that point due to the verticals' refusal to give out information about the nature of the company that had been created to assist with the organising process and the precise legal parameters accompanying the affiliation process. (Still others had not affiliated because of financial difficulties, but where even though that, too, was against the organising statement's parameters.) This was not the first time that the verticals played what we had come to call 'the affiliation card', and we were sick and tired of this blatant discriminatory practice. The other thing that occurred was that the chair led a SWP-SA walkout at the end of the meeting. When no agreement could be reached about a slate of people who would represent the UK at the upcoming European Programme Working Group that was to meet in Paris later that month, the chair announced that the meeting was over and physically disconnected the power from the microphone, even though someone from Babels²⁸ was trying to give the report they had been promised time for.

So, there was manipulation of the order of the agenda, consensus processes were ignored, objectors and their objections were falsely characterised and then attacked, the 'affiliation card' was played, and in the end the verticals refused to stay and negotiate when some of their pet proposals were not adopted. The spirit of these actions was one of contempt, condescension, and disregard for non-vertical ideas or reasoning. There were interesting emotional responses to these dynamics, some of them overtly expressed at the meeting itself. One horizontal ended up shouting 'Fuck you !' to the chair, who at times had been directly

verbally attacking this person. There were many other instances of both verticals and horizontals swearing, but mostly at a lower volume. Nonetheless, the verticals began a smear campaign against this person over the mainstream ESF email lists, once again labelling horizontals as 'troublemakers' and righteously insisting that they could "not condone abusive behaviour" (!) at meetings. In fact, this was the first time that anger had been expressed by the horizontals in such a strong way. It can be interpreted as a standing up to the abuser(s), and many of us in the audience felt both embarrassment and relief when this indignation was (finally) expressed. 'Fuck you !' might not be the most elegant or effective language, but its rawness reflects the way it feels to be in that place of having been abused, of being falsely accused of being the abuser (classic 'blame the victim' stuff), and of simply not being able to take it anymore. There is probably much more to be thought through and theorised about the nature and role of anger in these situations; I offer this anecdote as a contribution to starting that conversation.

I came away from this May 16 2004 OC meeting with a complete sense of disgust. And I think this meeting was, for me, the final straw. Somewhere a line had been crossed; the abusive behaviour was simply too blatant, and, well, too abusive.

It was necessary for me to be out of the country in June of 2004. Once away from the ESF organising process, I felt as if a huge burden had been lifted. I felt a sense of relief, like I could breathe again. And now, looking back, I can see that this relief was precisely that of being **removed from the scene of abuse**. I also felt quite keenly that sense of 'having my life back'. And so I was relieved that upon my return to London, I had an excuse for not getting back into the organising process : I had to finish my PhD dissertation. By this time, July of 2004, the horizontals had, by and large, pulled out of the 'official' organising process entirely. A meeting of many groups, horizontals and Wombles and many others, had been called at the end of May, and folks had started working very hard at organising alternative events for the ESF. I was completely supportive of these efforts, but by July had simply run out of time and energy to contribute to these efforts, as my dissertation needed attending to. I still felt relieved, and as the ESF itself approached, I had mixed feelings. I was amazed, heartened, and quite grateful at the array of wonderful, well-planned, and politically substantive alternative events that were being announced on various email lists in the late summer and early autumn.²⁹ I felt a slight twinge of guilt, and an even greater sense of sadness that I'd been missing out on the camaraderie and energy of these collective efforts, but I was excited about attending as much of the 'alternative ESF' as I could. As the October date came closer, I discovered that, actually, I felt complete disgust and loathing for the entire official event, and I had no desire to attend it at all. It seems clear to me now that going to the official ESF felt like going to visit someone who had abused me as a child – something I wanted to avoid at all costs. I was stuck in a place of wanting to avoid, to shut down, to ignore the feelings – and the abusers – and almost pretend that the abuse did not happen. There was, to be fair, a more rational dynamic that was occurring as well : I decided that I wanted to take in the positive energy, brilliant thinking, and collective spirit of the alternative spaces. I attended many of these fantastic events, such as the Radical Theory Forum and the Life Despite Capitalism workshop, to name just two out of a plethora of alternative offerings. How much came out of the hastily organised alternative ESF events was impressive, in both the quantity of alternative events, as well as the quality (depth, interweaving of cultural and experiential elements with the analytical and political, proposals for the future, and a hell of a lot of fun and solidarity). I was inspired by what everyone who helped organise these alternative events was able to achieve; thank you to all of you.

Denying and Disavowing the Abusive Reality

I want to mention one more emotional dynamic that was part of this whole process, one that was quite insidious – denial. When the abused or powerless person / group requests

acknowledgment of the reality, the abuser refuses, continues to talk from the place of the lie, of the fantasy, pretending that everyone is really 'on the same side', disavowing by this very pretence not only the real differences in power (and in this case of politics) but also the reality of the abuse. The abused are left feeling frustration and disbelief : 'Can this person or these people really be in this much denial ?', 'Can there really be this refusal to acknowledge what is really going on ?'.

One of the ways this denial and pretence happened time and time again was in the SWP-SA invocation of the 'we' of the 'left'. This is akin to the address used by the dominant media all the time, what Stam calls "the regime of the fictive 'We' "³⁰ used, for example, by announcers in US television news. Allen explains that "the signified" of such a fictive 'We' "is usually left vague enough to cover both the addresser and the implied addressee".³¹ The result, according to Stam, is "misrecognition of mirror-like images". Like that of television newscasters, the discourse of members of elite left organisations such as the SWP and the GLA "claims to speak for us, and often does, but just as often it deprives us of the right to speak by deluding us into thinking that its own discourse is our own". Stam comments on how often television news "gives us the illusion of social harmony, the ersatz communication of a global village which is overwhelmingly white, male and corporate",³² a characterisation that ironically fits the SWP-SA-big union discourse during the entire UK-ESF organising process. Those of us who were not at all convinced of such unity in fact or in purpose were left to say constantly, "Wait a minute. 'We' are part of a different 'We' – not your 'We'. And our 'We' comes out of a completely different political context, different political goals for social change, and different ideas of how we effect social change as well".

Confronted with this denial and pretence, as well as with frequent outright lies, the abused find ourselves feeling like **we** are 'crazy'. The irrationality of the abuser(s) is thus transferred onto the victims of the abuse. This is just one of the emotional bases for the horizontals' frequent experience of feeling distraught when people not privy to the organising process expressed disbelief at our characterisations. 'Surely you must be exaggerating – it can't be that bad !', many externally located folks would say. The only response to this is first to insist, 'No, this **is** happening', and then to feel a very deep need to describe the events themselves, to document the abuse (of power, of process) in great detail, and then to acknowledge the concomitant and extremely strong **need to be believed**. This need obviously has a personal resonance, as it is difficult to deal with feelings of not being believed and heard when one has seen and experienced abuse first-hand. But at the same time this need is politically vital : For if the real dynamics are not acknowledged, analyses of the situations and decisions about response and action cannot happen, or at the very least, they will be distorted and ineffective. Nonetheless, it does put the people who make the effort to speak out about and document the abuses in the position of being defensive and almost child-like : 'Hey, really, we're not making this up !'. Add to this the incessant false characterisations of horizontals, which made the suggestions we at times got from horizontally minded folks outside the UK that we were perhaps exaggerating, distracting meetings, or complaining too much, all the more painful and exasperating. The 'blame the victim' phenomena are even more difficult to experience when it comes from potential allies.

III

The Emotional Aftermath, and Perspective

I must admit that once the ESF was over, I did retreat again. I needed to focus on my dissertation writing, it is true. But I also, mostly unconsciously, took steps to distance myself from anything related to the ESF, past or future. In fact, it was only in realising that I did still actually want to write this article I'd so delayed, that I acknowledged what was holding me back, ie all this repressed emotion. Others I've spoken to in recent weeks as I've been

composing this, and re-experiencing many of the emotions I've just described here (along with the return of the nightmares, though thankfully less frequently than last year), have agreed that the ESF organising process was a scene of abuse, and that they, too, are still in the throes of post-traumatic stress. (And whole organisations and networks, such as the London Social Forum, have had to collectively recover from the emotional devastation the ESF organising process caused.) I hope that the narratives and thoughts I've shared here are an initial step towards helping us address this post-traumatic stress and towards formulating strategies and plans to acknowledge and deal with our emotions in Social Forum processes, and in all activist efforts more generally.³³

I also note that throughout the writing of this article, I discovered big gaps in my memory. As many of these events happened quite a while ago, perhaps that does not sound surprising. However, usually I can quote exact dates and times of particular conversations and events, even years after they have occurred. I attribute this fuzziness in my memory directly to the distresses that are, for me, still attached to this whole experience. Distress makes us forget. So, the shame, dread, fear, grief, sadness, frustration, and shock that coalesced around this organising process have been dormant, repressed for months, and as a result, they have affected my memory. I believe that many of the horizontals, myself included, are still walking around in a state of post-traumatic stress. Writing this piece, documenting the abusive dynamics and the emotions that I and others typically experienced during this process, and trying to articulate these in some coherent fashion, has led me to face much that I had been avoiding. Now, I realise that the UK-ESF organising process was precisely a scene of oppression and abuse. Equally, those of us who went through it need to acknowledge what feelings and issues we are still carrying around as a result of having experienced the irrational, abusive, and hostile behaviour that pervaded the process as a means of avoiding our perpetuation of such dynamics in other contexts.

A Few Ideas on How to Proceed

My initial suggestions for what we can learn and carry forward from these experiences are :

- To incorporate an understanding of the role of emotions, and in particular the common experience of restimulation, in activist efforts.

- To set aside space and time for attention to these emotional dynamics as well as for the more practical issues and tasks.

- To work to build an activist community (or, more accurately, communities) in which we give each other support for our feelings, such as those outlined here.

- To create spaces for us to release our anger – at the exploitative society, at oppressive dynamics, at 'the state', as well as at abusive factions 'on the left' that we run up against.

- To learn about the oppression of activists and the common internalisations that result (such as feeling overwhelmed, guilty, and hopeless, and such as being out of balance in terms of how much time we devote to 'organising' in that larger sense and how much we devote to ourselves).

- Along these lines, to create a climate of encouraging us to be, individually and collectively, as nurturing to ourselves as possible. This will mean remembering to treat our bodies well (I have never smoked so many cigarettes in my life as before, after, and in between the UK-ESF organising meetings !). Giving ourselves validation, nurturing ourselves and each other, and creating spaces to release our triggered emotions will reduce self-destructive behaviours, such as excessive smoking and drinking (and lack of rest, to name another frequent struggle for many of us who engage in social change efforts). It will also help us to think more clearly, and to choose more effective actions (or non-actions, as the case may be).

I also have a sense that it would be useful to learn how to reach for the humanness underneath all the patterns that people in power display. As yet, I have not cleared enough of my despair and hopelessness around this issue, so I do not have much clear thinking to offer here. But in the longer term, I do think we will have to learn how to reach for and connect with people in positions of power more successfully. It may be that in cases that are abusive in the way that the UK-ESF organising process was, the rational thing to do is to avoid or leave that process. After all, expectations of humanness are a basis for any possibilities of negotiation, and therefore are essential for any politics to take place. But there may be other instances in which it will be possible for us to reach around the distresses of those with whom we are working to connect with the human being, and thereby move forward together more effectively.

Notes

- 1 *Eds* : This essay was earlier published in ephemera. theory & politics in organisation , Vol 5 No 2 (2005), pp 344–369; <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-2/5-2sullivan.pdf> . We thank the editors of the journal for their permission to re-publish this essay. Despite our best efforts to get in touch with the author for her permission however, and perhaps towards revising and editing her essay, we have not had a response; but given how rarely this aspect of movement is discussed (and also in such sensitive detail), given how important an issue we feel this in movement, and also on the basis of a very cordial but intense first exchange that one of us (JS) had with her on these issues during the London ESF in November 2004 – at the height of this experience - we are going ahead with this publication on the basis of the editors' permission and with our deep gratitude to the author for having written such an essay and for her trust and solidarity. *Note* : Given that we have not heard back from her, please note that the blurb given for the author in the List of Contributors, adapted from the one given with her original 2005 essay, is likely to be somewhat outdated.
- 2 For more information about Re-evaluation Counselling, see <http://www.rc.org> .
- 3 *Eds* : World Social Forum Organising Committee and World Social Forum International Council, June 2001.
- 4 *Eds* : See, for instance, Sen 2004c.
- 5 See <http://www.wombles.org.uk> .
- 6 I realise that such sentiments are immediately open to the theoretical criticism of 'essentialism'. Nevertheless, I strongly believe that we must explore, and in some cases adopt, such thoughts regarding what it means to be / become human – in the spirit of what Gayatri Spivak, in a feminist context, refers to as 'strategic essentialism' – in the endeavour to move forward in envisioning and building a non-exploitative world that values all forms of life. So I will continue with these broadly conceived ideas about the psychological dynamics from early life that appear to me to be typically involved in our emotional struggles in activist processes.
- 7 Lerner 2000.
- 8 Gordon, Griffith, Neale, and ors, January 2004.
- 9 One particular example comes to mind – of a man from Brazil, representing the World Social Forum, who was completely unacknowledged, disrespected, and treated in an entirely patronising manner at a UK-ESF OC meeting in February 2004.
- 10 *Eds* : The 'EA' is / was a particular feature of the ESF / European Social Forum process (as distinct from the WSF as a whole or social forum processes elsewhere). Rather than starting with a committee being formed to administer the process, the European process was characterised by an open assembly that in principle took all policy decisions – and to which the OC of any particular OSF was, in principle, accountable.
- 11 See : The Horizontals, February 2004, and The Horizontals, 2004; also Casalucci, De Angelis, Hodkinson, Ruiz, Sellwood, and Sullivan, March 2004 . Thanks to Teresa Hoskyns of the LSF for organising the meeting of the horizontals that preceded the March 2004 European Assembly. Also, for more information on the horizontals and regarding the debates and disagreements that emerged between the 'verticals' and the 'horizontals' in the process of organising the London ESF 2004, see papers by De Angelis, Dowling, Juris, and Tormey in ephemera. theory & politics in organisation , vol 5, no 2. *Eds* : An edited version of the paper by De Angelis also appears in a companion volume, CE4, The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds (De Angelis 2013).
- 12 In this short document, which we called 'Principles for Democracy', we proposed 10 concrete changes to the organising process : 1. Affiliation of individuals (maximum £5); 2. Working groups freely organised; 3. Individuals working in the process must participate in the decision-making process; 4. Meetings around the UK and around the EU – the timetable has to be accessible to the majority; 5. Transparency : Sending meetings to all lists and web; 6. Rotation of facilitators; 7. UK assembly / organising committee as the place where decisions are taken and individuals have equal voice in the process; 8. No more meeting in GLA; 9. Prioritising spaces for workshops and seminars at the heart of the ESF; and 10. Fees are too high !.
- 13 I admit that this might sound overly sentimental. Nevertheless, I maintain that it is important to risk this rather than to hide or feel embarrassment over these feelings. Our ability to connect with each other in these situations is precious and integral to our intent to build community and solidarity in our desire for a world beyond capitalism, exclusion and violence.
- 14 I should note at this point that I am adopting the language that was used, by everyone involved, throughout the UK-ESF

organising process – that is, calling people from outside the UK ‘the Europeans’. Being from the States, I found this language extremely strange, as in the US the UK is considered ‘European’. However, for convenience and to reflect convention, in this essay I adopt this language. At some point this distinction could be a very useful point of investigation itself, as it reveals much about the pre-existing divisions and tensions that characterised this UK-ESF organising process and event as well.

15 See www.indymedia.org.uk .

16 This document, sometimes known as the ‘Alex Gordon proposal’ after the president of the RMT who chaired several of the early meetings, was drafted on January 24 2004 and amended a few weeks later by the OC. Its full title is ‘For a UK Organising Committee to host the European Social Forum in London’.

17 The theory and practise of Re-evaluation Counselling refers to the process of ‘discharging’, the physical release of emotions, which comes in the following forms : Tears for grief; hot perspiration for anger; cold perspiration and shaking for fear; laughter for light embarrassments, light fears, and light anger; yawning for boredom and physical tension.

18 Also see : Dowling 2005.

19 *Eds* : For a directly comparable experience, see Sen 2004c, especially the full version. This is not self-promotion; unfortunately, there is all too little literature out there on the actual dynamics and experience of the organisation of social for a, and of social movement more generally; or more to the point, it would seem that those in such work record all little of their actual experience.

20 Hodgkinson and Sullivan 2004.

21 ECF, <http://ecf2004.org/Mambo/index.php> .

22 See also Sullivan 2004; 2005.

23 Or, we might become confused and overwhelmed and perhaps not realise, until quite late in the game, that it makes more sense to withdraw.

24 *Eds* : See also the related essay by Dowling, as also referred to in Note 11 above; Dowling 2005.

25 I should note that by this time, which was mid-April 2004, we had discovered that all of the lists, including the ‘democratise the ESF’ list, as well as the unofficial websites, were being monitored by the verticals. Such surveillance was not pleasant to experience and only added to the Stalinesque quality of the organising process. At any rate, because we wanted to ensure privacy, we found ourselves, reluctantly, going against the very notion of transparency that we had been calling for so fervently in the organising process, and producing internal lists with certain centrally involved horizontal folks.

26 These nightmares have returned to me as I’ve been writing this piece, revealing that I have much more to process in the wake of having participated in the official UK-ESF organising process.

27 See Gilbert 2005 .

28 The organisation of volunteer translators / interpreters, <http://www.babels.org> .

29 See <http://www.altspaces.net/> ; <http://esf2004.net/en/tiki-index.php?page=AutonomousSpaceForESF2004> .

30 Stam 1983, p 39.

31 Allen 1992, p 122.

32 Stam 1983.

33 See www.activist-trauma.net .

Differences And Conflicts In The World Social Forum In India : Towards An 'Open'
Cosmopolitanism ?
Giuseppe Caruso

Can the World Social Forum (WSF) be the beacon of global civil society¹ by contributing to build the conditions for convivial existence on our planet, based on respect, equality, justice, and non-violence ? To answer this question, I will discuss a specific case of difference in negotiation in the India WSF, held in 2004, that involved the organisers of the WSF and a member of the Indian Muslim community.

Chapter 9 of the WSF's Charter of Principles states that the WSF "will always be a forum open to pluralism and to (...) the diversity of genders, ethnicities, cultures, generations and physical capacities". This statement is a purely descriptive one, acknowledging variation within the Forum but relatively silent about the conflictual dynamics, and power and structural imbalances between genders, ethnicities, and cultures within and outside the Forum. For this reason, in the Indian discourse around the WSF, the word "difference",² recognition of the political implications of variance, replaced "diversity".³

However, I will maintain here that a consciousness of the relevance and necessity of political action in order to commensurate differences⁴ and negotiate conflicts were not always fully instantiated in the organisational process of the 2004 WSF. A key organiser of this WSF commented on the difficulties the organisers encountered in dealing with difference : "We haven't learnt to deal with differences, we just have forgotten them. This is not only a political problem it has also organisational repercussions. To overcome these problems we need to fix an appropriate institutional set up for the future endeavours of the WSF India". The core organisers fully acknowledged that "the WSF process has suppressed differences, not created dynamics and space. It was not reconciliation but suppression of differences that made us able to organise the WSF". This situation has pushed away "many valuable people from the WSF".⁵

There was a clear recognition of the problem of radical differences and their difficult negotiations. However, there was also awareness that, as someone stated, "almost all the differences" managed to work together and only in few cases was fracture unavoidable; this, however, is inevitable in processes of the WSF's size. We have to accept, they insisted, that "there is no solution to some kinds of differences, and we have to learn to live with them". A member of the Venue and Logistics group made a concrete proposal : As differences are part of the WSF, "our task is to design specific norms of functioning that help address [the conflicts witnessed during the 2004 WSF]".

From the realisation that important lacunae were present in the organisational structure of the Indian WSF, the evaluation moved towards the political implication of the selective and less than inclusive mobilisation for it. The mobilisation of Indian minorities was very weak : As examples, it did not reach Muslims, the physically challenged, or working children. In particular, about the mobilisation of Muslims, it was suggested that this was simply not possible if pledging coherence with the Charter, according to which the WSF is a secular space. However, important ambiguities were exposed by a paradoxical situation, the implications of which are discussed below : The membership of a Catholic nun in the WSF's India Organising Committee (IOC).

Difference within the WSF is enormous and its instantiations are often hard to negotiate. If a meaningful negotiation is not possible, Correa Leite⁶ suggests it is necessary to find ways to "manage" these differences. Sen describes the India WSF's approach to mediation,

articulation, and management of differences as politically inconsistent with the Forum's principles. In Sen's words, "instead of respecting the differences, the debate went suddenly into a kind of 'international cosmopolitanism' that everyone felt everyone else would understand, but in this case it was not a higher level of discourse but in fact a kind of lowest common denominator".⁷ This reduction to the lowest common denominator proved tactically successful for the organisational process of the WSF, but it may turn negative if it does not evolve into a strategic approach towards difference negotiation. Moreover, the WSF needs to challenge the set of a priori universal values on which it built its vision of a cosmopolitan world, and engage in negotiating a new set of universals to be built through communication and based on daily political practices.

I

Some Background

The stress on differences in the WSF⁸ follows a trend initiated in the 60s by social movements in Europe and North America. Fraser⁹ analysed the shift from claims to social equality (traditional leftist movements) to claims to group difference ("new social movements"). The elaboration and radicalisation of the concepts behind this shift produced the conditions for what were later widely perceived as the biggest shortcomings of those movements : Cultural incommensurability and political fragmentation. Culture and difference came to be understood as discrete, perfectly bounded, and internally homogeneous, romanticising group identity and specificity, and generating what later became the multicultural turn¹⁰ that, if celebrating differences, understood them as patches of a mosaic made of distinct and separated units. The reaction against Marxist class struggle, and the subordination of all struggles to it, made the political use of culture increasingly prevalent, which resulted in the political fragmentation and general disbandment of progressive movements in the 80s and 90s.

The focus on culture, identity, and ethnicity¹¹ became increasingly extreme, to the point that Derrida¹² denied that categories (ethnicity, in this case) defining difference have any intrinsic content but are simply defined in opposition to other categories. If, on one side, such stress on political conflict is illuminating, the erosion of content from identities simply makes them all morally equivalent (killer and killed, oppressor and oppressed, etc.).¹³

In the debate around the WSF some of the terms of the debate discussed above were explored by Santos¹⁴ who warned about the divisive potential of identity and difference. His main concern refers to the atomisation and fragmentation (the dark side of diversity and multiplicity) of the counter-hegemonic actor whom the WSF is animating within world politics. The present case study exposes the limitations of the WSF, which tends to swerve between universalism, fundamentalism, romanticism, radical relativism, and liberal cosmopolitanism, when it should be exploring, beyond a priori frameworks, the strong political potentialities of this gathering of actors from so many walks of life. I suggest, below, that the legacy of the feminist movement of the past 40 years could constitute a fundamental tool for the WSF in this regard; yet, it does not seem prepared to take full advantage of the successes and mistakes of a movement so fundamentally engaged in extricating the limitations and potentialities of difference.

I do not have the space here to explore in detail the potential contributions of feminist literature to the WSF; I will simply hint at the extraordinary critical opportunities that that debate could provide. Ray and Korteveg,¹⁵ for instance, analyse the main strategic mistakes of the feminist movement with respect to diversity and difference. If unity in diversity has always been the slogan of the WSF, I ask what unity and defined by whom ? The unity is in the oppression by neoliberal globalisation, and the diversity, as mentioned earlier, the descriptive categorisation of variance within the WSF. This approach is not politically satisfactory because it does not explore systemic and structural imbalances of power between diverse actors. As in the

feminist movement, the global solidarity movement tends to imagine average needy people, the poor, usually possessing scarce understanding of the causes of their condition and, amongst those with some knowledge of causes and alternative possibilities, without the strategic tools to achieve these. The sophisticated activist, but rarely 'the poor' of the South, possesses knowledge of the 'big picture'. In the feminist movement, as in the WSF, the analytical difference, proposed by Molyneux,¹⁶ between strategic and practical interests (strongly criticised by Barring and Alvarez)¹⁷ seems to prevail. This attitude contributed to the fragmentation of the feminist movement, encompassing the adoption of the veil by Muslim women torn between their cultural identity as Muslim and their identity as women;¹⁸ and the rejection by Latin America women of the feminist¹⁹ to escape such rigid distinctions as between feminine and feminist, or strategic and practical.

In the WSF this attitude translated into the practical use of the difference discourse, with positive, universalistic, secular, and ethnocentric connotations to organise the 2004 WSF, and the refusal to imagine negotiated strategic solutions for dealing with political and structural imbalances of power. Feminist literature has produced a set of sophisticated analyses which could give the WSF the necessary critical tools to build its ideal of strategic unity beyond the socialist / post-socialist debate discussed above. A reified use of notions of difference can be observed in the WSF outcome – not in the daily practices of the movement but as a universal a priori imposed by hegemonic activists. The ontological difference on which the WSF wants to build itself has pernicious consequences when applied to issues of secularism and religion, as observed often in the WSF and particularly in the WSF in India, a country torn by religious sectarianism, to which the western secular solution cannot be imposed but must be practiced by local activists based not only of their relations with western activists, but on their daily experimentation with discourses and practices in their local realities. As Vargas explains,²⁰ to achieve the political objectives shared by the activists of the WSF it is necessary to politicise, not reify, difference, so as to use the difference as a weapon against neoliberal capitalism. The WSF, she claims, is a space where difference can be meaningfully politicised. I will explore, below, how and if this politicisation is really taking place; or if, instead, the WSF is witnessing a consistent process of de-politicisation.

II

Religion, Secularism, and the WSF

The debate on religion and secularism is among the most controversial in the WSF.²¹ According to the Charter, the WSF is a non-confessional space. Critics of the WSF have thoroughly addressed the failures of religious dogmatism but, according to Daulatzai, not enough rigour had been devoted to a discussion of the "limits and incongruities of secularistic politics".²² She observes how secularistic politics is unethical and exclusionary, imposing on believers an extremely rigid "mode of political being".²³ She concludes that the WSF has to be "particularly vigilant about the creation of a space that might nurture the becoming of subjected peoples. The space must allow, on equal footing, for the various possibilities of life and ways of inhabiting the world".²⁴

Before engaging with the issues raised by the case study, I will provide some details on the circumstances in which the conflict took place. Khan describes the general atmosphere which welcomed her and some of her Muslim friends at the forums : "The integration is by no means seamless – there are moments of discomfort with the clothes, appearance, demeanour and slogans of the Muslim organisations".²⁵ Ramadan adds to this discomfort a caustic analysis :

What is nevertheless astonishing is the near total absence of serious consideration of cultural and religious diversity, outside the usual conventional talk which reminds us of the so-called "duty of tolerance". [r]eady to fight for social justice but at the same time so confident and sometimes arrogant as to assume the right to dictate a

universal set of values for everyone... the 'alter'-globalisers continue to cultivate too many prejudices. Convinced that they are progressive, they give themselves the arbitrary right to proclaim the definitively reactionary nature of religions, and if liberation theology has contradicted this conclusion, the possibility that Islam could engender resistance is not even imagined... unless it's to modernity. In the end, only a handful of 'Muslims-who-think-like us' are accepted, while the others are denied the possibility of being genuinely progressive fighters armed with their own set of values : by doing this, the dialogue with Islam is transformed into an interactive monologue which massages 'our ideological certainties' just as Huntington wanted to ensure 'our strategic interests'.²⁶

It was in this atmosphere that the conflict between Ahmed (all names are fictitious), a member of the Indian Muslim community, and some of the organisers of the WSF occurred. Ahmed denounced how the WSF was consistently reproducing the systemic economic, political, and social exclusion of which Muslims, Adivasis, and Dalits are victims in India, while three members of the IOC tried to negotiate the conflict in a rather uncoordinated manner. The three intertwining negotiations of the conflict ignited by Ahmed constituted three landmarks in the possible range of communicative acts during conflicts : Incommensurability, empathic recognition, and mediation. The examination of these three communication strategies highlighted that the conflict escalated because of the de-politicised assessment of the issues at stake, and of the nature and specificities of the context in which it took place. Once it exploded, the lack of a coherent conflict-management strategy precipitated the conflict into the frustrating field of incommensurability instead of, as it might have, constituting a learning experience.

The openness of the WSF is challenged by events like this, and by organisational practices for negotiating conflicts created both within its framework, and with the 'outside' (against which the WSF's 'openness' has to be measured). Moreover, if the organiser's lack of experience explains some shortcomings, a coherent strategy to learn from experience has not yet been established. The learning process experienced by the IOC with reference to practices of inclusion and the politics of differences negotiation, as often noted by IOC members themselves, was built on a series of incidents like the one discussed here, which exposed a lack of shared, openly negotiated, and proactive practices for including minorities and marginalised groups.

III

The Facts

On November 26 2003, Ahmed sent a letter to many addresses of the organisational structure of the 2004 WSF, containing a detailed list of the issues raised by the exclusion of minorities from the WSF.

In this emotional but sharp letter, Ahmed reports his concerns about how the 2004 WSF was being run. The author recalls the importance of a process like the WSF taking place in India, challenging a social and political system hijacked by the extreme Hindu right wing. With this reference to recent, bloody communal conflicts in India, Ahmed sets the scenario in which the WSF will take place and expresses hope for a progressive movement that could help negotiate hateful communal conflicts. That said, Ahmed wonders why the WSF, though stressing the necessity for positive negotiations of conflicts among different communities and cultural groups, has in fact excluded them through the non-inclusive politics of its organisers. No attempt, reports Ahmed, has been made to contact Muslim activists; though getting closer to the vibrant reality of resistance to the exacerbation of communal politics could have been an invaluable contribution to the WSF process.

Do the organisers of the WSF realise, he asked, the consequences of the exclusion of Muslims from the WSF process ? To stress the magnitude of the mistake and injustice, Ahmed summarises the main features of the global context for Muslim people. Muslims, he says, are among the most affected by the imperialism clearly expressed in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in the Palestinian conflict. The imperialism that is fought passionately by the

people of the WSF, that constitutes the core of its activities, also affects Indian Muslims who should share the scrutiny that the world and the WSF are dedicating to the resounding questions of Iraq, Palestine, and Afghanistan. It is inexplicable why the Muslims of the country where the WSF will take place are being left out of the organisational process.

Ahmed warns that excluded people may resort to any means to make themselves heard. A powerful reference to the “misguided ones” brings to mind the frequent terrorist actions in India and elsewhere. And while the threats and acts of these “misguided ones” are condemned from all sides, and while the reasons for their acts are so thoroughly debated by WSF organisers, how is it possible to deny the Muslim minority a crucial space in which to voice their concerns and demand their rights? They are acting, he states, like the imperialists they fight by denying access to a democratic space to Muslims in which to voice their grievances. Ahmed warns the WSF organisers that whilst Muslims remain in ghettos, “preys for the fascist predators”, there will be no solution to communal conflicts in India, and that the actions of the organisers of the WSF lack full legitimacy because they are earning international prestige from the sufferings of oppressed people while “bargaining their rights [of the oppressed people] at their [the organisers’] own conditions”.

The three responses to Ahmed’s letter, written by members of the IOC, express three very different possibilities for negotiating conflicts in an open institutional set-up such as the WSF. Each reaction also raises important questions about the strategies for negotiating differences used by the IOC. The articulation of these different strategies by these members of the IOC acts as an unintentional but concerted effort to convince Ahmed of the plurality of sensibilities within the WSF and, perhaps, of the prevalence of more sympathetic positions towards his cause.

Maria is the first to answer Ahmed’s email. She invites Ahmed to a meeting of the Voice of the Minorities (VOTM) group that she leads. Their main concern is justice and they meet regularly to strategise actions that will allow a voice to people deprived of this fundamental right. Theirs is a “positive” approach that avoids discussing the injustices perpetrated on all Indian communities, but reflects on what every community can contribute to improve the state of things. She points out that the “WSF is an open process” into which everyone can just step in. The incommensurability of the VOTM with Ahmed’s views is manifest. Ahmed is not condemning injustice and massacres perpetrated on all communities but on the Muslim community. Maria’s argument is not sustainable in this context. Her positive approach avoids confrontation where confrontation is needed to expose systemic domination. This is Ahmed’s position: No acceptance of things as they are will ever help to move to a condition where all communities respect each other and live, as she says, “in peace, harmony, justice and equality”.

A fundamental, irreconcilable difference between the two positions is evident. The conversation between Maria and Ahmed exemplifies a clear case of failed communication, due to incommensurability between the languages of the two actors and the consequent impossibility of translating one into the other, making any negotiation of their different positions impossible.

Another IOC member, Mamta, wrote an email that produced the opposite effect. In her letter Mamta first opposes the “rational” approach to injustice proposed by Maria and expresses full solidarity with Ahmed’s cry against exclusion. She maintains that defining Ahmed’s reaction as “emotional” (as Maria did) is a way to just “brush aside the whole issue”, relegating to the realm of the irrational a crucial political illness in India. She then adds a few remarks on the terrible mistake constituted by not understanding that when the private aspect of religion turns into ideology, it needs to be dealt with in a political way. Exclusion must be politically addressed with special sensibility and understanding of its social and political roots. Her suggestion is that there needs to be “a conscious space for excluded communities within

[the] WSF” or else the WSF will fall in contradiction.

Mamta’s language expresses a vision that is fully commensurable (at least so far) with Ahmed’s. Moreover, it is clear here that the condition of commensurability (a common ground that allows for successful communication) is their shared political approach to injustice and exclusion (exposing the power dynamics between communities and individuals that create injustice and exclusion). Maria’s language, on the other hand, moves away from a political approach towards an ecumenical and universalistic approach, according to which it is time for all the people of the world to join hands to create a better and more just world. Mamta, instead, embraced and expands Ahmed’s position using the same language as him.

Ahmed’s reaction is enthusiastic. On December 11 he writes : “In times of plague, the plague of fascism, voices like yours make me feel proud of my country. Such voices indeed are the soul of our Rainbow Country”. The email reflects the complete success of the communication performed. At the same time, it could be argued that, in reality, no coordinated effort is negotiated to make their position heard and their conditions addressed.

One last member of the IOC made an intervention in this exchange. As the debate between Ahmed and Maria risked embarrassing the WSF, Deepa foresaw the dangers and decided to write to the IOC and Ahmed clarifying that Maria’s position was personal and did not reflect the positions of the WSF.

She, like many others in the IOC, strongly feels that communalism cannot be dealt with “from an interfaith standpoint”. Further, Deepa writes that communalism as well as globalisation is the WSF’s main focus, on which the organisations participating to the WSF will try and build unity so he can expect something good out of the Forum. Deepa’s letter does not directly address Ahmed’s concerns. However, there is clearly a strong energy in her words when pointing out the main causes for the failed communication between Ahmed and Maria. Let us list them here :

Exclusion does create pain and passionate emotions. These emotions are the key motivations to act for change.

The WSF process has some shortcomings due to its newness as a global political process. Its open organisational architecture allows anyone to join. Ahmed should take this opportunity rather than criticise the WSF from the outside.

Deepa stresses the openness of the WSF and she indicates a practical way in which Ahmed can join in : She provides the contact details of the person in charge of mobilisation in Ahmed’s state. She invites him to contact him and contribute to the mobilisation efforts of the WSF. She mentions the Indian WSF’s website as a source of information on the organisational process, and the newsletter.

Her tone is authoritative both in denying that Maria represents the approach of the “whole” WSF and in showing a way for Ahmed’s full inclusion into the WSF process. However, she does not mention the politics of excluding the Muslim community, and indeed her communication does not constitute a fully satisfying response to Ahmed’s denunciation of the IOC’s elitism and exclusiveness. Deepa’s reference to the openness of the WSF process, along with a clear recognition of the limitations of this openness due to the difficulties of fine-tuning a political device so new to the Indian context; the offering of clear and detailed information on the IOC’s daily operations; and the acceptance of the main stands in Ahmed’s *j’accuse* (giving it full legitimacy) create the grounds for the commensurability necessary for communication. Deepa’s response not only has a crucial importance in this case but, more generally, describes the conditions necessary for any successful conflict-management strategy and, in a broader sense, the conditions of openness in the WSF as a global political environment, founded on the praise of the differences that constitute it.

IV

Ahmed's Return

In the same precise manner as the first, Ahmed second letter proposes his analysis of the reasons for the exclusion of Muslims from Indian social, political, and economic life. He explores the dynamics of this "process of exclusion" which, he argues, leads to the "systemic exclusion" of Muslims in general. He argues that the WSF is part of the process that excludes Muslims from public life and by consolidating this exclusion on a daily basis makes it so embedded in society so that it becomes systemic. He is not discussing a "calculated exclusion" that can be easily exposed and fought; instead he argues that Muslims are "systematically" excluded from education, government employment, the private sector, and every sector of Indian public life. The opportunity for a constructive encounter between the realities of the exclusion of Muslim "ghettoes" and the WSF organisers has been missed because the "managers" of the WSF never tried proactively to cross that bridge. This irresponsible behaviour risks justifying further expressions of hatred and revolt voiced by "some uneducated religious leaders" : If space for Muslims is not made in progressive arenas such as the WSF, they will find themselves forced to associate in less progressive spaces to fight their marginalisation

His detailed email on the systematic exclusion of his community fails to generate any improvement in the conversation with Maria, who again reacts hastily, inviting him to join the VOTM and not consider too emotionally the questions he was raising. Ahmed, then, lets his emotions flow onto the virtual page.

Justice is the focus of his argument. He is not claiming spaces for Muslims as such, but for Muslims as human beings, for Muslims as citizens; citizens who are denied their basic rights. He claims the right to those emotions that move to action, the same emotions that are supposedly moving the organisers of the WSF to fight for another world. He is not claiming the right for himself to participate in the WSF, and he is not ready to accept an invitation as a consolation. Why should he help in reaching out to the Muslim community ? Why has he been asked to become a member only because he has voiced a clear discomfort with the practices of the WSF ? Shouldn't they be the first to want the inclusion of those who are most affected by the injustices of Indian society ? Is Maria really thinking of solving the fundamental question of the exclusion of entire communities (and here he mentions the Adivasis and the Dalits, indicating the wider repercussions of his argument) by inviting him to the VOTM group meeting ?

He replied to Deepa as well. The WSF was claiming to work for another world and yet is not as inclusive as it claims to be. He does not want to be quiet when a great event organised to claim the rights of the minorities is hijacked by a group of professional "careerists". He writes that "the WSF has been shaped as a mechanism to deflect the radical attacks on the globalisation project. The legacy of Seattle's successful resistance has already been lost". He does not accuse Deepa of being part of this "tricky game". He is actually sure that she will be one of those who will take part in the WSF with a strong commitment and resolution to "resist imperialism". However, he advises her not to fall prey to those who "would play to pawn resistance and to co-opt dissenting sections". Here, although agreement has not been reached, the conversation has allowed a successful non-confrontational exchange of opinions. The goal of the WSF (to create a favourable environment for successful communication) has been fully realised through Deepa's communication strategy.

V

How Incommensurability can be made Commensurable

The discussion of the practices used to recompose the incommensurability between Ahmed and the 2004 WSF preformed by Deepa introduces this discussion on the practices of commensuration relevant to the WSF. I will argue that although the WSF envisages very

important goals no consistent guidelines for conflict resolution have yet been elaborated, leaving this crucial activity to contingency, improvisation, and individual sensibility. Although generically considered a pluralistic and democratic approach, this too often creates fractures that cannot be recomposed, and the loss of fundamental creative energies.

Incommensurability is understood here as the lack in two or more entities of common elements on which to make a comparison. The necessity to make comparisons in communicative acts derives from the need to 'translate' the utterances of the other into meanings that make sense to the listener, and on that basis formulate, as a response, a statement in a code that can be processed by the interlocutor. This is necessary to ensure the possibility of exchanging information between interlocutors. It is commonly accepted that although some sense is lost in every human communication it is still possible to ground communication on a shared set of conventions that make it possible to exchange information between two or more actors.²⁷ The conventions are established at the level of the actual language used, and beyond that at the level of the cultural codes of the interlocutors. In the case we are discussing here, it is evident that sharing the conventions of the English language did not necessarily allow for successful communication, especially between Ahmed and Maria. The cultural codes processed by the people in the case study are based on principles and values that do not admit common operations.

Their positions are maintained throughout the exchange; no attempt is made by the speakers to understand the other according to his or her principles, and to modify their code accordingly. Ahmed believes that it is inconceivable that the people organising an event to design a better world should not involve members of those minorities that suffer most in the present world. Maria considers it inconceivable that someone who complains about exclusion does not accept reiterated invitations to participate in the organisational process. Philosophers of language have long studied the nature of incommensurability in communication.²⁸ Davidson notes the radical differences that separate cultures and individuals, and suggests that communication can occur between radically different subjects if informed by the principle of charity.²⁹ According to this principle, the actors engaging in a conversation should constantly adjust their meanings to those of their interlocutors, acknowledging some consistent principle of rationality that informs their linguistic acts. This practice gives rise to a charitable negotiation of meanings, leading to successful communication (although not necessarily to full understanding of the other). The opposite of the charitable linguistic approach is the performative linguistic act³⁰ of information dissemination observable, *inter alia*, in international relations (propaganda) and political campaigning.

Influential works by Gramsci on hegemony and by Foucault on power demonstrate how to move from the semantico-logical level discussed by Davidson to the social level, in order to include political reasons in the dissemination and communication of meanings.³¹ A recursive process involving both linguistic and social components will enable us to understand how social agency and structures determine linguistic and cultural meanings, thus establishing standards for commensurability (inclusion) and incommensurability (exclusion). It is legitimate, on these grounds, to suggest that the universalising project of the WSF is based on a hegemonic programme of global commensuration as expressed in Deepa's conflict-management strategy.

In a globalised world (including an alternatively globalised world), commensuration must be universal to allow all individuals on the planet to engage successfully in communication and conflict resolution. Attempts at universal commensuration have been repeated through the ages, usually at the point of the sword. Other attempts to commensurate particular local values with general universal theories were made by theorists such as Marx and Weber, to mention just two influential Western names. Marx's analysis of the processes of commoditisation and Weber's analysis of bureaucratisation help us understand the mechanisms of the hegemonic

practices that purport to set standards for universal commensuration. Gramsci and Foucault, on the other hand, provide us with powerful instruments to understand the dynamics of commensuration not based on the force but on mechanisms of co-option and encompassment.

In the case discussed in this paper, we observe one possible expression of the hegemonic practices at play within the WSF, along with their *modus operandi*, as Deepa exercises hegemonic power to commensurate what has been developed by the WSF. In her correspondence with Maria and Ahmed, she sets the rules of communication both within the WSF and between members of the WSF and outsiders. The terms include an 'open space', accepting the existence of radical differences, the inadequacy of the interfaith approach to communalism, acknowledgment of the role of emotion so long as it is combined with commitment in action for social change, and the need to offer to the outsiders a view that reflects the positions of the IOC as a whole. Thus, the rules of legal communication within the WSF are not natural. They are imposed through deliberate operations to commensurate incommensurables and create standards for conflict negotiation. Deepa's strategy, which uses non-repressive force, is based on the principle of radical translation³² enhanced by the power attached to her status. She establishes communication principles that are loose yet inflexible and non-negotiable, and suggests that all who subscribe to them will, subject to the principle of charity, be able to overcome incommensurability and interact successfully within the framework of the WSF. universal commensuration can take place through adherence to the standards set by the WSF Charter, and adjusted according to contextual legal interpretations as shown in the case discussed above.

De facto, albeit unconsciously, the WSF sets standards for commensurating the radical differences it wants to promote. A more consciously counter-hegemonic project should be designed and openly negotiated in the WSF open space, to avoid the risk of making of this space one where mystification reigns and the law of the jungle prevails – disguised by a sort of "gentlemen's agreement", as Sen describes it.³³ A two-fold approach, immediate and long-term, is required to make the WSF fully inclusive. In the short term, three tasks might reduce the incidence of situations like the one discussed here :

Clearer norms need to be discussed and consensually agreed upon by the WSF, with a view to establishing coherent and proactive procedures to include the most marginalised groups and individuals.

The organisation's architecture needs to reflect the ideological goals of the WSF, and be put in place to facilitate the process of inclusion and the negotiation of differences.

Detailed guidelines for conflict-management need to be thoroughly elaborated.

In the long term, the WSF should systematically fight conditions of apparent incommensurability due to power imbalances, hegemonic practices, and embodied patterns of domination.

Inclusion in the WSF demands proactive practice to reach out to different groups and individuals, using many cultural codes to communicate with glocal diversities (globally influenced local realities and vice-versa). Successful communication is not a simple task; it involves the dynamics of power and echoes traditional systemic dominations that need to be exposed and fought. Improvisation, good faith, and enthusiasm are neither successful by themselves in generating positive communication, nor a legitimate excuse when they cause communication to collapse, as in this case study. The WSF has at its disposal, to mention just the most relevant resource, four decades of theoretical and practical feminist developments on these issues. It cannot afford to ignore that incredible theoretical and critical wealth.³⁴

VI

Conclusions

This case study has shown how unsuspected relative intolerance is rooted within the WSF's

open space. In particular, the inability of the India WSF to include one of the country's most marginalised communities has taken grave legitimacy from the WSF process both in India and globally. Ahmed's complaint exposed the political naivety, authoritarian attitudes, and strategic approximations of many in the core group of the India WSF. Moreover, it exposed the IOC's inability to think in non-ethnocentric and non-imperialist ways about difference and commensuration : Religion, and its fundamental attachment to emotion, has not yet found full recognition within the WSF unless tamed by the secular promise that many in the world, Hindus and Muslims for instance, are not ready to make. Long- and short-term action is required at the organisational and political levels of the WSF to address these fundamental shortcomings. Differences tend to become, or to be perceived as, incommensurable for a wide range of reasons, exacerbated by the stress due to commitment and the fatigue caused by such an endeavour. As in Ahmed's case, the suppression of differences and calls for 'fair play' obliterate power dynamics and social, political, and economic imbalances.

One unintended outcome of having no consistent conflict-management strategy is the plurality of responses to Ahmed's letter. However, this aspect of plurality needs to be consciously assessed and not just randomly enacted as a casual compilation of uncoordinated acts that tend to silence one another and, on the basis of vaguely specified norms, to deny each other's legitimacy to speak for the WSF. Although multiplicity can be seen as a positive attitude, its manifestation has not too often proved democratic, transparent, and fully inclusive. Regulation seems necessary : The WSF requires a set of well designed and consensual guidelines that help everybody deal with apparently irreconcilable conflicts, especially when passions run high. Simultaneously, the guidelines need to deal with external issues regarding the inclusion of those who are not already in the process. As Ahmed's case shows, the WSF organisers' best intentions with respect to the creation of open spaces cannot be realised simply by leaving the doors open. Specific practices to ensure openness are necessary to maintain the legitimacy that the WSF has acquired.

Notes

- 1 Glasius and Timms 2005.
- 2 Derrida 1995.
- 3 " The WSF was consciously created as an open space for movements to meet in spite of their differences": WSF India process campaign material.
- 4 In other words, to made them measurable by a common standard, avoiding what radical differences are, in this sense, incommensurable.
- 5 Note taken by the author at the evaluation meeting of the 2004 WSF in Mumbai, February 28-29 2004.
- 6 Correa Leite 2003.
- 7 Sen 2004b, p 24; see also Bourdieu 2001.
- 8 Whitaker 2004.
- 9 Fraser 1997, pp 126-129 .
- 10 Terence Turner 1993.
- 11 Barth 1969.
- 12 Derrida 1978; see also: Harrison 2003, pp 343-361.
- 13 Gellner 1996.
- 14 De Sousa Santos 2004a and 2004b, and 2005.
- 15 Ray and Korteveg 1999, pp 47-71 .
- 16 Molyneux 1985, 227-53.
- 17 Barring 1989 and Alvarez 1990.
- 18 Kandiyoti 1991, p 7.
- 19 Schirmer 1989, pp 3-29 .
- 20 Vargas 2004; see also Rosemberg 2002.
- 21 See the excellent discussion in Daulatzai 2004.

- 22 Daulatzai 2004 , p 574.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid, p 575.
- 25 Khan 2004, p 544.
- 26 Ramadan 2003.
- 27 Davidson 1984, Venuti 1998, Ribeiro 2004.
- 28 Quine 1969.
- 29 Davidson 1984.
- 30 Austin 1975.
- 31 Gramsci 1971 and Foucault 1980.
- 32 On the relevance of translation as epistemological tool for radical change see Ribeiro 2004, Venuti 1998 and, with specific reference to the WSF, de Sousa Santos 2005a.
- 33 Sen 2004b.

34 Besides that tradition, new and inspiring literature is exploring the relevance of religion in progressive politics and the unsuspected intolerance of much of progressive global civil society towards an open reformulation of the secularism / religion debate as, for instance, Khan 2004 and Daulatzai 2004.

Towards Building The Future Together : An Open Letter From A Fellow Traveller To The
Puno Cumbre ¹

Jai Sen

From India, Friday, May 22 2009 ²

Respected friends - sisters and brothers - gathering soon at Puno in Peru for planning out the journey you have taken towards building a '*Minga en Defensa de la Madre Tierra y los Pueblos*' ('Solidarity in Defence of Mother Earth and her Peoples')³ –

Namaste, namaskar; greetings !

I come in peace. May peace be with you.

My name is Jai Sen.

I come from a land called India. But I see myself and come to you not as a citizen of any one country but as a person of this earth, our common home.

I have travelled a long way.

Please allow me a moment to dust off my clothes as I stand at the entrance to your gathering.

Please allow me a moment to remove my shoes, for I do not want to bring in with me the dust of my travels.

Please give me some water to drink, so that I may clear my throat of the dust of travel and speak clearly.

And please forgive me for any imperfections in what I am going to say. The language I speak is different from yours; today, I will try and speak in a language that I hope can cross the differences and boundaries between us, and can travel across the world to reach you.

I come to you with some memories, some reflections on the past, and some thoughts for the future.

I come to you in common cause.

*

I come to you as a member of CACIM, which stands for 'Critical Action : Centre in Movement'. CACIM is based in New Delhi, India (www.cacim.net), and its work is to try to be a critical fellow traveller with you and with others in movement in the worldwide struggle for achieving peace, dignity, justice, and self-awareness. We have already declared our open support to your initiative, through our voice and through our actions. May our common struggles succeed !

I come to you conscious also of CACIM's community - of all our associates and friends scattered across the world who in our many diverse ways, are all on this same journey for peace, dignity, justice, and self-awareness; and I thank them for their spirit and for their presence in my life and in my words; here and always.

And as I speak to you, I specially pay respect to my many teachers in life, and at this stage in my life in particular to John Brown Childs, Taiaiake Alfred, Jeff Corntassel, and the Zapatistas, and also to Kolya Abramsky, Jeremy Brecher, Janet Conway, Lee Cormie, Xochitl Leyva Solano, and Brian Murphy; to my partner in life, Julia Sánchez; to my late wife Munni Sen; to my children and to their futures; and to ancestors of mine from whom I am drawn and from whom I have learned. And to all our children, and to their children, and to all their futures. And to our common mother, Mother Earth.

*

Over the next some days, you are gathering in Puno to discuss your plans for the new journey you have proposed, towards '*Minga en Defensa de la Madre Tierra y los Pueblos*' ('Solidarity in Defence of Mother Earth and her Peoples').

My community and I are aware that you have come to this place for having your discussion after already having travelled for many years in struggle.

We believe that your proposals for this journey – which has a truly planetary vision – are extremely significant, and stimulating. They are for us significant both because they have this vision and also because they are being independently and autonomously being taken by indigenous peoples. As we see it, this action, of reclaiming, recovering, and protecting our Mother Earth therefore has a very special historical significance. This is perhaps one of the first times in human history that an initiative like this has been taken by such peoples, at a global level, anywhere in the world.

We applaud you for this, and wish you well for your deliberations, and hope that they will bear fruit.

Allow me to now present to you some memories, some reflections, and a proposal.

My memories

I was at the World Social Forum that took place in Belém in Brazil in January 2009, at the mouth of the mighty Amazon River, where I had the privilege of meeting some of you who are now gathering in Puno.

I bore witness to much of what happened there.

I took part in the opening rally for the World Social Forum in Belém, at the start of which I saw very few indigenous peoples taking part and was puzzled by this, but then during which I suddenly saw a small band of proud indigenous warriors bursting through the procession, with everyone moving aside to make way for them.

I attended meetings of the *Campaña Pueblos Indigenas en la Amazonia* ('Campaign of the Indigenous Peoples in Amazonia'); and I also attended various meetings of various other organisations who are also struggling for peace and justice.

I myself was involved, as a member of CACIM and along with other organisations, in organising meetings at the Belém Forum that looked at the politics of the Belém Forum and of the real meanings and implications for the WSF of, from now on, the organised presence and participation in the WSF of indigenous peoples. We also organised a meeting that looked at the organising principles that underlie the World Social Forum and another that tried to look at and face the future that is emerging all around us.⁴

I also had the privilege, while at the Belém Forum, of meeting and exchanging thoughts several indigenous individuals, mostly from the Americas, among them Adolfo Montero from Colombia (of OIK - Organizacion Indigena Kanuama, ONIC - Organizacion Nacional Indigena de Colombia, and CAOI - Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indigenas (Andean Coordination of Indigenous Organisations)), Ben Powless from Canada/Turtle Island (representing the Indigenous Environmental Network), Hugo Blanco from Peru (of the Confederacion de Campesinos del Peru, Lucha Indigena, and CAOI), Ron Rousseau from Canada/Turtle Island (of CUPW - Canadian Union of Postal Workers), and Tom Goldtooth, Dine' and Dakota nation, of the USA/Turtle Island (of the Indigenous Environmental Network); and also with Roberto Espinoza, then Technical Coordinator of CAOI (Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indigenas – Andean Coordination of Indigenous Organisations, headquartered in Peru).

I also had the great privilege of sitting and speaking at some length with Ivaneide Bandeira Cardozo, General Coordinator of Kanindé - Associação de Defesa Etnoambiental, based in Rio Branco, in Brazil, and with three of her Suruí brothers, about their impressions of the Belém Forum.

I also walked extensively in the grounds where the Belém Forum was taking place, both in UFRA and in UFPA, to see and sense what was happening, along the river and under the magnificent groves of bamboos; and I thought of the grounds and the river as they must have once been, the home of the indigenous peoples of the Amazon, and thought of the near genocide that such people have endured.

I also saw many other things at the Belém Forum that also pained me deeply, such as indigenous warriors with WSF identity cards hanging around their necks; armed guards outside the entrance to the WSF, which is meant to be a place of peace; and crowds of young settler peoples around indigenous warriors, paying for their own bodies to be painted by the warriors and then posing for photographs beside them.

These are some of my memories of Belém.

My reflections

I have many reflections on my experience of being at the Belém Forum. But the main reflection that I want to put before you here is that while being able to be at the Belém Forum and to witness and take part in all of the above was for me truly an extraordinary privilege, I nevertheless feel that we - all of us, but especially the organisers of the Belém Forum - missed a huge opportunity for advancing peace and justice in this world.

As I now see it, 'Belém' – the Belém Forum – was potentially an extraordinary opportunity for building peace between peoples and for building the future together; and beyond this, for taking forward the task you are now undertaking, of re-quickening the world. I sensed this to some extent while I was still in Belém but much more so after leaving and returning to my home in India. If only we had seen – and seized - this opportunity, I believe we could have significantly advanced the cause of peace and justice in this world.

But we did not; and I therefore now want to ask whether you, at your *cumbre* in Puno, would consider looking at this possibility in the course of your deliberations there.

Allow me to explain.

After all is said and done, the World Social Forum is still largely a 'civil' organisation and process, made up of settlers and of peoples related first to them rather than to indigenous peoples or to other historically oppressed peoples.⁵ While this is changing in small ways, and for all its achievements, and for all its very noble objectives as laid out in its Charter of Principles,⁶ the WSF remains this. For instance, the International Council of the WSF so far has,⁷ among its 200 plus members, just one indigenous peoples' organisation as a member – CAOI⁸ – and only a handful of organisations of peoples actually in struggle; and as several surveys have shown, in general the WSF continues to have this class and race composition.⁹ And perhaps as a consequence, the organisers of the World Social Forum process, including its International Council, therefore see the world in this way – through the eyes of settlers.

I believe that it was because of this way of seeing the world that the reason the WSF put forward publicly for organising the Forum at Belém was that it was going to be held 'in Amazonia', which was projected as being under ecological threat, and not because it is one of the great longhouses of indigenous peoples, and that it could therefore potentially be a meeting between those who normally attend the WSF – settlers – and indigenous peoples. It is possible that they do not even see any differences between themselves and indigenous peoples. The organisers therefore appealed primarily to our sense of crisis, within the larger

climate crisis that we today face as a part of the assault on Mother Earth.

But while this is true, and very significant, it is surely equally true and equally significant that Amazonia is first the home and land of indigenous peoples, and that it is fundamentally symbolic at a world level of the existence and struggles of such peoples – who have been colonised, devastated, and exploited by settler societies across the world for centuries and today remain under intense threat across the planet.

And so, by choosing to organise the Forum at Belém, which is not only in Amazonia and at the mouth of the Amazon but also is the mouth of a great continent that has faced some of the greatest acts of violence against indigenous peoples, at a civilisational level the WSF – as a civil process dominated by settler organisations – in fact had an extraordinary and historic opportunity : An opportunity to create a space and a time where indigenous peoples and settler peoples could meet each other with respect and in peace, and to talk to each other and to smoke with each other, in peace; and that could even, perhaps, have contributed to opening a process of historical reconciliation and remedy between indigenous peoples and settler peoples, at a people-to-people level, should indigenous peoples also have wanted this.

The WSF could have done this by recognising that after all is said and done, the settler peoples and organisations that are today its core are, in historical terms, complicit with the violence and crimes that have been inflicted through colonisation on the indigenous peoples of Latin America, as well as elsewhere. For it was not only the European **states** that so violently conquered and colonised the Americas; **it was also, very much, 'civil society'** (or rather, the predecessors to civil society) in those countries, and the Church, and driven by them : The explorers, the traders, the adventurers, the investors, the teachers, and the missionaries, and in time also the bankers, moneylenders, and other middlemen.¹⁰

I put forward to you the notion that the WSF, and other sections of civil societies across the world today who see themselves as being progressive, therefore need to recognise this, and need not wait for the governments of the world to own up to the crimes of the past on their behalves. They can claim this historical role, and do so themselves.

The Belém Forum was such an opportunity. If any of us had seen this window, and had recognised this opportunity, this opening, this initiative could perhaps have been taken at that time and at that place.

But this is not what happened at Belém, and so I believe that your gathering at Puno – just four months after Belém - could be taken as a very timely opportunity to reflect on what happened at Belém and on the potential that was there, and to draw lessons for the future.

Towards this, and before ending, I offer you here some reflections. For a moment, let us imagine what could have happened IF :

IF we had all been conscious at Belém of the historical fact that we were gathering not just in Amazonia, and at the mouth of a great river, but on a land that had been violently conquered by settlers and taken away from the indigenous peoples whose home this had been, since time immemorial; and so we were in fact meeting on their historical home and land;

IF the organisers of the World Social Forum that was held at Belém had therefore, in this other vision, not just 'invited' indigenous peoples to come and attend the Forum at Belém – just like everybody else – and made them come through gates, get registered and pay 'money' for this, and then hang identification badges around their necks; but had, instead, recognised and respected indigenous peoples as, at the very least, the original inhabitants and trustees of the land that the WSF was organising its meeting on; and had not merely 'invited' such peoples but had organised the gathering together with them and around them;

IF the organisers – now indigenous and settler, together, as well as other peoples

present – had, in order to honour whose home they were gathering in, personally met and welcomed each and every indigenous person who came to the Belém Cumbre, honoured them, and helped them make it their home again;

IF this act of reception and welcome moreover, had taken place in an area without any walls and gates and military police, such as on the banks of the river;

IF the organisers of the Forum had respected the cultures of so many peoples around the world, and especially of indigenous peoples, by conducting welcome ceremonies that signalled and heralded new cultures and new discussions – and the possibility of new futures;¹¹

IF the organisers of the Belém Forum had also conducted a special gathering of peace during the Forum, after all the indigenous peoples from around the planet had arrived, in a very special way, in recognition of this extraordinary moment in space, time, and history and of the confluence of these many great rivers of civilisation, and to have drunk together from the waters of the confluence;

IF the organisers of the Belém Forum had, in further recognition of this special moment, also organised the closing of the Forum in a very special way, not by asking the indigenous peoples only to ‘read out’ their conclusions just like everybody else, but by designing the closing in ways that very specially recognised the moment of the ending of this first convergence of the diverse peoples of Mother Earth and that signalled the beginning of the next phase of convergence, and looking ahead also to many more such convergences;

IF the members of the International Council, as the leadership of the World Social Forum, had also recognised the moment by organising their own meeting not after the Forum, when everyone – including most of the indigenous peoples – had left, **but during the Forum**; and instead of doing so in a remote and airconditioned conference centre (as was the case) had, in honour of the trustees of the land on which they were meeting and of the warriors who had come to the Belém Forum, done so **in the indigenous peoples’ tent**, with a thousand indigenous warriors seated around them;

IF the members of the International Council had, at their meeting, not just listed the proposals of the indigenous peoples who were present in a powerpoint presentation, and not simply read out the proposals and just added them to its ‘list of forthcoming actions’, as just as one more action, but – in recognition of the very special convergence that would have been taking place in that great tent, that longhouse of their hosts - declared that they were willing to now join the indigenous peoples of the world in their 2,000 years of struggle for peace, dignity, and justice, and to henceforth walk together;¹² and -

IF the organisers of the Belém Forum and the leadership of the WSF had left the Belém Forum together with the indigenous peoples of the world, arm in arm, out into the great rivers of history.

I am aware that all this is now only in our imaginations – but can we see these thoughts, these reflections, as signs, not only of the past but also of the future ? Can we draw lessons from all this, for what we next do ? In how we conduct ourselves, and in choosing the paths that we take, the waters we drink ?

*

My proposal

I come now to you with a very simple proposal : Can you, in your deliberations in Puno,

consider the possibility of finding ways where some of this ground, and some of these possibilities, can be perhaps recovered over this next year of activities that you are planning, and in the course of all that you do in this long journey you are undertaking ?

But with the essential difference being that this time, the initiative would come and the ground laid, as would in fact be far more fitting, from the indigenous peoples of the world, and not from the settlers ?

*

With this, I conclude my presentation to you.

Let every action that is taken be an opportunity for this convergence, with meaningful ceremonies and meaningful actions, respectful of all cultures that are taking part.

Respectful of all boundaries that exist, treating them as bridges, and crossing them with care.¹³

Respectful of pasts, of the present, and of possible futures.

Respectful of the dreams of other worlds.

Respectful of dreams.

Because I have invoked them in this letter, I am also paying respect to them by sending copies of this open letter to my teachers, to my partner in life and to my children and family; to my colleagues and community, and to some respected friends who are members of the International Council of the WSF; and also to others across the planet who may also be watching your gathering with the interest that I am.

I end here, my friends, compañeros, and compañeras, and leave my thoughts with you, with all due respect. Please take care of them. I bid you well for your deliberations and actions in the days ahead, and salute you in your struggles.

With respect, in peace and in hope and, I believe, in common cause,

Jai Sen

jai.sen@cacim.net

CACIM / cacim.net

www.cacim.net , cacim@cacim.net

A3 Defence Colony, New Delhi, India

Notes

1 The Puno Cumbre – in full form, the ‘IV Cumbre Continental de Pueblos y Nacionalidades Indígenas del Abya Yala’ (the ‘IVth Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities of Abya Yala’, Abya Yala being the land called ‘the Americas’ by settlers) - was a major gathering of organisations of indigenous peoples that took place in Puno, Peru, on May 29-31 2009. This gathering took place just four months after the World Social Forum that was held in Belém, Brazil, and built on the discussions that took place there among indigenous peoples. As this letter explains (and comments on), the WSF was held in Belém (at the mouth of the Amazon river) ostensibly to focus both on ecological issues and also on the struggles of indigenous peoples, and was an occasion where the organisers of the WSF, mostly of settler origin, invited indigenous peoples – especially of the Americas - to come. Although problematic in the way it was organised, the indigenous peoples nevertheless used the meeting to advance their common understandings, and resolved in Belém to meet again in Puno – but this time among themselves and at a meeting convened by themselves. For a problematisation of the Belém Forum, see CACIM and NFFPFW, May 2009.

2 The original version of this open letter – which was emailed to some of the organisers of the Puno Cumbre and posted on WSFDiscuss, and is available at <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=MingalDefence&highlight=towards%20walking> - has been lightly edited for publication here. As mentioned in my covering note to this letter, I want to especially express here my deep debt to John Brown Childs and to Taiaiake Alfred for what I have learned from them, and which very directly inspired me to attempt to write this letter.

3 In Quechua and Spanish.

4 For details of what we planned for the Belém Forum, see <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=CACIMatBelem> ; and for reports of the three meetings we organised at the Belém Forum together with others, see : CACIM, June 2009; CACIM and NFFPFW, May 2009; and AFM, CACIM, DaSMI, and ARENA, June 2009.

- 5 For a discussion of the real meanings of ‘civility’, and of the power of civility, see my essay in a companion volume, The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds (Sen, forthcoming (2013)); and for a discussion of the position and positionality of indigenous peoples in the WSF, see Conway, October 2010, Conway 2011, and Conway 2012.
- 6 World Social Forum Organising Committee and World Social Forum International Council, June 2001.
- 7 At the time of the original of this letter, in early 2009.
- 8 CAOI stands for Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indigenas (Andean Coordinating Body for Indigenous Organisations).
- 9 This is the general character even if in a few cases, such as the Mumbai Forum in 2004 and the Karachi Forum in 2006 and the Atlanta and Detroit Fora in the US in 2007 and 2011, there was a greater proportion of working class and indigenous peoples.
- 10 For this argument, see Sen, forthcoming (2013a).
- 11 As happened at the US Social Forum organised in Detroit, on Turtle Island / Abya Yala, in June 2010.
- 12 In all humility, and just to place this matter on record, I personally spoke with several members of the WSF’s International Council after the Belém Forum, urging them to move a resolution to this effect. None did so, however, though one, François Houtart of the Centre Tricontinentale, urged the International Council to include a statement of ‘friendship’ with the indigenous peoples – thereby, of course, signalling clearly that he saw the IC as being not composed of such peoples.
- 13 See, in the companion volume to this book The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds , the essay by John Brown Childs (Childs, forthcoming (2013)).

Does Bamako Appeal ? : The World Social Forum Versus The Life Strategies Of The Subaltern ¹

Franco Barchiesi, Heinrich Bohmke, Prishani Naidoo, and Ahmed Veriava

I

The WSF, the Bamako Appeal, and the Contradictions of the 'Seattle Canon'

For many activists and academics, the Bamako Appeal,² which came out of the 2006 'Polycentric' World Social Forum (WSF) in Mali,³ was an important step in the development of a movement for an alternative globalisation, not merely opposed to neoliberalism but also capable of formulating concrete political proposals and programmes. Nonetheless, coming out after six years in which the WSF had taken place under the aegis of the 'Another World is Possible' slogan, the Bamako Appeal provided a reminder of how much the definition of such another world is shaped by the self-perpetuation of an old left tradition that is among the saddest legacies of the present world. In this sense, we regard the Bamako Appeal as a document that, albeit irrelevant to the material development of social movements' subjectivities, is nonetheless symptomatic of long-term trends that, even though contested by participatory dynamics from below, have affected the WSF's organisational modalities and its most visible, mediated institutional representations.

The Appeal, in fact, is a particularly extreme - but by no means unique - manifestation of two interconnected patterns that contributed to the mutation of the WSF from an arena of encounter for local social movements into an organised network of experts, academics, and NGO practitioners. Such patterns, on the other hand, transfer the legacy of the modes of left politics well established in 20th century industrialised capitalism to a context marked by the withering away of coherent revolutionary subjects defined on class lines. First, while building its status and standing on buzzwords and symbolic referents that have been widely circulating after the 1999 Seattle revolt, the cliques of experts and full-time activists vying for hegemony within the WSF aim to elaborate guidelines for social transformation of which they remain the sole wardens and true interpreters. On the one hand, the political discourse of such aspiring leaders is nurtured in a set of metaphors and images, which we define as the 'Seattle canon', that have come to shape the parlance of anti-globalisation movements. Therefore the continuous insistence on plurality, horizontality, consensus, and the creation of global political spaces that respect the characteristics of local struggles aims to replace traditional left rhetoric that once praised unity, organisational discipline, democratic centralism, and respect for the party line.

A resilient underlying trope however, continues to operate underneath these seeming innovations. This is the idea that between the material development of subjectivities at the level of communities, locales, and struggles, and the place where they become properly political, capable of embodying a universal yearning for change, there is a gap that social subjectivity and conflict alone cannot bridge. In this view, the politicisation of local struggles requires a level at which the disorderly, spontaneous, often contradictory claims that originate from local struggles are subsumed into neat, clearly defined blueprints and political demands. A central level of organisation (where the writers of the Bamako Appeal apparently place themselves) would then convey 'our' demands into the realm of the properly political (as opposed to confusedly subjectivist) where we face our historical antagonists, be they Capital, State, or Market.

This obsession with drafting the blueprint for the Revolution as a process qualitatively different from the material practices of struggles that enable their own emergence is combined with a second important legacy from the 20th century left : An emphasis on the necessary role

of political vanguards. It can be debated to what extent the transformation of the WSF into a conduit for vanguardist politics has advanced, or what the margins are to contest it or even to stop it. Documents like the Bamako Appeal, however, reveal how deeply entrenched the vanguardist temptation in the WSF is, currently.

By vanguardism, we mean an approach holding that even if material struggles and conflicts open up spaces for political possibilities, the authentic meanings of such possibilities and their articulation into blueprints for change are not self-evident from the standpoint of subjectivity. Rather, the politicisation of subjectivities in conflict, and the articulation of their possibilities, requires a specialised organisation, a layer of experts and activist professionals whose knowledge is not ordinarily accessible from the grassroots. The Bamako Appeal's fairly naked ambition to articulate what it regards as the 'authentic' and 'true' meaning of the exchanges that take place in the WSF within a set of clear, and of course 'positive' demands is a clear manifestation of vanguardism. It in fact tries to "impute", to use Lukacs' phrase,⁴ a "true consciousness" over the confused desires that motivate real-life, immediate struggles. In a time-honoured tradition, it wants to re-establish the role of professional revolutionaries as those in charge of making the kitchen maids of Lenin's metaphor⁵ truly understand their revolutionary political potential.

It is difficult to understand the trajectory of the WSF without noticing the role played by the legacy of the 20th century old left within the rhetorical trappings of the Seattle canon. Nationalism, developmentalism, and Third-Worldism feature prominently among the self-representation devices of the WSF elite. After much rhetorical homage to the diversity and autonomy of popular struggles, the Bamako Appeal calls (Point 8) for a "Bandung of the Peoples of the South" as an "anti-imperialist front" uniting "all the peoples, in the North and in the South in the construction of a universal civilisation" based on "internationalism and anti-imperialism", away from the "antagonisms inherent to capitalism and imperialism". What about, one might wonder, the antagonisms inherent in the modalities of orthodox left rule with which so many postcolonial regimes that were part of the old Bandung moment (which was also hailed as 'of the Peoples') have followed their own ideas of 'universal civilisations' in terms not different from what the Appeal so enthusiastically repeats ?

Without a clear critique of the legacy of nationalist developmentalism, and how it was used by left governments to repress a multitude of struggles defending the commons in urban and rural areas alike, it is hard to see what the celebration of 'autonomy' and 'diversity' means, apart from some lip service paid to exorcise the repetition of the past. More importantly, what if the struggles of the poor for land, water, and basic de commodified services are not inspired by grand alternative civilisational visions, but by messiness, contradictions, compromises, and "quiet encroachments",⁶ which do not need a structured challenge to power to expose it to subversive eruptions of desire ? Are such struggles less authentic for that ? What if they don't want to find their place as orderly diversities within the glorious 'anti-imperialist' front to come ? What if they don't care ? Will they be accused of reproducing the "antagonisms inherent to capitalism and imperialism" just because of that, similarly to how peasants' opposition to state exactions have usually been deemed 'counter-revolutionary' by so many governments that were well represented at Bandung ? Historical analogies carry their own set of responsibilities, and attaching 'of the peoples' to them might not be enough to erase what has often been an ugly past.

Experiences of relations between diversity and front-building at the WSF are not encouraging in this regard. Concluding statements of the various WSFs are, like the Bamako Appeal, usually never discussed or approved through processes of grassroots participation, reflecting a growing concentration of decision-making and political visibility in the hands of an unaccountable stratum of academics and professional activists. Conversely, endless debates

and workshops among less media-heavy, more dispersed social actors have been relegated to the role of innocuous background chatter and a pale shadow of mass mobilisation. The Bamako Appeal is ultimately a reflection of the general political method of the WSF, as is its overarching preoccupation with institutionalising the 'other globalisation movement' - of making it, under the guidance and tutelage of its self-appointed vanguards, a counterpart to be reckoned with in the 'reform' of international economic architectures, political institutions, and media apparatuses. No wonder that the way in which neo-populist Latin American politicians and governments like those of Brazil, Bolivia, and Venezuela have become central political referents for the WSF is claimed as vindication for those who argue that the effectiveness of social movements is primarily a matter of shaping, or even seizing, power at the level of the nation-state.

II

Can the Subaltern Appeal ? For a Politics of Immanent Desire

The WSF's drift towards institutionalisation and vanguardism marks the crisis of a political discourse that, following the 1999 Battle of Seattle, has imagined the global movement as a convergence of singular, partial actors and subjectivities. The elaboration of common claims and struggles has been seen as premised on the constitutive autonomy of practices aimed at developing alternatives using methods of horizontality and consensus. Such practices and their autonomy questioned the assumption that a central revolutionary subject, as in much working class mythology of the 20th century western left, is necessary or indeed desirable to achieve fundamental social change. On the other hand, the ontology of the central revolutionary subject has also been denied on the ground by multifarious recent conflicts like the Zapatista rebellion in Mexico, landless movements in Latin America, environmental struggles in India, the struggles of welfare claimants and opposition to gentrification in the USA, migrants' and precarious workers' movements in western Europe, the *piquetero* movement in Argentina, IMF riots in structurally adjusted Africa, and South African struggles against the privatisation and commodification of basic social services.

This multitude of voices that have rejected the intolerable price imposed by neoliberalism on individual and collective forms of life has not been primarily rooted in a stable waged condition, has not come especially from formally employed and unionised workers, and has expressed no overarching nostalgia for an age in which a waged occupation was the main or even the only condition for a decent life, basic social security, or an income beyond mere poverty. Instead, the politics of the 'poor' has contested the mere sociological connotation of this word, recodifying it to rightfully claim a sensuous enjoyment of everyday experience and forms of life enabled by decommodified access to common goods, in ways that no longer depend on the prospect of becoming factory working class, or on delegating liberation to the revolutionary organisation and its self-proclaimed vanguards. For these reasons, the official party and union left has often been contemptuous and dismissive of the struggles of the poor, dismissing their 'spontaneity' or 'subjectivism' as 'ultra-left', while complimenting their dedication, and fondling their constituencies as potential grounds for recruitment. And now we have the Bamako Appeal, which, forgetful of the criticism of established left politics emerging from the very poor who see the WSF as an opportunity for encounter and exchange, comes up once again with ominous expressions like 'workers' united front'. It does not seem, therefore, possible to maintain the view that the 'other globalisation movement' is about "changing the world without taking power"⁷ without a head-on confrontation between the material practices of the poor and the current discourse of the WSF expertocracy.

A function of the WSF expertocracy's obsession with the institutionalisation of social movement politics is a view that reifies material, concrete social subjectivities into mechanical abstractions and purely ideological simplifications. The Bamako Appeal, for example, tells us

that the 'other globalisation movement' is about democratising politics and society. That basically means articulating a discourse of rights and claims to be asserted vis-à-vis the nation state and international organisations. As such, the movement imagined by the Appeal questions hierarchy and authority, but only when these originate outside of it, as the product of corporate domination or state power. No mention is made of the fact that authoritarian modes of organising are an integral part of the legacy of left vanguardism, and have been as such opposed and contested within social movement politics. Nor can we find anything there of the intuitions of, among others, feminist, gay, lesbian, and transgender movements that criticise a rights-based politics centred on the nation-state - since it is the state's prerogative to codify rights that is precisely what enables the disciplining and fragmentation of social subjectivities.

Similarly, nothing is said in the Appeal of the ways in which demands for the decommodification of income and resources that emerge in the struggles of the unemployed and precarious workers (and not only in Western countries) have often nothing to do with 'job creation', which is rather intended as a perpetuation of wage slavery. Issues like whether wage labour should be celebrated or transcended, whether the nation state should be reconstituted or subverted, or what the relations between vanguardism and organisation are, continue to separate left politics from the subjectivities of subaltern communities; they are not issues that can be veiled under the reassuring mantles of comradely debates and united fronts.

The suppression by WSF elites of diversity, complexity, and contestation as constitutive features of globalisation **movements** (plural) operates by virtue of an idealised and singular globalisation **movement**, whose assumptions of unity and coherence are required by the institutional realm the elites themselves aspire to inhabit. It is precisely such a multitude of social subjectivities, and the unsuppressed autonomy of its constituents, that we identify as a terrain for engagement and politicisation. We begin, moreover, with the premise that social movement politics and its potentialities are validated only by the material practices of the subaltern, and not by the ability of leaders and vanguards to encapsulate such practices in blueprints and guidelines in accordance with pre-existing, static theories. Putting material praxis and subjectivity at the centre of social movement politics implies the preliminary step of recognising the full political potential of struggles that want to shape 'this' globalisation, and not delegating the construction of 'another' one to a self-styled activist personnel, especially when this personnel emerges from the most discredited left trajectories. A healthy scepticism is therefore needed towards exercises of ideological imperialism that, under the pretence of building a common ground for an assumed global political subject, reorders and disempowers localised, diversified dynamics of insurgency.

It reassures us that documents like the Bamako Appeal will eventually prove totally irrelevant and inessential to struggles in South Africa as elsewhere. Indeed, the WSF elite's cold institutional and technicist soup, occasionally warmed up by some hints of tired poeticism, can provide little nourishment for local subjectivities whose daily responses to neoliberalism face the more urgent need to turn everyday survival into sustained confrontations with an increasingly repressive state. At the same time, building radical political discourse and imagery to be sustained over the long term requires a recognition of the fundamental ambiguities and contradictions that shape the politics of the poor at all levels, and as such do not lend themselves to facile idealisations. The recognition of the permanence of sexism and authoritarianism, retrogressive national and ethnic identities, clientelist relations with state politicians and apparatuses, and ideological discourses of populism and developmentalism are as integral to the development of the subjectivity of the subaltern as the desires underpinning it for a society liberated from the powers of market and state. The interactions between survival, politicisation, and organisation in the unfolding politics of social movements are much fuzzier and far more problematic than what transpires in the rhetoric and pomp of WSF

plenaries. It is, nonetheless, the muddiness of community politics on the ground, and their resilience to ossified institutional discourse, that provides the most powerful critique of the left's established politics. Unruly and unspecified desires are here, indeed, productive of political potential and praxis. As an alternative to the WSF's official discourse, therefore, we propose **immanence**, not mediated institutionalisation, and yet-unsignified desire, not political blueprints and guidelines, as the foundation of social antagonism.

III

Autonomy or State : Where does the WSF stand ?

Recognising the power of community struggles as having the potential for radical change immanent in their very development, and for which a separate institutional layer is not required, raises important epistemological implications. The transformation of the WSF into a machine for the repressive disciplining of the politics of the poor is not just a matter of ideology, but has to do with knowledge as well. The established left discourse projects a mode of knowledge onto the social subjectivities of the subaltern, which aims to 'format' them into desirable, prescribed political behaviours. The imposition of old left modes of analysis on the knowledge that social movement struggles produce of themselves, coupled with the temptation in the official discourse of forums like the WSF to argue for social movements that want to become institutions of state and global governance, raises troubling questions. Everywhere in the Global South, for example, states and ruling parties have often attempted to square their enduring adherence to neoliberal policymaking with rhetorical openings in the direction of state-driven developmentalism. In South Africa, a 'developmental state' has indeed become the rallying cry of a government that, while trying to regain support from organised labour constituencies, continues to privatise housing, water, and electricity, evicting those who cannot pay, repressing those who protest, and generally condemning to invisibility the vast numbers of those deemed unproductive in the country's formal 'first economy'. What have WSF representations, and documents like the Bamako Appeal, to say in this regard ? Are they conducive to building, as we advocate, life forms and strategies that conflictually **autonomise** themselves from the state, capital, and wage labour, or are they in fact meant to endorse struggles to shape the heart and soul of the state ?

For us the imperative, which has always been claimed as being at the heart of the WSF experience, to build connections between subaltern social subjectivities on a global scale, remains as urgent as ever. The reason for the WSF's phenomenal success remains its promise to be an arena (however incomplete and often biased) of contestation and politicisation for diverse social subjectivities and practices. In so doing, the WSF itself becomes a potential site of production rather than just a means for the representation or translation of struggles.

In our own interactions in the WSF space, we have learnt new ways of understanding and approaching our various struggles against capitalism. Our immediate struggles against the privatisation of basic services, health, and education, have found resonance with the struggles of groups all over the world. For us, the most meaningful experiences have been those facilitated through the autonomous spaces within the WSF, in interactions and engagements between activists directly involved in struggles, for example discussions at the WSF in 2003 between the Anti-Eviction Campaign (Cape Town) and members of the *piquetero* movement in Buenos Aires. In these encounters, short-lived as they have been, we have shared and learnt not only about the experiences of survival under neoliberalism, but also about living differently and antagonistically to capitalism. In these encounters, we have discussed and debated the creation of self-reliant political spaces – how to make demands on the state and how to live without the state – through the lived experiences of different people fighting neoliberalism in different places. In these encounters, lines between the 'local' and the 'global' have become blurred, both geographically and in the ways in which we have come to imagine our struggles,

their interrelatedness, and their 'impact'.

In these encounters a method of communication between comrades in different struggles against a common enemy has come into operation, significantly different from the hierarchical modes of engagement that persist in the formal processes and spaces of the WSF. Outside of panel discussions that frame and shape the nature of an engagement prior to the meeting, and long theoretical diatribes delivered by anti-globalisation gurus, spaces such as *Intergalactica* have provided the means by which activists from all over the world have been able to come together in discussions about struggle that prioritise 'the encounter' as a productive means of interaction between people. In the tradition of Zapatismo, 'the encounter' values both participants as equals in struggle, who approach their engagement in the spirit of trying to find the answers to their common questions through the encounter itself. 'Talking-listening' is prioritised as the means of engagement, with the only commitment prior to the encounter being to 'walk, asking questions'. In the struggles of movements such as the piqueteros of Argentina, the Zapatistas in Mexico, and for social centres in Italy, this collective acceptance that there is no prior known solution or alternative, but that the alternative is made by us in our common engagement and interaction, is an idea that has begun to resonate within our own struggles.

This embrace of our collective uncertainty in the creation of common alternatives to our common problem of capitalism stands in stark opposition to the certainty with which the Bamako Appeal states its plan for a new world order. In this difference, and in this uncertainty, it allows each of us to be part of the struggle against capitalism as we face it in the here and now, and not as bearers of some future solution that is predetermined outside of our immediate struggles.

What remains a powerful undercurrent of informality in the WSF's proceedings reveals the persistence of horizontal communication between movements, not based on mystical views of the revolutionary subject or in the official discourse of the leaders, but in the life strategies of participants. Desires expressed in exchanges that take place at events like the WSF are indeed manifestations of the strategies that antagonistically situate the subjectivities of the subaltern in the circuits through which the social life of communities is reproduced in the age of neoliberalism. The WSF's officialdom as it presently stands reveals, however, a different order of priority: The 'compression' of the movements' irreducible diversity, the marginalisation of life strategies, and the channelling of political communication by a distant, unrepresentative organisational vanguard. Such developments will unquestionably be contested in forthcoming editions of the WSF. Putting the subjectivity of the subaltern at the centre of political praxis, however, is not merely a matter of reforming or democratising the WSF, or of restoring it to some pristine status of unhindered activist communication. In the final analysis, opposing the resurrection of the 20th century old left, inside and outside the WSF, is, now more than ever, a matter of liberating political desire.

Notes

1 This paper was written for a presentation at a workshop on World Social Forums that took place in Durban, South Africa, in July 2006. It therefore precedes events that saw local activists and community movements demonstrate against the 2007 World Social Forum held in Nairobi (Kenya) on account of the WSF's alleged elitism, separateness from ordinary people's concerns, and outrageously high registration fees. We believe that such events vindicate the validity of our analysis and confirm the urgency of the problems we anticipated, mainly the need for the WSF to define organisational and discursive modalities capable of dialogue for subaltern subjectivities, and less focused on the self-representation of transnational activist leaderships.

This paper was first published as Chapter 8.3 in: Jai Sen and Madhuresh Kumar, compilers, with Patrick Bond and Peter Waterman, January 2007 – *A Political Programme for the World Social Forum ? Democracy, Substance, and Debate in the Bamako Appeal and the Global Justice Movements - A Reader*, pp 246-254. But since this Reader was published by CACIM (and OpenWord, the publisher of this book, is a division within CACIM), there are no rights issues involved.

2 Forum for Another Mali, World Forum for Alternatives, Third World Forum, ENDA (Senegal), and others, January 2006.

3 *Eds* : Our understanding is that the Bamako Appeal did not actually “come out of” the Bamako Forum in Mali as such but rather was the outcome of a meeting that was organised in the days just before the Forum in Bamako (and where it was also not announced at the Bamako Forum but rather only at the Forum in Caracas, Venezuela, a few days later.) For details, see Sen and Kumar, compilers, January 2007.

4 Lukacs 1972.

5 Zinoviev 1922.

6 Bayat 1996, pp 2-12.

7 Holloway 2002.

Opening Up the 'Open Space' Of The World Social Forum ¹ Shannon Walsh

I

We Won't Pay to Discuss our Own Poverty !

"The World Social Forum is suppose to be a space for us, but we are denied entry if we can't pay the Kshs 500 (US\$ 7). We shouldn't have to pay to discuss our own poverty !", decried David Odhambo Ayimo, a local activist from the Nairobi slums on the second day of the World Social Forum (WSF) in Nairobi. About 300 people had gathered outside the gates of the Kasarani Sports Complex. Comrades from South Africa and elsewhere joined Nairobi activists to demand free entry to the WSF for Kenyans.

Trevor Ngwane from the Anti-Privatisation Forum spoke to the crowd : "We are very unhappy that the local people of Kenya cannot go in here, because this World Social Forum is about poor people, about the unemployed, about the working class".

Singing and chanting, the group marched through the gates erupting in jubilant cheering as entry was gained. This simple but concrete action won the spontaneous coalition's first victory. As the action died down, Orlean Naidoo from the Westcliff Residents' Association in Durban told her newly found Nairobi comrades, "I don't want to be inside with the NGO types, but out here with the real people who are suffering the same things we have at home in South Africa".

Later that afternoon, in the occupied offices of the Secretariat of the Nairobi WSF, answers were demanded from Professor Edward Oyugi about the high entrance fees, the telecommunications corporation Celtel's monopoly at the Forum, mistreatment of volunteers, and the high price of food and water.

"If we said all poor people could come to Kasarani for free," Oyugi explained, "I can tell you, there would be no space here to walk". The crowd erupted : "But that's what we want ! That is what the World Social Forum is all about ! Another world is possible !".

"We learned socialism from you, and now it is the students who must teach the teacher ?".

By Day Four, the protests had moved to the Windsor Hotel food-vending tent, owned by the notorious Minister of Internal Security, John Michuki, where exorbitant prices made food inaccessible to Kenyans and others on a limited budget.

Falsely described in some local reports as a group of "40 street children who raided the tent of a food caterer" and prompted "anarchist chaos", the group was large and diverse. Those who spoke had a clear anti-capitalist message.

Frances O, one of the more vocal young activists, spoke directly to the WSF participants who were enjoying cappuccinos under the tents of the exclusive Windsor Hotel restaurant. "They are stealing from us ! They are selling water. Next they will be selling air. This is suppose to be the World Social Forum, not the World Capitalist Forum !". The activists included many new faces besides those I'd seen at the other protests, but they were equally loud, passionate, and principled in their analysis.

"Join us !", implored Frances. "This is not right". But very few WSF participants stood up from their shaded seats to stand in solidarity with the protest.

Early assumptions that perhaps there 'weren't any social movements in Kenya' were further maintained as the protesting activists were depicted as disgruntled hooligans and 'poor people from the slums'. The activists became a sideshow, like the other cultural performers on display in Nairobi – discussed and observed from a distance, and preferably over a Tusker beer

or a Kenyan coffee under the shade of the Windsor Hotel tent. The principle that the Forum was “opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital” was understood differently indeed, by those inside the tent and those outside.² Even without the physical solidarity of most WSF participants however, concessions were won; yet it was sad and ironic that these concessions had to be demanded from the Forum itself.

I admit that I felt hopeful, at least, with these young people, and ran around with a camera trying to capture their energy and message. At the same time, hope was mixed with sadness.

That these battles are not rhetorical was starkly clear to me as I watched a group of five men split the ‘spoils’ from the ‘pillaged’ food stalls. A single packet of sugar was shared out between them, one man studiously pouring small portions of sugar into each outstretched hand. Is this the socialism we imagined to be taking place at the WSF ?

II

Open Space or a Farce of Solidarity ?

Something certainly felt wanting in Nairobi. There can be little doubt that domination of the formal WSF space by church groups and large NGOs (and one felt there was more than a tinge of nepotism and patronage in the way that the Forum’s topics were shaped by their agendas) sapped some of the more radical analysis in favour of developmentalist agendas. It may also have been the significantly fewer number of young people at this Forum (only 250 in its Youth Camp, as compared to 30,000 in Porto Alegre) that robbed the space of creative energy and fresh insight. There was also the much discussed invisibility of Kenyans in many of the panels, most likely due to the high entrance fees.

Regardless of the possible reasons, the under-representation of Kenyans and African social movements was stark, especially in contrast to the domination by Northerners. I must agree with Firoze Manji’s remarks that “One couldn’t help feel the absence of politics” during a week in which “social movements from the South were conspicuous by their numerically small presence at the Forum”.³

In this light, focusing on the disruption caused by Kenyan activists around the exclusion of the poor from the Nairobi WSF becomes clearer. Of course, the protests created a media spectacle, appreciated by activists and journalists hungry for ‘action’. But it is not just for the spectacle of their struggle that the protests emerged as an important way in which to understand the Kenya WSF. It also made stark the contradictions, bored rhetoric, complacencies, and omissions in how the space is being actualised.

The WSF’s principle of creating “an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate”, and for “free exchange of ideas... by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism”⁴ looks good on paper, but is it possible within its current depoliticised construction ? It is a negligent optimism that imagines that when you open the doors (more or less, as some fees apply) you erase the structures of capitalism that mark our interactions not only within the world but within our organisations, our lives, and our relationships. (And, please, don’t open the doors too widely, because we’d be swamped by the masses !)

An ‘open space’ is of course a space where contestations can, and should, occur. Yet it is telling that many of our comrades from Nairobi had to spend so much time and energy demanding entry into the Forum rather than building links, exchanging ideas, discussing the issues they face, and solidifying networks. The mere struggle to access the space, and to eat and to drink water there, became a central preoccupation around the WSF for many of the poorest activists in Kenya.

Clearly, the WSF is not truly a space for those struggling to survive or to find solutions for sustaining bare life, at any immediate level. When confronted by the actual masses and the

lessons, struggles, and ideas that they might bring to the table, 'we' (the elite that travels the world to attend these meetings), watch unmoved, as 'they' divide up 'our' sugar.

If we are honest, we must either claim that there is no role for the 'poor' in this space, and that the WSF is not a means to strategise with a starving person, or acknowledge that we have failed in the project, even the miniscule one of finding adequate ways to speak to one another and build together in contexts like this one. Kenyan social movements may have had something to say about the struggle for a better world beyond poverty, but what, ironically, stopped them from saying it was poverty itself.

Within a terrain organised to include petty capitalists, exploited workers, market forces, Northern domination, academic and NGO supremacy, and the disempowered poor, we must admit the left looked like a caricature of itself. It is a zone of bad faith we have created, a carelessly, callously, exclusionary space. And for those that do consider themselves part of the masses (such as the Orleans and Trevors amongst us), the battle in these moments becomes one of asking for concessions from the WSF, not from neoliberalism.

Tragically, even when we have a space in which we can potentially actualise another possible world, we fail miserably, barely even making a gesture towards creating something outside this political economy. We assume, on a micro-level, the structures and inequities of capital with only a minor amount of apprehension. If this is the way that another world might look, I'm not sure I'm interested.

I don't know that it's not even more of an ironic tragedy that while the gleaming towers of multinationals remain untouched, and while Davos goes ahead without protest, the organisers of the WSF come under attack and the food vendors of Nairobi have their packets of sugar appropriated. If the WSF is not a vehicle of struggle, not part of a programme of action between these players and movements, it's telling that it becomes hobbled with expectations of something better within its very interior. Petitions and grievances from the poorest among us are starting to seem best brought to the foot of the WSF and a left that hasn't done much for them lately, and is promising nothing.

Realities like these may be one indicator of why attendance at the WSF has been declining. The actions of the Nairobi activists peeled away the veneer of 'commonality within difference' to show our disabilities around actualising a creative space in which that is possible. 'Sharing' and 'coming together' is depoliticised, missing the power at work in any space and therefore replicating it. Celebrating horizontality without situating responsibility is a dangerous omission. Under the shade of the Windsor hotel, we must admit this is a farce of solidarity.

The contradictions that surfaced through the protests taught us very little about this 'other world' we are meant to be building. How can we digest the interactions and 'solidarities' that broke down, and will continue to break down within this style of engagement ?

Of course there were many important achievements made at the WSF that shouldn't be overlooked. Still, it is important to not only romanticise our solidarity, but to analyse our exclusions. If another world is possible, how to actually create a responsible, politicised, horizontal space on a broad scale, without reinforcing the 'world that exists', is a question that lingers for me post-Nairobi.

Notes

1 This essay was first posted on the SA Debate discussion list, at debate@lists.kabissa.org , on February 4 2007, 4:06:20 PM GMT+05:30, as 'We Won't Pay To Discuss Our Own Poverty ! Activist Interventions Into The 'Open Space' of The World Social Forum'. The editors thank the author for her agreement to modify the text for inclusion here, and the debate moderator for making all such material available freely.

2 World Social Forum, 2001.

3 Manji, January 2007.

Linking Below, Across, And Against : Rethinking Global Civil Society Strategy ¹

Patrick Bond

Can we learn to conceive, theoretically and politically, of a 'grassroots' that would be not local, communal, and authentic, but worldly, well-connected, and opportunistic ? Are we ready for social movements that fight not 'from below' but 'across', using their 'foreign policy' to fight struggles not against 'the state' but against that hydra-headed transnational apparatus of banks, international agencies, and market institutions through which contemporary capitalist domination functions ?²

Introduction ³

The last some years have not been ripe for global reforms, as witnessed by some telling intra-elite battles decided mainly by the arrogance of the United States government : The inability to expand the UN Security Council in September 2005; the potentially permanent breakdown of the Doha Round of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations in July 2006; the minor shift of voting power within the International Monetary Fund (IMF) board of governors in September 2006 (which strengthened several countries at the expense of Africa); the failure to expand the Kyoto Protocol at a November 2006 conference in Nairobi; and the lack of Middle East, Gulf, central Asian, and Horn of Africa peace settlements, or indeed prospects.

Likewise, this appears a 'down time' for global-scale social change work in the radical tradition, if by that one considers full-fledged attacks on institutions like the WTO in Seattle (1999) or the G8 in Genoa (2001); or the more surgical activities (including solidarity) that characterised the defence of Zapatismo in Mexico after 1994, or of Cochabamba water warriors after they kicked out Bechtel in 2000, or of factory occupations in Buenos Aires after 2002, or of the right to water and electricity in Soweto, or a myriad struggles for human rights and democracy in Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Burma, Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Colombia, etc. The anti-war movement also provides occasional shows of strength, especially in sites like Italy where US bases are at stake.

Still, it is sometimes argued that since September 2001, alliance-growing internationalism in the North (especially long-sought unity between social movements, environmentalists, and labour) and the space or impulse to conduct protest against corporate globalisation in the South have both withered and also failed to maintain even the minimum required momentum given ongoing global-scale threats. If Joe Stiglitz is correct, in Globalization and its Discontents, that fair trade activists and the Jubilee movement were crucial to getting his reformist critique onto the agenda, then it is not surprising that Stiglitz, Jeffrey Sachs, George Soros, and other high-profile global Keynesians have themselves made no progress.

Without a doubt, there continues to be hectic advocacy work across borders by NGOs, international labour federations, and environmentalists. But the waning visibility of militant community-based tree-shakers probably prevents the petit-bourgeois NGO jam-makers from finding any fruits for – or of – their labours. Setting aside the remarkable rise of left-leaning Latin American governments and their puncturing of the IMF's self-financing model, almost nothing has been accomplished to reform the world over this time, aside from dubious debt deals, permission to produce generic AIDS medicines, and a slight increase in North-South aid. The move by some globally-conscious activists to anti-poverty campaigning is one reflection of how weak the anti-poverty campaigners have been till date in articulating a coherent global-scale political project.

But this is not meant to sound pessimistic. For advocates of global justice, the period since 2001 has also witnessed two kinds of constructive activities, one building the World Social

Forum (WSF) and its constituent movements, and the other linking social movements across borders, usually sector-by-sector – albeit with insufficient linkages between the sectors. In his important politico-anthropological book on Africa, Global Shadows, James Ferguson offers this confession :

Traditional leftist conceptions of progressive politics in the third world (to which many anthropologists, including myself, have long subscribed) have almost always rested on one or another version of the vertical topography of power that I have described. 'Local' people in 'communities' and their 'authentic' leaders and representatives who organise 'at the grassroots', in this view, are locked in struggle with a repressive state representing (in some complex combination) both imperial capitalism and the local dominant classes. The familiar themes here are those of resistance from below, and repression from above, always accompanied by the danger of cooptation, as the leaders of today's struggle become the elites against whom one must struggle tomorrow.

I do not mean to imply that this conception of the world is entirely wrong, or entirely irrelevant. But if, as I have suggested, transnational relations of power are no longer routed so centrally through the state, and if forms of governmentality increasingly exist that bypass states altogether, then political resistance needs to be reconceptualised in a parallel fashion.⁴

Hence we begin here such a reconceptualisation – a vast task which can only be done through debates and struggles, with activists from the 'grassroots' as our most serious guides – by checking the WSF's progress. From disputes between various camps within the WSF, we reconstruct a map of ideological currents spanning Third-World nationalism, the Post-Washington Consensus reformers, and the disturbing fusion of neoliberalism and neoconservatives to be found in most multilateral agencies. Those with any lingering hope for global governance as a route to global eco-social justice under prevailing power relations should, after this reality check, perhaps refocus on those cross-border, cross-sectoral and cross-cutting alliances that can rearticulate how to best fight global-scale repression in all its manifestations.

I

The World Social Forum 'At The Crossroads'

We learned a great deal about divergent possible ways forward for global justice movement political strategy at the 2007 WSF in Nairobi. One of the most influential commentators and activists, Walden Bello, found the Nairobi WSF to be :

... disappointing, since its politics was so diluted and big business interests linked to the Kenyan ruling elite were so brazen in commercialising it.... There was a strong sense of going backward rather than forward in Nairobi. The WSF is at a crossroads. Hugo Chavez captured the essence of the conjuncture when he warned delegates in January 2006 about the danger of the WSF becoming simply a forum of ideas with no agenda for action... : "We must have a strategy of 'counter-power.' We, the social movements and political movements, must be able to move into spaces of power at the local, national, and regional level".

[This] need not mean lapsing back into the old hierarchical and centralised modes of organising characteristic of the old left. Such a strategy can, in fact, be best advanced through the multilevel and horizontal networking that the movements and organisations represented in the WSF have excelled in advancing their particular struggles. Articulating their struggles in action will mean forging a common strategy while drawing strength from and respecting diversity. After the disappointment that was Nairobi, many long-standing participants in the Forum are asking themselves : Is the WSF still the most appropriate vehicle for the new stage in the struggle of the global justice and peace movement ? Or... is it time for the WSF to fold up its tent and give way to new modes of global organisation of resistance and transformation ?⁵

From my own experience, a mixed message – combining celebration and autocritique – is in order. From January 20-25 2007, the 60,000 registered participants at the Nairobi WSF heard triumphalist, radical rhetoric and yet, too, witnessed persistent defeats for social justice causes – especially within the WSF's own processes. Many of these were aired on the leading African political webzine, www.pambazuka.org :

Firoze Manji, the Kenyan director of Pambazuka : "This event had all the features of a trade fair – those with greater wealth had more events in the calendar, larger (and more

comfortable) spaces, more propaganda – and therefore a larger voice. Thus the usual gaggle of quasi-donor and international NGOs claimed a greater presence than national organisations – not because what they had to say was more important or more relevant to the theme of the WSF, but because, essentially, they had greater budgets at their command”.

Nairobi-based commentator Tajudeen Abdul-Raheem : “The WSFs show up Africa’s weaknesses whether they are held outside or inside Africa. One of the critical areas is our level of participation and preparedness. A majority of the African participants – even many from Kenya itself – were brought by foreign paymasters or organisations funded by outsiders. Often they become prisoners of their sponsors. They must attend events organised or supported by their sponsors who need to put their ‘partners’ on display, and the ‘partners’ in turn need to show their loyalty to their masters”.

New Internationalist editor Adam Ma’anit : “The sight of Oxfam-branded 4x4s cruising around flauntingly, the many well-resourced charity and church groups decking out their stalls (and even their own office spaces) with glossies and branded goodies, all reinforce the suspicion that perhaps the WSF has become too institutionalised. Perhaps more worrying has been the corporate sponsorship of the WSF. The Forum organisers proudly announced their partnership with Kenya Airways. The same company that has for years allegedly denied the right to assembly of its workers organised under the Aviation and Allied Workers Union”.

Blogger Sokari Ekine (‘Black Looks’) on the final WSF event : “Kasha, a Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex activist from Sexual Minorities Uganda, went up to the stage and asked to make a statement. She was asked for a copy of what she would be speaking about and gave them her piece. The organisers threw her piece on the floor and refused to allow her to speak. Kasha stood her ground saying she, like everyone else, had a right to speak here at the WSF. Despite the harassment by the MC and organisers, Kasha took the mic and spoke. She spoke about being a lesbian, about being a homosexual. She refuted the myth that homosexuality was un-African. She spoke about the punishment and criminalisation of homosexuals in Kenya, in Uganda, and in Nigeria.... Kasha was booed and the crowd shouted obscenities at her waving their hands screaming : “No ! No ! No !”. But she persisted and said what needed to be said”.

These sobering observations were reflected in a statement by the Social Movements’ Assembly at a January 24 rally of more than 2,000 : “We denounce tendencies towards commercialisation, privatisation and militarisation of the WSF space. Hundreds of our sisters and brothers who welcomed us to Nairobi have been excluded because of high costs of participation. We are also deeply concerned about the presence of organisations working against the rights of women, marginalised people, and against sexual rights and diversity, in contradiction to the WSF Charter of Principles”.⁶

Conflicts included arrests of a dozen low-income people who wanted to get into the event; protests to forcibly open the gates; and the destruction of the makeshift Windsor Hotel restaurant owned by the notoriously repressive Kenyan Interior Minister, John Michuki, which had monopolised key space within the Kasarani Stadium grounds. Soweto activist Trevor Ngwane was a protest leader but, after the first successful break-in by poor Kenyans, reported stiff resistance : “The next day we again planned to storm the gates but found police and army reinforcements at the gates. Those officers carried very big guns. Comrades decided to block

the main road until the people were allowed in for free. This action took about half an hour and then the gates were opened. The crowd then marched to the Organising Committee's offices to demand a change of policy on the question of entrance. Another demand was added : free water inside the WSF precinct and cheaper food".⁷

Although that demand was not met, Oloo gracefully confessed the "shame" of progressive Kenyans during the Social Movements' Assembly rally. WSF logistical shortcomings reflected the Kenyan left's lost struggles within the host committee, he said. The Interior Minister ('the crusher') snuck in at the last second, and the Kenya Airports Authority systematically diverted incoming visitors to hotels, away from home stays (of the 2,000 stays arranged only eighteen actually materialised).

Setting these flaws aside, consider a deeper political tension. For Oloo, "These social movements, including dozens in Kenya, want to see the WSF being transformed into a space for organising and mobilising against the nefarious forces of international finance capital, neoliberalism and all its local neo-colonial and comprador collaborators".

Can and should the 'open space' concept be upgraded into something more coherent, either for mobilising around special events or establishing a bigger, universalist left-internationalist political project ? Bello puts the argument for upgrading in these terms :

The idea of an 'open space' should be interpreted in a partisan fashion, as explicitly promoting some views over others and as openly taking sides in key global struggles. In this view, the WSF is under an illusion that it can stand above the fray, and this will lead to its becoming some sort of neutral forum, where discussion will increasingly be isolated from action. The energy of civil society networks derives from their being engaged in political struggles, say proponents of this perspective. The reason that the WSF was so exciting in its early years was because of its affective impact : it provided an opportunity to recreate and reaffirm solidarity against injustice, against war, and for a world that was not subjected to the rule of empire and capital. The WSF's not taking a stand on the Iraq War, on the Palestine issue, and on the WTO is said to be making it less relevant and less inspiring to many of the networks it had brought together.⁸

In South Africa, the Centre for Civil Society (CCS) has hosted several debates on this question, with at least four varying points of view emerging. In July 2006, for example, leading African political economist Samir Amin presented the 'Bamako Appeal', a January 2006 manifesto that originated at the prior WSF Polycentric event, and which combined, as Amin put it, the traditions of socialism, anti-racism / colonialism, and (national) development.⁹ In support was the leader of the Organisation of African Trade Union Unity, Hassan Sunmonu (also a WSF International Council member). Complaining that "billions of ideas have been generated since 2001 up till the last Forum", Sunmonu found "a lot of merit in [the] Bamako Appeal that we can use to transform the lives of ourselves, our organisations and our peoples".¹⁰

But reacting strongly against the Bamako Appeal, CCS student and Johannesburg anti-privatisation activist Prishani Naidoo criticised its "last century" tone and content, which mirrored "the mutation of the WSF from an arena of encounter for local social movements into an organised network of experts, academics, and NGO practitioners".¹¹ For Naidoo and three of her comrades, "It reassures us that documents like the Bamako Appeal will eventually prove totally irrelevant and inessential to struggles of communities in South Africa as elsewhere. Indeed, the WSF elite's cold institutional and technicist soup, occasionally warmed up by some hints of tired poeticism, can provide little nourishment for local subjectivities whose daily responses to neoliberalism face more urgent needs to turn everyday survival into sustained confrontations with an increasingly repressive state".¹² In contrast, Naidoo and the others praise the "powerful undercurrent of informality in the WSF's proceedings [which] reveals the persistence of horizontal communication between movements, which is not based on mystical views of the revolutionary subject, or in the official discourse of the leaders, but in the life strategies of their participants".

A third position on WSF politics is the classical socialist, party-building approach favoured by Ngwane and other revolutionary organisers. Replying to both Amin and the autonomist critique at the July workshop, Ngwane fretted, on the one hand, about reformist projects that “make us blind to recognise the struggles of ordinary people”. On the other hand, though, “I think militancy alone at the local level and community level will not in itself answer questions of class and questions of power”. For that a self-conscious socialist cadre is needed, and the WSF is a critical site to transcend localist political upsurges.

A fourth position seeks the 21st century’s anti-capitalist ‘manifesto’ in the existing social, labour, and environmental movements already engaged in excellent transnational social justice struggle. The WSF’s greatest potential is the possibility of linking dozens of radical movements in various sectors. Instead, at each WSF activists disappear into their own workshops : Silos with few or no interconnections. Before a Bamako Appeal or any other manifesto is parachuted into the WSF, we owe it to those activists to compile their existing grievances, analyses, strategies, and tactics. Sometimes these are simple demands, but often they are also articulated as sectoral manifestos, like the very strong African Water Network of anti-privatisation militants formed in Nairobi.¹³

These four positions are reflected in a book released at the Nairobi WSF by the New Delhi-based Institute for Critical Action : Centre in Movement (CACIM) and CCS : A Political Programme for the World Social Forum ?.¹⁴

Lest too much energy is paid to these political scuffles at the expense of ongoing struggle, consider the spirit articulated by Ngwane at a Nairobi debate with WSF founder Chico Whitaker : “Ordinary working class and poor people need and create and have a movement of resistance and struggle. They also need and create and have spaces for that movement to breathe and develop. The real question is what place will the WSF have in that reality. What space will there be for ordinary working class and poor people ? Who will shape and drive and control the movement ? Will it be a movement of NGOs and individual luminaries creating space for themselves to speak of their concern for the poor ? Will it be undermined by collaboration with capitalist forces ? I think what some of us saw happening in Nairobi posed some of these questions sharply and challenged some of the answers coming from many (but not all) of the prominent NGOs and luminaries in the WSF”.¹⁵

To date, the WSF’s primary achievements have been in gathering the multiplicity of movements fighting neoliberal capitalism and imperialism, and maintaining the open space to sustain mutual education and networking. But, aside from the adverse power relations critiqued by grassroots activists in Nairobi, the WSF’s main disappointment remains our inability to converge on strategy, generate agreed joint actions, and forge cross-sectoral ties.

In past decades, ‘internationals’ were forged from labour, socialist, women, youth, anti-racism / colonialism, anti-war, and other such movements, actively seeking commonalities across borders. Besides these movements, future international initiatives will more tightly link organisations devoted to minority rights, civil rights, democracy, indigenous people, cultural freedom, human rights, sexual identity, disability rights, and elder and youth rights. There are, in addition, many other issue-based movements that already coordinate advocacy and protest, in many cases taking leadership from the South, where movements are more militant and the stakes higher : Finance / debt / aid / investment, trade, recuperated factories / coops, corporate disempowerment and anti-consumerism, land / agriculture / forestry / fisheries, housing / urban access rights, water, energy, health, food / nutrition, social security, education, other environmental struggles, media, policing / prisons, and information and communication technology, to name a few.

In addition to better targeting common enemies (such as the Bretton Woods twins, the WTO, the White House, the European Union, etc), the challenge is to gain more coherence not

only for networking among these movements, but also in finding sites of interlock where their own political programmes can be drawn on for the sake of a larger – and firmly grounded – manifesto that would inspire a new generation of coordinated global / national / local activism.

One national-scale example of an all-encompassing political project – which perhaps would emerge from greater linkages across and between these movements, and much closer attention to their traditions of struggle – comes from South Africa : The 1994 ‘Reconstruction and Development Programme’ (RDP).¹⁶ That document attempted to fuse the historical struggles of the Mass Democratic Movement’s component parts, drawing upon the analyses, strategies, tactics, and alliances built over decades. Though the neoliberal African National Congress did a subsequent U-turn on the vast majority of progressive mandates in the RDP,¹⁷ it remains a crucial statement of South African social justice aspirations.

If such a global-scale project is not hosted by the WSF, where then ? One answer is that many movements are beaver away on the terrain of ‘global governance’, where there are various efforts to reform multilateral institutions. However, they have not had much success, given the global balance of forces; and hence the agents behind these campaigns are often ridiculed for their “service to imperialism”, as Petras and Veltmeyer put it.

II

Co-Opted Ngos : Contradictory Tendencies in the Global Movement

James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer have attacked the cadre based mainly in NGOs who fail to properly address global power, because they import neoliberal precepts into social movements, dressing them up in the language of participation and consultation :

The effects of structural adjustment programmes and other [global] interventions have the potential of causing popular discontent. That is where the NGOs play an important function. They deflect popular discontent away from the powerful [global] institutions towards local micro-projects, apolitical ‘grass roots’ self-exploitation and ‘popular education’ that avoids class analysis of imperialism and capitalism. On the one hand they criticise dictatorships and human rights violations but on the other they compete with radical socio-political movements in an attempt to channel popular movements into collaborative relations with dominant neoliberal elites. Contrary to the public image of themselves as innovative grass roots leaders, they are in reality grass roots reactionaries who complement the work of the IMF and other institutions by pushing privatisation from below and demobilising popular movements, thus undermining resistance.¹⁸

David Sogge’s formulation (Table 1) of ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative’ lineages of civil society captures a useful dichotomy. And Mike Davis has amplified the critique and applied it especially to urban NGOs in Third World cities.¹⁹

Table 1 : Mainstream and alternative lineages of civil society ²⁰

	Mainstream lineage	Alternative lineage
Membership of civil society	Local and intermediary NGOs, anti-government media, non-profit service bodies such as missions, charities, professional and business associations.	Social movements, non-establishment political parties, trade unions, activist community-based organisations, knowledge-based NGOs, independent media.

Main problems for civil society to tackle	Imperatives of markets, competition and modern life break natural social bonds. Tensions increase, threatening political instability. Lack of trustful relations in society sets limits to exchange and to security of private property – thus setting limits to economic growth. The state ‘crowds out’ private economic actors. Bad governance stems from oversized state apparatuses and from behaviour of government elites.	Domination by national and foreign state and private actors (often in collusion) generates socio-economic exclusion and insecurity. These set limits to equitable development and growth, weaken tax-based redistributive measures, frustrate democratic politics and generate dangerous social polarisation. Bad governance is a cumulative outcome of national and global politico-economic and military forces.
Wider roles of civil society	Civil society fosters bonds of trust, thus lowers business transaction costs and widens market relations. It compensates for loss of traditional social bonds, strengthening social consensus and consent to rules, thus helping prevent conflict.	Civil society promotes the ethic and practice of solidarity and emancipation, animating and inspiring action toward state and toward private business interests. (Nonviolent) conflict seen as a necessary motor of social change.
Organisations’ positioning and tasks	Organisations together form a ‘third sector’ complementing the state and business sectors, though they are separate from the state in political terms. Via ‘advocacy and lobbying’ they hold the government to account. They promote decentralisation and reduction of central state powers. Via public-private ‘partnerships’ some NGOs provide social services, conflict mediation etc. as alternatives to state providers.	Organisations distinct from state and from business interests. Social movements may however crystallise into parties contesting for state power. Otherwise, primary tasks are to aggregate countervailing power through mobilising and forging alliances among groups of the poor and excluded via routine and non-routine political, judicial and media channels.
Level and scope	Mainly local and national	Local, national and international
Political premises	Approach is premised on notions of ‘weak publics’ where opinions are formed but no active political leverage is pursued.	Approach premised on notions of ‘strong publics’ where opinions develop and political leverage actively pursued.
Contemp-orary origins	Approach associated with family	Approach associated with

and backing

of ideas centred on 'community', 'social capital' and 'trust' promoted chiefly by US academics and large research projects based at US universities. Major financial and intellectual backing since around 1990 from the World Bank & USAID.

activist movements of 1970s and 1980s confronting authoritarian, often western-backed regimes. Latin American, anti-colonial and some European intellectuals.

A similar danger – co-option – exists for those forces which too rapidly jump scale to the global, in search of reforms. It should be clear, after nearly three decades of systematic NGO advocacy within and around multilateral agencies that collaboration has usually not paid off. UN researcher Kleber Ghimire registers pessimism based on his survey of movements (albeit sometimes “spontaneous and informal”) which address debt, trade barriers, the Tobin tax on financial corruption, anti-corruption, and fair trade :

[A]lthough governments, bilateral bodies and international development institutions are beginning to pay more attention to such reformist transnational movements, this has not resulted in significant policy impacts.... There are major ideological limitations of the system to readily accommodate such demands.... There are few signs of stable interactions between formal political bodies and social movements. Internal divisions persist between reformist and radical forces within the movements themselves....²¹

This latter point is worth exploring further. In what I term ‘movements for global justice’, one major split appears between ‘autonomist’ and ‘socialist’ politics, as noted in the dispute over WSF programmatic politics. But two other ideological currents in civil society should also be noted : Third-World nationalism (especially as applied to networks active on matters such as racism, reparations, trade, and debt), and the ‘Post-Washington Consensus’ approach adopted by many NGOs, trade unions, progressive religious organisations, and academics aligned with civil society. Moreover, they are arrayed against two common foes : Neoliberalism and neoconservatism. Consider, then, a map of these five politico-ideological tendencies that represent distinct and largely coherent categories associated with, if not historic ‘bloc’ formation, at least increasingly universal political orientations (Table 2) :

Table 2 : Five international ideological currents

Political current :	Global Justice Movements	Third-World Nationalism	Post-Washington Consensus	Washington Consensus	Resurgent Right Wing
Tradition	socialism, anarchism	national capitalism	(lite) social democracy	neoliberalism	neoconservatism
Main agenda	‘deglobalisation’ of capital (not people); ‘globalisation-from-	increased (but fairer) global integration	fix ‘imperfect markets ’; add	rename neoliberalism (PRSPs, HIPC, PPPs) with	unilateral petro-military imperialism;

	<p>below' and international solidarity; anti-war; anti-racism; indigenous rights; women's liberation; ecology; 'decommodified' state services; radical participatory democracy</p>	<p>via reforms based on debt relief and expanded market access; reformed global governance; regionalism; rhetorical anti-imperialism; Third-World unity</p>	<p>'sustainable development' to capitalist framework via UN and similar global state-building; promote some global Keynesianism; oppose US unilateralism and militarism</p>	<p>provisions for 'transparency', self-regulation, and bail-out mechanisms; co-opt emerging-market resistance; offer financial support for US-led Empire</p>	<p>crony deals, corporate subsidies, protectionism and tariffs; reverse globalisation of people via racism and xenophobia; religious extremism; patriarchy and bio-social power</p>
<p>Leading institutions</p>	<p>social movements; environmental justice activists; indigenous people; autonomists; radical activist networks; leftist labour; liberation theology; radical think-tanks; radical media; semi-liberated zones; sector-based or local coalitions in the WSF</p>	<p>Non-Aligned Movement, G77, and South Centre; self-selecting regimes (often authoritarian), with a few that lean left; Al-Jazeera; supportive NGOs</p>	<p>Some UN agencies and some NGOs; large environmental groups; big labour; liberal foundations; Columbia University's economics department; the Socialist International; Norway</p>	<p>US state; corporate media, IT, and financiers; World Bank, IMF, WTO; elite clubs; some UN agencies; universities and think-tanks; BBC, CNN, and Sky; G8</p>	<p>Republican Party's populist and libertarian wings; Project for a New American Century; right wing think-tanks; Christian Right institutions and media; petro-military complex and industrial firms; the Pentagon; right wing media; proto-fascist European parties – but also Zionism and Islamic extremism</p>

Internal disputes	role of state; party politics; fix-it v s nix-it for international agencies; gender and racial power relations ; divergent interests; tactics	degree of militancy v ersus the North; divergent regional interests; religion; large vs small countries; internecine rivalries	some look left (for alliances) while others look right to the Wash ington Consensus (in search of resources , legitimacy , and deals) ; reforms that are optimal	Differing reactions to US empire due to divergent national-capitalist interests and domestic political dynamics	Disputes over US imperial reach , religious influence, and how to best protect cultu re, patriarchy , and state sovereignty
--------------------------	---	--	--	---	---

III

Global Governance Gaps Grow

The divergent and sometimes contradictory and opposing nature of tendencies working within the global justice movement must also be seen in the context of geopolitical currents. The Post-Washington ideology often finds expression in campaigns such as the UN's Millennium Development Goals (MDG), 'Make Poverty History', and the Johannesburg-based 'Global Call to Action against Poverty' (GCAP), all of which essentially rely for credibility upon minor advances within multilateral elite institutions. Activists associated with Post-Washington strategies are sometimes accused of promoting 'reformist reforms', which legitimise existing power structures, accumulation dynamics, and political processes, and which might also demobilise their own constituents by virtue of gaining a modicum of change on issues such as debt relief or aid promises.²² ('Non-reformist reforms', in contrast, would open wide the doors for further contestation, empower the movements not the system, and identify areas of structural contradiction for more intense struggles ahead.)

Reformist reformers include Make Poverty History strategists, unveiled in the British press as being under the influence of Gordon Brown's office via the Oxfam / Treasury / World Bank revolving door.²³ At the end of 2005, writers like Stuart Hodgkinson, Noreena Hertz, and Maxine Frith analysed the fatal flaws of Make Poverty History. According to Frith, the problem was that celebrities "hijacked" the campaign.²⁴ For Hertz, "We achieved next to nothing" because "the campaign's design allowed it to accept inappropriate markers for success that were never real proxies for justice, empowerment or accountability. And also because its demands were never in fact audacious enough".²⁵ Hodgkinson was even more critical :

By being too dependent on lobbying, celebrities and the media, by failing to give ownership of the campaign to southern hemisphere social movements, by watering down the demands agreed by grassroots movements at the World Social Forum, and by legitimising the G8 summit, the campaign was doomed from the start. Ten out of 10 on aid, eight out of 10 on debt ? [This is a reference to Bob Geldof's claim after Gleneagles.] More like G8, Africa nil.²⁶

The GCAP, known primarily for advocating white headband fashion,²⁷ issued an initial newsletter in mid-2005, entailing 3,600 words of report-backs on poverty campaigns. But there was not a word about organic anti-poverty activism in the Global South : Labour strikes, popular mobilisations for AIDS-treatment and other health services, reconnections of water / electricity, land and housing occupations, anti-GMO and pro-food security campaigns, women's organising, municipal budget campaigns, student and youth movements, community resistance to displacements caused by dam construction and the like, anti-debt and reparations movements, environmental justice struggles, immigrants' rights campaigns, political movements to take state power, etc. Two decades of unrest went unnoticed : 1980s-90s IMF Riots, high-profile indigenous people's protests since Zapatismo in 1994, global justice activism since Seattle in 1999, the Social Forum movement since 2001, anti-war demos since 2001, autonomist protests, and the Latin American left's revival. Instead, GCAP and similar efforts dedicated themselves to UN MDG advocacy.

And what of the MDGs and the MDG campaign ? September 2005 was a telling moment : The heads-of-state UN Summit meant to celebrate progress on the MDGs. According to an apparently surprised Vicente García-Delgado, the UN representative for the NGO then hosting GCAP in Johannesburg, Civicus,

What took place at the UN during the few weeks leading to the Summit was a disgrace – an ugly diplomatic spectacle where a large majority of Member States saw their carefully drafted outcome document blown up before their eyes, and where the entire process of delicate inter-governmental negotiations was held hostage to a small minority pulling in opposite directions.²⁸

But this attack by neoconservative / neoliberal forces on this pillar of the Post-Washington project was not in the least unusual or isolated. Consider other examples of institutional power and ideology that had emerged by the mid-2000s within a multilateral system whose managers generally fused neoliberalism and neoconservatism, serving the interests of a Washington nexus in which the Pentagon, Treasury, and Fed were unusually powerful and well-aligned :

Influenced especially by Gordon Brown, the European Union chose to appoint former Spanish Finance Minister Rodrigo Rato as IMF managing director in mid-2004. Vicente Navarro describes him as “of the ultra-right”, and says that besides supporting regressive social policies, he

dramatically reduced public social expenditures as a way of eliminating the public deficit of the Spanish government, and was the person responsible for developing the most austere social budget of all the governments of the European Community. The elimination of the deficit in the Spanish government's budget has had an enormous social cost ²⁹

The new head of UNICEF, chosen in January 2005, was the Bush regime's agriculture secretary, Ann Veneman, although the US and Somalia are the only two of 191 countries that refused to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In February 2005, the outgoing neoliberal head of the WTO, Supachai Panitchpakdi from Thailand (who served US and EU interests from 2003-05), was chosen to lead the UN on Trade and Development;

Paul Wolfowitz – architect of the illegal US / UK / Coalition of the Willing war against Iraq – was appointed to head the World Bank in March 2005, and because by mid-2007 he was embroiled in a legitimacy-threatening nepotism scandal of special delight to the more prurient Post-Washingtoners.³⁰

At the IMF, Dominique Strauss-Kahn – on the rightwing of the Socialist Party but a choice of conservative Nicolas Sarkozy – replaced Rato in October 2007, the third Frenchman in the last two decades in the job.

The European Union's hardline trade negotiator Pascal Lamy won the directorship of

the WTO a few weeks after Strauss-Kahn's appointment.

Bolton was appointed US Ambassador to the UN in mid-2005, although he departed in December 2006 due to Bush's inability to gain Congressional approval.

The neoliberal former World Bank spokesperson Mark Malloch-Brown took up a central job in Kofi Annan's office, at Washington's insistence.

Neoconservative US State Department official Christopher Burnham became UN undersecretary-general for management.

Another State Department official and former Washington Times editor, Josette Sheeran, was made director of the UN World Food Programme in spite of dubious links for twenty years with Rev Sun Myung Moon's Unification Church

The same dynamics were also played out in the leadership of the United Nations. In the wake of an early 1990s bout of (failed) UN leadership by Boutros Boutros-Ghali (a somewhat more Third Worldist Egyptian booted out by the US in 1995), Kofi Annan's tenure was characterised by obsequious obedience on matters ranging from ineptly-targeted anti-Iraq sanctions (which left at least half a million children dead), Nato's illegal bombing of Serbia, and the Iraq invasion and occupation. As National Security Council officer Robert Orr told an Annan biographer, "Very few secretaries-general had worked with the US military. Here we were in an era where the US military was going to be a big part of the equation. You needed a secretary-general who understands that the US military is not the enemy. Kofi could do it".³¹

As Perry Anderson's ferocious critique of Annan and the UN concludes, any hope for the UN as a source of counterhegemony ended during the 1990s :

Victory in the cold war, knocking the USSR out of the ring, and the concomitant eclipse of nationalism by neoliberalism in the Third World, henceforward gave the United States more thoroughgoing real power over the UN than it had enjoyed even at the height of its postwar ascendancy, since it could now rely on the compliance, tacit or express, of Russia and China with its imperatives. Annan's Secretariat was one product of this change. The multiplication of UN peacekeeping missions in the '90s, offloading policing tasks of lesser strategic importance for the American imperium was another. Paramountcy does not mean omnipotence. The United States cannot count on always securing UN legitimization of its actions ex ante. But where this is wanting, retrospective validation is readily available, as the occupation of Iraq has shown. What is categorically excluded is active opposition of the UN to any significant US initiative.....

Ban Ki-moon, whose appointment required Chinese assent, may keep a lower profile than Annan, but his role is unlikely to be very different.... Anxious voices from liberal opinion, worrying that the organisation might become irrelevant if Bush's 'unilateralism' persists, and plaintive appeals from the left to defend the UN from distortion by Washington, are regularly heard today. They can be reassured. The future of the United Nations is safe. It will continue to be, as it was intended to be, a serviceable auxiliary mechanism of the Pax Americana.³²

(Ban Ki-moon proved Anderson's point in January 2007, on the day the US began bombing Somalia : "I fully understand the necessity behind this attack".³³)

For the MDGs to serve Pax Americana requires that they empower the neoliberal wing of multilateralism, the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO. That is indeed the necessity behind the MDG rhetoric for, as three leading UNDP bureaucrats suggested in 2003, the campaign relies upon

... the Monterrey Consensus on development finance, the Doha 'development' round on trade, and the Highly Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) initiative, respectively. Progress on global commitments for improved aid, fairer trade and steep debt relief will determine, to a large extent, the successful achievement of the first seven MDGs by 2015 in most if not all developing countries.³⁴

Such logic will continue to exacerbate, not reduce, the forces behind the production of poverty.³⁵ Even UN officials admit that while "Monterrey, Doha and HIPC hold great promise to make significant contributions to the achievement of the MDGs, however, progress thus far has been extremely slow".³⁶ Abundant evidence suggests that **because of** Monterrey, Doha and

HIPC (including 2005 concessions), MDG targets will not be met.³⁷

IV

Conclusion : Bottom-Up Strategies to Link across Borders and Sectors

What can and should the response of the global justice movement be to this ? The strategic formula which the South African independent left, amongst other movements, has broadly adopted is to build durable and relatively democratic mass movements ³⁸ informed by internationalism, combined with demands upon the national state to “lock capital down”. The spirit entails what Walden Bello has called “deglobalisation” (of capital), to which should be added ‘decommodification’ as a central objective.⁴⁰ In South Africa, this has entailed three bouts of important mass internationalist protest activity, with more than 10,000 people marching **against** the UN’s World Conference Against Racism (Durban, September 2001) for failing to put reparations and Zionism on the agenda; more than 25,000 demonstrating against the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, August 2002) for embracing neoliberal environmental and social strategies; and tens of thousands protesting the war against Iraq (countrywide, 2003-04).

South African activists like Dennis Brutus, Trevor Ngwane, and Virginia Magwaza-Setshedi have also been instrumental in trying to remove the boot of the Bretton Woods Institutions from Third World necks, harking back to anti-apartheid analysis, strategy, and tactics. As a revival of ‘divestment’ to fight apartheid, the World Bank Bonds Boycott has had remarkable success in defunding the institution most often at the coalface of neoliberal repression across the Third World. In addition, South Africans and other activists have won dramatic victories in deglobalising the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights regime, by demanding generic anti-retroviral medicines instead of branded, monopoly-patented drugs. Similar struggles are underway to deglobalise food, especially given the Genetically Modified Organisms threat from transnational corporations, to halt biopiracy, and to kick out water and energy privatisers. These are typically non-reformist reforms insofar as they achieve concrete goals and simultaneously link movements, enhance consciousness, develop the issues, and build democratic organisational forms and momentum.

Of course, this is also a matter for nuanced scale politics : Determining whether local community, subnational, national or regional strategies can best mitigate and reverse global economic tyranny for particular issues. But the main reason to deglobalise is to gain space to fight neoliberal commodification, in the process establishing proto-socialist consumption strategies that would accompany the kinds of radical initiatives at the point of production required to move to the next mode of production.

To illustrate, the South African decommodification agenda entails struggles to turn basic needs into genuine human rights, including : Free anti-retroviral medicines to fight AIDS (disempowering Big Pharma); fifty litres of free water per person per day (ridding Africa of Suez and other water privatisers); one kilowatt hour of free electricity for each individual every day (reorienting energy resources from export-oriented mining and smelting to basic-needs consumption); extensive land reform (de-emphasising cash cropping and export-oriented plantations); prohibitions on service disconnections and evictions; free education (halting the General Agreement on Trade in Services); and the like. A free, monthly ‘Basic Income Grant’ allowance of \$15 is even advocated by churches, NGOs, and trade unions. All such services should be universal (independent of income levels) and, to the extent feasible, financed through higher prices that penalise luxury consumption. This potentially unifying agenda could serve as a basis for social change, as Gosta Esping-Andersen has discussed with respect to Scandinavian social policy.⁴¹

To arrive at such an agenda will require a formal **programme** , something that the global justice movements have not found easy to establish given divergent

tendencies between socialism and autonomism. For example, in early 2005 at the Porto Alegre WSF, nineteen well-known movement intellectuals and activists gathered to produce a draft of 'Twelve Proposals for Another Possible World', (abridged as follows) :

- Cancel the external debt of southern countries
- Implement international taxes on financial transactions, direct foreign investments, consolidated profit from multinationals, weapon trade and activities accompanied by large greenhouse effect gas emissions
- Progressively dismantle all fiscal, juridical, and banking paradises
- All inhabitants of this planet must have the right to be employed, to social protection and retirement / pension, respecting equal rights between men and women
- Promote all forms of equitable trade, reject all free-trade agreements and laws proposed by the WTO, and put in motion mechanisms allowing a progressive upward equalisation of social and environmental norms
- Guarantee the right to for all countries to alimentary sovereignty and security by promoting peasant, rural agriculture
- Forbid all type of patenting of knowledge on living beings (human, animal, or vegetal) and any privatisation of common goods for humanity, particularly water
- Fight, by means of public policies, against all discrimination, sexism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and racism. Fully recognise the political, cultural, and economic rights of indigenous populations
- Take urgent steps to end the destruction of the environment and the threat of severe climate changes due to the greenhouse effect, resulting from the proliferation of individual transportation and the excessive use of non-renewable energy sources
- Demand the dismantling of all foreign military bases and the removal of troops on all countries, except when operating under the explicit mandate of the UN, especially in Iraq and Palestine
- Guarantee the right to access information and the right to inform, for / by all citizens
- Reform and deeply democratise international institutions by making sure human, economic, social and, cultural rights prevail. ⁴²

A much longer effort along these lines was then made the next year by Samir Amin and Francois Houtart (both signatories of the 2005 statement) in January 2006 – the Bamako Appeal, as discussed above.⁴³

It can be argued – and has been argued, by some - that these efforts risk the 'top-down' danger of imposing programmatic ideas upon fluid movements and campaigns.⁴⁴ The point, however, is that the WSF has been an unprecedented space for these sorts of debates. Personally, I would be thrilled if the WSF and its affiliates developed programmatic points of convergence. My feeling is that the programmes will emerge from struggle, as they always have, and that probably the ideological diversity of the WSF will not permit sufficient clarity on matters of the sort I raise above (especially over whether we should 'fix' or 'nix' embryonic global-state institutions). Instead, I think real progress in these directions will be found in transnational sectoral forums, of which there are roughly three dozen examples, some of which are already generating the global-scale analyses, demands, strategies, tactics, and alliances that the Porto Alegre and Bamako Appeal authors should have referred to. We can divide these into three types : Political movements; traditional and cross-sectoral civil society movements; and issue-based civil society movements.

Many of the dilemmas associated with the global governance reform considered

above suggest that instead of top-down corrections, it is worth focusing on bottom-up pressure but, as Ferguson suggests, in a manner that entails movements working across borders, and linking what are sometimes single issues in the process. In many parts of the world, Karl Polanyi's "double movement" – popular resistance through which "the extension of the market organisation in respect to genuine commodities was accompanied by its restriction"⁴⁵ – is already reasserting itself, both through the rejection of market power, and in the reduction of the scope and scale – globalisation – through which capital exerts itself. But it is especially in middle-income, semi-peripheral countries that commodification and economic globalisation are most fiercely experienced, and most actively resisted.

It is important to underline that these are not scenes that occur only outside the realm of state politics. In many Latin American countries, for example, mass-popular initiatives have changed governments through votes and protests. Overall, the last thirty years since the onset of neoliberalism, and especially the last decade, have witnessed a formidable upsurge of unrest, as detailed above. In the process, the most serious activists are crossing borders, races, classes, and political traditions in sector after sector : Land (Via Campesina), healthcare (International Peoples Health Movement), free schooling (Global Campaign for Education), water (the People's World Water Forum), energy / climate change (the Durban Declaration), debt (Jubilee South), democratic development finance (IFIs-Out ! and World Bank Bonds Boycott), trade (Our World is Not for Sale), and others.

For these movements, what strategies are most appropriate given the circumstances and the array of forces they are up against ? As noted above, some in the Global Justice Movements insist that autonomist independence is the objective, while others consider these as seed-bed struggles for socialism, starting locally but building to national, regional, and international scales when power relations are less adverse. Although this is not the optimal site for such a debate, it is fairly obvious that in Chiapas, Zapatismo has ended its localist project and moved to a national agenda, in alliance with other indigenous and progressive movements. Argentine factory occupations appear to have hit their maximum autonomist strength at the stage of roughly 200 sites and 15,000 participants. Brazilian landless activists are reformulating critiques of the national state, in the wake of the betrayal by the Workers' Party, but making yet more militant demands for state services such as interventions against major landowners and grid connections, to water and electricity services for their occupied lands. Johannesburg's Anti-Privatisation Forum and its affiliates – sometimes identified as autonomist because of their illegal reconnection of water and electricity – have recently debated the adoption of an explicitly socialist manifesto. Autonomism may, hence, be at the point of exhaustion as a scale politics, potentially to be renewed by national-scale political initiatives, as we see in Latin America – yet which work across borders and link issues, as Chavez and his movements appear to clearly comprehend.

It is impossible to say where and how far these initiatives and movements will proceed before they either accomplish their goals or are defeated. But because the commodification of everything is still underway, this could provide the basis for a widescale movement for fundamental social change, if linked to the demand to 'rescale' many political-economic responsibilities now handled by embryonic world-state institutions under the influence of US administrations. To make any progress, delinking from the most destructive circuits of global capital will also be necessary, combining local decommodification strategies and tactics with the call to defund and then close the World Bank, IMF, and WTO. Beyond that, the challenge for progressive forces, as ever, is to establish the difference between reformist reforms and reforms that advance a non-reformist agenda. The latter would include generous social policies stressing decommodification, and capital controls, and more inward-oriented industrial

strategies allowing democratic control of finance, and ultimately of production itself.

But the work required to analyse the movement of movements – and their analyses, strategies, tactics, and alliances – has not even properly begun. Perhaps we must await the increasing coherence of these cross-border and potentially cross-sectoral movements at the next local, national, and regional social forums, that will build towards the 2009 WSF. Meantime, activists are driving the research forward in a manner that tells us more about the world than any other method, namely *praxis*, and it behooves us to learn from their victories and failures if we want the most strongly rooted socialist programme possible.

Notes

- 1 This is an edited version of a paper presented at the Democracy and Social Movements Institute, SungKongHoe University, Seoul, South Korea, on May 28 2007, and finalised in this form for publication in this collection in 2008. In addition to warmly thanking Hee-Yeon Cho and Yiho Ki of the Democracy and Social Movements Institute at SungKongHoe University for this invitation, my great appreciation is due to Seongjin Jeong of the Gyeongsang University Institute for Social Studies (where this work was first presented), along with the Korea Research Foundation (grant KRF-2005-005-J00201). Thanks are also due to colleagues at UKZN CCS and to numerous collaborators in other institutions and justice movements.
- 2 Ferguson 2006, p 108.
- 3 Although this paper also contains new arguments and evidence, precursors of the analysis I present here were presented to the International Society for Third-Sector Research (<http://www.istr.org/conferences/bangkok/WPVolume/Bond.Patrick.pdf>) and were published in 2005-06 in the Society's journal Voluntas, in Third World Quarterly (on problems with Millennium Development Goal campaigning), in Policy Studies (on the need for decommodification and deglobalisation strategies), in the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (on the promise and pitfalls of the World Social Forum), in David Held's Debating Globalization (on the fruitless search for global governance reforms), in three books with specific details on South African and African resistance: Elite Transition (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2005), Talk Left Walk Right (UKZN Press, 2006) and Looting Africa (Zed Books and UKZN Press, 2006); and in several other articles.
- 4 Ferguson 2006, p 108.
- 5 Bello 2007.
- 6 kenya indymedia 2007.
- 7 Ngwane, January 2007.
- 8 Bello, 2007.
- 9 Forum for Another Mali, World Forum for Alternatives, Third World Forum, ENDA (Senegal), and ors, January 2006.
- 10 As quoted in: Sen, Kumar, Bond and Waterman, eds, 2007, Section 8, 'Reactions to the Bamako Appeal', Subsection 8.4, 'Politics of the WSF: A debate in Durban'.
- 11 Eds: As quoted in Bond, February 2007.
- 12 Barchiesi, Bohmke, Naidoo, and Veriava, July 2006, and 2010.
- 13 Waguma 2007.
- 14 Sen et al 2007. The text contains some older attempts at left internationalism, such as the Communist Manifesto (1848) and the Bandung Communiqué of the Asian-African Conference (1955), as well as the 'Call of Social Movements' at the second and third Porto Alegre WSFs, the 2005 Porto Alegre Manifesto by the male-heavy Group of Nineteen, and the Bamako Appeal with sixteen critical replies. There are also selections on global political party formations by Amin, analysis of the global labour movement by Peter Waterman, the Women's Global Charter for Humanity, and some old and newer Zapatista declarations.
- 15 Ngwane, January 2007.
- 16 See The Reconstruction and Development website at: www.anc.org.za/rdp/index.html.
- 17 Bond and Khosa 1999.
- 18 Petras and Veltmeyer 2002.
- 19 Davis 2006.
- 20 Sogge 2004. Sogge draws upon Howell and Pearce 2001.
- 21 Ghimire 2005.
- 22 Bond, Brutus, and Setshedi 2005a and 2005b.
- 23 Quarmby 2005.
- 24 Frith 2005.
- 25 Hertz 2005.
- 26 Hodgkinson 2005.
- 27 GCAP's website is <http://www.whiteband.org>.

- 28 García-Delgado 2005 .
- 29 Navarro 2004.
- 30 See World Bank President , at : www.worldbankpresident.org . A sex/money scandal ultimately brought down Wolfowitz, and his replacement was Robert Zoellick, one of the 18 members of the Project on the New American Century – including Wolfowitz and Donald Rumsfeld – who, in 1998, wrote to then president Bill Clinton, asking him to enunciate a new strategy that would secure the interests of the US and its friends and allies around the world; and where that strategy should aim, above all, at the removal of Saddam Hussein’s regime, and where US American policy should not continue to be crippled by a misguided insistence on unanimity in the UN Security Council.
- 31 Anderson 2007 .
- 32 Ibid.
- 33 Within two days it became apparent that 70 nomadic civilians in southern Somalia near the Kenya borders were the main victims. According to one report, they were “misidentified in a secret operation by [US] special forces attempting to kill three top al-Qa’ida leaders... [Nomads were] bombed at night and during the day while searching for water sources. Meanwhile, the US ambassador to Kenya has acknowledged that the onslaught on Islamist fighters failed to kill any of the three prime targets... In addition to the scores of Somali civilians killed, the simmering civil war in the failed state has been rekindled.” (Penketh and Bloomfield 2007.)
- 34 Vandemoortele, Malhotra, and Lim 2003.
- 35 An excellent recent statement of why can be found in Bush 2007 .
- 36 MDG Gap Task Force, 2010.
- 37 Bond 2006.
- 38 Many of these are surveyed in Ballard, Habib, and Valoodia 2006.
- 39 Bond 2003.
- 40 Bello 2002. Eds : See also the essay by Pete North and Dave Featherstone in a companion volume; North and Featherstone, forthcoming (2013).
- 41 Esping-Andersen 1991.
- 42 The signatories – regrettably 18 men and just one woman - were Aminata Traoré, Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, Eduardo Galeano, José Saramago, François Houtart, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Armand Mattelart, Roberto Savio, Riccardo Petrella, Ignacio Ramonet, Bernard Cassen, Samir Amin, Atilio Boron, Samuel Ruiz Garcia, Tariq Ali, Frei Betto, Emir Sader, Walden Bello, and Immanuel Wallerstein.
- 43 Forum for Another Mali, World Forum for Alternatives, Third World Forum, ENDA (Senegal), and ors, January 2006.
- 44 Bond 2005. Eds : See also the essay by Franco Barchiesi, Heinrich Bohmke, Prishani Naidoo, and Ahmed Veriava (Barchiesi, Bohmke, Naidoo, and Veriava, July 2006) and also as published in a revised version in this book (Barchiesi, Bohmke, Naidoo, and Veriava 2012); and Waterman 2007a.

Opening Spaces At The US Social Forum ¹ Jeffrey S Juris

I

Two Cultures

Two cultural-political traditions converged during the 2007 United States Social Forum (USSF) in Atlanta : The contentious, often contradictory cultural politics of open space within the World Social Forum process and the cultural politics of race and class among US social movements.² These traditions are not mutually exclusive. Conflicts over openness and participation have also long riveted US feminist, student, and environmental movements, while debates about access and exclusion with regard to race, class, religion, and caste have also characterised the social forum process. However, since the first World Social Forum (WSF) was organised in Porto Alegre in 2001, the social fora have been most visibly associated with the concept of open space : The idea that the Forum provides an arena where diverse movements, sectors, and groups can come together across their differences to communicate and coordinate. At the same time, given the history of slavery, racial and economic oppression, and white supremacy in the US, together with the legacy of a powerful civil rights movement, it should come as no surprise that race and class profoundly shape the contemporary social movement context in the US, where issues of privilege, unequal access, and affirmative action are prominent. In this sense, the USSF was a unique opportunity to address racial and class exclusion within the fora and global justice movements more generally, particularly in relation to the WSF's idea of open space.

This essay critically explores efforts on the part of USSF organisers to build a diverse Forum in racial and class terms, thereby redressing a perceived domination of white and middle-class activists within previous global justice movement spaces in the US. In this sense, the anti-WTO protests in Seattle in November 1999 and the USSF in June-July 2007 have come to stand as historical-symbolic bookends, the first representing a politically important and powerful, yet white-led mobilisation,³ the latter pointing to the success of a highly 'intentional' strategy to build a movement space led by grassroots people of colour organisations. As Guerrero et al put it, "In our view, the Global Justice Movement in the United States had so far been largely white-led - we identify even the celebrated Battle of Seattle as young, white, and anarchist, albeit composed of many decentralised affinity groups - and we saw the USSF as an opportunity for change. Our aim was to shift the focus of the movement to those most impacted by the ravages of neo-liberal capitalism."⁴

By most accounts, the USSF was indeed a great success, not just in terms of numbers - more than 12,000 participants took part in five days of activities (which is a significant number for social movement gatherings in the US, in contradistinction to the global or European contexts, where tens, even hundreds of thousands have come together during social fora) - but also in terms of racial and class diversity.⁵ As I described in my field notes regarding the opening march :

Thousands of protesters began filing in with colorful signs and t-shirts, representing diverse racial and ethnic communities. The large numbers of Latinos, African Americans, immigrants, and indigenous people was striking, particularly when compared with past fora and global justice protests in the US. When the march began I moved to spot on a nearby hill to watch the various blocs marching by : Grassroots Global Justice, Acorn, Jobs with Justice, *Derechos para Todos* , the People's Freedom Caravan, the Immokolee Workers, Critical Resistance, and other largely people-of-colour led groups dedicated to social, economic, and environmental justice... The opening march set the tone for the rest of the Forum, where people of colour made up at least half, if not more, of all participants, while young women of colour assumed visible roles as presenters, plenary speakers, and organizers.

Given this observation, the main questions I pose here are the following : How did organisers achieve such a high level of racial and class diversity ? What are the implications - positive and negative - of their organising strategy ? What lessons can be drawn with respect to the lead-up to the next USSF scheduled for Detroit in 2010 ? And : What broader lessons can be learned regarding the Forum process and the practice and politics of open space ?

In a previous article,⁶ I suggested that USSF organisers achieved a highly diverse Forum in racial and class terms (though not necessarily politically or ideologically) by implementing a **strategy of intentionality** to reach out to and primarily organise among working class people of colour communities. In theoretical terms I counter-posed the idea of 'open' to the notion of 'intentional' space, by which I meant a space that was consciously designed to assume particular characteristics, i.e. to be comprised of specific social groups, to reflect a particular kind of politics, to lead to certain outcomes, etc. I specifically argued that the intentionality enacted by USSF organisers, which involved reaching out to and targeting grassroots base-building groups, resulted in the exclusion of many other sectors from the organising process, such as larger NGOs, liberals, white radicals and anarchists, organised labour, and mainstream environmentalists and feminists. Racial and class diversity was thus achieved by favouring a specific model of social change : Grassroots organising within working class communities of colour. This had the extremely salutary effect of including historically marginalised groups, but it also de-emphasised the role of the Forum as a "contact zone",⁷ a space of emergence, translation, and exchange among diverse movement sectors.

In this essay, I revisit this argument through a slightly different conceptual lens. Rather than contrast openness and intentionality - indeed, even the most open spaces are inscribed with significant intentions - I want to explore intentionality as an alternative strategy of *opening space*. In this sense, it is important to shift our focus from looking at open space as a noun to opening space as a verb.⁸

As it is widely conceived within the Forum process, open space refers to creating structures that are *formally* open, that is to say generating infrastructures for communication, coordination, and exchange within which any group can participate, provided they adhere to a set of common principles - anti-neoliberalism, anti-patriarchy, anti-racism, etc - and that they are not political parties or armed insurgents. All this is clearly stated in the WSF Charter. Even here, there is a level of intentionality, but the thrust is to build an infrastructure open to all movements, organisations, and groups that agree to these principles regardless of their social composition, political ideology, or vision of social change. However, a commitment to formal openness often overlooks *informal* barriers to access based on structures of power and domination such as race, class, religion, language, or caste. In this sense, an alternative strategy for opening space may involve the implementation of intentional strategies designed to overcome barriers to more or less equal participation.

In what follows I offer three related arguments based on ethnographic fieldwork at the 2007 USSF in Atlanta, subsequent interviews, and a conversation with previous analyses - my own and those of USSF organisers - as a contribution to our understanding of the nature and practice of open space. In a more concrete sense however, I hope this discussion can help both organisers and participants appreciate both the positive and negative consequences of particular organising strategies. In particular, I highlight three such consequences that merit reflection : First, in deciding to primarily reach out to grassroots base-building groups with a constituency among working class people of colour, USSF

organisers pursued a strategy that addressed **informal** barriers to access but in doing so they erected **formal** barriers - while also emphasising a particular strategy of organising and movement building. Second, this strategy had the positive effect of generating a Forum process that not only included but was actually led by historically marginalised groups, but had the unfortunate consequence of marginalising other movement sectors, thus reducing the degree of interaction, learning, and exchange at the US Social Forum. And third, although this outcome was widely perceived as legitimate given the history of race and class-based exclusion in the US, I suggest that the success of future US Forums depends on the achievement of a strategic balance between racial/class and political/ideological diversity via a multiplication and deepening of open spaces in ways that address formal *and* informal barriers.

I would like to think that this analysis also has relevance for other Forum processes, beyond the US context, and particularly where informal exclusions have not been adequately addressed. The US case demonstrates the need for the Forum as a whole to take the issue of inclusion/exclusion more seriously and for organisers to develop proactive measures to address informal barriers to access, while remaining committed to openness in a formal sense as well as diversity in its multiple manifestations.

II

Opening Space as Political Practice

One of the most important political innovations of the Forum process has been the promotion of the idea and practice of open space as a way to facilitate the convergence of diverse movements, networks, and groups across geographic, social, and ideological divides. Moving away from a traditional view of movement based on singular organisations with a unified vision and identity, political leadership, and formal membership base, the Forum - reflecting a broader “cultural logic of networking”⁹ that is characteristic of contemporary social movements - saw itself not as a traditional movement organisation, but rather as an ‘open space’, an arena for diverse movements to exchange ideas and information, interact, and coordinate.¹⁰ The WSF Charter of Principles thus defines the Forum as “an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences, and interlinking for effective action.”¹¹ The Charter further states that no one can speak in the name of the Forum or all of its participants, and it excludes political parties and armed organisations.

At the same time, there has been a heated debate about whether the Forum should also be viewed as a civil society actor, a means for networks and movements not only to communicate and coordinate, but also to articulate common positions and engage in collective action.¹² In this sense, some would also like to see the development of a common set of strategies and demands, as evidenced by efforts to promote a Forum-wide platform, including the G19 statement at the 2005 WSF in Porto Alegre and the Bamako Appeal at the polycentric WSF in Mali the following year. The view of the Forum as an open space, though clearly inscribed in the WSF Charter, is thus now widely contested within the WSF process, and in many ways, the intentional strategy of USSF organisers to build a more ‘diverse’ Forum also had the effect of contradicting the Forum’s open space ideal.

Over the years since it was first introduced within the Forum process, the concept of open space has come under significant critique and subsequent reformulation, often with respect to the question of power. For many critics, open space suggests a liberal notion of free exchange and expression that at best does little to advance particular struggles for social justice and at worst is complicit with the capitalist market and state. This is precisely the position of those who would like to see the Forum adopt a more overt political programme and to see particular bodies such as the International Council assume a traditional leadership role. This

position is a direct challenge to the ethic of open space within the WSF Charter and has been fiercely resisted, leading to what I have termed a struggle between horizontal 'networking' and vertical 'command' logics within the heart of the Forum.¹³ However, as Jai Sen has recently suggested, open space is a process and methodology that can be used for diverse ends, and as such, it becomes incumbent upon progressives to consciously - intentionally - construct open space as an alternative to capitalism and colonialism.¹⁴

An equally trenchant critique has arisen even among supporters of open space regarding the issue of internal power dynamics, and particularly with respect to inclusion and access. In this sense, we can think about open space as something akin to a public sphere, where diverse civil society groups come together to exchange ideas, to deliberate and, ultimately, to generate normative consensus. However, public spheres are never neutral playing fields, always already involving significant exclusions that reproduce prevailing structures of privilege and inequality. As Nancy Fraser suggests, in highly stratified societies it is not possible to bracket status inequalities.¹⁵ Even if marginalised groups are formally admitted to the public sphere, informal protocols of style and interaction may continue to mark status differences, preventing them from participating on an equal footing. At the same time, subordinate groups often lack the material means to access public spheres, making it difficult for them to participate in the first place.¹⁶

As many observers have noted, such cultural and structural exclusions have also been at work within the Forums.¹⁷ With the exception of the 2004 WSF in Mumbai and the 2007 WSF in Nairobi (and now the USSF), Forum participants have been disproportionately lighter skinned and middle class.¹⁸ Such disparities can be partly explained as resulting from an unequal access to resources. Indeed, the 'tyranny of distance' prevents many people with limited means from travelling to the Forums. As Chase-Dunne et al note, delegates at the various editions of the WSF have thus tended to come from the host country and surrounding regions.¹⁹ Exclusion has also worked along religious and cultural lines, a point that has been made regarding a lack of Muslim participation.²⁰ Despite formal openness, structures of privilege and inequality erect 'invisible' barriers that are masked by the discourse of openness, making it more likely that powerful groups will predominate. As Janet Conway has observed, "inequalities among movements get reproduced in the open space unless there is affirmative action to ensure that marginalized and minority populations are present and their voices and perspectives amplified".²¹ This was precisely the goal behind the intentional strategy of USSF organisers.

The question of invisible structural barriers to participation and unintended exclusions along lines such as race, religion, class, and caste has led to a reformulation of the concept of open space to allow for contradiction, multiplicity, and struggle. Indeed, rather than counter-posing open to closed, it is vital to consider how open space and exclusion, and by extension intentionality, are mutually implicated. As Rodrigo Nunes suggests, "The very idea of 'open space' is contradictory - for it to be opened, it must be opened by someone, for some purpose and with some people in mind; no matter how open this first determination is, it always already creates an exclusion."²²

The basic insight here, which has been most clearly articulated by Jai Sen, is that we have to view open space not so much as a space or container as a political act or a process. In this sense we need to shift from seeing open space as a noun to conceiving opening space as a verb. The practice of opening space is thus a political act, a form of **critical action**, yet one that is always fraught with tensions and contradictions. As Sen argues, "the fundamental problem here is of conceiving of open space as an object and as a fixed state of being. To the contrary, open space needs to be understood both as a *tendency* (as in *openness*, *open-endedness*) and also as an *activity* (such as *dialogue*), and not as a fixed state."²³

With respect to the USSF, the central questions become : **What kinds** of spaces are

opened, **how** are such spaces opened, and *who* is included and excluded in the process? As I argue, USSF organisers made a conscious decision to address the **informal** exclusions generated by the Forum process, intentionally opening a space that was extremely diverse in racial and class terms; and yet, by initiating a process that was more closed and directed in a **formal** sense, other actors, spaces, and political possibilities were excluded. This was an important step in building a more plural, diverse, and powerful US Forum process, but the question remains as to whether the intentional strategy enacted by USSF organisers may have moved too far in the direction of **directedness** and away from an ethic of **openness** - in the broad sense outlined above - that has characterised the spirit of the Forums.

Before moving on to discuss the USSF in more detail it is important to say a few words about the nature of openness with respect to the social fora. Once again it is useful to consider Jai Sen's recent essay, which discusses openness and open space in relation to three principles: Self-organisation, autonomy, and emergence.²⁴ The first, which has been increasingly practiced within the global and regional (notably in Europe) Forum processes and events, is **self-organisation**, which means that the Forum is, at least theoretically, organised by all of its participants. In this sense, those bodies that coordinate the organisation of the Forums - local and regional organising committees, the International Council, etc - are mainly engaged in a logistical task, providing an *infrastructure* where movements and groups opposed to neoliberal globalisation and war come together and organise their own events and activities. It is in this sense that the WSF Charter precludes anyone from speaking on behalf of the Forum or its participants. The Forum itself can thus make no political statements (although participating entities and assemblies can) and no body can provide an overall political direction. The global Forum has taken clear and conscious steps to reinforce this principle in recent years, doing away with the large plenary sessions that characterised early WSFs, and moving toward a programme that is completely self-organised by participants. The European Social Forum is also self-organised, although other regional Forums, such as those in Latin America and the US, have maintained large plenary spaces organised by planning committees.

A second related principle associated with the practice of open space within the Forums is that of **autonomy**, the idea that particular movements, groups, and communities should be free to organise themselves according to their own traditions, values, and practices and should not be encumbered by or beholden to outside forces such as the market, state, or other large institutions. In the context of the social forums this means not only that the Forums should be independent of political parties and the state, but that representatives of these forces should not participate in the Forum (an explicit point in the WSF Charter that is sometimes violated in practice, as when leaders such as Lula or Chavez hold large rallies during global and regional fora).. However, in this context autonomy also means that actors are autonomous from one another and should thus be free to organise within and around the Forum according to their own political and cultural logics. As Sen points out, the practice of building parallel and autonomous spaces,²⁵ including those that are critical of the Forum, has led to a process of "permeability and feedback" that has made the "WSF a far stronger and more robust political phenomenon."²⁶

Finally, building on the work of politically engaged scholars and theorists such as Arturo Escobar²⁷ and Graeme Chesters,²⁸ Sen also associates the concept and practice of open space with the notion of **emergence**, the idea, influenced by biology and complexity theory, that when diverse actors come together and interact in an open, non-directed manner they elicit unpredictable, at times even unintended outcomes that are often superior to those generated within more controlled social and political processes. Such open, non-directed, and often unanticipated encounters between actors from varied social and political backgrounds and traditions generates a process of **learning** and **translation**²⁹ that not only allows diverse

movements and groups to interact and coordinate and thus to form broader, more powerful movements for social change, but also leads to innovation and experimentation with new organisational forms, strategies, and practices. As Sen (2009) argues, citing a definition developed collectively during a workshop that explored open space prior to the WSF in 2005 :

The central idea here is that an open space, rather than a party or movement, allows for more and different forms of relations among [social and] political actors, while remaining open-ended with respect to outcomes. It is open in that encounters among multiple subjects with diverse objectives can have transformative political effects that traditional forms of movements, coalitions, and campaigns, with uniform themes and goals, exclude.³⁰

III

Opening Spaces – Building Racial and Class Diversity at the USSF

During the USSF this prevailing cultural politics of open space within the Forum process came together with a US-based cultural politics that has been shaped in profound ways by historical forms of racial and economic domination and privilege. These politics are particularly salient in the US, but are not unrelated to those found elsewhere, even in significantly different social, cultural, and political contexts. Consequently, while the debates surrounding open space within the US Forum process largely revolved around race and class inclusion/exclusion, the implications are also relevant for other Forum processes, in other parts of the world.

To address the historical marginalisation of working class people of colour within the US and within global justice movements in the US, the organisers of the USSF made a highly conscious effort to reach out to and organise among those communities. They enacted an ‘intentional’ organising strategy, which, rather than stressing **formal** openness, attempted to open new spaces by challenging **informal** structures of domination, bringing hitherto excluded groups into the process. But what does this mean in practice ? How did organisers build a Forum that was so diverse in racial and class terms ?

The first ‘intentional strategy’ that USSF organisers implemented was a matter of timing, of waiting for the right historical moment. Whereas regional Forums were first held in Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America in 2002, 2003, and 2004 respectively, the initial USSF would not take place until June/July 2007. The idea of a US Social Forum had been discussed at prior global social forums, but the project ultimately coalesced only in 2004 under the stewardship of Grassroots Global Justice (GGJ), an alliance founded in June 2002 by a network of grassroots organisations that had gone to the WSF earlier that year. In January 2002, the WSF International Council had asked Jobs with Justice and the Fifty Years is Enough network, which were on the Council, to organise a US Forum, but they responded that it was still premature since the WSF process was largely unknown within grassroots communities in the US. As a member of GGJ and the National Planning Committee (NPC) of the USSF explained, “If we called for it back in 2002 we wouldn’t have seen the diversity that we saw in 2007. There just wasn’t enough awareness of the process, and those who were familiar with it tended to be folks who were more White, who came from the anarchist sector, who came from the policy and solidarity groups, and some labor.”³¹

GGJ organisers realised that it would take a coordinated and sustained effort to ensure diversity, and so it was only when the IC met in Miami in November 2003 during the mobilisation against the Free Trade Area of the Americas Summit that GGJ finally agreed to look seriously into the prospect of organising a US Forum. Two meetings were held in Washington DC in April 2004, one of grassroots groups in the US, who drafted a proposal for the USSF, and another of diverse organisations from the US that had till then taken part in the WSF International Council.³² A call then went out to mostly grassroots groups to form a national

coordinating committee of fifty organisations, which ultimately became the NPC. By August 2004, 22 organisations had applied and were accepted, most with a working class people of colour base.

The second strategy of intentionality was to specifically target certain groups that had been excluded from past US global justice movement spaces. As organisers explained at the Moving the Movement Workshop on the first day of the USSF at Atlanta, an effort had been made to ensure that organisations from the “grassroots base-building” sector would assume a lead role in the process. As an NPC member explained, “If we didn’t build diversity in from the start it would have been harder to build it in later. That’s why we felt that we should take the approach of starting from this sector, with the groups that are historically marginalised from national processes, for them to get together first and build the foundation for the Forum, and from there other sectors would be incorporated so we can all sit around like we are today, equally and in dialogue.”

For USSF organisers, ‘grassroots’ meant a certain kind of organisation that was defined by a particular politics. First, and where among members of the NPC there was already a widespread commitment to grassroots organising, the goal was to help communities build sustainable organisations that empower their members, achieve tangible victories, and remain accountable to their base.³³ Second, and related to this point, in this approach the communities that are most directly affected by prevailing structures of exploitation and inequality were viewed as the principal agents of social change. In the US, these include working class communities, people of colour, indigenous peoples, youths, and gays and lesbians, among others. Third, whereas traditional community organising strategies focus on pragmatic politics rooted in people’s self-interest,³⁴ the organisations in the NPC were committed to building wider multiracial, multi-class movements actually led by oppressed people of colour. Finally, there was also an emphasis on popular education, leadership development, and community empowerment in order to build long-term structures of resistance.

USSF outreach thus specifically targeted marginalised populations organised within grassroots base-building groups. As an NPC member explained, the “folks who were brought together in Grassroots Global Justice said if it’s going to be in the US it’s got to be different... We said we want to focus on grassroots base-building organisations, of and inside working class communities of color.” Rather than circulating the initial call for the coordinating committee broadly, the early recruitment strategy was thus directed, as the NPC member continued, “This is where the intentionality comes in, because if we just sent out a broad call, you know, part of the open space is that you make it broad, whoever wants to come, but who would respond would be very different.”

Throughout the process the outreach group continued to recruit grassroots people of colour organisations as regional anchors. As a result of this very deliberate approach, the NPC would come to be comprised of 85% people of colour, 64% women, 51% under the age of 40, and 15% queer identified.³⁵ Organisers also chose a symbolic site – Atlanta – highlighting key issues such as the struggle against racism and White supremacy that are important to those they wanted to reach.

The third strategy of intentionality organisers enacted at Atlanta was to emphasise the movement-building role of the Forum, which resonated with the political vision and practice of the grassroots base-building groups that led the process. In this sense, each day of workshops was organised around a different movement-building theme : Consciousness, Vision, and Strategy. Moreover, USSF organisers highlighted popular education, and deliberate efforts to bring about a particular kind of social change. When organisers referred to ‘movement building’ they thus specifically meant community organising, and not so much cross-sector alliance building. While cross-movement alliance building and other networking were not entirely

absent at Atlanta, they were de-emphasised. There was talk of building links across people of colour movements - Asian, Latino, African-American, etc but not much across other kinds of movements. It was a singular discourse around 'movement-building'. This allowed them to plug into numerous already existing movements involving working class people of colour but without over-emphasising cross-fertilisation and exchange among diverse movements.

Finally, another element of the intentional organising strategy was to open spaces for the collective, emotional, and performative dimensions of the Forum, which allowed organisers to represent, foreground, and make visible particular issues and subjects. For example, organisers put a great deal of time and effort into organising the opening march, large plenary sessions, and public panels such as the Peoples' Movement Assembly, which generated emotion and collective solidarity. At the same time, the plenaries and panels also provided arenas for representing and enacting particular identities and foregrounding key 'movement building moments' of relevance to working class people of colour, including the Iraq War, Hurricane Katrina, drilling on Native American land, and the 2006 immigrant rights marches. These gatherings, which involved up to 4,000 participants, provided a platform for groups to perform their identities and for organisers to publicly demonstrate their commitment to diversity, voice, and representation. Organisers spent hours working on these issues, as an NPC member explained, "We spent a lot of time on representation : How many women, how many people of color ? We broke down every single [panel and] panellist : How many Latinos, indigenous people, African Americans, folks from the South, queer folks, internationals, white folks, working class ?". Organisers thus explicitly recognised the need to take proactive measures to overcome structural and cultural exclusions and to enact inclusion. That most of the speakers were people of colour and predominantly young women physically embodied the organisers' intentionality around the kind of movement they wanted to build.

IV

Intentionality and Opening/Closing Spaces

USSF organisers thus opened new spaces for marginalised groups in the US by enacting an intentional organising strategy involving a particular timing, outreach to certain groups, a specific view of movement building, and large public gatherings to make particular actors and strategies visible. This led to an exceptionally diverse Forum in racial and class terms and provided a convincing answer to the critique of US-based global justice movements for their lack of colour. However, by formally excluding other sectors - at least initially - the intentional strategy enacted by USSF organisers also had the effect of closing off other spaces. In this sense, organisers did not entirely reject the open space model, but they placed a greater emphasis on establishing a space with a particular racial and class composition, balance of power, and movement building strategy. As a result, racial and class diversity was achieved in practice by privileging a strategy of grassroots organising over a more open space of convergence, translation, and exchange among diverse sectors with distinct political visions, organisational practices, and strategies for social change.

It is instructive here to return to the three principles that Jai Sen associates with openness in the context of the Forums : Self-organisation, autonomy, and emergence.³⁶ One of the main characteristics of the Social Forums is that they provide open spaces for diverse actors to organise their own activities and events; the participants themselves determine their content. This aspect of the Forum varies across space and over time, but it is significant that the European and global Forums are now entirely self-organised, relying on a distributed, electronic process of proposal registration to fill the programme of activities. This can be contrasted with the USSF, which, despite having 900 participant-led workshops, greatly emphasised the central plenary sessions where specific issues, strategies, and communities were accentuated. Even the workshops reflected intentionality, as organisers were asked to engage with issues of concern

to grassroots communities and to address USSF goals such as youth and diversity.³⁷ In addition, the plenaries and public events consistently stressed movement building as opposed to open spaces for open, undirected sharing, exchange, and translation. The NPC thus attempted to manage much of the Forum's content and tone. The use of paid rather than volunteer translators, which can be contrasted with the use of the Babels network at the European and global Forums, further reflects a lack of emphasis on self-organisation.

It is important to note, however, that the NPC is not homogeneous and, according to a report by Project South, the USSF anchor organisation in Atlanta, there was a divide between local and national organisers around several issues, including the degree of directedness versus self-organisation. As the report explains, "The over-emphasis of the 'stage' and the crafting of the political agenda for the plenaries outweighed some national planners' ability to connect to, support, and in most cases, even recognize the non-conference movement spaces." The report goes on to suggest, "If you are more interested in political prescription than building capacity and making connections across skills, sectors, and political lines, then you don't prioritize the infrastructure design."³⁸

With respect to autonomy, NPC members who have written about the USSF process have tended to see their role as offering political leadership to the Forum rather than providing an infrastructure, implicitly siding with those critics of open space who would like to see the Forum become a unified political actor.³⁹ As Guerrero et al explain with respect to the USSF process, "At the Durham meeting we clarified that the NPC would define the overall political direction of the USSF."⁴⁰ The same essay stresses the importance of ideological unity, faulting prior progressive movements such as the immigrants struggle for lacking this quality. Indeed, as further discussed below, the emphasis on 'grassroots base building' as the sine qua non for participating in the NPC precisely reflects the imposition of a hegemonic political direction and ideology within USSF organising process.

In this sense, although the USSF was perhaps more autonomous from political parties than other Forums, which is partly however due to the lack of a true electoral left in the US, it opened relatively few spaces for the public expression of political and ideological autonomy by participating networks, movements, and groups. Indeed, there was little publicly expressed internal critique within the USSF process and the event itself, and the kinds of autonomous spaces that have promoted critical debate and direct actions aimed at the other Social Forums were largely absent at Atlanta, thus depriving the process of a key source of learning and innovation.

Perhaps most importantly, the particular organising strategy implemented by USSF organisers tended to undercut the quality of emergence that has characterised past Forums – a quality that has opened multiple spaces where diverse actors with varying backgrounds, ideologies, and strategic vision have been able to somewhat randomly converge, interact, and translate across their differences, leading to surprising, unexpected, and unintended, yet often highly promising outcomes. At one level, this lack of political/ideological diversity and of random interaction was the result of the conscious effort to ensure that the USSF was led by grassroots base-building groups, but which in turn meant other sectors were initially left out of the process. On the one hand, the criteria to join the NPC – groups had to be member-based and they had to be involved in grassroots organising – limited membership to certain kinds of organisations. Individuals, policy-oriented NGOs, intellectual and student groups, environmental organisations, and informal networks involving anarchists, direct action activists, and free media practitioners were largely absent from the NPC.⁴¹ The NPC did try to introduce some openness later, but this at all times played a secondary role, partly as a function of what came naturally to them.

On the other hand, the specific outreach strategy employed by the NPC to attract

people to the Forum primarily targeted grassroots base-building organisations rooted in working class communities of colour. This had the salutary effect of reversing traditional hierarchies, but at the same time, significant energy, creativity, and experience from other active parts of US society was lost. If this was the result of a short-term strategic or tactical decision to overcome past exclusions, and to ensure a prominent role in the Forum for those most affected by neoliberal globalisation, then it can be seen as a worthwhile step toward building a more open, diverse, and inclusive USSF process. However, at times, some organisers seem to express a view of the movement encapsulated by the USSF as, **in essence**, and exclusively, an oppressed people of colour movement. As a member of the NPC suggested during the Moving the Movement session, "this is a very intentional process... it's a people of colour movement, so we're talking about Black folks, Latinos, indigenous folks, Asian folks, which we led with a process of self-determination." There is a critical need for a powerful people of colour movement in the US, and the Forum ought to facilitate such a movement, but historically the role of the WSF has been to provide a broader space for interaction and exchange *across* movements. Too closely linking the USSF to a particular sector or group dampens the unanticipated connections, translations, and exchanges that could otherwise take place across ideological as well as racial and economic diversity and difference, both within and among particular groupings.

At another level, targeting specific populations was consistent with a particular vision of social change based on the building of powerful movements through long-term community organising, grassroots base building, and popular education. This model helps to explain why the Atlanta USSF was able to attract so many organisations that mobilise working class people of colour, and thus why the Forum was so diverse and inclusive. Indeed, by reaching out to already existing grassroots base-building groups, including environmental justice networks, the Right to the City alliance, and a coalition of community-based Workers' Centres, the organisers were able to bring out their target population in significant numbers. However, a consequence of emphasising a particular kind of movement was that less attention was paid to alternative strategies, tactics, and visions. Which is more effective : Community organising, direct action, lobbying, or media work ? Should social movements pursue state-oriented or autonomous strategies for social change ? What are the strengths and weaknesses of vertical and horizontal forms of organising ? How might different strategies, tactics, and organisational forms work together within a broader movement ?

Another result of the strategy of intentionality within the USSF was that informal networks with a greater commitment to self-organisation and autonomy were less involved in the Forum than has been the case elsewhere, particularly at the global level and in Europe, where many such groups have organised 'autonomous spaces'. In this sense, although the organisations that led the USSF process are resource poor, most have traditional organisational structures, involving vertical leadership, formal membership, and paid staff supported by foundation funding.⁴² Direct action, anarchist, and other informal groups did attend the USSF, but they had little impact on its organisation.

However, it is important to point out here that there is **no necessary correlation** between a particular community and a style of organising. In this sense, the Another Politics is Possible session at the Atlanta Forum featured a set of open, interactive discussions regarding alternative organisational forms, strategies, and tactics among predominantly informal, often anarchist-oriented people of colour groups. Some participants even challenged the model of grassroots organising. As a member of an immigrant workers group explained, "It might sound a little harsh, but... we don't believe in organizers. We're animators and consciousness raisers in our community."

Conclusions : Multiplying Open Spaces at the USSF

This essay has explored the intersection of the cultural politics of open space within the global Forum process and the cultural politics of race and class among US-based social movements as articulated at the first USSF that took place in Atlanta in 2007. Although race, class, and other modes of informal exclusion have been debated at other Forums, these issues took on a central role within the US context. As I have suggested, building on recent reformulations of the concept, open space should be seen as a contradictory and conflictual process rather than a static container. In this sense, it is important to address the possibility of alternative paths to opening space. Whereas the dominant or prevailing discourses of open space within and around the Forum's stress *formal* openness, USSF organisers broke new ground by emphasising the opening of space by challenging *informal* barriers to access. This was a positive development that helped generate an extremely diverse Forum in race and class terms. However, the intentional organising strategy enacted by USSF organisers also undermined the openness of the Forum in other ways. By favouring a single model of organising - grassroots base-building - the Atlanta Forum ended up de-emphasising, and even negating, the role of the Forum as a contact zone between different movement sectors, ideas, and practices.

The challenge going forward in the US will be to bring other movement sectors into the NPC and to increase the overall political and ideological diversity within the Forum without sacrificing the impressive racial and class diversity achieved at the first USSF. The best way to accomplish this would be to promote a multiplicity of spaces within the USSF - each autonomous, yet connected to the broader Forum and self-organised. In this sense, rather than expressing an overall social and political character or direction, the USSF would provide an infrastructure where multiple movements, networks, and groups can organise their own spaces and activities without imposing their styles, practices, and traditions on other Forum participants. There could still be a significant degree of intentionality to ensure that historically marginalised groups continue to have a key role within the NPC and that grassroots base-building groups that organise among working class people of colour are able to create large, visible spaces within the USSF, but no one sector would be able to determine the direction, composition, or character of the entire Forum.

This also has important implications for social fora elsewhere, where the challenge posed by the US Forum process is precisely to take more proactive measures to overcome informal barriers to access with respect to axes such as race, class, and religion. At the same time, the US experience also offers a cautionary tale regarding the need to strike the right balance between efforts to achieve multiple forms of diversity and Forum's traditional commitment to openness, cross-fertilisation, and exchange across particular movements and sectors. This suggests a critical need for further research and reflection regarding how these dynamics play out during subsequent local, regional, and global Forum processes.

I want to conclude by proposing three specific strategies that could facilitate the opening of multiple spaces at the next USSF. First, the NPC should be rethought as a coordinating body that is less concerned with providing political direction for the Forum (which violates the spirit, if not the letter, of the WSF Charter) and more attentive to the building of an infrastructure where participating movements, networks, and collectives themselves can build and organise their own spaces and activities. In practical terms, this would mean further reinforcing the **logistical** role of the local Organising Committee and the **coordinating** role of the NPC, while privileging self-organised activities over larger plenary sessions during the USSF. Second, with respect to the composition of the NPC, a certain level of intentionality is still warranted to ensure that working class people of colour retain a prominent role, but membership should be greatly expanded among other sectors. In addition to labour, NGOs, and mainstream environmental, anti-war, and feminist groups, this would also mean reaching out

to the informal anarchist, direct action, and media collectives that have played such an important role within the wider global justice movement, particularly in terms of their innovative organisational practices and forms. Finally, the physical infrastructure of the USSF should be seen as a multiplicity of spaces. This would mean allowing diverse sectors to not only organise their own activities but also to manage the organisation of particular zones within the Forum, much like the World Social Territories from the 2005 WSF.⁴³

These strategies would not only generate greater political and ideological diversity, they would also enhance openness with respect to the three dimensions explored above. In terms of self-organisation, they would multiply the number of spaces developed and managed by participating movements, networks, and groups. This, in turn, would reduce the role of outside structures in determining the organisation and the political direction of the USSF and reinforce the autonomy of participants. Finally, the greater degree of self-organisation, autonomy, and multiplicity would also facilitate increased dialogue, sharing, and internal critique with respect to political vision, practices, and organisational forms. Such emergent patterns of interaction would help promote an ongoing process of communication, learning, and innovation across sectors that could lead to new, unforeseen, and hopefully more effective, movement strategies, forms, and campaigns.

Indeed, some NPC members are themselves eager to see the USSF move in this direction. As the Project South report mentioned above contends :

As we move the Social Forum process forward in this country, we must not default to preconceived notions of methodology, space design, and political prescription. If we collectively consider the crises of our moment, reflect on the historical trajectory, and support the creation of innovative and experimental spaces, the Forum has the opportunity to expand in participation every time we converge. These spaces, although not resourced effectively in this first round, were compelling and offered glimpses of strategic convergences on a mass scale.⁴⁴

Notes

1 Editor's note : This essay was written in 2008-9, based on the author's experience of the first USSF held in Atlanta, Georgia, in June 2007, and looking ahead to the second USSF, scheduled for June 2010. At the time of publication however, the second USSF has also taken place, in Detroit, in June 2010. From my own experience of the Detroit USSF, and while the views and analysis in this essay remain entirely his, I feel I can say that the author's analysis remains as valid post Detroit as it was post Atlanta, and his suggestions as valid for the USSF process over the next period as they were for the process leading up to Detroit. - JS

For the reader's information, the author of this essay presented the essence of his arguments in this essay at a workshop organised during the Detroit Forum titled *Rooting the Social Forum process in the everyday practices of the subaltern : How else are other worlds possible ? A critical engagement with the US Social Forum and the World Social Forum* (organised on June 25 2010 by JS on behalf of CACIM together with NIGD and Sociologists without Borders), as comments on the presentations made at the workshop by three key members of the Organising Committee of the Detroit Forum; and where a very rich discussion took place on these and related issues. A report on the meeting based on the transcript of the session is posted at <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-page.php?pageName=Learning%20from%20the%20US%20Social%20Forum>, and the audio recording of the session at <http://organize.ussf2010.org/news-stories> and at <http://organize.ussf2010.org/content/future-world-social-forum-2-learning-us-social-forum-process-audio-recording>.

2 See Juris 2008a.

3 Martinez 1999, Starr 2000.

4 Guerrero et al 2009, p 316.

5 Guerrero 2008; Guerrero et al 2009; Juris 2008a; and Rebeck 2007.

6 Juris 2008a.

7 de Sousa Santos 2006a.

8 Sen 2009.

9 Juris 2008b.

10 Cf. Sen January 2003e.

11 www.forumsocialmundial.org.br (accessed by author December 15, 2003).

12 Patomäki and Teivainen 2004.

- 13 Juris 2005b, 2008b.
- 14 Sen 2009.
- 15 Fraser 1992.
- 16 Fraser 1992, p 120.
- 17 Ylä-Anttila 2005.
- 18 Alvarez et al, forthcoming.
- 19 Chase-Dunn et al, forthcoming.
- 20 Caruso 2004. Daulatzai 2004.
- 21 Conway 2008, p 62.
- 22 Nunes 2005b.
- 23 Sen 2009, p 28.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Juris 2005b, 2008b.
- 26 Sen 2009, p 6.
- 27 Escobar 2008.
- 28 Chesters 2008; cf. Chesters and Welsh 2006.
- 29 de Sousa Santos 2006.
- 30 This definition was developed and put forward by members of the EIOS – Explorations In / Encounters with Open Space – Collective during a workshop before the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2005.
- 31 All quotes are taken from personal interviews unless otherwise indicated. For additional details on the history of the USSF, see Guerrero 2008 and Guerrero et al 2009.
- 32 Editors' note : The organisations from the US that had taken part in meetings of the WSF's International Council till 2003 were : 50 Years is Enough!, AFL-CIO - American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations, APC (Association of Progressive Communicators), Corpwatch, Global Exchange, IATP (Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy), IFG (International Forum on Globalization), IGTN (International Gender and Trade Network), IRN (International Rivers Network), Public Citizen, and ZNet. Data taken from WSF Office, nd. As this list makes clear, till this date none were grassroots organisations or organisations based on grassroots organising.
- 33 Polletta 2002.
- 34 Polletta 2002, p 179.
- 35 Guerrero 2008, p 179.
- 36 Sen 2009.
- 37 In the end, members of the programme group decided not to vet specific workshops, however, given the large number of proposals (personal interview).
- 38 Guilloud 2009, p 11.
- 39 *Eds* : See, for instance, Sen and Kumar, compilers, with Bond and Waterman, January 2007.
- 40 Guerrero et al 2009.
- 41 However, not many groups from other movement sectors applied and no applicant was ever rejected. The process eventually opened up, however, and a few non-base building organisations did ultimately serve on the NPC, including Sociologists without Borders, the American Friends Service Committee, the 50 Years is Enough Network, and the Ruckus Society .
- 42 In this sense they resemble the classic social movement organisations of resource mobilisation theory. However, as Piven and Cloward (1978) contend, formal organisations can dampen the spontaneity and militancy needed to build mass movements. For a critique of what some activists and observers are now calling the “non-profit industrial complex,” see INCITE! 2007.
- 43 Juris 2005b.
- 44 Guilloud 2009, p 12.

At An Impasse ? Anti-Capitalism And The Social Forums ¹

Alex Callinicos and Chris Nineham

The international movement against capitalist globalisation has been globally visible for nearly a decade and a half now. It first emerged to prominence with the Chiapas rising of January 1994 and the French public sector strikes of November-December 1995, and exploded onto the global stage at the Seattle protests in November 1999. It then enjoyed a period of dynamic expansion through the launch of the World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2001, the massive confrontation at the G8 summit in Genoa in July 2001, and the first European Social Forum in Florence in November 2002. The culmination was the enormous demonstrations against the war in Iraq between February and April 2003. Subsequently, however, there has not been the same forward impetus. Indeed, increasingly centrifugal pressures and even a degree of disarray have become evident.²

The seventh World Social Forum, held in Nairobi, Kenya, in January 2007, may have marked a turning point. The forum was far from being a disaster, despite the questionable decision to hold it in a country with weak social movements. Some 46,000 people participated, the majority from Kenya itself and around a quarter from the rest of Africa—no mean achievement, given the poverty and vast distances of the continent. The coming together of activists involved movements from across Africa and the rest of the Global South, as well as from the North, generated some of the energy on display at the earlier world and European forums. And the opening and closing marches, from the slum settlements of Kibera and Kariobongi respectively, did offer a vivid sense of the convergence of global struggles, even if they were relatively small.

Nevertheless, the forum was also crippled by internal controversy. Many local and foreign activists expressed the view, summarised by one of the organisers, Onyango Oloo, national coordinator of the Kenya Social Forum, that “the event gave rise to disturbing and negative tendencies such as commercialisation, militarisation and authoritarian and undemocratic decision-making”.³ Particular anger was caused by the sponsorship of the forum by a mobile phone company, the high entrance fees charged to Kenyan participants, the dominance of catering by elite local hospitality firms such as the Windsor and Norfolk, and the pervasive presence of the police and military. The tensions climaxed when a coalition of Kenyan slum-dwellers and foreign activists led by Trevor Ngwane of the South African Anti-Privatisation Forum stormed the Windsor restaurant, owned by John Michuki, minister of internal security (and known by Kenyans as Kimendeero, the crusher, because of his role for the British colonial regime during the 1950s Mau Mau rebellion), and redistributed its contents. Oloo paints a damning insider’s portrait of the undemocratic way in which the forum was run. He tells of “a political evaluation of the WSF” by “perhaps the most high profile member of the organising committee” which refers to “glue-sucking urchins from Korogocho” (a slum in northern Nairobi), while dismissing most of the critics of the process as “condescending Trotskyites from the North”.⁴ The Filipino intellectual and activist Walden Bello, one of the movement’s most consistent strategic thinkers, writes, “There was a strong sense of going backward rather than forward in Nairobi”.⁵

Italian trade unionist Bruno Ciccaglione criticises what he calls “the tendencies...to transform the WSF into a folklorist/commercial event”, but argues that these are only symptoms. “The real problem”, he says, is the divergence in what is happening to the different movements that were the driving force in the WSF process :

On the one side the European movements, able to produce large mobilisations and concrete victories in past years, are today in a deep crisis and do not look capable to have unitary and common mobilisations at a continental level, and, sometimes, like Italy, even at a national level. On the other side the Latin American movements, very strong at the moment, are living an interesting and successful period...but they are a lot more concentrated on their own continent rather than on a worldwide perspective.⁶

This loss of impetus can be traced in the trajectory of the most powerful anti-capitalist organisation in Europe, Attac France. Founded in 1998 to campaign for the regulation of financial speculation, it initially grew explosively, attaining a membership of 30,000 by 2001, and spawning affiliates in many other countries. However, Attac's membership stagnated in 2002-4 and then started to decline, falling to 21,000 in 2006. This reflected an increasingly bitter internal crisis that drove Attac to the verge of a split by the end of 2006.⁷

There are in fact a number of issues that we need to analyse to begin to understand this sense of crisis in the European movement. There are inherent difficulties with common mobilisations, there are weaknesses in the methods and practices of the social forum movement, and there are political problems that have emerged in the process of developing the wider movements. This article aims to help develop this understanding. Its focus is largely on Europe because this is the region that we know best and it is here that the crisis in the anti-capitalist movement is most visible.

I

The Dialectic of National and Global

Global capitalism is subject to what Leon Trotsky called the law of uneven and combined development.⁸ So too are the movements that resist it. The anti-capitalist movement developed certain key national bases during its initial phase of dynamic expansion. The Al Qaida attacks on New York and Washington on 11 September 2001 crippled the North American coalition of activists that had been responsible for the Seattle protests and had expanded rapidly thereafter. Fortunately, an axis had already developed through the first WSF in Porto Alegre between Attac in France and a coalition of Brazilian NGOs and social movements (notably the MST landless labourers' movement and the CUT trade union federation), which gave the movement a stable global framework. A powerful third partner came from the explosive development of the social forum movement in Italy, under the inspiration of the WSF and hugely accelerated by the confrontation at the Genoa G8 summit in July 2001.⁹ Others played an important role - for instance the Indian organisers of the most successful WSF to date, in Mumbai in January 2004 - but the most politically important relationships were between these three partners.

Relations within the Franco-Italian-Brazilian trinity were never exactly harmonious. Neither Attac nor its partners in the Brazilian based WSF organising committee were happy about the high profile involvement of the Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (the Refounded Communist Party) in the Italian movement. Bernard Cassen, first president of Attac, was openly critical of the emphasis on the war at the first European Social Forum in Florence in November 2002.¹⁰ That emphasis also drew the Italians closer in 2001-3 to the emerging anti-war movement in Britain, but which was the object of much mistrust from both Attac and various autonomists because of the role of the radical left in its leadership. Nevertheless, these tensions were relatively easy to manage till after Florence and the anti-war protests of early 2003.

Greater internal polarisation became visible in 2003-4, reaching a crescendo at the third European Social Forum in London in October 2004. In part it involved a natural process of political differentiation. As the movement developed, it confronted increasingly demanding questions about how to pursue the struggle both against neoliberalism and against the imperialist offensive mounted by the United States and its allies. The diverging responses led to

the crystallisation of distinct political tendencies within the movement—a reformist right wing, focused on Attac and its international network, seeking a return to a more regulated capitalism; autonomists who claimed to be transcending traditional debates on the left and building localised alternatives to capitalism in the here and now; and a radical left seeking to get rid of capitalism altogether. Such a clash of different political perspectives was inevitable, though debate was often obfuscated by the tendency of the right wing to use autonomist language and even (as at the London European Social Forum) to ally with the autonomists against the left.¹¹

But the subsequent evolution of the movement has shown it has other problems. A key characteristic of the anti-capitalist movement has been its transnational character (hence it has always been a misnomer to call it the ‘anti-globalisation movement’, since it has from its inception been the most international of movements; for those reluctant to apply the label ‘anti-capitalist’, the ‘movement for another globalisation’ and ‘altermondialiste movement’ are much better alternatives). But this poses the problem of how it pursues a genuinely transnational struggle. International mobilisations against G8 summits and World Trade Organisation meetings are one answer, but these are intermittent and artificial events, and are too vulnerable to the contingencies of location (which tend, precisely because of the protests, to be ever more remote) to be the basis for a sustained movement.

Opposition to the war in Iraq offered a genuinely universal unifying issue. No wonder, then, that the global day of protest against the Iraq war on February 15 2003 came to represent a historic peak of global mass protest. But the bulk of the movement did not persist with anti-war mobilisation once Baghdad fell, on April 9 2003. There were a variety of reasons for this. As we have seen, one very influential actor, Attac, regarded the war as a diversion from the real priority of opposing neoliberal globalisation. Moreover, in much of continental Europe the peace movements also gave up serious anti-war campaigning. This reflected their origins as pacifist groupings campaigning against nuclear weapons during the Cold War. Ideologically and temperamentally they were ill-equipped to respond to a conflict that pitted US American imperialism against enemies it portrayed as ‘Islamofascist’; and so they threw in the towel with some relief.

In the US itself the luxury of not talking about the war wasn’t available, and the US anti-war movement mobilised on a very impressive scale. A series of historic demonstrations and the stand of anti-war troops and their families helped to turn US opinion overwhelmingly against the war, a feat many had felt was impossible. But from the start the anti-war movement was divided. There was Answer, led by pro-North Korean Stalinists who have subsequently themselves split, and there was the much broader and more mainstream United for Peace and Justice. Many of this organisation’s leaders and supporters allowed themselves to be diverted into John Kerry’s presidential campaign in 2004, in the vain hope that even a pro-war Democrat would be better than George Bush. The distraction was doubly damaging because of the demoralisation caused by Kerry’s defeat. It is only in 2006 that the American anti-war movement began to recover from these setbacks.

There were, of course, exceptions to the pattern of dropping the issue of the war once it had started. The Spanish anti-war movement, though never well coordinated at a national level, played an important role in turning the tragedy of the Madrid train bombings into a rout for the warmongering Aznar government in March 2004. The movements in Turkey and Greece continued over some time to make an impact on their national political scene. But the most important exception was the Stop the War Coalition in Britain, a new kind of anti-war movement founded specifically to oppose the ‘war on terrorism’ and whose radical left leadership was able to build and sustain a broad coalition with considerable popular support and mobilising power.

At an international level, Focus on the Global South, whose roots lie in the 1990s

campaigns against trade and debt from which the anti-capitalist movement emerged, showed a very clear understanding of the connections between neoliberalism and imperialism and has devoted considerable effort to maintaining a global anti-war network. The annual Cairo Anti-War Conference also built powerful links between the opposition in the most important Arab state and some Northern anti-war coalitions. But, important though these different initiatives are, and despite the fact that there is deep-seated popular opposition everywhere to Bush's 'long war', the fact remains that there is currently no real global movement against the war.

No other issue has emerged to replace the war as a transnational mobilising focus. The idea was floated at a meeting in Genoa in July 2003 of building 'a social 15 February'. It was a wonderful idea, but, in the circumstances, utopian. Everyone, wherever they were, could campaign against the war in Iraq. But neoliberal attacks necessarily unfold on a national terrain. Even when they reflect global or (within the European Union) continental initiatives by capital, the timing and content of their implementation are shaped by the nation-state concerned. Taking up what in the European movement has come to be called 'the social question' therefore has a centrifugal logic.

Now in many ways this is a welcome development. The old establishment taunt at the anti-capitalist movement was that it was an elitist travelling circus. But the movement has in fact sunk real, national roots in some parts of the world. In Europe this has happened in a number of countries, notably France, Italy, Germany, Greece, and Britain. But this development has also produced diverging political priorities in different countries.

For example, there has been a long-running debate between the movements in France and Britain over the relative priority of the war and 'the social question'. In part, this reflects real political disagreements arising from different appreciations of the relationship between neoliberalism and imperialism.¹²

At the same time, the different socio-political realities of the two countries mean that the issues differ in their mobilising power. France is the European country that has witnessed the most sustained resistance to neoliberalism, with social explosions in 1995, 2003, 2005, and 2006. In Britain, perhaps because neoliberalism was imposed here first and most comprehensively under the Thatcher government in the 1980s, there is a degree of popular fatalism about the possibility of stopping or reversing the inroads of the market that has, for example, made it difficult to mount effective mass agitation against the Bolkestein Directive aimed at privatising public services in the European Union. But in contrast, the war in Iraq has generated enormous popular anger in the UK, that continues to bring large demonstrations onto the streets.

These difficulties did not make cross-border mobilisations against neoliberalism impossible. On the contrary, respectable altermondialiste contingents took part in protests in Brussels in March 2005 and in Strasbourg in France in February 2006. But the reach of these mobilisations was limited to north western Europe and participants numbered in thousands, not tens or hundreds of thousands. This pattern will no doubt change with the further development of social resistance to neoliberalism—Britain included, since increasing pressure on living standards may lead to a revival in workers' struggles here—but this future prospect doesn't alter the present limitations of the movement.¹³

II

The Troubled Return of Politics

Greater engagement by the movements with their national realities has a further complicating effect. The more anti-capitalist coalitions find themselves operating in a national arena, the harder it is to evade the political field. But one of the founding myths of the movement is its separation from political parties, reflected in the famous ban on their participation in social forums in the WSF Charter of Principles.¹⁴ This was a symptom of what Daniel Bensaïd aptly

called :

A “social illusion”...an illusion in the self-sufficiency of social movements reflected in the experiences after Seattle (1999) and the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre (2001). Simplifying somewhat, I call this the “utopian moment” of social movements, which took different forms : utopias based on the regulation of free markets; Keynesian utopias; and above all neo-libertarian utopias, in which the world can be changed without taking power or making do with counter-powers (John Holloway, Toni Negri, Richard Day).¹⁵

The ideology of autonomous social movements developed during the 1970s and 1980s, as the left and the organised working class suffered serious defeats. It is therefore not surprising that it should be a major influence on activists mobilising against neoliberalism. Many of them were veterans of these defeats. They are often based in non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that, by virtue of their social role, have a complex relationship of both distance from and dependence on official politics, or, as in France and Italy, they are based in the broad activist coalitions through which the altermondialiste movement began to develop in the course of the 1990s.¹⁶¹² As time has gone on, this ideology has become a growing obstacle to the further development of the movement.

This can be seen in all three countries of the dominant trinity. In Brazil, the ban on parties in the WSF’s Charter was hypocrisy from the start. The WSF depended on a tacit understanding between its founders and the Workers’ Party, which was, at the time of the WSF launch, in opposition at the federal level but in control of the city of Porto Alegre and the state of Rio Grande do Sul of which it is the capital – and where the WSF was founded. The election of Workers’ Party leader Lula as president in October 2002 posed an acute problem for the movement both locally and internationally, since even by that time he had committed himself to the neoliberal economic policies of his predecessor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso.

The increasing integration of the Workers’ Party leadership in Brazilian capitalism caused revulsion among many activists and intellectuals previously loyal to the party.¹⁷ The Porto Alegre WSF in January 2005 was marked by a visible polarisation, with Lula addressing the forum at its start and Hugo Chávez speaking to a huge rally of the young at its end. That put the Porto Alegre Charter on life support and dramatised the choice facing the left in Latin America between a regional version of Blairism and the search for 21st century socialism.

In France, the pressure of the political field has been both more complex and more demanding. Probably the most important single impact that the anti-capitalist movement has had in a national arena was the role altermondialistes played in the campaign that defeated the neoliberal European Constitutional Treaty in the French referendum of May 29 2005. Considerable credit must go to the leadership of Attac for identifying the issue of the constitution as a major challenge to the movement. But a decisive role in that movement was played by the traditional political organisations of the left, despite the contribution of Attac and other altermondialiste groups.

The French Socialist Party split as its rank and file rebelled against its leadership—a development that was matched in the CGT, the biggest trade union federation. A leading role within the national network of 29 May collectives was played by the Socialist Party left (and not so left) alongside the Communist Party and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR). This was, as Stathis Kouvelakis put it, “the triumph of the political” : “The real significance of the referendum process was the popular mobilisation which took hold of political questions on a scale not seen since the early 1970s”.¹⁸

Building on this victory, alas, proved very difficult. A strong will developed after the referendum to continue the coalition that had delivered the No vote and to give it a political expression by running a unitary anti-neoliberal candidate in the presidential elections of April-May 2007. This was, however, sabotaged by the two most important political organisations of

the radical left, though they did so by pursuing opposed strategies. The Communist Party sought to embrace and indeed in many cases take over the 29 May collectives in order to gain their support for the candidacy of the party's general secretary, Marie-George Buffet. The LCR, by contrast, kept aloof and concentrated on preparing the presidential campaign of its candidate, Olivier Besancenot, a stance it justified on the grounds that the collectives had failed to rule out in principle participating in a social-liberal coalition government headed by the Socialist Party.

The result was chaos, rancour, and division in the collectives. Instead of a unitary anti-neoliberal candidate running in the first round of the presidential elections on April 22, the political fragmentation on the radical left actually increased compared to the first round five years before, with José Bové - a French farmer and syndicalist, member of the alter-globalisation movement, and spokesman for Via Campesina - running as the candidate of the rump of the collectives against Buffet, Besancenot, and two other Trotskyist candidates. The cohesion of the organised left was also weakened, with powerful minorities in both the Communist Party and the LCR opposed to their parties' official positions.

The behaviour of the political organisations increased hostility to parties and thereby strengthened the ideology of autonomous social movements. Besancenot's success in coming fifth in the first round with over 4 percent of the vote - well ahead of Buffet and Bové - salvaged something from this debacle, but it placed a heavy responsibility on the LCR to take the initiative in building a genuinely united radical left.

The crisis of the French radical left also affected Attac. The replacement in 2002 of Cassen as president of Attac France by his chosen heir Jacques Nikonoff marked the beginning of an increasingly bitter faction fight. It pitted the two of them against a loose left that saw Attac as an important ingredient in a broader coalition of social movements rather than, as Susan George (sponsor of the opposition slate for the Attac leadership) put it, "a hierarchical, top-down pyramidal organisation with a strong executive, able to give orders to its troops and eventually to serve their private political ambitions on the French left".¹⁹

Cassen and Nikonoff made an abortive attempt to run an altermondialiste list in the European parliamentary elections in May 2004 and sought unsuccessfully to keep Attac local committees out of the collectives formed to oppose the European Constitution a year later. But, as Raphaël Wintrebert has documented in his important study of Attac, the shockingly autocratic methods used by Cassen and particularly by Nikonoff were an important factor in the developing polarisation. After the referendum victory Attac imploded into a fierce internal struggle that became worse after the National Administrative Council elections held in June 2006 were denounced by the defeated left opposition on grounds of fraud (their claims were upheld by two internal inquiries). The opposition won the restaged elections the following December but Cassen and Nikonoff showed their intention to continue the struggle by forming their own network, Avenir d'Attac.²⁰

It was in Italy that the troubling question of the political representation of the social movements has had the most disastrous consequences. Fausto Bertinotti, general secretary of Rifondazione, closely identified his party with the social forums during their heady expansion between Genoa and Florence. He brilliantly used the abstract and ambiguous vocabulary of autonomism to give the impression that Rifondazione fully identified with the most radical ambitions of the anti-capitalist movement without committing himself to anything very definite. But, as the social forums lost impetus, Bertinotti turned back towards mainstream politics.

He prepared the way for the party's return to the centre-left (from which it had broken in 1998) with a campaign in 2004 committing Rifondazione to pacifism and opposition to political violence. The logical culmination of the process was Rifondazione's entry into the

centre-left government formed by Romano Prodi after he narrowly won the Italian general election in April 2006. Ironically, in the light of Bertinotti's earlier pacifist professions, this led to Rifondazione voting to support Italy's participation in the Nato military mission in Afghanistan and expelling a far left senator who abstained in one parliamentary division on this issue.

The effect on the anti-war movement in Italy, hitherto the largest in Europe, was nothing short of catastrophic. Piero Bernocchi of the left union Cobas described the situation at the end of 2006 :

There is now a big split in the Italian anti-war movement. A first part doesn't give to the occupation of Afghanistan the same importance as the occupation of Iraq; to avoid going against Prodi's government, it didn't want to organise anything when the government decided to maintain the troops in Afghanistan and this part is for the Italian troops in Lebanon. The second part is for withdrawal from Afghanistan but not from Lebanon. The third part, in which Cobas are, is for the end of all the Italian war missions (Afghanistan, Lebanon, Kosovo, etc).²¹

The consequences of these divisions were visible on the streets of Rome. On the first anniversary of the invasion of Iraq in March 2004 a million people had marched in Rome. Three years later only 30,000 demonstrated. Given the central role that the Italian social forums had played for the anti-capitalist movement globally at the time of Genoa and Florence, this was a disastrous development.

If the French case showed the difficulty in gaining political representation for the social movements and of overcoming the divisions among the established left organisations, the Italian situation highlighted the dependence of movements on parties. Despite all the talk of autonomous social movements, when Bertinotti moved rightwards, he pulled the Italian movement along with him, fragmenting it in the process. Both examples illustrate, unfortunately in negative terms, that movements seeking to challenge neoliberalism and imperialism cannot escape the political field.

III

Fragmentation and Drift

These political divisions were greatly reinforced by the increasingly dysfunctional way in which the anti-capitalist movement organises itself. From Seattle onwards the principle prevailed that decisions were to be taken in assemblies open to all and on the basis of consensus. This method of decision-making did have some advantages in the early phase of the movement's development. Giving everyone a veto helped to build trust in a new coalition involving actors from very different backgrounds and it bypassed the problem of deciding how to weigh the votes of different organisations, which would have been raised by a system of delegate democracy.

Nevertheless, there were and are very high costs to this supposedly 'horizontal' form of democracy. It is always subject to what was long ago identified in the US American women's movement as "the tyranny of structurelessness" : In the absence of formal structure, informal elites emerge to ensure that the movement actually functions.²² This became very visible in the European Social Forum (ESF) process, where an alliance of the French and Italian altermondialiste coalitions largely dominated decision-making.

From the start, securing consensus frequently involved backdoor bargaining to arrive at compromises; recalcitrant minorities were sometimes bullied into not exercising their right to veto decisions; and chairpersons, seeking to manage difficult and often lengthy meetings, always sought to steer discussion, sometimes in a very directive way. Moreover, the quickly established procedure of taking decisions at the European Preparatory Assembly, whose venue shifts each time from one European city to another, has tended to ensure the dominance of large organizations - trade unions, NGOs, the different branches of Attac, political parties - with the resources to send delegates to these meetings.

Instead of recognition of these defects, leading to a serious attempt to improve the democratic functioning of the process, there was a marked degeneration. In the lead-up to the London ESF, Italian and to a lesser extent French delegates persistently intervened to support the opposition of a fairly marginal grouping of autonomists to the British coalition responsible for bringing the forum to London, and acquiesced in the attempts violently to disrupt the forum and the closing rally. Subsequently, the situation became substantially worse.

The Athens ESF, held in May 2006, had to contend with deep political divisions. On one side was the Greek Social Forum, a coalition of far left sects sponsored by the radical left party Synaspismos and by the Franco-Italian axis, and on the other was Genoa 2001, involving the Greek Socialist Workers Party and the Greens, and linked to the Greek trade union federation. The result of a bitterly contested preparatory process was the smallest ESF to date, where even the large concluding demonstration was marred by a row over the order of march that saw violent attacks by Greek Social Forum 'stewards' on the anti-war contingent.

None of this stopped the dominant forces in the ESF process from proclaiming Athens a success. But the difficulties that they have faced in finding a viable national coalition willing to host the fifth ESF were symptomatic. It took till April 2007, nearly a year after Athens, to reach agreement that the next Forum will take place in Scandinavia in September 2008, and even then the venue—either the Danish capital, Copenhagen, or the Swedish city of Malmö – at first remained undecided. No wonder attendance at European Preparatory Assemblies dwindled over time, as many participants voted with their feet, leaving the Franco-Italian hard core and their hangers-on to dominate. Despite the growing evidence of crisis, however, this group, ever since the London ESF, responded by seeking organisational solutions, reflected by a growing obsession with 'methodology' that spawned yet more all-European meetings and thereby made the decision-making process even more opaque and unaccountable.

The same preoccupation with procedure was evident in the faction fight inside Attac, where the leaders of the opposition (many of them, such as Pierre Khalfa, prominent in the ESF process) made what Wintrebert calls the "important 'strategic' error" of arguing that "it wasn't fundamental problems that divided the leading members [of Attac], but only a problem of the 'style of leadership'." This conceded the initiative to Nikonoff and Cassen, who were much more willing to introduce political issues, such as their defence of French republican 'laicity' against the Muslim veil.²³

The problems created by this kind of organisational overload were reinforced by the increasing influence of the conception of the social forums advanced by Cassen and another of the founders of the WSF, the Brazilian Chico Whitaker. For them, the social forums do not belong to a movement, or even the 'movements of movements'. Rather, they are "a socially horizontal space" where different actors can converge to discuss and share perspectives.²⁴²⁰ In particular—and this is a constant source of puzzlement to participants in social forums who are uninitiated into these mysteries—the international forums don't take decisions. This risks alienating activists who want to be part of the movement's decision-making process and who are often radicalised partly by the way neoliberalism has hollowed out democratic political forms at national level. It is also off-putting because it can turn the social forums into talking shops pure and simple. An interplay between discussion, decision, and mobilisation is the lifeblood of any real movement.

The left within the alterglobalist / WSF movement has sought to bypass the problem by inventing the Assembly of Social Movements, where different social movements get together at the end of each social forum and adopt an action plan of mobilisations. The device immediately attracted the hostility of Whitaker, Cassen, and others on the right of the movement. Their response has involved celebrating 'diversity' by fragmenting social forums around different 'thematic priorities'. Thus the fifth WSF in Brazil in January 2005 was spread along the banks of

the river Guaíba in Porto Alegre with the division of the site into 11 distinct 'thematic terrains'. As we wrote at the time :

Space A was devoted to autonomous thought, B to defending diversity, plurality, and identities, C to art and creation, and so on. The effect was tremendously to fragment the forum. If you were interested in a particular subject—say, culture or war or human rights—you could easily spend the entire four days in one relatively small area without coming into contact with people interested in different subjects.²⁵

Even though European activists reacted negatively to that WSF, the drive to fragment the Social Forums was used to justify the absence of any unifying events at the Athens ESF. Even figures generally on the left of the movement gave way to the new cult of diversity. Piero Bernocchi argued at an European preparatory meeting in Istanbul in September 2005 that the altermondialiste movement was a "rainbow coalition" that could not take decisions over priorities. But the very strength of the movement from Seattle onwards lay in the convergence of different coalitions in a common struggle against neoliberalism and war. Had the view Bernocchi expressed in Istanbul prevailed before Florence, February 15 2003 would never have happened.

Fragmentation reached the level of caricature in Nairobi, in 2007. Cramped physical conditions and organisational chaos meant that there was no repetition of the physical partition into 'thematic terrains'. But the official programme concluded with 'big forums of struggles and alternatives' meeting separately to discuss 21 different themes, followed by 'a tree-planting event'. The left successfully insisted on ending instead with an unscheduled Assembly of Social Movements, which at least agreed on a common schedule of future mobilisations.²⁶

But the assemblies are organised within the prevailing ideology of autonomous social movements and therefore reflect the weaknesses already discussed. As in other cases, the method of consensus decision-making tends to ensure the dominance of 'insiders' with resources and connections. The agenda and order of speakers are fixed in advance by meetings that, though theoretically open to all, are run by veterans and those with the greatest resources and stamina. There is very rarely any real discussion at the assemblies themselves—and never any voting. This rules out the possibility of any serious popular discussion or development of strategy. They do serve a real function and represent a sincere effort by those who organise them to give some coherence to the movement. But they don't provide the kind of democratic decision-making the movement needs.

Many activists have grown increasingly impatient with the fragmentation and drift that have come to prevail. At the 2006 Polycentric WSF in Bamako, Mali, Samir Amin of Egypt and François Houtart of Belgium initiated an appeal that "aims at consolidating the gains made" at the social forums by "defining and promoting alternatives capable of mobilising social and political forces. The goal is a radical transformation of the capitalist system".²⁷

Amin, a leading radical dependency theorist in the 1960s and 1970s, has been a key figure in pressing for a much greater strategic focus for the anti-capitalist movement :

There is no room for self-congratulation about these successes [of the movement]. They remain insufficient to shift the balance of social and political forces in favour of the popular classes, and therefore remain vulnerable to the extent that the movement has not moved from defensive resistance to the offensive... Progress is and will be difficult. For it implies (i) the radicalisation of struggles and (ii) their convergence in diversity...in common action plans, which imply a strategic political vision, the definition of immediate and more distant objectives (the "perspective" that defines the alternative). The radicalisation of struggles is not that of the rhetoric of their discourses, but their articulation of an alternative project with which they propose to replace the prevailing systems of social power...convergence can only be the product of a "politicisation" (in the good sense of the word) of the fragmented movements. This necessity is resisted by the discourse of "apolitical civil society", an ideology imported directly from the United States, which continues to exert its ravages.²⁸

Amin, who went on to criticise “the theorists of autonomist currents [who] affirm that we can change the world without taking power”, for denying the necessity of a strategic convergence of struggles, also notes that the Bamako Appeal had “irritated the WSF ‘Secretariat’.” Indeed, a seminar on the Appeal during the Nairobi WSF saw a fierce clash when Chico Whitaker objected strongly to Trevor Ngwane’s critical defence of the appeal and criticisms of the fragmentation and absence of strategy in the WSF.²⁹ But it was clear that large numbers of activists were worried about the lack of direction of the movement. The response of the WSF international council was to issue a call for worldwide mobilisations to coincide with the big business World Economic Forum in January 2008—a decision that both contradicted the ideology of the social forums as simply ‘spaces’ and implied that a summons to action from the stratosphere could somehow magically give unity and impetus to the movement.

IV

Moving Forward

It is important not to take too cataclysmic a view of the current condition of the anti-capitalist movement. Above all, the other side isn’t in too good a state. The World Trade Organisation’s Doha round, launched in November 2001 and intended radically to deepen global capitalism’s reach into national economies and to demonstrate the unity of the world’s ruling classes after 9/11, has run to a halt. True, the anti-capitalist movement can’t claim the chief credit for this, which lies with the deep and persisting divisions between the United States and the European Union and the emergence of a new bloc of powerful Third World states, the Group of 20. Moreover, both Washington and Brussels are seeking to bypass the deadlock by negotiating bilateral economic partnership agreements with individual countries. Nevertheless, the disarray in the World Bank with Paul Wolfowitz’s sacking symbolises the larger difficulties faced by the neoliberal camp.

The plight of the imperialist offensive launched by the Bush administration after September 11 2001 is, of course, much more serious. US failure to impose its will on Iraq led to the administration’s defeat in the mid-term elections in November 2006 and goaded Bush into ordering a military ‘surge’ that did not succeed. The US and its Nato allies today remain mired in a long-term guerrilla war in Afghanistan that may prove equally intractable. There is a crisis of legitimacy for US global hegemony that is clearly limiting Washington’s ability to exercise ‘soft’ ideological power as well.

A poll of 26,000 people in 25 countries for the BBC World Service in January 2007 revealed that 73 percent disapproved of the Iraq War, while “majorities across the 25 countries also disapprove of US handling of Guantanamo detainees (67 percent), the Israeli-Hezbollah war (65 percent), Iran’s nuclear programme (60 percent), global warming (56 percent), and North Korea’s nuclear programme (54 percent)”. 49 percent of those polled said that the US is playing a mainly negative role in the world.³⁰ This erosion of the USA’s global standing has real effects. Commenting on US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice’s shift towards a more compromising position on issues such as North Korean nukes, the Financial Times explained :

Ms Rice has been forced by America’s drastically compromised situation in Iraq into making changes from a position of weakness. “When you have a hammer, everything looks like a nail,” said a former senior diplomat in the Clinton administration. “But, because of Iraq, these guys don’t have much of a hammer any more”.³¹

The weakening of US hegemony isn’t just a consequence of the ham-fisted arrogance of the Bush administration. It is an achievement of those who have opposed the global state of exception proclaimed by Bush after 9/11. Pride of place here must go to the resistance in Iraq itself, but the international anti-war movement can claim a share of credit.

Washington’s descent into the Iraqi quagmire has in turn created a space in which resistance can develop elsewhere. The most important case in point here is Latin America,

especially in Venezuela and Bolivia where the interaction between mass movements and political leaders has produced governments that have begun, in however hesitant and inconsistent a way, to pursue a logic that breaks with neoliberalism.³²

None of these very positive features of the present situation alter or remove the difficulties that we have discussed above. What they do cast into question is any suggestion that the balance of forces is shifting decisively to the right or that the cycle of struggles that began in the mid-1990s is drawing to a close. Even in Europe, where the movement is in greatest trouble, in 2006 we saw the massive revolt by French students and trade unionists that smashed the CPE law that was proposing to reduce the rights of young workers. The persistence of the neoliberal offensive will undoubtedly continue to produce more social explosions, particularly if France's right wing president, Nicolas Sarkozy, continues to carry out his threat to drive through market 'reforms'.

The critical issue is that posed by Samir Amin when he asks : "Does the World Social Forum benefit popular struggles ?". In other words, what is the relationship between the anti-capitalist movement as an organised force and mass resistance to neoliberalism and imperialism ? The honest answer is that it is pretty variable and is likely to remain so. The organisational implosion of the European movement does not make one especially optimistic about the ESF.³³

The same need not be true of the WSF. Even in Nairobi there were, as we have already suggested, hints of the explosion of energy that can be generated by the convergence of different movements. Unfortunately, as we have seen, the dominant forces in the WSF process are pushing in the opposite direction, and promoting fragmentation rather than what Amin calls "convergence in diversity". It is the duty of the left within the anti-capitalist movement firmly to resist these tendencies. This resistance, however, needs to be accompanied by an alternative strategy that is informed by an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the movement to date.

This understanding has to involve an open break with the ideology of autonomous social movements. Too often the left has taken its stand within the framework of that ideology, whether for tactical reasons or from principled agreement. But a break is required by an honest appreciation of the interplay between political parties and social movements. The truth is that cooperation between the two actually strengthens both. However much retrospect is coloured by Bertinotti's subsequent right turn, the high points of the European movement at Genoa and Florence were informed by this cooperation, involving not merely Rifondazione but also smaller parties of the radical left such as the LCR and the Socialist Workers Party as well as more radical elements of Italy's centre-left Left Democrats.

The same is true at a global level. The peak so far reached by the WSF took place not at any of the Porto Alegre Forums but in Mumbai, in January 2004, infused as it was by both a strong anti-imperialist consciousness and the movements of India's vast poor. The two key organisations of the Indian left - the Communist Party (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India - played a critical role both in making the forum possible and also in restraining themselves from trying to dominate the forum or competing too openly either among themselves or with the various Maoist organisations that organised the Mumbai Resistance event across the road that was, in formal terms, strongly critical of and opposed to the WSF.

An honest reappraisal of the relationship between parties and movements would allow the social forums to play to their strengths. The two most successful forums - Florence and Mumbai - were ones where opposition to the 'war on terror' was a dominant theme. Saying this does not mean returning to the tedious and sterile argument - either the war or the 'social question'. Opposition to both neoliberalism and war are constitutive themes of the anti-capitalist movement. But recognition of both the principled significance and the mobilising

power of anti-imperialism needs to be built into how the social forums operate.

This was proved by the success of the 'polycentric' WSF in Caracas, Venezuela, in January 2006. It was taken for granted among the tens of thousands of mainly Latin American activists assembled there that the US poses a real and present threat to the gains being made by movements in Bolivia, Venezuela, and Ecuador. President Hugo Chávez echoed many others when he spoke there of the importance of the movement against the Iraq war in weakening the US's ability to act in what it regards traditionally as its own backyard.

Yet the Caracas forum also showed up the limitations of the WSF process. It should have been possible, for example, to launch a very high profile, high-powered campaign from the forum calling on all the movements round the world to pledge defence of the gains of the Chavista experience so far. Many present were suggesting it. But because of the autonomist principles so jealously guarded by the WSF leadership, no such centralised initiative was taken.

In breaking out of this impasse, it will be necessary to define precisely what the radical left is within the movement. This is no simple matter. The big Indian Communist parties, despite the very positive role they played in the Mumbai WSF, participate in neoliberal coalitions at the all-India and state levels : The Left Front government in West Bengal violently clashed with workers and peasants during 2007, and then again recently in 2009. The sorry record of Rifondazione has already been discussed. A much more principled organisation, the LCR, has kept aloof from the anti-capitalist movement as an organisation, because of its acceptance of a version of the ideology of autonomous social movements (although individual LCR members such as Christophe Aguiton, Pierre Rousset, and Sophie Zafari have played important roles in the movement at global and/or European levels).

Documents of the left within the movement tend to espouse versions of radical reformism. The Bamako Appeal's first plank is, "For a multipolar world founded on peace, law, and negotiation".³⁴ Amin's pronouncements are sometimes redolent of nostalgia for the high tide of Third World nationalism between the 1950s and 1970s : "The reconstruction of a 'front of the countries and peoples of the South' is one of the fundamental conditions for the emergence of 'another world' not based on imperialist domination".³⁵ Another important figure on the left of the movement, Walden Bello of Focus on the Global South, shows a similar approach in his calls for 'deglobalisation'.³⁶ Such formulations do not sufficiently address the reality that confronting imperialism as a system will require global social transformation based on the collective power and organisation of the oppressed and exploited in the North as well as the South.

None of this should prevent cooperation among different forces on the left seeking to give the anti-capitalist movement a more coherent and strategically focused direction. Such cooperation is essential. But it needs to be accompanied by open debate about the nature of the enemy that we are confronted with and of the alternatives that we should be seeking.³⁷ Striking the right balance between disagreement and cooperation once again requires a break with the ideology of autonomous social movements.

This ideology conceives social movements as a neutral space somehow beyond politics. But fighting neoliberalism and war is necessarily a highly political affair, and nowhere is free of the antagonisms of wider capitalist society. The development of the movements necessarily generates political disagreements that cannot be kept separate from party organisations. The emergence of new anti-capitalist political formations that are at least partly the product of movements of resistance—Portugal's Left Bloc, the Left Party in Germany, Respect in Britain—shows the extent to which activists recognise the need for a political voice as part of the development of opposition to neoliberalism and war.

As revolutionary socialists, we believe that the concept of a united front, developed by the revolutionary Marxist tradition, provides a better guide to building democratic, dynamic

movements than does the model that has prevailed so far. A united front involves the coming together of different forces around a common but limited platform of action. Precisely because they are different, these forces will have disagreements about political programme; they may also differ over how to pursue the common actions that have brought them together. But so long as they come together round limited and relatively specific aims, such alliances can be politically inclusive and maximise the chances of practical campaigning agreement. Because they are focused round action, they can be a testing ground for different tactics and strategies. This is the way to break movements away from abstract position-taking or sectarian point-scoring, so providing a framework in which political debate and practical organising can fruitfully interplay.

Constructing such united fronts is not easy. It requires initiative and clear leadership on the one hand, and openness and humility on the other. But at a time when the anger against neoliberalism is growing everywhere and so many people are reassessing their political loyalties, it seems to us that the anti-capitalist left needs urgently to try such methods if it is to reach out and connect with its potential audience.

There is unlikely to be agreement between the different tendencies in the movement in the short or medium term over general political alternatives. But we can reach constructive agreement on the many issues—opposition to neoliberalism and war—that unite a large spectrum of forces. It is precisely this kind of unity in action that many people are looking for in the current situation. Through the experience of such campaigning, new political coalitions can emerge. Moreover, the left within the movement, whether revolutionary or reformist, should working together in order to fight to give the movement a more strategic and focused direction.

Many of the ideas and arguments of the anti-capitalist movement have gone mainstream in the eleven long years since Seattle. Neoliberalism has been widely discredited. The world's 'hyper-power' is in the process of a terrible humiliation in the Middle East that will have major repercussions for its ability to intervene and shape geopolitics. In these circumstances the left has a responsibility to examine the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the anti-capitalist movement as it has functioned up to now, and not allow the movement to be trapped in an impasse.

Notes

- 1 *Eds* : This is a revised edition of an article titled 'At an impasse ? Anti-capitalism and the social forums today' that was published in *International Socialism*, vol 115, accessible @ <http://www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?id=337&issue=115>; posted July 2 2007. We thank the authors of the article and the editors of the journal for their agreement to our publishing this edited version here.
- 2 For background on the movement in its initial phase, see Harman, 2000; Charlton and Bircham, 2001; Callinicos, 2003; Mertes, 2003; and Tormey, 2004.
- 3 Oloo 2007, p 1.
- 4 Oloo 2007, p 3.
- 5 Bello 2007.
- 6 Ciccaglione 2007.
- 7 Wintrebert 2007, figures from pp 69-71.
- 8 For a recent discussion, see Anievas 2010.
- 9 For a wildly biased and inaccurate but interesting account of this process by one of the founders of Attac, see Cassen 2003a.
- 10 Cassen 2003b.
- 11 For a more extended discussion of the process of political differentiation, see Callinicos 2004a; and on the European Social Forum in London, see Callinicos 2004b.
- 12 For a brief summary of these differences, see Callinicos 2004a, pp 98-106.
- 13 Since this article was written (2007), the context has been dramatically changed by the global economic and financial

crisis. But, while this has led to a significant rise in social resistance, most notably in France and Greece, and very recently in Britain, the disconnect between the altermondialiste movement and these struggles remains, if anything, more striking than what is described in the main text.

- 14 World Social Forum Organising Committee and World Social Forum International Council, June 2001.
- 15 Bensaïd 2007, pp 139-140.
- 16 See Nineham 2006. Wintrebert 2007 offers an interesting account of the role of such coalitions in the emergence of French altermondialisme; see his chapter 1.
- 17 See the damning analyses in Oliveira 2003 and 2006.
- 18 Kouvelakis 2005, p 10.
- 19 George 2006.
- 20 Wintrebert 2007, Part III.
- 21 Bernocchi, 2006.
- 22 Freeman 1972.
- 23 Wintrebert 2007, p 261.
- 24 See, for example, Whitaker, March 2003.
- 25 Callinicos and Nineham 2005.
- 26 Amin, Kadenyeka, Kamara, and ors, January 2007.
- 27 Amin et al, 2006. See Sen and Kumar, eds, 2007.
- 28 Amin 2007.
- 29 CACIM 2007a.
- 30 BBC World Service 2007.
- 31 Luce, Barber, and Dinmore 2007.
- 32 *Eds* : See the essay by Emir Sader in the companion volume to this book, The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds (Sader 2013).
- 33 This pessimism was amply confirmed by the subsequent European Social Forums in Malmö, Sweden, in 2007 and in Istanbul in 2010. Both were pale shadows of earlier forums.
- 34 Amin et al, 2006. For a critical take on such slogans, see Miéville 2005.
- 35 Amin 2007.
- 36 Bello 2002.
- 37 See, for example, Callinicos 2003, and Callinicos 2006.

World Social Forum At The Crossroads ¹

Walden Bello

A new stage in the evolution of the global justice movement was reached with the inauguration of the World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in January 2001.

The WSF was the brainchild of social movements loosely associated with the Workers' Party (PT) in Brazil. Strong support for the idea was given at an early stage by the ATTAC movement in France, key figures of which were connected with the newspaper *Le Monde diplomatique*. In Asia, the Brazilian proposal, floated in June 2000, received the early enthusiastic endorsement of, among others, the research and advocacy institute Focus on the Global South based in Bangkok.

'Porto Alegre' was meant to be a counterpoint to 'Davos', the annual event of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in a resort town in the Swiss Alps, where the world's most powerful business and political figures congregate annually to spot and assess the latest trends in global affairs. Indeed, the highlight of the first WSF was a televised transcontinental debate between George Soros (well-known speculator and investor) and other figures in Davos with representatives of social movements gathered in Porto Alegre.

At the WSF, the world of Davos was deliberately contrasted with the world of Porto Alegre, the world of the global rich with the world of the rest of humanity. It was this contrast that gave rise to the very resonant theme adopted by the WSF, 'Another world is possible'.

There was another important symbolic dimension : While Seattle was the site of the first major victory of the transnational anti-corporate globalisation movement – the collapse amidst massive street protests of the third ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation – Porto Alegre represented the transfer to the South of the centre of gravity of that movement. Proclaimed as an 'open space', the WSF became a magnet for global networks focused on different issues, from war to globalisation to communalism to racism to gender oppression to alternatives. Regional versions of the WSF were spun off, the most important being the European Social Forum and the African Social Forum; and in scores of cities throughout the world, local social Fora were held and institutionalised.

The Functions of the WSF

Since its establishment, the WSF has performed three critical functions for global civil society :

First, it represents a space – both physical and temporal – for this diverse movement to meet, network, and, quite simply, to feel and affirm itself.

Second, it is a retreat during which the movement gathers its energies and charts the directions of its continuing drive to confront and roll back the processes, institutions, and structures of global capitalism. Naomi Klein, author of *No Logo*, underlined this function when she told a Porto Alegre audience in January 2002 that the need of the moment was "less civil society and more civil disobedience".²

Third, the WSF provides a site and space for the movement to elaborate, discuss, and debate the vision, values, and institutions of an alternative world order built on a real community of interests. The WSF is, indeed, a macrocosm of so many smaller but equally significant enterprises carried out throughout the world by millions who have told the reformists, the cynics, and the 'realists' to move aside because, indeed, another world is possible ... and necessary.

Direct Democracy in Action

The WSF and its many offspring are significant not only as sites of affirmation and debate but

also as direct democracy in action. Agenda and meetings are planned with meticulous attention to democratic process. Through a combination of periodic face-to-face meetings and intense email and internet contact in between, the WSF network has been able to pull off events and arrive at consensus decisions. At times this could be very time-consuming and also frustrating, and if you were part of an organising effort involving hundreds of organisations, as we at Focus on the Global South were during the organising of the 2004 WSF in Mumbai, it could be very frustrating indeed.

But this was direct democracy, and direct democracy was at its best at the WSF. One might say, parenthetically, that the direct democratic experiences of Seattle (1999), Prague (2000), Genoa (2001), and the other big mobilisations of the decade were institutionalised in the WSF or Porto Alegre process.

The central principle of the organising approach of the new movement is that getting to the desired objective is not worth it if the methods violate democratic process, if democratic goals are reached via authoritarian means. Perhaps Subcomandante Marcos of the Zapatistas best expressed the organising bias of the new movements :

... the movement has no future if its future is military. If the EZLN [Zapatista Army of National Liberation] perpetuates itself as an armed military structure, it is headed for failure. Failure as an alternative set of ideas, an alternative attitude to the world. The worst that could happen to it apart from that, would be for it to come to power and install itself there as a revolutionary army. ³

The WSF shares this perspective.

What is interesting is that there has hardly been an attempt by any group or network to 'take over' the WSF process. Quite a number of 'old movement' groups participate in the WSF, including old-line 'democratic centralist' parties as well as the traditional social democratic parties affiliated with the Socialist International. Yet none of these has put much effort into steering the WSF towards more centralised or hierarchical modes of organising. At the same time, despite their suspicion of political parties, the 'new movements' have never sought to exclude the parties and their affiliates from playing a significant role in the Forum. Indeed, the 2004 WSF in Mumbai was organised jointly by a coalition of social movements and mainstream Marxist parties.

Perhaps a compelling reason for the *modus vivendi* of the old and new movements was the realisation that they needed one another in the struggle against global capitalism, and that the strength of the fledgling global movement lay in a strategy of decentralised networking that rested not on the doctrinal belief that one class was destined to lead the struggle, but on the reality of the common marginalisation of practically all subordinate classes, strata, and groups under the reign of global capital.

What Constitutes 'Open Space' ?

The WSF has, however, not been exempt from criticism, even from within its own ranks. One criticism in particular appears to have merit. This is the charge that the WSF as an institution is unanchored in actual global political struggles, and this is turning it into an annual festival with limited social impact.

There is, in my view, a not insignificant truth to this. Many of the founders of the WSF have interpreted the 'open space' concept in a liberal fashion, that is, for the WSF not to explicitly endorse any political position or particular struggle, though its constituent groups are free to do so.

Others have disagreed, saying the idea of an 'open space' should be interpreted in a partisan fashion, as explicitly promoting some views over others and as openly taking sides in key global struggles. In this view, the WSF is under an illusion that it can stand above the fray, and its doing this will lead to it becoming some sort of neutral forum, where discussion will

increasingly be isolated from action. The energy of civil society networks derives from their being engaged in political struggles, say proponents of this perspective. The reason that the WSF was so exciting in its early years was because of its affective impact : It provided an opportunity to recreate and reaffirm solidarity against injustice, against war, and for a world that was not subjected to the rule of empire and capital. The WSF's not taking a stand on the Iraq War, on the Palestine issue, and on the WTO is said to be making it less relevant and less inspiring to many of the networks it had brought together.

Caracas versus Nairobi

This is why the sixth WSF held in Caracas in January 2006 was so bracing and reinvigorating : It inserted some 50,000 delegates into the storm centre of an ongoing struggle against empire, where they mingled with militant Venezuelans, mostly the poor, engaged in a process of social transformation, while observing other Venezuelans, mostly the elite and middle class, engaged in bitter opposition. Caracas was an exhilarating reality check.

This is also the reason why the seventh WSF held in Nairobi was so disappointing, since its politics was so diluted and big business interests linked to the Kenyan ruling elite were so brazen in commercialising it. Even Petrobras, the Brazilian state corporation that is a leading exploiter of the natural resource wealth of Latin America, was busy trumpeting itself as a friend of the Forum. There was a strong sense of going backward rather than forward in Nairobi.

The WSF is at a crossroads. Hugo Chavez captured the essence of the conjuncture when he warned delegates at the Caracas edition of the polycentric WSF that was held in January 2006 about the danger of the WSF becoming simply a forum of ideas with no agenda for action. He told participants that they had no choice but to address the question of power : "We must have a strategy of 'counter-power'. We, the social movements and political movements, must be able to move into spaces of power at the local, national, and regional level".

Developing a strategy of counter-power or counter-hegemony need not mean lapsing back into the old hierarchical and centralised modes of organising characteristic of the old left. Such a strategy can, in fact, be best advanced through the multilevel and horizontal networking that movements and organisations represented in the WSF have excelled in using to advance their particular struggles. Articulating their struggles in action will mean forging a common strategy while drawing strength from and respecting diversity.

After the disappointment that was Nairobi, many long-standing participants in the Forum are asking themselves : Is the WSF still the most appropriate vehicle for the new stage in the struggle of the global justice and peace movement ? Or, having fulfilled its historic function of aggregating and linking the diverse counter-movements spawned by global capitalism, is it time for the WSF to fold up its tent and give way to newer modes of global organisation of resistance and transformation ?

Notes

1 Source : Transnational Institute @ http://www.tni.org/detail_page.php?act_id=16771 . This is an edited version of an article of the same title that was first published in *Foreign Policy in Focus* , May 4 2007. We have made every attempt to contact the author to get his approval of the minor editing we have done, including the references we have added, and are now going ahead with publication, with our thanks extended to Walden Bello for his trust and solidarity.

Eds note : Although this very short essay was first published back in 2007, and has been somewhat superseded by events, we are republishing it here because of the issues and intense debate it raised within the WSF, and also because of the role that the author and the organisation he heads plays within the Forum and the wider global justice movement. (For an idea of the debate, see also the essays by Chico Whitaker and Boaventura de Sousa Santos in this volume; Whitaker 2012 and de Sousa Santos 2012.) What it says however, also needs to be seen in terms of the subsequent actions of the WSF – which can in part be seen as a response - including the invention and calling of a first 'Global Day of Action' in January 2008 (with actions around the world in place of the normal fixed-location meeting/s), and then the organising of the WSF in Belém, in Amazonian Brazil, in January 2009, with a much more specified agenda.

2 *Eds* : The actual quote seems to be : "The alternative to a world without possibility is not civil society – but civil disobedience". See Sivaraman, February 2002, and Cooper, March 2002.

3 From : Marcos, interviewed by García Márquez and Pombo, May-June 2001. *Eds* : The full version of the opening sentence is : "A soldier is an absurd person who has to resort to arms in order to convince others, and in that sense the movement has no future if its future is military. ..."

Crossroads Do Not Always Close Roads ¹

Chico Whitaker

“Is it time for the WSF to fold up its tent and give way to new modes of global organisation of resistance and transformation ?”²

The least that one can say about Walden Bello’s question at the end of his essay ‘The Forum at the Crossroads’ is that it is daring... It has the merit of saying directly and clearly what a certain number of members of the WSF International Council think, but do not say.

One cannot help but reflect on the essay’s provocative reasoning, especially when it affirms that the WSF has already “fulfilled its historic function of aggregating and linking the diverse counter-movements spawned by global capitalism”; or in quoting Hugo Chávez “about the danger of the WSF becoming simply a forum of ideas with no agenda for action”, or the necessity now to “have a strategy of ‘counter-power’ ” and “to move into spaces of power at the local, national, and regional level”.

To begin with, it is necessary to see what these crossroads are and therefore of what roads we are speaking. The WSF continues on a path that did not exist before, and one that is parallel to the concrete resistance to neoliberalism and the struggle to change the world. It exists not to replace the other but rather to give it support, creating conditions so that those who resist and fight can be articulated and reinforced.

These two paths do not have to cross. Being different they can continue on parallel paths. And if both are necessary – which would be the question to discuss – one should not eat the other, as Walden proposes. What they should do is to be related intensely and permanently, to come closer and closer, to mutually feed each other, so that more and more people are at the same time part of both, interconnecting themselves on the one and acting on the other.

If the path to change the world effectively and deeply is still very long, the support that can be given by the WSF to this struggle also has to continue for the long term. Truly, we do not arrive at any crossroad, but rather we have to face the necessity to clarify the horizons better, so that the two paths can continue forward.

I

The Initial Options in the WSF

It would be useful to remember the discussion on the character of the WSF that has accompanied it from its creation on all levels of reflection and decision : Is it a space or a movement ? What Walden Bello, who seems to be among those who see the WSF primarily as a movement, proposes therefore, is not, in itself, anything new. The new thing – maybe the surprising thing – is the radicalness of his proposal. It suggests that instead of remaining a space, the WSF simply disappears. It is as if the two paradigms could not coexist, as has happened during these past seven years, and now we should only continue on the path of action.

Before the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2001, its organisers were already grappling with the disjunctive space-movement issue. To create a place of encounter or to propose, to all those who came to the Forum, concrete actions of resistance and transformation ? That is to say, they had on their hands a bifurcation that would define the character of the process that they began at that moment.

When organising that first edition and when proposing its Charter of Principles – which

was drafted drawing upon the lessons and discoveries of that edition – they opted for the path that would give the WSF the character of a space. But they saw it as an instrument in the service of those who were in action, that is to say, the existing movements. In other words, they considered that the vocation of the WSF was to begin something that did not exist before, that would not try to change the world directly but rather to help those who fight to change the world.

An initiative with this objective seemed more necessary than the creation of a new movement, with its own political programme and immediate objectives, its militants and specific actions defined by its directing instances. Such an initiative could not even be considered ‘a movement of movements’, because then it would always be in competition with other movements looking to carry out the same objectives.

So the Forum has been organised primarily as an open encounter of the different types and levels of civil society organisation – social movements, NGOs, unions. The intention is to put all of these various actions into relationship – and not only the more directly political movements, but also all the types of action that we need to change the world effectively and deeply, even at the level of personal behaviours. It was necessary to reinforce and to multiply these actions, up to the planetary level, to face a globalised capitalism, inside this general mobilisation of citizens usually called ‘alterglobalisation’.

The organisers of the first and second Forums saw it therefore as a global space – that could expand horizontally to all the horizons and all the levels of reality – where the different proposals and actions underway could be known, discussed, deepened, evaluated, questioned, articulated, with freedom and with the widest possible participation, incubating new initiatives and movements, without this whole exchange resulting in a ‘unique final document’ of the Forum that would seek to unify all its participants in light of specific options or objectives of resistance or change.

An important factor in the fight for another world seemed to be that the discussions in the ‘WSF space’ remain propositional, ie they look for alternatives for the real construction of ‘another world’. And that the initiative to propose debates in that space should be reserved specifically for civil society, a new political actor emerging in the world – as citizens organised in social movements and other types of bodies – which needed a space to express itself. This new actor did not have until then an instrument of such a dimension and of this type, to enable its components, in their extreme diversity, to know more about each other and define common objectives of struggle.

But the organisers of the first Forum also considered an even more important question : That to gather more force it was not enough to meet and to get to know each other. It was also necessary to experience new practices of political action, based on horizontal relationships, in which all respect each other in their diversity of methods and objectives, in which nobody is considered more important than anyone else, in a space without hierarchies or main leaders, in which all could be heard instead of competing among themselves according to the capitalist logic. This would allow the discovery of convergences and the possibility of new alliances, inside the logic of networks that were already signed in the world as a more democratic way to organise ourselves. Little by little the Forums that have been organised after the first one have developed as opportunities for exercising what were almost completely new types of relationships.

In this way the Forum as an ‘open space’ serves precisely to build “new modes of global organisation of resistance and transformation”, as Walden Bello desires, except that these modes become concrete not in the path of the Forum but rather in the path of action. This is due to the self-imposed limitation of the WSF to not seek to impose decisions on the other participants of the Forum, nor to speak in the name of all of them, and less still to lead the

Forum to take positions in the name of the Forum, linking them to all participants.

The organisers of the creation of the WSF spaces – or facilitators, as they have called themselves, from the local level to the International Council (IC), so that they are not considered ‘leaders’ of a new ‘movement’ – have continually discussed these options from 2001 onwards, during all of the encounters. And today we discuss in these same Forums ‘the future of the WSF’ and its ‘open space’ character. Many proposals that have arisen in the Forums and in the International Council are framed in fact within this discussion, which exists from the beginning of that process.

The problem with Walden Bello’s proposal is that, in the light of the fact that he seems to have opted for a movement-Forum, he could not but question the possibility of a ‘space’ being “the most appropriate vehicle for the new stage in the struggle of the global justice and peace movement”. In fact, leaving aside the parallel road that was begun in 2001 and considering only one, or a mixture of both, what he proposes is that we get rid of the limitations that the WSF, as a space, imposes on us, so that we can continue ahead with more force – “to occupy spaces of power” – only on the path to action.

II

Current Perspectives and Necessities

Walden, however, also indicates in his essay some of the positive effects of the WSF that in fact could not exist were it not a space. So, he says, “the WSF became a magnet for global networks focused on different issues, from war to globalisation to communalism to racism to gender oppression to alternatives”, permitting this civil society, in its diversity, “to meet, network, and, quite simply, to feel and affirm itself”, as “a retreat during which the movement gathers its energies”. He considers that “the WSF provides a site and space for the movement to elaborate, discuss, and debate the vision, values, and institutions of an alternative world order built on a real community of interests”. And considering that “perhaps a compelling reason for the *modus vivendi* of the old and new movements was the realisation that they needed one another in the struggle against global capitalism”, he affirms “that the direct democratic experiences of Seattle, Prague, Genoa, and the other big mobilisations of the decade were institutionalised in the WSF or Porto Alegre process”, providing “an opportunity to recreate and reaffirm solidarity against injustice, against war, and for a world that was not subjected to the rule of empire and capital”.

But in saying all this, his proposal to pack up camp sounds as if he is declaring that the WSF has been a nice experience, but it is necessary to accept that it is over.

We know that all organisations – including the WSF – have to disappear one day, when their role is fulfilled. But have we already arrived at this moment ? Are we at a point on the road at which it should end ? Maybe Walden, in this aspect, is being too optimistic, since I do not believe that he wants to delude himself.

Have all of the positive effects of the WSF to which Walden refers been brought to all the corners of the planet ? In Asia, in the old socialist countries, in the Arab world, in China, in all of the Americas, in all of Africa ? Have all civil society organisations in all the countries of the world – or at least a significant number of them – had the opportunity to carry out the interconnections provided by the Forums ? Have there been local forums in all the cities or regions of the world – or in a large number of them – so that this experience can be lived by those who cannot travel to world or continental encounters, or even national ones ? Have new political practices effectively penetrated the organisations that come to participate in the Forums, changing them internally ? Are all the movements already fully convinced that “they needed one another in the struggle against global capitalism”, and are able to build a union instead of continuing to be divided and confronting each other ?

Naturally nothing can stop us from ending this experiment or adopting the option of

WSF as a movement if we think we are already sufficiently strong and united to be able to change the present tendencies of the world history. We could consciously end this stage of the WSF history, change the Charter of Principles, and begin new reflections and alliances.

Myself, I think that we are not so strong and we would be making a bad choice by interrupting the present WSF process. Civil society is still not, unhappily, so strong a political actor as we would like, while left parties and governments remain confused as ever. I prefer to consider that both strategies – creation of spaces and launching movements – can and must coexist. We can continue in both ‘roads’.

If this coexistence is accepted, they can reinforce each other. Social movements and organisations can launch through civil society forums new autonomous initiatives to overcome neoliberalism. Campaigns and pressures launched by them can be incorporated in the left parties’ and government’s programmes of action. New movements and even ‘movements of movements’ can be created, autonomous of the WSF events, as it happens already with the one we used to call ‘altermondialism’.

In terms of cultural changes – in the behaviours and the practices of political action – there is no doubt that, under the ideological dominance of capitalism, we need maybe generations to see full-fledged change happening. Why then, do we want to interrupt that process, or to finish off the road of interconnection that lies parallel to action ? That is in fact the question to put to Walden Bello, in response to the question at the end of his essay.

III

The Forum’s Communication with the World

I worry, too, that Walden Bello’s proposal helps us less than our opponents. Even more so because it comes from within the WSF.

In fact, to say that the WSF is finished is to reinforce exactly the same thing that the large international media says in its attempts to decree the death of the WSF, so that the owners of the world do not have to worry any more. The members of the Communication Commission of the WSF International Council cite for us, as an example, what the Spanish newspaper *El País* said in January of this year : “(T)he WSF has disappeared from the radar screens”.

The Commission points to what, in my opinion, is currently the biggest challenge of the WSF : Communicating with the world. We can clamour with loud and multiple voices that ‘another world is possible’, but there are still a very large number of those who do not believe it. Without any doubt, they are the largest majorities. And we have still not been able to ensure that all that is proposed, discussed, intended, articulated, and done, starting or not in the Forums, reaches the eyes and ears of those large majorities, as messages of hope.

In a recent meeting of the Communication Commission in Italy, I have been able to see more clearly the difference of evolution – one positive and one negative – of the two dynamics lived by the process of the WSF, toward inside and outside.

The dynamic toward the inside corresponds to its first challenge, to organise Forums that are indeed spaces of encounter, recognition, and mutual learning, to identify convergences, to launch new initiatives of resistance and transformation, and to feed properly actions already underway, building a union of resistance.

This dynamic has always been upward. Each Forum has taken advantage of the experiences of the previous one, looking to improve its methodology for a more complete realisation of objectives. From the first Forum that combined activities proposed from above, by the organisers, with self-organised activities from below, by the participants, we arrived in 2005 at a completely self-organised Forum. On the other hand the Charter of Principles has been signed by more and more. And many new articulations and actions, even on a planetary level, have arisen in the Forums and been consolidated, including, in February 2003, the

biggest rally for Peace that surprised everyone.

In the last Forum, in Nairobi – that had however fewer participants, for reasons that have already been well identified – the methodology took important qualitative leaps, such as basing the inscription of activities not in theoretical topics but rather in transformative objectives, or reserving the fourth working day to plan out concrete actions. Diverse organisational inadequacies, however, did not allow the full use of these advances.

The very limited outward communication on the other hand, made the inadequacies in Nairobi far more visible than the advances, and this Forum has deserved and received very controversial evaluations – including some frankly negative ones – such as Walden Bello who called that Forum very “disappointing”, and Onyango Oloo, one of its organisers, ending up writing 24 pages of hard criticism, beginning by saying that the Forum had been a “disaster”. At the same time, among other positive analyses, Gustave Massiah, from France, without ignoring what was insufficient, titles his evaluation : ‘Nairobi 2007, an excellent World Social Forum’.

The literature on this Forum is therefore varied. And as its International Council has not presented better information on the character of the 2008 Forum and perspectives for 2009, many journalists have been able to say that the WSF process has lost much of its force.

But it is surely clear that the WSF is not so dead. I recently listened to Oloo's words, the one who wrote the 24-page criticism, at a round-table in Italy, recounting the extremely positive outcomes of the Nairobi Forum that today appear in Kenya's society, in spite of all the Forum's inadequacies.

The best demonstration, however, that the process is alive is in the multiplication of regional and local Forums. The process is expanding more and more, as with the first United States Social Forum in June 2007, and at the same time others in Québec, in Germany, in the countries of Maghreb in Mauritania, in Denmark, in Guatemala, in Brazil, and in South America's Triple Border, among many others.

It can therefore be said that the dynamic of the Forum toward the inside, that is to say toward those who are fighting for another world, continues ascending even now. And the 2008 Forum, with its format of multiple simultaneous activities throughout the entire planet, in its diversity of types and topics, with one day of common visibility in the symbolic date of Davos, can carry us to a very significant World Social Forum in January of 2009.

But the same thing has not occurred with the outward dynamic, which has on the contrary declined. It is interesting to note that the two dynamics (toward inside and toward outside) were both in ascendance until the 2005 Forum : More and more people came to participate in the World Forums, as well as the Forum multiplying on the regional, national, and local levels. And it was in 2005, during which 150,000 people came to participate in the largest Forum until then, that the dynamic toward the outside began to lose force.

It is for this very reason that the Communication Commission of the International Council will present, in the next meeting of the IC in Berlin in June 2007, a plan of work towards the outside.

Communication with the world at large is not, however, the task of a Commission. It has to be assumed by all of the participants of the process. It is not only an issue of communication with journalists, but rather of multiple communication systems that would make possible the certainty in the minds of many that ‘another world is possible’. And even more, since many processes of resistance and effective transformation are already underway, the conviction that the ‘other world’ is already under construction; and that the World Social Forum process is available as a powerful instrument for those who act to change reality.

Notes

1 This essay is a slightly edited version of Whitaker, May 2007b, which in turn is a translation of Whitaker, May 2007a.

2 See Walden Bello's essay in this volume, 'World Social Forum at the Crossroads' (Bello 2012).

A Left Of The Future : The WSF And Beyond **Boaventura de Sousa Santos**

I

Crisis and Overhaul

Enough has been said about the crisis of the left, and part of what has been said has worked as self-fulfilling prophecy. When the habit of thinking that history is with us is put in question, we are inclined to think that history is irremediably against us. History does not know any better than we do where it is headed, nor does it use women and men to fulfil its ends. Which is to say that we cannot trust history more than we can trust ourselves. To be sure, trusting ourselves is not a purely subjective act, decontextualised from the world. For the past few decades, the political and cultural hegemony of neoliberalism has given rise to a conception of the world that shows it as being either too well made to allow for the introduction of any consequent novelty, or too fragmentary to allow for whatever we do to have consequences capable of making up for the risks taken in trying to change the status quo.

The last thirty or forty years of the last century may be considered the years of degenerative crisis of global left thinking and practice.¹ To be sure, there were crises on the left before, but not only were they not global – restricted as they were to the Eurocentric world, what nowadays we call the Global North – they were also compensated for, from the 1950s on, by the successful struggles for the liberation of the colonies. These crises were mainly experienced as casualties in a history whose trajectory and rationality suggested that the victory of the left (revolution, socialism, communism) was certain. This is how the division of the workers' movement at the beginning of World War I was experienced, as well as the defeat of the German revolution (1918-1923), and then Nazism, fascism, franquismo and salazarismo (after Franco and Salazar of Spain and Portugal respectively, 1939-1975 and 1926-1974), the Moscow processes (1936-1938), the civil war in Greece (1944-1949), and even the invasion of Hungary (1956). This kind of crisis is well characterised in the works of Trotsky in exile. Trotsky was very early on aware of the seriousness of Stalin's deviations from the revolution, but he never for one moment doubted that history went along with the revolution just as the true revolutionaries went along with history.

The crises of left thinking and practice of the last thirty or forty years are of a different kind. On the one hand, they are global, even though they occur in different countries for specific reasons : From the assassinations of Patrice Lumumba and Che Guevara in the 1960s, or the student movement of May 1968, to the globalisation of the most anti-social form of capitalism, neoliberalism, in the 1980s, or the parallel rise, in the next decade, of political Islam and political Christianity, both fundamentalist and confrontational.

On the other hand, the crisis of left thinking and practice of the last thirty or forty years appears to be degenerative : The failures seem to be the result of history's mortal exhaustion, whether because history no longer has meaning or rationality, or because the meaning and rationality of history finally opted for the permanent consolidation of capitalism, the latter turned into a literal translation of immutable human nature. Revolution, socialism, communism, and even reformism seem to be hidden away in the top drawers of history's closet, where only collectors of misfortunes reach. The world is well made, the neoliberal argument goes; the future finally has arrived in the present to stay. This agreement on ends is the uncontested fund of liberalism, on whose basis it is possible to respect the diversity of opinions about means. Since means are political only when they are at the service of different ends, the differences concerning social change are now technical or juridical and, therefore, can and must be discussed regardless of the cleavage between left and right.

A Counter-Hegemonic Globalisation

In the mid-1990s, however, the story of this hegemony started to change. Hegemonic practices for the past decades have intensified exclusion, oppression, and destruction of the means of subsistence and sustainability of large populations of the world, leading them to extreme situations where inaction or conformism would mean death. These are the moments in which the victims don't just cry, they fight back. The actions of resistance into which these situations were translated, together with the revolution in information and communication technologies that took place meanwhile, permitted alliances in distant places of the world and the articulation of struggles through local / global linkages.

The 1994 Zapatista uprising is an important moment of this construction precisely because it targeted a tool of neoliberal globalisation, the North American Free Trade Agreement; and because it aimed to articulate different scales of struggle, from local to national to global, resorting to new discursive and political strategies, and to the new information and communication technologies available. In November 1999, the protesters in Seattle managed to paralyse the World Trade Organisation (WTO) ministerial meeting, and later many other meetings of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), WTO, and G-8 were affected by the protests of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and social movements intent on denouncing the hypocrisy and destructiveness of the new world disorder. In January 2001, the World Social Forum (WSF) met for the first time in Porto Alegre (Brazil), and many other meetings followed : Global, regional, thematic, national, subnational, local Forums.

Thus an alternative globalisation was gradually constructed, alternative to neoliberal globalisation, a counter-hegemonic globalisation, a globalisation from below. The WSF may be said to represent today, in organisational terms, the most consistent manifestation of counter-hegemonic globalisation. As such, the WSF provides the most favourable context to inquire to what extent a new left is emerging through these initiatives – a truly global left, with the capacity to overcome the degenerative crisis that has been beleaguering the left for the past forty years.

The WSF And Its Novelty

The WSF is a new social and political phenomenon. The fact that it does have antecedents does not diminish its newness, quite the opposite. The WSF is not an event. Nor is it a mere succession of events, although it does try to dramatise the formal meetings it promotes. It is not a scholarly conference, or an international of parties, or a confederation of NGOs. It is not a social movement, even though it often designates itself as the movement of movements. Even as it presents itself as an agent of social change, the WSF rejects the concept of a historical subject and confers no priority on any specific social actor in this process of social change. It holds no clearly defined ideology, either in defining what it rejects or what it asserts. Given that the WSF conceives of itself as a struggle against neoliberal globalisation, is it a struggle against a given form of capitalism or against capitalism in general ? Given that it sees itself as a struggle against discrimination, exclusion, and oppression, does the success of its struggle presuppose a post-capitalist, socialist, anarchist horizon, or, on the contrary, does it presuppose that no horizon be clearly defined at all? Given that the vast majority of people taking part in the WSF identify themselves as favouring a politics of the left, how many definitions of 'the left' fit the WSF ? And what about those who refuse to be defined because they believe that the left-right dichotomy is a north-centric or west-centric particularism, and look for alternative political definitions ?

The social struggles that find expression in the WSF do not adequately fit either of the two ways of social change sanctioned by western modernity : Reform and revolution. Aside from the consensus on non-violence, its modes of struggle are extremely diverse and appear

spread out in a continuum between the poles of institutionalism and insurgency. Even the concept of non-violence is open to widely disparate interpretations. Finally, the WSF is not structured according to any of the models of modern political organisation, be they democratic centralism, representative democracy, or participatory democracy. Nobody represents it or is allowed to speak in its name, let alone make decisions, even though it sees itself as a forum that facilitates the decisions of the movements and organisations that take part in it.²

These features are arguably not new, as some of them, at least, are associated with what are conventionally called 'new social movements'. The truth, however, is that these movements are thematic. Themes, while fields of concrete political confrontation, compel definition – hence polarisation – whether regarding strategies or tactics, organisational forms or forms of struggle. Themes work, therefore, both as attraction and repulsion. Now, what is new about the WSF is the fact that it is inclusive, both as concerns its scale and its thematics. What is new is the whole it constitutes, not its constitutive parts. The WSF is global in its harbouring local, national, and global movements, and in its being inter-thematic and even trans-thematic. In other words, if the WSF is arguably a 'movement of movements', it is not one more movement. It is a different kind of movement.

The problem with new social movements is that, in order to do them justice, a new social theory and new analytical concepts are called for. Since neither the one nor the others emerge easily from the inertia of the disciplines, the risk that they may be undertheorised and undervalued is considerable.³ This risk is all the more serious as the WSF, given its scope and internal diversity, not only challenges dominant political theories and the various disciplines of the conventional social sciences, but challenges scientific knowledge as the sole producer of social and political rationality as well. To put it another way, the WSF raises not only analytical and theoretical questions, but also epistemological questions. This much is expressed in the idea, widely shared by WSF participants, that there will be no global social justice without global cognitive justice.

The challenge posed by the WSF has one more dimension still. Beyond the theoretical, analytical, and epistemological questions, it raises a new political issue: It aims to fulfil utopia in a world devoid of utopias. This utopian will is expressed in the slogan, 'Another world is possible'. At stake is less a utopian world than a world that allows for utopia.

In the next section, I analyse the reasons for the success of the WSF, contrasting them with the failures of the conventional left in recent decades. I will then try to examine whether this success is sustainable. Finally, I will identify the challenges that the WSF process poses both to critical theory and to left political activism.

II

Three Successes of the WSF

Strong questions and weak answers

Contrary to Habermas, for whom Western modernity is still an incomplete project,⁴ I have been arguing that our time is witnessing the final crisis of the hegemony of the socio-cultural paradigm of Western modernity and that, therefore, it is a time of paradigmatic transition.⁵ It is characteristic of a transitional time to be a time of strong questions and weak answers. Strong questions address not only our options of individual and collective life but also and mainly the roots and foundations that have created the horizon of possibilities among which it is possible to choose. They are, therefore, questions that arouse a particular kind of perplexity. Weak answers are the ones that cannot abate this perplexity and may, in fact, increase it.

Questions and answers vary according to culture and world region. However, the discrepancy between the strength of the questions and the weakness of the answers seems to be common. This discrepancy derives from the current variety of contact zones involving cultures, religions, economies, social and political systems, and different ways of life. The

contact experience is always an experience of limits and borders. In today's globalised conditions, it is the contact experience that gives rise to the discrepancy between strong questions and weak answers.

In my view, one of the reasons for the success of the WSF lies in the disjuncture between strong questions and weak answers. There may be two types of weak answers. The first type is what I call the weak-strong answer. Paraphrasing Lucien Goldmann, such an answer represents the maximum possible consciousness of a given epoch.⁶ It transforms the perplexity caused by the strong question into a positive energy and value. Rather than pretending that the perplexity is pointless or that it can be eliminated by a simple answer, it transforms the perplexity into the social experience of a new open field of contradictions in which an unfinished and unregulated competition among different possibilities exists. The outcomes of this competition being most uncertain, there is plenty of room for social and political innovation, once perplexity is transformed into a capacity to travel without reliable maps.

The other type of weak answer is the weak-weak answer. It represents the minimum possible consciousness of a given epoch. It discards and stigmatises the perplexity as a symptom of the failure to understand that the real coincides with the possible. Perplexity amounts to an irrational refusal to travel according to historically tested maps. But since perplexity derives in the first place from questioning such maps, the weak-weak response is an invitation to immobility. On the contrary, the weak-strong answer is an invitation to move at high risk.

The success of the WSF lies in that it is a weak-strong answer to two strong questions of our time. I formulate the first in the following way : If humanity is one, why are there so many different, and often contradictory, principles concerning human dignity and a just society ? At the root of this question is the verification, today more unequivocal than ever, that the understanding of the world largely exceeds the Western understanding of the world. One of the most widespread of the weak-weak answers to this question is the conventional understanding of human rights. It banalises the perplexity by postulating the abstract universality of the conception of human dignity that underlies human rights. The fact that such a conception is Western based is considered irrelevant, as the historicity of human rights does not interfere with its ontological status. It is equally irrelevant that many social movements fighting against injustice and oppression do not formulate their struggles in human rights terms, and indeed often formulate them in terms that contradict them.

This weak-weak answer has been fully embraced by the conventional left, particularly in the global north. It has therefore blinded itself to new realities taking place in the countries of the global south.⁷ New movements of resistance have been emerging – for instance, the indigenous movements, particularly in Latin America, or the 'new' rise of traditionalism in Africa, or the Islamic insurgency – whose ideological bases have nothing to do with the ones that were the references of the left during the twentieth century (Marxism, socialism, developmentalism, anti-imperialist nationalism). They are rather grounded on multi-secular cultural and historical identities, and / or religious militancy. It is not surprising, therefore, that such struggles cannot be defined according to the cleavage between left and right. What is actually surprising is that the hegemonic left as a whole does not have the theoretical and analytical tools to position itself in relation to them, and that it does not think it a priority to do so. It applies the same abstract recipe of human rights across the board.

In my opinion, the WSF is so far the most convincing weak-strong answer to this question. In spite of its limitations, the WSF has credibly established itself as a global open space, a meeting ground for the most diverse movements and organisations, sponsoring different conceptions of human dignity, calling for a variety of other worlds that should be possible. The WSF does not answer the question of the 'why' of such a diversity, nor the

questions of what for, under which conditions, and for the benefit of whom. But it has successfully made this diversity more visible and more acceptable to social movements and organisations; it has made them aware of the incomplete or partial character of their struggles, politics, and philosophies; it has created a new need for inter-knowledge, inter-recognition, and interaction; it has fostered coalitions among movements up until now separated and mutually suspicious of one another. In sum, it has transformed diversity into a positive value, a potential source of energy for progressive social transformation.

Dialectically, the WSF's weakness (the non-discrimination among diverse solutions) cannot be separated from its strength (the celebration of diversity as value in itself), and vice-versa. The WSF is as transitional as our time and draws attention to the latent possibilities of such transition. Herein lies its success.

The second strong question for which the WSF provides a weak-strong answer can be formulated in this way : Is there any room for utopia in our world ? Is there really an alternative to capitalism ?

After the historical failure of so many attempts at building a non-capitalist society, with such tragic consequences, shouldn't we look for alternatives inside capitalism rather than for alternatives to capitalism ? The crisis of left politics of the last thirty or forty years derives in part from the weak-weak answers that the conventional left has given to this question. The conception of an alternative society and the struggle for it have been the backbone of both critical theory and left politics throughout the twentieth century. Such conception, however vague, was consistent enough to serve as an evaluation criterion of the life conditions of the working class, excluded social groups, and victims of discrimination. The strength of Marxism resides in this unique capacity to articulate the alternative future with an oppositional way of living the present.

In the last decades, however, neoliberal conservatism became so dominant that left politics, particularly in the global north, split into two fields, neither of them, paradoxically, on the left. On the one hand, there were those who took the eradication of the idea of an alternative society to be such a devastating defeat that there would be space left only for the old centrism dominated by the 'more enlightened' right; on the other, there were those who, in the absence of an alternative, saw a victory capable of encouraging a new centrism, this time dominated by the left (the UK Labour Party's Third Way and its developments in Latin America). These two fields responded to the perplexity caused by the question by denying any reason for perplexity. They both missed the fact that without a conception of an alternative society and without the politically organised struggle to bring it about, the present, however violent and intolerable, would be depoliticised and, as a consequence, would stop being a source of mobilisation for revolt and opposition. This fact has certainly not escaped the right. Bearing it in mind, the right has based its government, since the 1980s, not on the consensus of the victims, but on their resignation.

The WSF, in contrast, offers a weak-strong answer to the question. It takes the perplexity seriously and strongly claims that there are alternatives. But it does not define the content of such alternatives and, according to some of its most radical critics, it does not even respond to the question of whether these are alternatives to capitalism or alternatives inside capitalism. It also claims the legitimacy of utopian thinking but of a different kind than the one dominating at the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century. In abstract, this seems very little, but in the context it has emerged in it amounts to a utopia of a new type.⁸

The hegemonic conception of our age posits a radical denial of alternatives to present-day reality. As Franz Hinkelammert says, we live in a time of conservative utopias whose utopian character resides in its radical denial of alternatives.⁹ All conservative utopias are sustained by a political logic based on one sole efficiency criterion that rapidly becomes a

supreme ethical criterion. Neoliberalism is one such conservative utopia for which the sole criterion of efficiency is the market or the laws of the market. Its utopian character resides in the promise that its total fulfilment or application cancels out all utopias.

This is the context in which the utopian dimension of the WSF must be understood. The WSF signifies the re-emergence of a critical utopia, that is to say, the radical critique of present-day reality and the aspiration to a better society. The WSF puts in question the totality of control claimed by neoliberalism (whether as knowledge or power) only to affirm credibly the possibility of alternatives. Hence the open nature of the alternatives. In a context in which the conservative utopia prevails absolutely, it is more important to affirm the possibility of alternatives than to define them. Herein lies the mix of weakness and strength of the WSF's answer to the strong question about the possibility of alternatives.

The specificity of the WSF as critical utopia has one more dimension. The WSF is the first critical utopia of the twenty-first century and aims to break with the tradition of the critical utopias of western modernity, many of which turned into conservative utopias – denying alternatives under the excuse that the fulfilment of utopia was underway. The openness and plurality of the utopian dimension of the WSF corresponds to the latter's attempt to escape this perversion. The affirmation of alternatives goes hand in hand with the affirmation that there are alternatives to the alternatives. The other possible world is a utopian aspiration that comprises several possible worlds.

The utopia of the WSF is a radically democratic utopia. This utopian design, grounded on the denial of the present rather than the definition of the future, focused on the processes of intercourse among the movements rather than an assessment of the movements' political content, is the major factor of cohesion of the WSF. It helps to maximise what unites and minimise what divides, celebrate intercourse rather than dispute power, be a strong presence rather than a strong agenda. This utopian design, which is also an ethical design, privileges the ethical discourse, quite evident in the WSF's Charter of Principles, aimed at gathering consensus beyond the ideological and political cleavages among the movements and organisations that compose it. The movements and organisations put between brackets the cleavages that divide them, as much as is necessary to affirm the possibility of a counter-hegemonic globalisation.

The nature of this utopia has been adequate for the initial objective of the WSF : To affirm the existence of a counter-hegemonic globalisation. It remains to be seen if the nature of this utopia is the most adequate one to guide the next steps, should there be any next steps. Once the idea that another world is possible is made credible, will it be possible to fulfil this idea with the same level of radical democracy that helped formulate it ? This is the question that Walden Bello has recently raised,¹⁰ and to which I will turn below.

A sense of urgency, or long-term civilisational changes ?

Another reason for the success of the WSF is the way it has dealt with the two extreme and contradictory temporalities disputing the time frame of collective action today. On the one hand, there is a sense of urgency, the idea that it is necessary to act now as tomorrow will probably be too late. Many factors, from the imminent ecological catastrophe to the exponential growth of social inequality, seem to demand that absolute priority be given to immediate or short-run action as the long run may not even exist. Most certainly the pressure of urgency lies in different factors in the global north and in the global south, but seems to be present everywhere.

On the other hand, there is a sense that our time calls for deep and long term civilisational changes. The crises of today are symptoms of deep-seated structures and agencies which cannot be confronted by short-run interventionism as the latter is as much part of the civilisational paradigm as the state of affairs it fights. The twentieth century proved with

immense cruelty that to take power is not enough, that rather than taking power it is necessary to transform power. The most extreme versions of this temporality even call for the transformation of the world without taking power.¹¹

The coexistence of these polar temporalities is producing great turbulence in old time distinctions and cleavages such as between tactics and strategy, or reform and revolution. While the sense of urgency calls for tactics and reform, the sense of civilisational paradigmatic change calls for strategy and revolution, to use the binaries that have dominated the conventional left. But the fact that both senses coexist and are both pressing disfigures the terms of the distinctions and cleavages. The fall of the Berlin Wall, while striking a mediatic mortal blow on the idea of revolution, struck a silent but no less deadly blow on the idea of reform. Since then, we live in a time that, on the one hand, turns reformism into counter-reformism which, on the other, is either too late to be post-revolutionary or too premature to be pre-revolutionary. As a result, political polarisations become relatively unregulated and with meanings which have very little to do with the names attached to them.

In my view, the WSF captures very well this unresolved tension between contradictory temporalities. Not just as an event but also as a process, the WSF has fostered the full expression of both senses (of urgency and of civilisational change), juxtaposing campaigns and forming coalitions of discourses and practices that focus on immediate action and on long term transformation. Calls for immediate debt cancellation get articulated with long duration campaigns of popular education concerning HIV/AIDS; denunciations of the criminalisation of social protest by indigenous peoples before the courts go hand in hand with the struggle for the recognition of the cultural identity and ancestral territories of the same peoples; the struggle for the immediate access to sufficient potable water by the people of Soweto, in the wake of the privatisation of water supplies, becomes part and parcel of a long strategy to guarantee sustainable access to water throughout the African Continent, as illustrated in the constitution of the Africa Water Network in Nairobi during the WSF 2007.

These different timeframes of struggle coexist peacefully in the WSF for three main reasons. First, they translate themselves into struggles that share the same radicalism, whether it concerns the maximum obtainable now or the maximum obtainable in the long run. Second, mutual knowledge of such diverse temporalities among movements and organisations has led to the idea that the differences among them are much wider in theory than in practice. This explains why some major movements have been able to combine in their overall strategies the immediate and the civilisational. This is the case of the MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra, the movement of landless rural workers in Brazil) which combines illegal land occupation to feed hungry peasants with massive actions of popular political education aiming at a much broader transformation of the Brazilian state and society.

The final reason for the coexistence of contradictory temporalities is that the WSF does not set priorities between them; it just opens the space for discussions and coalition building among the movements and organisations, the outcomes of which can be the most diverse. An overriding sense of a common purpose, however vaguely defined, to build another possible world tends to deemphasise polarisations among the movements and invites them to concentrate on building more intense coalitions with the movements with which they have more affinities.

Cognitive alternatives, pluralities, and justice

The third reason for the success of the WSF lies in the way it deals with the gap between left practices and classical theories of the left, which is broader today than ever. This is probably another feature of the transitional nature of our time. From the EZLN in Chiapas to Lula's election in Brazil, from the Argentinean piqueteros to the MST, from the indigenous movement in Bolivia and Ecuador to Uruguay's Frente Amplio and the successive victories of

Hugo Chavez, as well as, more recently, the election of Evo Morales, or from the continental struggle against ALCA¹² to the alternative project of regional integration led by Hugo Chavez, we are faced with political practices that are in general recognised as left, but which were not foreseen by the major left theoretical traditions, or even contradict them. As a result, there seems to be emerging a mutual blindness between theory and practice – of the practice vis-à-vis the theory and of the theory vis-à-vis the practice.

The reason for this lies in the fact that while critical thinking and left theory was historically developed in the global north, indeed in five or six countries of the global north, the most innovative and effective transformative left practices of recent decades have been occurring in the global south. One might argue that this is not a completely new phenomenon as the anti-colonial struggles and the movement of the non-aligned countries, founded in Bandung in 1955, also contributed important new concepts and ideas to the hegemonic north-centric left script. This is true to a certain extent. But contrary to what happened then, the new left practices not only occur in unfamiliar places carried out by 'strange' people, but they also speak very 'strange' non-colonial languages (aymara, quechua, guarani, Hindi, Urdu, Arabic, ki-Zulu, ki-kongo) or less hegemonic colonial languages (such as Spanish and Portuguese) and their cultural and political references are non-western.

Moreover, when we translate their discourses into a colonial language there is often no trace of the familiar concepts with which western-based left politics was historically built, such as revolution, socialism, working class, capital, democracy or human rights, etc. Instead, we encounter land, water, territory, racism, dignity, respect, cultural and sexual oppression, Pachamama (Mother Earth), control of natural resources, poverty and starvation, pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, cultural identity, violence. It is therefore not surprising that the north-centric left thinking does not recognise as belonging to the left some of the critical understandings and practices emerging in the global south – and that the latter often refuses to include its experiences within the left / right binary.

The wild effects of the mirror games between blind theories and invisible practices have been brought to their climax in the WSF. The WSF originated in the global south according to cultural and political premises that defied all the hegemonic traditions of the left. Its novelty, which was strengthened as the WSF moved from Porto Alegre to Mumbai and later to Nairobi, lies in that the hegemonic traditions of the left, rather than being discarded, were invited to be present but not on their own terms, that is, as the sole legitimate traditions. They were invited along with many other traditions of critical knowledge, transformative practice, and conceptions of a better society. The fact that movements and organisations coming from disparate critical traditions could interact during several days and plan for collaborative actions has had a profound and multifaceted impact on the relationship between theory and practice.

First, it has made clear that the discrepancy between the left in books and the left in practice is more of a western problem. In other parts of the world, and even in the west among non-western populations (such as indigenous peoples), there are other understandings of collective action for which such discrepancy doesn't make sense. The world at large is full of transformative experiences and actors that are not educated in the western left. Moreover, scientific knowledge, which has always been granted absolute priority in the western left books, is in the WSF's open space one form of knowledge among many others. It is more important for certain movements and causes than for others and in many instances it is resorted to in articulation with other knowledges : Lay, popular, urban, peasant, indigenous, women's, and / or religious knowledges.

In this way, the WSF poses a new epistemological question : If social practices and collective actors resort to different kinds of knowledge, an adequate evaluation of their worth for social emancipation is premised upon an epistemology, which, contrary to hegemonic

epistemologies in the west, does not grant a priori supremacy to scientific knowledge (heavily produced in the north). This allows for a more just relationship among different kinds of knowledge. In other words, there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice. Therefore, in order to capture the immense variety of critical discourses and practices, and to valorise and maximise their transformative potential, an epistemological reconstruction is needed. This means that we need not so much alternatives as an alternative thinking about alternatives.

Such epistemological reconstruction must start from an intercultural dialogue and translation among different critical knowledges and practices : South-centric and north-centric, popular and scientific, religious and secular, female and male, urban and rural, etc. This intercultural translation I call the ecology of knowledges.¹³

The second impact of the WSF on the relationship between theory and practice, and probably more decisively for its success, is the way it has valued the diversity of philosophies, discourses, styles of action, and political objectives present in its meetings. Two aspects must be emphasised in this regard. On the one hand, the WSF has so far resisted reducing its openness for the sake of efficacy or political coherence. As I mention below, there is an intense debate inside the WSF about this issue, but, in my view, the idea that there is no general theory of social transformation capable of capturing and classifying the immense diversity of oppositional ideas and practices present in the WSF has been one of the most innovative and productive decisions. On the other hand, this potentially unconditional inclusiveness has contributed to create a new political culture that, as I mentioned above, privileges commonalities to the detriment of differences, and fosters common action even in the presence of deep ideological differences once the objectives, no matter how limited in scope, are clear and adopted by consensus.

In the antipodes of the idea of an all-encompassing general theory or a correct line dictated from above, the coalitions and articulations made possible among the social movements are generated from bottom-up, tend to be pragmatic, and to last as long as they are considered to further each movement's objectives. In other words, while in the tradition of the conventional left, particularly in the global north, to politicise an issue was equivalent to polarising it, which often led to factionalism, in the WSF another political culture seems to be emerging in which politicisation goes hand in hand with depolarisation, with the search for common grounds and agreed-upon limits of ideological purity or ideological messiness. In my view, the possibility of global collective action lies in the development of this political culture.

III

Unfinished Tasks of the WSF

Compulsive self-reflexivity and capacity for self-reform

Since its beginning the WSF has been intensely debated both inside, among its participants, and outside, mostly among members of the conventional left who have looked at it with a suspicious eye. The themes of debate are numerous. Along the way, such debates and the evaluations they gave rise to have led to important organisational changes. I have argued elsewhere that, contrary to the opinion of its critics, the WSF has shown a remarkable capacity to reform itself.¹⁴ The issues of organisation and representation have been the main playing field upon which such capacity has been tested. In my view, the limitations of self-reform have so far lain less in the WSF itself than in the global and national structural conditions under which it unfolds.

The debates exploded after the WSF 2005 and were a conspicuous presence in the WSF 2007 in Nairobi. From 2005 onwards the debates started to focus on the future of the WSF. Two different debates can be identified. One debate focuses on the profound changes the WSF should undergo in order to keep up with the transformative energies it has unleashed. From an

open space to a movement of movements ? From talk shop to collective action ? Global political party ? Deep changes in the Charter of Principles in order to allow for political positions on major global concerns, such as the invasion of Iraq, the reform of the UN, or the Israel / Palestine conflict ? From consensus to voting ? The other debate focuses on whether the WSF has a future at all, whether it has exhausted its potential, whether it should come to an end, opening space for other types of global aggregation of resistance and alternative. This second debate won particular notoriety with a recent paper by Walden Bello, in which he asks :

Having fulfilled its historic function of aggregating and linking the diverse counter-movements spawned by global capitalism, is it time for the WSF to fold up its tent and give way to new modes of global organisation of resistance and transformation ?¹⁵

Before trying to answer this question, I would like to answer another one, concerning the sociology of the debate : Why has the debate been so intense, and why is it that the more radically it questions the WSF, the less the consequences it has for the unfolding of the WSF process ? Having followed the evolution of the WSF since the very beginning very closely, I have come to three conclusions.

First, the debate has been very intense right from the first edition of the WSF and the issues being discussed fall into two categories. On the one hand, there is the resistance to acknowledging the novelty of the WSF vis-à-vis the traditions of the conventional left. These are the issues of efficacy, ideological makeup, political goals, etc. On the other hand, recognising the novelty of the WSF, there is the questioning of certain aspects or features that might compromise such novelty. These are the issues of global reach and representativeness, of internal democracy and transparency, and of relationships with states and financing agencies. In my view, in both instances, the intensity of the debate confirms the novelty of the WSF in the global landscape of left politics. Our time, both on the right and on the left, is so soaked in the neoliberal ideology of TINA (there is no alternative) that any institutional and political novelty seems to be forced into compulsive self-reflexivity.

My second conclusion is that the criticisms that started from the premise of the novelty of the WSF led in general to changes and innovations aimed at correcting acknowledged deficiencies. The meetings of the International Council in the last three years are abundant evidence of this. In fact, I cannot think of any other organisation of the left in which the capacity for self-reform has been so consistent.

My third conclusion is that the most radical debates, those that call for a radical transformation of the WSF or for its extinction, have very little consequence and rarely leave the rooms or sites in which they take place to become topics of conversation among the activists that have been joining the WSF process. I experienced this very notably in Nairobi, in January 2007, the meeting in which more panels were organised to discuss the future of the WSF. While in these panels very vehement discussions took place, outside, peasants from Tanzania and Uganda met their comrades from Kenya for the first time; women from all over the world were busy preparing the second draft of the Manifesto on reproductive and sexual rights; urban dwellers from different cities of the planet were planning collective actions against forcible evictions and the privatisation of water supply; community leaders from all over Africa were setting up the Africa Water Network and, together with NGOs and human rights and health movements and organisations from all over the world, were planning the most comprehensive campaign against HIV/AIDS.

The open space and process put in motion by the WSF tends to depolarise differences, to reform itself in light of constructive criticisms, and to ignore those that are identified as potentially destructive. This seems to make it immune to radical questioning; or better, the WSF is not an entity where radical questioning has real consequences. This resilience is, in my

view, a sign that the WSF has not yet fulfilled its “historic function”; that it has not yet exhausted its potential.

The WSF and the Global Left

This brings me back to Walden Bello’s article ‘The Forum at the Crossroads’.¹⁶ After acknowledging all the accomplishments of the WSF, very much in line with my analysis above, Bello argues in favour of “the charge that the WSF as an institution is unanchored in actual global political struggles, and this is turning it into an annual festival with limited social impact”. He agrees with those for whom the liberal conception of the ‘open space’ has created the illusion that the WSF can stand above the fray, turning the WSF into some sort of neutral forum, where discussion will increasingly be isolated from action, draining “the energy of civil society networks [which] derives from their being engaged in political struggles”. This criticism has been addressed to the WSF since the very beginning and I have myself subscribed to it.¹⁷ But while I see in it just another opportunity for self-reform, Bello considers it as dictating the death sentence of the WSF. The core argument is that the WSF corresponded to a stage of anti-capitalist struggle that is over. Its historical task consisted in bringing together old and new movements and demonstrating the strength of decentralised networking, and this has now been accomplished; indeed, the WSF has been left behind by more advanced struggles. Implied in the argument is the idea that the continuation of the WSF may even become an obstacle to the success of these struggles. Bello’s example of such a struggle is Hugo Chavez and the Bolivarian revolution. For Bello, the historical accomplishment of the WSF lies in having created the conditions for such struggles to now have better chances of succeeding.

I fully agree with Bello that Latin America is today at the forefront of the struggle against imperialism and that Hugo Chavez represents the most advanced moment of such struggle, which is also very much in march in Bolivia and Ecuador. Moreover, I think that the WSF, emerging in Latin America, has contributed a great deal to this. Two questions, however, still need to be asked. First, does the continuation of the WSF interfere negatively with the future outcomes of these struggles ? Second, are the transformations in left politics brought about by the WSF really so widespread and, if so, are they sustainable ?

Concerning the first question, I think the WSF has never claimed that the correction of the errors of the past would imply the acceptance of a single alternative path. Indeed, the core idea underlying the WSF is the celebration of the diversity of the struggles against exclusion and oppression. To assume that the WSF may become detrimental to the success of the most advanced struggles presupposes, first, that there is a single and unequivocal criterion to establish what is more and what is less advanced, and, secondly, that the coexistence of struggles of different types, scales, and degrees of advancement is detrimental to the overall objective of building another possible world. In my view, none of this presuppositions is borne out by reality. The doubts about adopting any such single criterion, and the frustration with the historical record of some candidates for such a privileged status, are at the core of the success of the WSF. Moreover, even assuming that a general agreement is possible within the global left about what is more or less advanced, it is hardly conceivable that it is possible to progress at the same pace in the different struggles against the different kinds of oppression in the different parts of the world.

On the contrary, the uneven and combined development of the different anti-capitalist struggles – probably, more evident now thanks to the WSF – will always mirror the uneven and combined development of global capitalism. In the words of Whitaker, in response to Bello, the WSF’s crossroads are in fact two parallel paths that can co-exist, as mutual sources of inspiration. Even assuming that the WSF has been outpaced by other conceptions and practices of resistance and alternatives, it is important that the WSF continue to provide an anchor for the struggles that still need it, and reduce the negative impact and frustration caused by the

potential defeat of the most advanced struggles.

In a recent evaluation of the US Social Forum, Ponniah, even though arguing that the USSF “demonstrated the accuracy of both Bello and Whitaker’s arguments, affirming the importance of continuing the Social Forum process but on much more innovative, decisive, political ground”, recognises that, in the last instance, the richness of the idea of the WSF as an open space received a robust confirmation in the USSF. According to him :

The US Social Forum created an open space that allowed different people’s movements to come together from around the United States. For the first time diverse activists from around the country were able to collectively interact in a non-hierarchical, horizontal manner that emphasised mutual understanding.¹⁸

Even if we think that it was the weakness or backwardness of the US left, combined with its multiculturalism, that made the format of the WSF fit the USSF so well, we are thereby confirming the continuing usefulness of the WSF. Particularly if we consider how crucial it is to strengthen the US left in order to put an end to US imperialism.

To answer the second question involves an evaluation of the impact of the WSF. Given the short period of its maturation, the inquiry into its contribution to transforming critical theory and the global left cannot but be somewhat speculative. It is, nonetheless, possible to identify some of the left’s problems highlighted by the WSF, as well as some of the solutions made possible or more credible in the light of its experience. By its very nature, the WSF does not have an official line on its own impact on the left’s future, and I suspect that many of the movements and organisations involved in it are not concerned about it. What I present next is a personal reflection drawn from my own experience of the WSF.

In my view, the most salient features of the WSF’s contribution to left politics are the following, without any criterion of precedence : The passage from a movement politics to an inter-movement politics; a broad conception of power and oppression; a network politics based on horizontal relations and on combining autonomy with aggregation; the intercultural nature of the left and of the very concept of what is considered to be ‘left’, as well as, following from this, the idea of cognitive justice functioning as an important political criterion; a new political culture around diversity; different conceptions of democracy (demodiversity) and their evaluation according to transnational and transcultural criteria of radical democracy; a combined struggle for the principle of equality and for the principle of recognition of difference; a privileging of rebellion, non-conformism, and insurgency vis-à-vis reform and revolution; a sustained effort not to convert militants into functionaries; the pragmatic combination of short-term and long-term agendas; an articulation between different scales of struggle, local, national, and global, together with an intensified awareness of the need to match global capitalism with global anti-capitalism; a focus on ‘transversality’ (how spaces can intersect) both in terms of themes and processes; a broad conception of means of struggle with the coexistence of legal and illegal action (barring illegal violence against people), direct and institutional action, and action inside and outside the capitalist state; a pragmatic conception of differences and commonalities, with emphasis on the latter; and a refusal of correct lines, general theories, and central commands in favour of agreed upon aggregations and depolarised pluralities. The last contribution is probably the most crucial, and is elaborated on in the next section.

The end of the WSF would be fully justified if these contributions were fully internalised by the left throughout the world, and particularly by the left involved in the more advanced struggles. If this is accepted as the criterion to decide whether or not the WSF has a future, I think that it cannot be reasonably argued that the historical task of the WSF has been completed. Indeed, it would be overly optimistic to think that the transformations on the left under the impact of the WSF are widespread and are fully present in the more advanced

struggles.

Moreover, I think that the continuation of the WSF (with all the changes that might improve its performance) will become more crucial in the coming years, for two main reasons. First, in recent years, globalisation is assuming the form of regionalisation. In the Americas, in Africa, in Asia and, of course, in Europe new kinds of regional pacts are emerging and, in some instances, they assume the form of a new kind of nationalism, what I call transnational nationalism. Just like globalisation, regionalisation may be hegemonic or counter-hegemonic. But in both cases, and for different reasons, this may contribute to isolating progressive movements and organisations of one region from those of other regions. It may be argued that the other side of this reciprocal isolation will be the strengthening of coalition building inside the same region, which will probably contribute to more advanced struggles at the regional level. I think, however, that, as long as capitalism remains global in its reach, regionalism will be instrumental to deepening its global nature. If so, it would be disastrous if the possibilities for trans-regional linkages and collective action – such as those offered by the WSF – were diminished.

Secondly, I suspect that we are probably heading for more difficult times. The securitarian and bellicose ideology that is taking hold of both internal and international politics is going to make it more difficult for activists to organise and even more difficult to cross borders. The criminalisation of social protest is underway. The global vocation of the WSF will be all the more needed when it becomes crucial to make visible and to denounce the restrictions on organisations and mobilisations being implemented on a global scale.

The sustainability of the impact of the WSF on global left politics is an open question depending on the ways the WSF will reform and reinvent itself as new conditions and new challenges arise. I would like to conclude this essay by drawing attention to the most precious contribution of the WSF, the one that most unequivocally calls for the dynamic continuation of the WSF.

IV

The Twenty-First Century Left : Depolarised Pluralities and Intercultural Translation
One of the remote sources of the ghostly relationship between theory and action that, as indicated above, became so extreme in the last decades was, to my mind, the virulent, theoretical extremism that dominated the conventional left throughout the twentieth century. Between concrete political action and theoretical extremism, a vacuum, a terra nullius, was formed, wherein gathered a diffuse will to join forces against the avalanche of neoliberalism and to admit that this would be possible without having to sort out all the pending political debates. The WSF is the result of this Zeitgeist of the left, or rather, of the lefts, at the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first. Pragmatism combined with the reconceptualisation of diversity as a strength rather than a liability became a tremendous source of energy and political creativity. The WSF has shown eloquently that no totality can contain the inexhaustible diversity of the theories and practices of the world left today. Therefore, diversity becomes the condition for unity rather than an obstacle.

In view of the heavy weight of the past, this is no easy task and demands continuous vigilance and reinforcement. It will be based on two pillars : Depolarised pluralities and intercultural translation. Given their novelty and counter-factuality they can be easily perverted into their opposites – new polarisations and new monocultural impositions. Though the WSF is no guarantee that this may not occur, without it or without some other entity with a similar profile, this is exactly what will most certainly occur.

Depolarised pluralities

As suggested above, the WSF has created a political environment in which politicisation may occur by means of depolarisation. This is particularly crucial in the case of global or

transnational collective action. It consists in giving priority to constructing coalitions and articulations for concrete collective practices and discussing the theoretical differences exclusively in the ambit of such constructing. The goal is to turn the acknowledgment of differences into a factor of aggregation and inclusion, by depriving differences of the conspicuous capacity for thwarting collective actions. Collective actions ruled by depolarised pluralities stir up a new conception of 'unity in action', to the extent that unity becomes the more or less vast and lasting meeting point of a plurality of wills.

This amounts to a new paradigm of transformative and progressive action : Theoretical disputes take place in the context of concrete collective actions; each participant movement, organisation, or campaign stops claiming that the only important or correct collective actions are the ones exclusively conceived or organised by itself; withdrawal by a collective subject from a collective action proceeds in such a way as to weaken the least the position of the subjects still involved in the action; transformative collective actions begin by occurring on the ground – since resistance never takes place in the abstract – and in the terms of the conflicts established by the oppressors; success is measured by the ability to change the ground and terms of the conflict during the struggle, and is, in turn, the only credible measure of the correctness of the theoretical positions assumed.

The priority conferred to participation in collective actions, by means of articulation or coalition, has a first effect which is precious in light of the factionalist heritage of the left : It allows for the suspension of the question of the political subject in the abstract. In this sense, if there are only concrete actions in progress, there are only concrete subjects in progress as well. The presence of concrete subjects does not annul the issue of the abstract subject, be it the working class, the party, the people, humanity, or common people, but it prevents this issue from interfering decisively with the conception or unfolding of the collective action. Indeed, the latter can never be the result of abstract subjects.

There are three major dimensions of the construction of depolarised pluralities inside transformative collective actions : Depolarisation through intensification of mutual communication and intelligibility; depolarisation through searching inclusive organisational forms; and depolarisation through concentration on productive questions. To my mind, the struggle for another possible world will be made of a rich and internally diversified constellation of struggles. To the extent that global collective struggles will be part of it, depolarised pluralities will be a necessary condition of possibility of such struggles.

Intercultural translation

The other major contribution of the WSF to the reinvention of the global left in the twenty-first century is a potential methodology that maximises the consistency and the strength of depolarised pluralities. With the WSF it became clear that the global left is multicultural. This means that the differences that divide the left escape the political terms that formulated them in the past. Underlying some of them are cultural differences that an emergent global left cannot erase by means of political resolutions, and can do no better than to accept and to turn them into factors of collective strength and enrichment.

As mentioned earlier, the political theory of western modernity, whether in its liberal or Marxist version, constructed diversity as an obstacle to unity and constructed the unity of action from the agent's unity. The utopia and epistemology underlying the WSF place it in the antipodes of such a theory. The diversity that finds a haven in the WSF is free from the fear of being cannibalised by false universalisms or false single strategies propounded by any general theory. The time we live in, whose recent past was dominated by the idea of a general theory, is perhaps a time of transition that may be defined in the following way : We have no need of a general theory, but still need a general theory on the impossibility of a general theory.

To my mind, the alternative to a general theory is the work of translation. Translation is

the procedure that allows for mutual intelligibility among experiences of the world without jeopardising their identity and autonomy – without, in other words, reducing them to homogeneous entities.

The WSF's strength derives from having corresponded or given expression to the aspiration of aggregation and articulation of different social movements and NGOs – an aspiration that up until then was only latent. The movements and the NGOs constitute themselves around a number of more or less confined goals, create their own forms and styles of resistance, and specialise in certain kinds of practice and discourse that distinguish them from the others. Their identity is thereby created on the basis of what separates them from the others. The feminist movement sees itself as very distinct from the labour movement, and vice-versa; both distinguish themselves from the indigenous movement or the ecological movement; and so forth. All these distinctions and separations have actually translated themselves into very practical differences, if not into contradictions that contribute to rivalries and factionalisms. Hence derive the fragmentation and atomisation that are the dark side of diversity and multiplicity.

This dark side has lately been pointedly acknowledged by the movements and NGOs. The truth is, however, that none of them individually has had the capacity or credibility to confront it. Hence the extraordinary step taken by the WSF. It must be admitted, however, that the aggregation / articulation made possible by the WSF is of low intensity. The goals are limited, very often circumscribed to mutual knowledge or, at most, to recognising differences and making them more explicit and better known. Under these circumstances, joint action cannot but be limited.¹⁹

The challenge that counter-hegemonic globalisation faces now may be formulated in the following way : Deepening the WSF's goals in a new phase requires forms of aggregation and articulation of a higher intensity. Such a process includes articulating struggles and resistances, as well as promoting ever more comprehensive and consistent alternatives. Such articulations presuppose combinations among the different social movements and NGOs that are bound to question their very identity and autonomy as they have been conceived of so far. If the project is to promote counter-hegemonic practices that combine ecological, pacifist, indigenous, feminist, workers', and other movements, and to do so in an horizontal way and with respect for the identity of every movement, an enormous effort of mutual recognition, dialogue, and debate will be required to carry out the task.

Such a task entails a wide exercise in translation to expand reciprocal intelligibility without destroying the identity of the partners of translation. The point is to create, in every movement or NGO, in every practice or strategy, in every discourse or knowledge, a contact zone that may render it porous and hence permeable to other NGOs, practices, strategies, discourses, and knowledges. The exercise of translation aims to identify and reinforce what is common in the diversity of the counter-hegemonic drive. Cancelling out what separates is out of the question. The goal is to have host-difference replace fortress-difference. Through translation work, diversity is celebrated, not as a factor of fragmentation and isolationism, but rather as a condition of sharing and solidarity. The work of translation concerns both knowledges and actions (strategic goals, organisation, styles of struggle and agency). Of course, in the practice of the movements, knowledges and actions are inseparable. However, for the purposes of translation, it is important to distinguish between contact zones in which the interactions focus mainly on knowledges, and contact zones in which interactions focus mainly on actions.²⁰

The work of intercultural and inter-political translation has just started among some movements participating in the WSF. Practice has shown that such work is needed not only to intensify the network of transformative practices across movements, but also inside the same

movement – that is, among its different national or regional expressions. In this regard, the feminist movement is probably the most advanced. It is imperative that the WSF in the future grant more priority to the work of mutual translation among and within movements.

Notes

- 1 de Sousa Santos 2006a.
- 2 For a better understanding of the political character and goals of the World Social Forum, see its Charter of Principles, available at <http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br>.
- 3 One of the most paradigmatic examples is the poverty – conceptual hubris coupled with bloodless narrow positivism – of the mainstream US sociology of social movements (McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1996; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001).
- 4 Habermas 1990.
- 5 See de Sousa Santos 1995.
- 6 Goldmann 1966, 1970.
- 7 The ‘global south’ is used here as a metaphor for the unjust and systematic human suffering caused by global capitalism. It is therefore not a geographic concept, as in the geographical north. There are pockets of the global south, what is also often called ‘the interior Third World’, as there are parts of the global north (in my sense) in the geographical south, most notably in Australia and New Zealand.
- 8 By ‘utopia’ I mean the exploration of new modes of human possibility and styles of will, and the use of the imagination to confront the apparent inevitability of whatever exists with something radically better that is worth fighting for, and to which humankind is fully entitled (de Sousa Santos 1995, p 479).
- 9 Hinkelammert 2002.
- 10 Bello 2007.
- 11 Holloway 2002.
- 12 In English, Free Trade Area of the Americas – FTAA.
- 13 de Sousa Santos 2004, 2006a, June 2007.
- 14 de Sousa Santos 2006a.
- 15 Bello 2007. *Eds* : This 2007 paper is included in edited form in this volume (Bello 2012).
- 16 This paper raised some debate in the International Council of the WSF. See, for instance, Whitaker, May 2007. *Eds* : Again, this 2007 paper is included in edited form in this volume (Whitaker 2012).
- 17 de Sousa Santos 2006b.
- 18 Ponniah 2007.
- 19 A good example was the first European Social Forum held in Florence in November of 2002. The differences, rivalries, and factionalisms that divide the various movements and NGOs that organised it are well known and have a history that is impossible to erase. This is why, in their positive response to the WSF’s request to organise the ESF, the movements and NGOs that took up the task felt the need to assert that the differences among them were as sharp as ever and that they were coming together only with a very limited objective in mind : To organise the Forum and a Peace March. The Forum was indeed organised in such a way that the differences could be made very explicit.
- 20 I deal with this issue in greater detail in de Sousa Santos 2006a.

The Great Counter-Movement : Empires, Multitudes, And Social Transformation ¹

Ronaldo Munck

The great counter-movement that free market globalisation has engendered is a complex phenomenon and cannot be reduced to the post-Seattle wave of street protests or the inspiring meetings of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre and beyond. This essay seeks to provide a broad-brush synthesis of the context in which the counter-movements to globalisation operate and their prospects for the future. Rather than travel through all the various academic frameworks generated from within particular disciplines over recent years (valuable as these may be in transforming academic discourse) we take as our starting point the emblematic work *Empire* by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, widely seen as an inspirational text for the anti-globalisation movement.

Put at its simplest, are we entering a new age of Empire in which US hegemony rules supreme and a diffuse 'desire' of the oppressed arises everywhere quite spontaneously ? Or is this not a vision as a-historical as Fukuyama's 'end of history' thesis in 1989 ? And who is to contest the new hegemony – the new figure of the 'multitude', nation-states, or social classes ? The challenges to orthodox categories and ways of thinking by the concepts of 'empire' and 'multitude' are serious but also welcome. My own narrative is set within the context of Karl Polanyi's famous thesis of broad periods of market liberalisation opposed by a counter-movement seeking to regain social control over the economy. Thus the rise of unregulated 'free market' neoliberalism on a global scale in the 1990s was followed by a counter-movement from the mid to late 1990s, signalled by Seattle 1999 and the rise of the World Social Forum.

My submission therefore is that while 'another world' is clearly possible, it may not necessarily be that dreamt of by the anti-capitalist movement. Polanyi's counter-movements of the 1930s in response to the collapse of the unregulated market system in 1929 included the New Deal - but also Stalinism and Nazism. Finally, I turn to the issue of strategy, namely the diverse paths that the counter-globalisation movement may follow, including democratic governance, the human rights path, and the new (or not so new) internationalism.

I

Empire and Multitude

Empire

"No word resonates more strongly today than 'Empire', the title of a literary sensation that has given a name to an enigmatic totality of money, power and culture."² The impact of Hardt and Negri's *Empire* has indeed been huge, and has crossed the entire political spectrum. For the right there was a recognition of the pre-eminent role of the United States of America in world affairs and even a transcendental role for the 'American' Constitution in the new world order. For the left, *Empire* represented hope reborn after the decade of despair following 1989 and the collapse of actually existing socialism. *Empire* appeared at the crucial historical juncture (for the counter-globalisation movement) between Seattle 1999 and the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2001. *Empire* delivered a theoretical framework for a new form of sovereignty in the era of globalisation based on disciplinary bio-power and a new form of resistance based on the immanence of molecular energy.³

Empire reinterprets, in an original way, the world revolution of 1968 in an overarching paradigm of empowerment and co-option. For Hardt and Negri '1968' stood for a rejection by the 'multitude' (see next section) of the disciplinary forms of production in the West (or Fordism) and the remnants of colonialism (Vietnam). As Sherman and Trichur express this shift :

“(l)it thus creates the context for a peaceless, global, imperial (not imperialist) power (Empire) based on US constituent power (but not reducible to the US)...”.⁴ *Empire* as the new hegemonic regime would thus reabsorb all the energy, productivity and subjectivity of the 1968 counter-cultural movement. Colonialism and disciplinary forms of production would be replaced by a more consensual form of subjection to the world market and by workers to the capitalist production regime. Post-colonialism and post-Fordism were the order of the day in the age of Empire.

A post-modernist reading of the rise of neoliberal globalisation (or as Polanyi termed it, world scale “self-regulating market”⁵) would be interesting, but what made *Empire* riveting on the left was, of course, its optimism with regard to the prospects for social transformation. *Empire* is diffuse and everywhere but so also is resistance. Struggles in the new era are ‘uncommunicable’ (unlike the era of working class internationalism) in the sense that they do not all ‘talk to each other’ as they did in an era with a shared political language, be it social democracy, national liberation, or communism. Thus, according to Hardt and Negri, because today’s struggles cannot communicate or travel horizontally they must travel ‘upwards’ to directly contest power. What this comes down to is that “the construction of Empire and the globalisation of economic and cultural relationships, means that the virtual centre of Empire can be attacked at any point”.⁶ Counter-powers emerge at local level that can leap immediately to the global level, becoming immediately subversive of the world order through a bio-political challenge to the construction of Empire in its generality.

What *Empire* provides is thus an ambitious overarching framework for the understanding of globalisation and counter-globalisation movements alike. Its passion, vision, and breadth made it noteworthy to a whole range of political forces on both sides that were grappling to understand the new developing world order and how to challenge it. Globalisation was discerned in this work as a totally new phase in world history unifying the globe in an homogenous or ‘smooth’ new order. Unlike many on the left, Hardt and Negri seemed to welcome this and showed no nostalgia whatsoever for nation-state capitalism. From the other shore of politics, however, this was also an uplifting grand narrative as many of the themes of post-structuralism (the importance of bio-power, the local, and culture, for example) were worked into a new challenge to the powers that be, albeit within a still recognisably Marxist account of capitalist production and development.

While *Empire* was hugely beneficial in breaking through the mood of despondency and the general acceptance that ‘there is no alternative’ (to neoliberalisation), it is however also profoundly flawed in its diagnosis of the present state of world affairs. It is a profoundly Eurocentric work quite oblivious to the non-Western world except for the odd trite reference to Islamic ‘fundamentalism’. Islam does not figure as a major ideological force from after the fifteenth century, and the current renaissance of capitalism in the east (primarily China) receives hardly a mention. The European Enlightenment – and its subsequent migration to North America and substantiation in the American Constitution – rules supreme in *Empire*. In terms of the world being made by globalisation in terms of social inclusion / exclusion, *Empire* simply reflects the globaliser’s ideology that we are entering a ‘smooth’ world. As one commentator puts it succinctly, “(i)f Hardt and Negri had taken African historical examples seriously, for example, they would have avoided the numerous presentist and universalising flaws that plague – and ultimately undermine – their work”.⁷

Empire is also an inherently androcentric text having seemingly missed out entirely on the theoretical and practical revolution carried out by the world’s feminisms since 1968. Its millennial tone, prophetic vision, and glorifying of the militant is male politics incarnate, something that cannot be said about the post-Seattle 1999 anti-globalisation movement as a whole. Lee Quinby writes that “Hardt and Negri’s gender-blindness renders their concept of

resistance to authority rhetorically engorged yet methodologically flaccid”.⁸ The global political economy has gender relations at its core, from the feminisation of poverty through to World Bank development policies. The concrete worlds of work, community, and family are only amenable to critical analysis through a gender lens. Both power and resistance in the contemporary world order – be it the invasion of Iraq or the revolt against environmental degradation – require a precise understanding of gender relations and how they are changing.

Nevertheless, *Empire* represents a fundamental challenge to classic theories of imperialism that were no less Eurocentric and androcentric in their day. Since *Empire* appeared in 2000 its analysis has taken a severe practical setback with the emergence of full-blown ‘red in tooth and claw’ US imperialism in Afghanistan and Iraq. The power-holders and their ideological backers in the US have no problem at all in articulating an openly imperialist project. Extending the neoliberal revolution at home in the US and the UK a range of ‘revisionist’ writers have sanitised the imperialisms of the past to articulate a civilising mission for a renewed US imperialism today. A popular example is Niall Ferguson with his *Empire : How Britain Made the World* and its sequel, *Colossus : The Rise and Fall of the American Empire*. Imperialism is here rehabilitated as a key element in the expansion of the West and the development of capitalism.

It is a fact that today’s division between rich and poor countries roughly mirrors the nineteenth century division between coloniser and colonised. This uneven development remains the most enduring inequality at a global level, notwithstanding the changing patterns of industrialisation and class development and the century of ‘development’ that has elapsed since the era of classical imperialism. So are we now witnessing a revival of colonialism, a neo-imperialism as it were ? To answer that question we need first to highlight the distinction between the **territorial** and the **capitalist** (or economic) logics of power. These may of course intertwine (as many accounts of current US expansionism show) but as David Harvey notes, “the literature on imperialism and empire too often assumes an easy accord between them : that political-economic processes are guided by the strategies of state and empire and that states and empire always operate out of capitalist motivations”.⁹

This distinction allows us to avoid simplistic accounts from the left announcing an era of new imperialism because US strategic interests and oil drive it to conquer and subjugate. For a global power to become truly hegemonic it must be in a position to hegemonise and lead through consent as well as pure coercion. Britain, in the heyday of its empire, did achieve sporadically and unevenly, precisely such an hegemonic role. The US as its successor as world power did seek from the start of the twentieth century “to mask the explicitness of territorial gains and occupations under the mask of a spaceless universalisation of its own values...”.¹⁰ This culminated towards the end of that century with the discourse of globalisation as the economic and cultural driver of progress, and ‘democracy’ (as made in the USA) as the legitimising political form of organising development.

Imperialism is the result of the territorial and economic logics of capitalist power coming into conjunction. It is not at all clear that the hegemonic social forces in the US today are actually interested in recreating imperialism in the classic sense, notwithstanding cheerleaders such as Robert Cooper (one time adviser to Tony Blair) who would recreate the nineteenth century distinction between pre-modern (for which read barbarian) and post-modern states who would be the guarantors of civilised behaviour.¹¹ To go beyond the notion of Empire as metaphor for aggression and imperialistic designs is problematic for a number of reasons, not least because contemporary globalisation is quite different from global capitalism in the era of imperialism. While imperialism was a state-centred project of territorial expansion, globalisation as per Pieterse, “is intrinsically multidimensional, involves multiple actors, and is in significant respects decentred and deterritorial, involving multiple and diverse

jurisdictions”^{.12}

To distinguish globalisation from imperialism is not meant to make the first a more benign enterprise. It is simply to recognise the complexity and fluidity of the current world situation where there are multiple and often contradictory globalisation and counter-globalisation projects at play. Taking a long-term historical view we can see empires and imperialism as phases of internationalisation that culminate with neoliberal globalisation.

This is not, however, to say that there are elements in power in the US today that have an imperial project, which is the argument articulated by Ralph Peters, a planner for ‘future war’, for whom :

We are entering a new American century in which we will become still wealthier, culturally more lethal, and increasingly powerful... The de facto role of the US armed forces will be to keep the world safe for our economy and open to our cultural assault. To those ends we will do a fair amount of killing.¹³

No one can doubt that the overwhelming concentration of military, economic, and cultural power in the US today creates something akin to empire, and that its designs are imperialistic. However, there is no reason to believe that this neo-conservative offensive could lead to a situation described by Harvey as one where “the logic of capital will look to regime change in Washington as necessary to its own survival”.¹⁴ We cannot draw a simple equation mark between globalisation and imperialism, let alone Empire. The desire of Hardt and Negri to articulate a ‘strong’ version of Empire over and beyond its use as metaphor ultimately obscures more than it clarifies the present world order, particularly in its dubious promotion of a new theory of right. I would agree thus with Balakrishnan’s not unsympathetic conclusion that “Empire is ultimately a Sorelian myth of empowerment, offering consolation to oppositional desire, in place of sober political realism”.¹⁵

Multitude

For Hardt and Negri, “the multitude ... [is] ... the living alternative that grows within Empire”.¹⁶ Whereas globalisation is a network of hierarchies the multitude springs from the expansive networks of cooperation, communication, and communality. The multitude is not the same as the ‘people’ (conceived of as a more unitary category), the ‘masses’ (where differences are submerged in the main), or the traditional ‘working class’ - because it is not as open and inclusive as the multitude as a concept. Initially for Hardt and Negri the multitude is conceived of as “all those who work under the rule of capital and thus potentially as the class of those who refuse the rule of capital”.¹⁷ But they go much further than broadening the concept of working classes because from their perspective, the main issue is not so much the “empirical existence” of multitude, but rather “its conditions of possibility”. Or more simply : “The question to ask ... is not ‘What is multitude ?’ but rather ‘What can the multitude become ?’ ”.¹⁸

While multitude goes beyond traditional Marxist concepts of working class it is not unrelated to the understanding of ‘working people’ elaborated under the influence of the new social movements from 1968 onwards, where gender, race, and other ‘non-class’ determinations have come into play. Even the question of what might the multitude become is not so different from Marxist conceptions of class ‘in itself’ and class ‘for itself’, as it becomes conscious and strives for social transformation. However, it can be read as an expression of the contemporary irreducible plurality of social existence as a necessary precondition for effective political action. The multiplicity of experience of oppression and exploitation is well captured by the term ‘multitude’, which Paolo Virno defines as the “form of social existence of the many as many”.¹⁹ Certainly this conception has been very influential in the anti-globalisation movement in the West.

Multitude as a concept both reflects and influences the theory and practice of the young street protestors of the post-Seattle anti-globalisation movement. It takes up and develops

further the critique, carried out in the 1970s by the 'new social movements' theory, of all economistic and reductionist conceptions of social and political change. It rejects all narrow and restricted views of political antagonisms as based on pre-established social structures and institutionalised forms of political representation. Where one sees structure the other sees fluctuation as the norm. If market fundamentalism called for deregulation of the economy, the multitude approach calls for a deregulation of all forms of representation. But the danger, as Barchiesi puts it, is that 'multitude' becomes so "all-encompassing and self-explanatory" that it could "lose much of its explanatory power when it comes to define how the singularities that comprise the multitude come to articulate their desires and demands in oppositional terms".²⁰

In 'deregulating' our understanding of social antagonisms and political representation, we are perhaps left with no coherent explanation of their contemporary dynamic. In *Multitude* we are presented with an image of radical immanentism as spontaneous response to Empire, insofar as to revolt is natural to the human condition. The unity of the oppressed in revolt is also unexplained and simply assumed as an innate tendency towards convergence. As Ernesto Laclau puts it : "The features of this formless but self-defined totality are transmitted to the multitude as Empire's grave-digger – in a way reminiscent of Marx's description of the universalisation brought about by capitalism as a prelude to the emergence of the proletariat as the universal class".²¹ There is no coherent explanation of the sources of social antagonism in contemporary society and no understanding of the complex political mediations lying behind the counter-globalisation movements for example.

Multitude is significant both for what it leaves out from this complex picture (peasants and nationalism, for example) and for what it foregrounds (migrants, for example), in the making of the new revolutionary subject. Hardt and Negri take a quite stereotypically modernist approach towards the peasantry. For them "the figure of the peasant has ... throughout the world faded into the background" and they conclude categorically on "this disappearance of the figure of the peasant".²² While there is a plausible argument that the peasant is, as an economic category, becoming less central to the world system, its political importance is still considerable, not least in terms of the broad counter-globalisation movement. It is thus inexplicable that in *Multitude* the peasant is seen as a "nonpolitical figure, disqualified from politics" and the peasantry as "fundamentally conservative, isolated, and capable only of reaction, not of any autonomous political action of its own".²³

This unduly negative view of the economic, cultural, and political role of the peasantry is reminiscent of the most clichéd phrases of Marx about the French peasantry as 'sacks of potatoes'. While the effects of capitalist expansion across the globe on the peasantry are mixed and open to considerable debate, its 'disappearance' is not likely. Nor can we assume as Hardt and Negri do that peasants can only enter the realm of progressive politics when they leave the land, forsake rural traditions and enter into 'communication' with the urban 'multitude'. In the struggles around the remaking of the peasantry by neoliberal globalisation we find a whole range of crucial sites of contestation such as the environment, gender and indigenous knowledge. The very Eurocentric and modernist dismissal of the world's peasantry from the scene weakens considerably the understanding Hardt and Negri might develop on the nature of globalisation and its contestation today and in the period to come.

Another area of contestation that Hardt and Negri seek to devalue is the whole terrain of the nation-state and nationalist revolts. For them the nation is a concept that sums up the hegemonic bourgeois solution to the problem of sovereignty. They understand the progressive nature of subaltern nationalism for the pre-Empire era when it could serve as a defence against powerful external forces and as a potential source of community. Even then they see a strong element of totalitarianism in nationalist revolts insofar as "the community is not a dynamic collective creation but a primordial founding myth".²⁴ The primordialist approach to nationalism

has of course never really developed our understanding of the phenomenon,²⁵ but Hardt and Negri go further and identify nationalism as the cause “blocking the constructive interactions of differences within the multitude”.²⁶ As with peasants it is only when nationalists forget the primordial that they can ‘communicate’ with the multitude, in Hardt and Negri’s scheme.

In the present era of imperial sovereignty Hardt and Negri take an even more categorically negative view of all things national. They argue that “it is a grave mistake to harbour any nostalgia for the powers of the nation-state or to resurrect any politics that celebrates the nation”.²⁷ This might read at first as a sensible warning against any belief that the nation-state and nationalist politics are an adequate and progressive answer to the speed of free-market globalisation. However, the authors of *Empire* base this assertion on the belief that “the decline of the nation-state ... is a structural and irreversible process”²⁸ that smacks of the ‘death of the nation-state’ thesis, which was clearly contradicted in practice even during the phase of ‘easy’ globalisation in the 1990s, as for example in the Balkans.²⁹ Whether it is the Group of 20 challenging the WTO from the South or Palestinians taking on the US-Israel power structures, the national question is an enduring element in the making and unmaking of globalisation, and will probably become even more important after the ‘great crisis’ of mid 2008, which effectively ended actually existing global neoliberalism.

While the many millions who work on the land and engage in national struggles of one sort or another are dismissed from the ‘multitude’, Hardt and Negri argue in *Communist Manifesto* messianic mode that “(a) spectre haunts the world and it is the spectre of migration”.³⁰ Following Nietzsche and his quest for the ‘barbarians’ who would invade the Empire, Hardt and Negri raise migration to “a spontaneous level of struggle” and laud “the power of desertion and exodus, the power of the nomad horde”.³¹ Migrants are seen to embody the desire for something ‘more’ as well as a resolute refusal to accept the present state of affairs. Migration patterns do indeed reflect the geographical hierarchies of the new global order, but in *Multitude* they are granted a privileged position in the construction of “the general commonality of the multitude by crossing and thus partially undermining every geographical barrier”.³² The interactions between globalisation and migration are far more complex than this,³³ and we probably do not need to go looking for another revolutionary subject at this stage of the game.

It is certainly the case that the complex waves and flows of migrants, whether legal, irregular, or somewhere in between, are a living testimony to the mobilities generated by globalisation. Migrants are, indeed, part of the global working class in the making and they have generated a whole range of ‘transnational communities’ that are part of the social effects of globalisation. However, Malcolm Bull is probably correct to refer to an element of self-delusion in the way in which “migrants have become a potent symbol of the social dislocation caused by globalisation and have been invested with some of the left’s more romantic aspirations”.³⁴ The flight of skilled workers from developing countries to the affluent North should thus be viewed in anything but romantic terms. Migrants are not the privileged agents of social transformation any more than industrial workers, peasants, or students were, in past futile searches for the golden key to revolution.

In conclusion to this section I would like to take up Laclau’s verdict that in *Multitude* Hardt and Negri “tend to oversimplify the tendencies towards unity operating within the multitude”.³⁵ Even a cursory examination of the different currents, eddies, and flows within the broad social counter-movement against the self-regulating market shows the complexity and contradictions that are at play here. Thus, for example, there is a whole history of conflict, confluence, and compromise lying behind the Seattle 1999 slogan ‘Teamsters and Turtles Unite’ that many took to be a signal of labour-environmental alliance. However, as Gould *et al* note in a review of ‘Blue-Green coalitions’, “in many ways forming a coalition at Seattle was easy :

this was a short-term marriage of convenience on an issue both groups strongly opposed".³⁶ Within a year the more usual antagonisms between organised labour (blue) and environmentalists (green) had resurfaced and were dominant.

Soon after Seattle 1999 the labour-race divide came to the fore in the US as the anti-globalisation movement came under fire from anti-racists for its 'whiteness'. The Colours of Resistance Network was formed in 2002 to articulate this critique.³⁷ Amongst its criticisms of the anti-globalisation movement were the points that it was exclusionary with regard to 'people of colour' and that white activists fetishised tactics as against the need to build up a long-term grassroots movement.³⁸ There are also serious tensions between, for example, the anti-globalisation movement and the diverse indigenous people's movements. For all the proclamations of the Zapatistas that 'we are all Indians of the world', the reality is that indigenous movements for social change (for example in Andean America) may prioritise recognition issues or agrarian issues that are not those central to the labour movement. Unity must be constructed politically and cannot be assumed.

II

History

At this stage it is necessary to go beyond the breathless 'presentism' of Hardt and Negri's theorising of *Empire* and *Multitude*. They do, of course, open up many new avenues for research and their bold iconoclasm can only be welcomed when contrasted with stale academic and political debates. However, if we take into consideration the historical comparative problematic of Karl Polanyi,³⁹ we can add a much-needed long-term strategic perspective on globalisation and contestation. Polanyi's basic theorem is that global history is ruled by a 'double movement' in which two organising principles of society are dominant, namely the principle of economic liberalism and that of social protection. The first aims at the establishment of a self-regulating market on a global scale ('globalisation' for short), and the second aims at protecting society and nature, as well as production, from the deleterious effects of the market (contestation for short).

The counter-movement is dynamic and can be plotted onto the long waves of global history. In Europe, prior to the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century, exchange relations were regulated by principles of reciprocity and the economy was 'embedded' in society. Industrial expansion was characterised by the spread of the free market and the *laissez faire* state, leading to the 'disembedding' of the economy from society and political control. In the mid-twentieth century, after economic depression and two world wars, a compromise system of 'embedded liberalism' began to prevail. Now going beyond the period above analysed by Polanyi we can apply this same optic to the neoliberal offensive of the 1980s that can be seen as a wave of economic 'disembedding' and deregulating of the market. Our question then, is whether we are today also witnessing a counter-movement whereby society protects itself from the unregulated market and political forces emerge seeking to regulate, if not control, the free market.

For Silver and Arrighi the last two decades show no lack of outstanding cases of mobilisation by 'groups, sections and classes' in response to the dislocations caused by the resurgence of the 'liberal creed' and politics designed to promote a 'self-regulating global market'.⁴⁰ The elements of a great social counter-movement range from the anti-IMF 'food riots' in the South in the 1980s to the anti-globalisation street protests in the North after Seattle 1999. But they also include the Group of 20 large developing nations that have challenged the impositions of the WTO and the establishment's moves to create a post-Washington Consensus to succeed the now discredited naked neoliberal model. The counter-movements thus have a facet of revolt 'from below' but also a reform move 'from above' seeking to pre-emptively deal with revolt and the potential instability of the global system.

The Polanyi problem – to balance the urge to liberalise with the basic need for some social stability – affects the rules of the new world order as much as it does the subaltern classes. As yet the social counter-movement is at an early stage of development, and we cannot pretend that the anti-globalisation movements at present pose a serious challenge to the established order. The main challenge to the unregulated market is at present located in the developing countries and nationalist movements of various types across the world. The contradictions from within the system are not yet as severe as they were during the great depression of the 1930s. Inter-imperialist rivalries are also less likely to emerge strongly in the present context and, as Silver and Arrighi argue, “a more likely source of destabilisation of the US-centred process of world market formation is the persistent protectionism of the United States itself”.⁴¹

Inconsistencies in the US position are thus a major source of instability, crusading on behalf of a free market and yet retaining strong protectionist elements itself. Nor is its use of overwhelming force to secure US predominance the best way to ensure hegemony over the system as a whole. It is in this context that Joseph Stiglitz, one time chief economist at the World Bank, can take up the Polanyi problematic and read the lessons for today’s managers of contemporary capitalism. Stiglitz is keen to contest the common wisdom that “the end of communism marked the triumph of the market economy, and its belief in the self-regulated market”.⁴² What was occurring was the imposition by force of ‘risky doctrines’, such as the benefits of unregulated markets, once the countervailing weight of the state socialist order had collapsed. “But this perspective is not only uncaring,” argues Stiglitz, “it is also unenlightened : for there are myriad unsavoury forms that the rejection of a market economy that did not work at least for the majority, or a large minority can take”.⁴³ Events in the global capitalist order in the second half of 2008, and the synchronised ‘credit crunch’ and the subsequent financial meltdown, have certainly vindicated those such as Stiglitz who sought to save the system from its own exuberance back in the 1990s.

So precisely in the apparently unconstrained victory for the unregulated market came the unforeseen consequences. This came, for example, in the shape of a dramatic and catastrophic transition to capitalism in Russia in the early 1990s which in its speed and lack of planning destroyed social capital and empowered the mafia. As Stiglitz puts it, “rapid transformation destroys old coping mechanisms, old safety nets, while it creates a new set of demands, **before new coping mechanisms are developed**”.⁴⁴ Then, towards the end of the 1990s, from 1997 onwards, came a series of economic collapses which represented individually and collectively a serious blow to the credibility of the unregulated market model. In his own book on ‘globalisation and its discontents’ Joseph Stiglitz subtitles his chapter on the East Asian Crisis of 1997 as “how IMF policies brought the world to the verge of a global meltdown”.⁴⁵ Whether the IMF or the broader economic model was at fault or not, the implications were clear : The winners of the Cold War had problems on their hands.

If the winners had problems, the losers in the great free market offensive suffered the most, of course. It is important to bear in mind in this regard that capitalist accumulation has always progressed not only through the exploitation of labour but also through naked dispossession. Today, the ever-expanding self-regulating market is dispossessing people in diverse forms. David Harvey writes of how “destruction of habitat here, privatisation of services there, expulsion from the land somewhere else, bio-piracy in yet another realm – each creates its own dynamics”.⁴⁶ These diffuse and often inchoate forms of dispossession are yet another manifestation of Polanyi’s liberalising dynamic. The response to this tendency is itself most often fragmentary and localised. Sometimes it links up with the more ‘traditional’ anti-exploitation movements of labour or national liberation, but more often it remains at the margins, taking on the effects of globalisation but not necessarily offering a coherent or noble

alternative.

Hardt and Negri, in a not unrelated way, refer to how “simplifying a great deal, one could argue that postmodernist discourses appeal primarily to the winners in the process of globalisation and fundamentalist discourses to the losers”.⁴⁷ Mobility, fluidity, and indeterminacy might be welcomed by those who benefit from globalisation, but they might also translate into uncertainty, constant flux, and insecurity for those who are subject to dispossession by the machine of the self-regulating market. Thus different forms of fundamentalism – from the Christian right to Islamic militants, from the French anti-immigrant right to, arguably, ecological fundamentalists – respond to the threat of uncertainty and insecurity of the present era with their own particular versions of certainty and truth. Hardt and Negri may well be prophetic when they tell us that “the losers in the process of globalisation might indeed be the ones who give us the stronger indication of the transformation in progress”.⁴⁸

The question that now arises is whether a Polanyian counter-movement can protect humanity from a self-inflicted demise. At one level Polanyi can be read simply as a humanist appeal to resist the commodification of the human and natural ecologies now under way. But it is a perspective that also offers an alternative vision of globalisation in terms of its inextricable links with the local and its communities. Whether it is a mining site, a financial market, or a sweatshop, the globalisation project necessitates local grounding. And as a result, as Adaman and colleagues write, “the local becomes the site of encounter, contestation and possibly resistance”.⁴⁹ As local identities proliferate so do diverse projects of contestation and even accommodation that represent different faces of a social counter-movement that is an integral element of the globalisation project.

While we need to appreciate the breadth and diversity of the great counter-movement now emerging to contest globalisation and its envisaged smooth world, it does not mean we value them all equally. Harvey quite rightly draws our attention to how many movements struggling against the dispossession that globalisation brings in its wake tend to look backwards in nostalgic way to a past that did not necessarily exist :

The danger lurks that a politics of nostalgia for that which has been lost will supersede the search for ways to better meet the material needs of the impoverished and repressed populations; that the exclusionary politics of the local will dominate the need to build an alternative globalisation... ; that reversion to older patterns of social relations and systems of production will be posited as a solution in a world that has moved on.⁵⁰

The next section deals with political strategies more explicitly; for now we just note how the combined but uneven nature of capitalist development will inevitably produce such effects.

The great counter-movement, then, is **essentially about a return of the ‘political’**, which the de-regulationist offensive had sought to evacuate from economics. This politics, as we have seen, does not necessarily take what used to be called a ‘progressive’ form. Indeed it is always good to recall that for Polanyi the cataclysm-triggered transformations of the 1930s saw societies taking control of the economy in very different ways, including the New Deal in the US, Stalin’s Russia, and Nazi Germany. If classical fascism can be seen as a perverse, reactionary social and political response to the chaos of the crisis-ridden capitalist system, so we can imagine today very many less than attractive responses to the social crises unleashed by globalisation. However, as Polanyi advised in relation to the period he observed, it is necessary for us “to detach the poignant national histories of the period from the social transformation that was in progress”.⁵¹

What we are witnessing today – if we abstract from the particular situations of chaos and conflict – is the “inability to regulate markets at the international level” that has “created social dislocations beyond the ability of ‘normal’ domestic politics to resolve”.⁵² If Polanyi’s

concerns and verdicts on the problem of reconciling free markets with social and political stability were correct in the 1930s and 1940s, they are doubly so in the 1990s and 2000s as the global casts its particular glow across the regional, national, and local domains of life. It is inevitable that politics will now come to the fore to seek social control or at least influence over this process. This response of the 'lifeworld', as Habermas famously calls it, will be diverse and not necessarily effective. It will also be countered by serious moves 'from above' seeking to co-opt or even to create a 'global civil society' to match global capitalism.

III

Strategy

In the age of *Empire*, following Balakrishnan, "revolutionaries no longer need to distinguish tactics and strategy, position and manoeuvre, weak links and vulnerable ones; they can now rely on a pervasive, if diffuse popular desire for liberation and an episodic intuition of friend and enemy".⁵³ As an ethos of liberation this approach captures well a dominant strand in the Western anti-globalisation movement, but since its bursting onto the world scene in 1999 many of these classical political categories have come back into play. The strategy of a given movement is clearly distinguished from the specific tactics it might follow in the streets or in negotiations with the powers that be. The distinction between what Gramsci called a 'war of manoeuvre' (classical early twentieth century revolutionary strategy) and a 'war of position', typical of the entrenched positions of those who now struggle for hegemony, is well understood. And all parties are aware of where the weak links of the system may be, where there are contradictions, and where pressure might most readily lead to reform.

Whether it is the 'global governance' or the 'global civil society' discourse, there is a strong tendency within 'globe-talk' to adopt a 'neutral' political stance. While not everything in society is political, "**all** struggles are, by definition, **political**", as Laclau puts it.⁵⁴ Society, the way we view it, and 'people' are being constantly reinvented in the political domain. There is no a-political stance towards a neutral globalisation process that we should just seek to administer better to the benefit of all. Developing this theme, Laclau argues :

(S)ince the construction of the 'people' is the political act *par excellence* – as opposed to pure administration within a stable institutional framework – the *sine qua non* requirements of the political are the construction of antagonistic frontiers within the social and the appeal to new subjects of social change...⁵⁵

The various political projects that seek to offer an alternative to the unregulated free market of globalised capitalism are all constructing their subjects through discursive operations that urgently require deconstruction.

With politics back 'in command' in terms of determining the future direction of the broad counter-globalisation movement(s), we can consider the various broad options in the struggle. One of the most ambitious political projects in the era of globalisation is that of 'cosmopolitan democracy' based on the notion that for global issues such as protection of the environment or the regulation of migration to be subject to democratic control, "democracy must transcend the border of single states and assert itself at a global level".⁵⁶ This project seeks to give a voice at the global level to people who may be disempowered at a national level. It is a perspective that does not shy away from the question of force, arguing unambiguously for 'humanitarian intervention' where necessary. For British Prime Minister Tony Blair, NATO's air raids on Yugoslavia at the close of the twentieth century were justified because "(i)t's right for the international community to use military force to prevent genocide and protect human rights, even if it entails a violation of national sovereignty".⁵⁷

The new 'cosmopolitan' is unapologetically West-centred. For Martin Shaw, still professing a left politics :

This perspective can only be centred on a new limb of purpose among Western peoples and governments, since only the West has the economic, political and military resources and the democratic and multinational institutions and culture necessary to undertake it. The West has a historic responsibility to take on this global leadership.⁵⁸

There is a direct lineage here with the justification of colonialism as the 'white man's burden' and the European social democratic support for 'social imperialism' to bring lesser peoples to the light. National sovereignty is seen as a quaint anachronism in the era of globalisation as the movement for 'global justice' must take precedence. The new liberal cosmopolitanism has its own 'right' and 'left' exponents but overall it seems to offer little to the majority world or those seeking social transformation.

There is no reason why we should accept that the alternative to liberal cosmopolitanism is illiberal nationalism or various dark forms of fundamentalism. At best cosmopolitan democracy is a cosy complacent ideology for those privileged to be born in the 'safe zones' of the new world order. At worst this call to go 'beyond' the confines of the nation-state is simply an apologia for the most powerful nation-state on earth as it goes about the business of world domination. In all versions the leftist language of universalism masks a denial of genuine attempts at popular sovereignty. The answer, from a social transformation perspective, should not merely be one of critique. As Timothy Brennan says :

We should be encouraging popular efforts in Southern Mexico, Colombia, Indonesia, or Palestine – and so many other parts of the world – to establish a modicum of real sovereignty, rather than constructing intricate theoretical edifices liable to weaken the very ability to imagine it.⁵⁹

The Polanyian counter-movement is based precisely on initiatives such as these that build up aspects of social counter-power to the unregulated free market.

The human rights movement might, one could suppose, provide a more universal construction of the 'people' than the new liberal cosmopolitanism, and its supporters include many (if not most) international NGOs. The idea of human rights and their global institutionalisation are integral elements of the globalisation discourses in most of its political variants. As Roland Robertson, one of the pioneers of globalisation, puts it : "(A)lthough the principle of human rights is in one sense applied to individuals, its general significance has to do with the consolidation of humanity".⁶⁰ The human rights of the individual are seen to be 'above' the sovereignty of nation-states and are thus important markers of the extra-territoriality that globalisation ushers in. From Bosnia to Rwanda it was precisely this theme of human rights that prevailed in Western debates on the conflicts. It is also the justification for the 'international community' to bring the likes of Augusto Pinochet and Slobodan Milosevic in front of international law tribunals.

Now, we should not neglect the importance that the international arena has gained as a strategic alternative for opposition activists seeking to bring national state atrocities to light. The Pinochet arrest in 1998 sent shock waves throughout the human rights community in Chile and transnationally. It did seem that 'global civil society' was able to make dictators accountable for their crimes against humanity. Yet a closer look at the Pinochet case shows that it was domestic pressure and Chilean judicial processes that carried more weight in the end than the international action. As Cath Collins argues, "one might conclude that external enthusiasts of accountability would do better to seek to support and resource domestic prosecutions than to attempt to replicate the increasingly precarious Pinochet precedent in third-country courts".⁶¹ This is an argument that takes full cognisance of the politics of scale in the making and unmaking of globalisation and alerts us to the dangers of automatically prioritising the global in contesting power today.

The third discourse to consider here is that of 'internationalism', long the main weapon

of the left in constructing a global response to capitalism. In much the same way that human rights have become a major instrument of hegemonic power so also has internationalism come to mean something quite different from its Enlightenment origins. The worker's cause, from its origins until at least the second world war, was always internationalist in rhetoric if not in practice. Even the nationalist revolts in the colonial world after that war were bathed in the glow of internationalism. Yet since the rise of globalisation, internationalism has acquired a quite different connotation precisely in the United States, the hegemonic power, where internationalism once meant simply the opposite of isolationism. Thus what was a progressive cause on the left became translated into a cover for a form of imperialism keen to distinguish itself from the formal political colonialism of the British Empire. Today Perry Anderson argues that "internationalism ... is no longer coordination of the major capitalist powers under American dominance against a common enemy, the negative task of the Cold War, but an affirmative ideal – the reconstruction of the globe in 'the American image', *sans phrases* [without caveats]".⁶² Thus invasion can be cloaked under the mantle of bringing democracy to the oppressed masses and even the cause of women's liberation can be enlisted as an argument for aggressive regime change and the security of US imperialism's natural resource needs.

Where does this leave internationalism and transnationalism as discourses of contestation? The broad transnational movement in solidarity with the Zapatistas shows that another meaning of internationalism is still in existence. Internationalism should, perhaps, be seen as an 'empty signifier' that constructs the 'people' in very different ways. As Micheline Ishay argues, we need to return to the history of internationalism as a process rather than a state concept, and distinguish it from the realist paradigm in international relations. For Ishay, "unlike the realist paradigm, which focuses on economic, military, or any other instrumental links between nations, internationalism includes both an instrumental **and** a normative view of social and global unity".⁶³ Internationalism is not the simple opposite of nationalism but rather the register of progressive actions in pursuit of global objectives.

Finally, while this is not the place to articulate the new politics of social transformation that has been emerging in recent years across the globe, we must point out that another world is, indeed, possible. It is as true today as it was in the 1980s. Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein pointed out at that time the "dilemmas of only systemic movements" :

We are massively, seriously in urgent need of reconstructing the strategy, perhaps the ideology, perhaps the organisational structure of the family of world anti-systemic movements; if we are to cope effectively with the real dilemmas before which we are placed...⁶⁴

Since then we have witnessed the end of the Cold War, the rise of globalisation, and the emergence of the counter-globalisation movement. There is nothing automatic about the advance of progressive social movements today, any more than in the mid-1980s when these cataclysmic changes in world history were hardly foreseen.

What we are witnessing in today's 'family' of global anti-systemic movements is an ongoing and profound debate on the 'new politics' that are required. This is focused not least on the nature of the 'democratic counter-power' that is necessary to counter and offer an alternative to free market globalism. Hilary Wainwright uses the word 'counterpower' to "describe the many sources and levels of power through which it is possible to bring about social transformation".⁶⁵ As with the post-1968 'new' social movements, this counter-movement is challenging the positivist paradigm of knowledge and the sanctity of what are deemed to be scientific laws. New forms of knowledge are being claimed by indigenous peoples, for example, and environmental movements are challenging the rationality and scientificity of Western thinking that is promoting unsustainable growth models. We should not

forget in looking forward, however, that accumulation by dispossession is, as Harvey puts it, “the primary contradiction at the core of globalisation to be confronted”.⁶⁶ While there is no easy way to reconcile those looking backwards and those looking forwards it is a necessary precondition for social transformation.

Taking a broad view, we can say that the governance agenda that the agents of globalisation are constructing in the post-Washington Consensus era depends on questions of politics and power being removed from the equation. Against this project the social counter-movements will bring back political contestation and resistance to domination in all its forms. I would argue, finally, in agreement with de Sousa Santos, that “in the womb of this alternative counter-hegemonic globalisation, another governance matrix is being generated, an insurgent counter-hegemonic governance”.⁶⁷ In this battle of the governances will be decided the outcome of the Polanyian problematic we now face. At the very least, the counter-movement and its alternative globalisation project have placed back on the broad political agenda questions of equity and justice within the context of a sustainable global development model.

Notes

- 1 *Eds* : This essay is an edited version of chapter eight in the author’s Globalisation and Contestation : The New Great Counter-Movement (London and New York : Routledge, 2007), pp 127-143. We thank both the author Ronaldo Munck and the publisher Routledge for their permission to include this essay, free of charge.
- 2 Balakrishnan 2003, p vii.
- 3 For Michel Foucault ‘biopower’ is a modern technology of power used to manage people as a group especially in the construction of the nation-state. (Foucault 1998, 2008.) Whereas traditional forms of power had been based on the threat of death by the sovereign, in the modern era bio-power emphasised the protection of life and the regulation of the body to create ‘well-being’. For Hardt and Negri anti-capitalist movements may also use their bodies as a weapon. These authors also borrow from Deleuze and Guattari for whom capitalism is both repressive and liberatory for the ‘molecular energy of desire’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987).
- 4 Sherman and Trichur 2004, p 825.
- 5 Polanyi 2001, p 70.
- 6 Hardt and Negri 2000, p 59.
- 7 Dunn 2004, p 159.
- 8 Quinby 2004, p 240.
- 9 Harvey 2003, p 291.
- 10 Harvey 2004, p 47.
- 11 Cooper 2002.
- 12 Nederveen Pieterse 2004, p 381.
- 13 Citing Nederveen Pieterse 2004, p 57.
- 14 Harvey 2003, p 207.
- 15 Balakrishnan 2003, p ix.
- 16 Hardt and Negri 2004, p xiii.
- 17 Hardt and Negri 2004, p 106.
- 18 Hardt and Negri 2004, p 105.
- 19 Virno 2004, p 1.
- 20 Barchiesi 2004, p 3.
- 21 Laclau 2005, p 240.
- 22 Hardt and Negri 2004, pp 120-121.
- 23 Hardt and Negri 2004, p 122.
- 24 Hardt and Negri 2000, p 113.
- 25 See chapter 7 of my Globalisation and Contestation : The New Great Counter-Movement .
- 26 Hardt and Negri 2000, p 113.
- 27 Hardt and Negri 2000, p 336.
- 28 Hardt and Negri 2000, p 336.

- 29 See chapter 2, Munck 2007.
- 30 Hardt and Negri 2000, p 213.
- 31 Hardt and Negri 2000, pp 213-214.
- 32 Hardt and Negri 2004, p 134.
- 33 See Munck 2009.
- 34 Bull 2004, p 218.
- 35 Laclau 2005, p 243.
- 36 Gould, Lewis, and Roberts 2004, p 92.
- 37 See <http://www.wiserearth.org/organization/view/40de2e805c5d0d776e4462faf2fe3de1> (accessed js 11.01.2011).
- 38 Starr 2004, p 127. *Eds* : See also the essay by Michael Leon Guerrero in this volume (Guerrero 2012).
- 39 See chapters 1 and 2 in Munck 2007.
- 40 Silver and Arrighi 2003.
- 41 Silver and Arrighi 2003, p xxx.
- 42 Stiglitz 2001, p xv.
- 43 Stiglitz 2001, p xv.
- 44 Stiglitz 2001, p xi.
- 45 Stiglitz 2001, p 89.
- 46 Harvey 2003, p 174.
- 47 Hardt and Negri 2000, p 160.
- 48 Hardt and Negri 2000, p 150.
- 49 Adaman, Bulut, and Madra 2003, p 7.
- 50 Harvey 2003, p 177.
- 51 Polanyi 2001, p 80.
- 52 Evans 2000, p 238.
- 53 Balakrishnan 2003, p xv.
- 54 Laclau 2005, p 154.
- 55 Laclau 2005, p 154.
- 56 Archibugi 2003, p 7.
- 57 Cited in Archibugi 2003, p 10.
- 58 Shaw 1994, pp 180-181.
- 59 Brennan 2003, p 49.
- 60 Robertson 1992, p 184.
- 61 Collins 2005, p 21.
- 62 Anderson 2002, p 24.
- 63 Ishay 1995, p xxi.
- 64 Arrighi, Hopkins, and Wallerstein 1989, p 51.
- 65 Wainwright, June 2005.
- 66 Harvey 2003, p 177.
- 67 De Sousa Santos 2005b, p 16.

SECTION 4

References

Bibliography

Some explanatory notes :

As explained in the Introduction, this Bibliography is a compilation of all the references for all the essays in the book. The general practice of our publisher OpenWord is to attempt to recognise and be respectful of diversity and cultural practice. This Bibliography therefore has some particular features that make it a bit different from those available in most other books, which we would like to point out here, for your convenience :

In particular, this Bibliography is organised alphabetically by surname, as is normally done, but – please note – where the names of individual authors are rendered in the ‘normal’ fashion, in other words with the first name first, and in most cases the surname last – other than in certain cases, as per Point 2 below. (And not as is done in, say, telephone directories, with surnames always given first.)

In addition, author’s names are also rendered, and organised, according to the particular cultural traditions to which they belong. For instance, in Anglo-Saxon and certain other traditions, the surname comes last; but in the East Asian system/s, as well as the South Indian, the surname comes first; and in Brazilian names in particular, the surname is often (but not always) the last two words together (including both maternal and paternal lineage). So if you are referring to this list to find particular titles, you will need to be fairly sure of the surname to find them.

(The combination of Points 1 and 2 means that we can then both respect all traditions and also present authors’ names not subjected to technical logic but in a more normal way.)

Please also note that in several European and therefore their respective colonial systems – French, Belgian, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish – terms / prepositions such as ‘de’, ‘de la’, ‘della’ – denoting ‘of’ or ‘coming from’ - are a part of the surnames, and therefore the surnames from these cultures are here listed under ‘d’ (and NOT under the ‘last’ word in the surname), and even if this is not always practised and respected in other publications.

In the ebook version of this book, you won't have problems reaching the reference because the short form citations given in the endnotes are hyperlinked to this full reference list; but in other editions, if you are coming from the chapters, please know that we have tried to make sure that the full (and properly rendered) surname is also used in the short form used in the notes. Please therefore please always search in this list according to the ‘full’ surname.

In this book (as in all books published by OpenWord), we use italics only for words not in English – and therefore in this list to denote material not in English -, but in the case of titles, we provide a translation in English immediately after.

Rebecca Neaera Abers, 2000 – Inventing Local Democracy : Grassroots Politics in Brazil. Boulder, CO : Lynne Rienner Publishers

ABONG, 2003 – '*Documento para Debate. Assembléia Abong de 2003* ['Document for Debate : 2003 ABONG Assembly', in Portuguese], September 3-4 2003, São Paulo, Brazil

Kolya Abramsky, August 2008 [April 2007] – 'The Bamako Appeal and the Zapatista 6th Declaration - From Reorganizing the Existing World to Creating New Ones'. CE1 in the *Critical Engagement* series from CACIM; available for download at <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications>

Kolya Abramsky, ed, March 2001 – Restructuring and Resistance : Diverse Voices of Struggle in Western Europe. Self-published; available from AK Press in the UK, www.akuk.org

Brooke A Ackerly and Bina D'Costa, 2005 – 'Working Paper 2005/1 : Transnational Feminism : Political Strategies and Theoretical Resources', The Australian National University : Department of International Relations

Fikret Adaman, Tugçe Bulut, and Yahya Mete Madra, 2003 - 'The Global-Local Clash : Embedding the global economy in the local society', Ninth Karl Polanyi Conference, Istanbul

Cornelius Adedze, 2007 – 'United in the Search for Alternatives', in African Agenda, vol 10 no 1

African Agenda, 2010 – 'EPAs : An unending saga', vol 13, no 3, TWN-Africa, Accra, Ghana

African Union, May 2005 – 'Meeting of Eminent Personalities, May 2-3 2005, in Dakar (Senegal)'. Draft Report

Giorgio Agamben, 2004 – The Open : Man and Animal. Translated by Kevin Attell. Stanford, California : Stanford University Press

Éric Agrikoliansky and Dominique Cardon, 2005 – '*Un programme en débat, forum, formes, formats*' ['A program under discussion : Forum, shapes, sizes', in French], in Éric Agrikoliansky and Isabelle Sommier, eds, 2005 - Radiographie du mouvement altermondialiste : Le second forum social européen ['X-ray of the alterglobalist movement : The Second European Social Forum', in French]. Paris : La Dispute

Éric Agrikoliansky and Isabelle Sommier, eds, 2005 – Radiographie du mouvement altermondialiste : le second forum social européen ['X-ray of the alterglobalist movement : The Second European Social Forum', in French]. Paris : La Dispute

Christophe Aguiton and Dominique Cardon, 2005 – '*Le Forum et le Réseau. Une analyse des modes de gouvernement des forums sociaux*' ('The Forum and the Network : An analysis of governance modes of social forums', in French). Mimeograph

Michael Albert, 2004 – 'The WSF : Where to Now ?', in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : Viveka), pp 323-328; available at http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html

Amanda Alexander and Mandisa Mbali, 2012 – ‘Have The Slaves Left The Master’s House ?’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012a – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, forthcoming (2013) – ‘Being Indigenous : Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2013 – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Max Ali, May 2010 – ‘Bolivia Throws Down Gauntlet, Demands Real Climate Action’, on Truthout, www.truth-out.org/bolivia-throws-down-gauntlet-demands-real-climate-action59090; also on website of World People’s Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth, May 5 2010

Tariq Ali, 2005a - Street Fighting Years : An Autobiography Of The Sixties. London : Verso

Tariq Ali, 2005b – ‘1968’, chapter in his Street Fighting Years : An Autobiography Of The Sixties (London : Verso), pp 236-267

Tariq Ali, forthcoming (2013) – ‘Looking Back in Anger’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Robert C Allen, 1992 - ‘Audience-Oriented Criticism and Television’, in Robert C Allen, ed, 1992 - Channels of Discourse, Reassembled : Television and Contemporary Criticism, 2nd ed. Chapel Hill : University of North Carolina Press

Alternatives Sud, 2005 – ‘*Mouvements et pouvoirs de gauche en Amérique latine*’ (‘Movements and left-wing governments in Latin America’, in French), Vol XII no 2

Alternatives Sud, 2007 - Special Issue on the MDGs, vol 13 no 1 (2006/1). CETRI and SYLLEPSE

Rebecca Álvarez, Erika Gutierrez, Linda Kim, Christine Petit, and Ellen Reese, May 2008 - ‘The Contours of Color at the World Social Forum : Reflections on Racialized Politics, Representation, and the Global Justice Movement’, in Critical Sociology, vol 34, May 2008, pp 389-407

Sonia E. Alvarez, 1990 – Engendering Democracy in Brazil : Women's movements in transition politics. Princeton : Princeton University Press

Sonia E. Alvarez, 1993 – ‘Deepening Democracy : Popular Movement Networks, Constitutional Reform, and Radical Urban Regimes in Contemporary Brazil’, in R Fischer and J Klinger, eds, Mobilizing the Community : Local Politics in the Era of the Global City. Newbery Park, CA : Sage Publications

Sonia E. Alvarez, 1996 – ‘Concluding reflections : Redrawing the parameters of gender struggle’, in John Friedman, Rebecca Abers, and Lilian Autler, eds, 1996 - Emergences : Women’s Struggles for Livelihood in Latin America. Los Angeles : University of California, Latin American Center

Sonia E. Alvarez, 1997 – ‘Reweaving the Fabric of Collective Action : Social Movements and

Challenges to 'Actually Existing Democracy' in Brazil', in Richard Gabriel Fox and Orin Starn, eds, 1997 - Between Resistance and Revolution : Cultural Politics and Social Protest. NJ : Rutgers University Press

Sonia E. Alvarez, 2000 – 'Translating the Global : Effects of Transnational Organizing on Local Feminist Discourses and Practices in Latin America', in Meridians : Feminism, Race, Transnationalism, vol 1 no 1, pp 29-67

Sonia E. Alvarez, 2012 – 'Globalised Localisms : The Travels and Translations of the World Social Forum Process', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Sonia E. Alvarez, forthcoming – Feminism in Movement : Cultural Politics, Policy Advocacy and Transnational Activism in Latin America. Durham, NC : Duke University Press

Sonia E. Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino, and Arturo Escobar, 1998 – Cultures of Politics, Politics of Cultures : Re-Visioning Latin American Social Movements. Boulder, Colo. : Westview Press

Sonia E. Alvarez, Claudia de Lima Costa, Verónica Feliú, Rebecca Hester, Norma Klahn, and Millie Thayer, eds, 2009 – Translocalities/Translocalidades : Feminist Politics of Translation in the Latin/a Américas. Durham, NC : Duke University Press, in press

Sonia E. Alvarez, Nalu Faria, and Miriam Nobre, 2003 – '*Dossiê Fórum Social Mundial e Feminismos*' ['Dossier on the World Social Forum and Feminisms', in Portuguese], in Revista Estudos Feministas, vol 11 no 2

Sonia E. Alvarez, Nalu Faria, and Miriam Nobre, 2004a – 'Another (Also Feminist) World is Possible : Constructing Transnational Spaces and Global Alternatives from the Movements', in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 - World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : Viveka Foundation), pp 199-206, @ www.choike.org/documentos/wsf_s313_alvarez.pdf

Sonia E. Alvarez, Nalu Faria, and Miriam Nobre, 2004b – '*Eine andere (auch feministische) Welt ist möglich*' ('Another (Also Feminist) World is Possible', German translation), in Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, Jai Sen, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 - Eine andere Welt : Das Sozialforum (German edition of World Social Forum : Challenging Empires, New Delhi : The Viveka Foundation, 2004), Berlin : Dietz Berlin

Sonia E. Alvarez, Elizabeth Jay Friedman, Ericka Beckman, Maylei Blackwell, Norma Stoltz Chinchilla, Nathalie Lebon, Marysa Navarro, and Marcela Ríos-Tobar, 2003 – 'Encountering Latin American Feminisms', in Signs : Journal of Women in Culture and Society, vol 28 no 2, pp 537-579

Samir Amin, 2006b – 'Towards a Fifth International ?', in Katarina Sehm Patomäki and Marko Ulvila, August 2006 – 'Democratic Politics Globally : Elements for a Dialogue on Global Political Party Formations'. NIGD Working Paper 1/2006, NIGD (Network Institute for Global Democratisation), Helsinki, Finland, @ <http://www.nigd.org/globalparties>, pp 121-144

Samir Amin, 2007 – '*Le Forum Social Mondial est-il utile pour les luttes populaires ?*' ['Is the World Social Forum useful for popular struggles ?', in French], February 1 2007

Samir Amin, September 2009 – ‘Emerging from the Crisis of Capitalism or Emerging from Capitalism in Crisis ?’, posted September 19 2009 on Coto Report, accessed js 12.01.2011 at <http://coto2.wordpress.com/2009/09/19/emerging-from-the-crisis-of-capitalism/>

Samir Amin, forthcoming (2013) – ‘Towards a Fifth International ?’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013b) – Worlds in Movement : New Movement, New Politics. Volume 5 in the Challenging Empires series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Samir Amin, Marcy Kadenyeka, Luseni Kamara, and ors, January 2007 – ‘Declaration of the Social Movements Assembly’, in the Full Report of the Social Movements Assembly, World Social Forum, Nairobi, January 24 2007; @ http://www.focusweb.org/images/stories/sma_24_jan_full_report.pdf

Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, Jai Sen, and Peter Waterman (Hrsg), 2004 - Eine Andere Welt : Das Weltsozialforum [‘Another World : The World Social Forum’, in German]. Translated from the original English edition (World Social Forum : Challenging Empires. New Delhi : Viveka, 2004) by Carla Krüger and Wolfram Adolphi of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Berlin : Karl Dietz Verlag

Benedict Anderson, 1991 – Imagined Communities : Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London : Verso

Perry Anderson, 2002 - ‘Internationalism : A Breviary’, in New Left Review, No 14, March-April 2002, pp 5-25

Perry Anderson, April 2007 – ‘Made in USA’, in The Nation, April 2 2007

Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius, and Mary Kaldor, eds, 2006 – Global Civil Society 2005-2006. London : Sage

Alexander Anievas, ed, 2010 - Marxism and World Politics. London : Routledge

Anon, January 2004b – ‘mumbai declaration 2004 : declaration adopted at the end of Mumbai Resistance 2004 against imperialist globalisation and war - an event held parallel to World Social Forum at Mumbai’. January 23 2004. Accessed js 05.10.06 @ <http://ireland.indymedia.org/article/63143>

Anon, 2006 - Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists 2006; accessed js 25.09.2011 @ http://www.isiswomen.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=780&Itemid=80

Daniele Archibugi, 2003 - ‘Cosmopolitan Democracy’, in Daniele Archibugi, ed, 2003 - Debating Cosmopolitics. London : Verso

Giovanni Arrighi, Terrence K Hopkins, and Immanuel Wallerstein, 1989 - Antisystemic Movements. London : Verso

Articulaci3n Feminista Marcosur (AFM), 2003a – ‘III World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, 23rd to 28th January 2003, Electronic Newsletter no. 1’, file accessed through DAWN website at : <http://www.dawn.org.fj/global/worldsocialforum/socialforum.html>, accessed on October 21 2005, no longer available online at time of writing (September 2008)

Articulación Feminista Marcosur (AFM), 2003b – ‘World Social Forum 2003 : Report on the activities of the Articulación Feminista Marcosur’, available online at : <http://www.mujeresdelsur.org.uy/fsm/2003/report03.htm>, accessed on February 13 2008

Articulación Feminista Marcosur, January 2005 – ‘Forummentalismos : The Contradictions of the World Social Forum’. Political Statement of the Diversity Boat at the Porto Alegre WSF, 2005. Dt January 31 2005. Translated by Peter Waterman, personal communication with Corinna Genschel, February 7 2005

Articulación Feminista Marcosur (AFM), nd – ‘Campaign Against Fundamentalism, People are Fundamental’, available at : http://www.mujeresdelsur.org.uy/index_i.htm, accessed on July 9 2008

Articulación Feminista Marcosur, nd, c.2005 - ‘International : WSF Contradictions – Feminist Dialogues’, available at <http://www.wluml.org/english/newsfulltxt.shtml?cmd%5B157%5D=x-157-119969>, accessed on July 6 2005

Articulación Feminista Marcosur (AFM), CACIM, DaSMI (Democracy and Social Movements Institute), and ARENA, June 2009 – ‘Facing The Future : Going Beyond Our Present Horizons’. A Report on the Workshop at the World Social Forum at Belém, Brazil, on January 30 2009 titled ‘Facing the Future : The World Social Forum, the Global Justice Movement, and Beyond’ organised by AFM - Articulación Feminista Marco Sur (Peru), CACIM (India), DaSMI - Democracy and Social Movement Institute (Sungkonhoe University, South Korea), and ARENA - Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives (South Korea). Available at <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=CACIMatBelem>. Report prepared for CACIM by Anil Varghese, New Delhi, India; jv.anil@gmail.com. Final Report, June 8 2009

Sam Ashman, 2004 – ‘Resistance to Neoliberal Globalisation : A Case of ‘Militant Particularism’?’, in *Politics*, vol 24 no 2, p 143-153

ATTAC Germany, nd, c.2008 – ‘The debate on the future of the World Social Forum - from Bamako to Bélem’. Reader for the European Attac Summer University (2008) Workshop with Francine Mestrum (Member of the WSF’s IC) and with Peter Strotmann and Marie-D. Vernhes (*Sand im Getriebe*). Compilers : Peter Strotmann and Marie-Dominique Vernhes, ATTAC Germany, editors of *Sand im Getriebe*

John Langshaw Austin, 1975 [1962] - How to do things with words. Cambridge, Mass : Harvard University Press

Betania Ávila, July-December 2003 – ‘Reflecting on the World Social Forum from a feminist perspective’, in *Revista Estudos Feministas* [‘Journal of Feminist Studies’, in Portuguese], vol 11 no 2. Brazil : Florianopolis

Sergio Baierle, 1992 – ‘Um novo princípio ético-político : prática social e sujeito nos movimentos populares urbanos em Porto Alegre nos anos 80’ [‘A new ethical-political principle : Social practice and subjects in urban popular movements in Porto Alegre in the 80’, in Portuguese]. Master's Thesis, Universidade Estadual de Campinas-São Paulo

Sérgio Baierle, 1998 - ‘The Explosion of Experience : The Emergence of a New Ethical-Political Principle in Popular Movements in Porto Alegre, Brazil’, in Sonia E. Alvarez, Evelina Dagnino,

and Arturo Escobar, eds, 1998 - Culture of Politics / Politics of Cultures : Re-visioning Latin-American Social Movements (Boulder : Westview Press)

Sérgio Baierle, 2009 – ‘The Porto Alegre Thermidor : Brazil’s “Participatory Budget” at the Crossroads’, in Socialist Register, vol 39

Gianpaolo Baiocchi, 2003 – Radicals in Power : The Workers' Party (PT) and Experiments in Urban Democracy in Brazil. London : Zed Books

Gianpaolo Baiocchi, 2005 - Militants and Citizens : The Politics of Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre. Stanford, CA : Stanford University Press

Gopal Balakrishnan, 2003 - ‘Introduction’, in Gopal Balakrishnan, ed, 2003 - Debating Empire. London : Verso

Richard Ballard, Adam Habib and Imraan Valoodia, 2006 – Voices of Protest. Pietermaritzburg : University of KwaZulu-Natal Press

Joe Bandy and Jackie Smith, eds, 2005 – Coalitions across Borders : Transnational Protest and the Neoliberal Order. Lanham, MD : Rowman and Littlefield

Albert-László Barabási and Réka Albert, 1999 - ‘Emergence of scaling in random networks’, in Science, vol 286, pp 509–512

Benjamin R Barber, 1995 – Jihad vs McWorld : Terrorism’s Challenge to Democracy. New York : Ballantine Books

Franco Barchiesi, 2004 - Classes, Multitudes and the Politics of Community Movements in Post-Apartheid South Africa. Bloemfontein, South Africa : Annual Congress of the South African Sociological Association

Franco Barchiesi, Heinrich Bohmke, Prishani Naidoo, and Ahmed Veriava, July 2006 – ‘Does Bamako Appeal ? The World Social Forum Versus the Life Strategies of the Subaltern’. Contribution to Workshop on the World Social Forum, Durban Centre for Civil Society, University of Kwa-Zulu–Natal, Durban, South Africa, July 22-23 2006. Accessed 06.09.2005 @ <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/ccs/default.asp?2,40,5,1115>; also included in edited form in this volume

Franco Barchiesi, Heinrich Bohmke, Prishani Naidoo, and Ahmed Veriava, 2012 – ‘Does Bamako Appeal ? The World Social Forum Versus the Life Strategies of the Subaltern’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Maruja Barrig, 1989 - ‘The difficult equilibrium between bread and roses : Women’s organizations and the transition from dictatorship to democracy in Peru’, in Jane Jaquett, ed, 1989 - The Women’s Movement in Latin America : Feminism and the Transition to Democracy, pp 114-148. Massachusetts : Unwin Hyman

Frederick Barth, ed, 1969 – Ethnic groups and boundaries : The social organization of culture difference. Boston : Little, Brown

Jean-François Bayart, April 2000 — 'Africa in the World : A history of extraversion', in African Affairs, vol 99 no 395

Asef Bayat, 1996 — 'Cairo's Poor : Dilemmas of Survival and Solidarity', in Middle East Report, issue 202. Accessed js 291110 @ <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer202/poor.html>

BBC World Service, January 2007 - 'World View of US Role Goes from Bad to Worse', January 23 2007

Pierre Beaudet, Raul Canet, and Marie-Josée Massicotte, eds, 2010 - L'Altermondialisme : Forums sociaux, résistances et nouvelle culture politique ['Alter-globalisation : Social Forums, Resistance, and New Political Culture', in French]. Montréal, QC : Les Éditions Écosociété

Elsa Beaulieu and Julia di Giovanni, February 2003 — 'The March at the 3rd Intercontinental Youth Camp', in World March of Women Newsletter, February 2003, vol 6 no 1, available at : http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/bulletin_liaison/2003/2003_02/en#d, accessed on February 13 2008

Marc Becker, 2004 — 'Pachakutik and Indigenous Political Party Politics in Ecuador'. Conference paper delivered at Radfest

Daniel M Bell Jr, 2001 — Liberation Theology after the End of History. London : Routledge

Walden Bello, 2001 — '*2000 : O ano de protesto global contra a globalização*' ['2000 : The Year of Global Protest Against Globalisation', in Portuguese], in José Seoane and Emilio Taddei, eds, Resistências Mundiais : De Seattle a Porto Alegre ['Global Resistance : From Seattle to Porto Alegre', in Portuguese]. Petrópolis : Editora Vozes, CLACSO, LPP

Walden Bello, 2002 - Deglobalisation : Ideas for a New World Economy. London : Zed

Walden Bello, May 2007 — 'World Social Forum at the Crossroads', in Foreign Policy in Focus, May 4 2007. Accessed @ http://www.tni.org/detail_page.phtml?act_id=16771

Walden Bello, 2012 — 'World Social Forum at the Crossroads', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 — World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

W Lance Bennett, 2003 — 'Communicating Global Activism', in Information, Communication & Society, vol 6 no 2, pp 143-168

Daniel Bensaïd, 2007 - 'The Return of Strategy', in International Socialism 113 (winter 2007)

Daniel Bensaïd, forthcoming (2013) — 'The Return of Strategy', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) — The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Piero Bernocchi, 2006 - email circulated on European Social Forum list, December 5 2006 (English lightly edited)

Isabelle Biagiotti, December 2004 — 'The World Social Forums : A paradoxical application of

participatory doctrine', in International Social Science Journal, Issue no 182, pp 529-540. Available at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/servlet/useragent?func=showIssues&code=issj&open=2004#C2004> and at http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-view_articles.php?type=Article&topic=3

Malin Björk, 2004 – 'Two-Day Feminist Dialogue in Mumbai', in Les Penelopes, available at : http://www.penelopes.org/Anglais/xarticle.php3?id_article=758, accessed on March 3 2005

Judith Blau and Marina Karides, eds, 2008 - The World and US Social Forums : A better world is possible and necessary. Leiden and Boston : Brill

Steffen Böhm, Sean Sullivan, and Oscar Reyes, eds, 2005 - 'The Organisation and Politics of Social Forums', in ephemera: theory & politics in organization, vol 5 no 2, pp 98-442, accessible at <http://www.ephemeraweb.org>

Patrick Bond, 2003 – Against Global Apartheid : South Africa meets the World Bank, IMF and International Finance. London : Zed Books

Patrick Bond, 2005 – 'Discussing the Porto Alegre Manifesto', in ZNet Commentary, 22 February, available at : <http://www.zmag.org/sustainers/content/2005-02/22bond.cfm>

Patrick Bond, 2006 [2004] – Talk Left, Walk Right : South Africa's Frustrated Global Reforms. Pietermaritzburg : University of KwaZulu-Natal Press

Patrick Bond, February 2007 – 'From WSF 'NGO trade fair' to left politics ?', on Southern African Regional Poverty Network, February 1 2007, <http://www.sarpn.org.za/documents/d0002320/index.php> and Z Communications www.zcommunications.org/from-wsf-ngo-trade-fair-to-left-politics-by-patrick-bond.pdf

Patrick Bond, Dennis Brutus, and Virginia Setshedi, 2005a – 'When Wearing White is not Chic, and Collaboration not Cool', in Foreign Policy in Focus, June 17 2005

Patrick Bond, Dennis Brutus, and Virginia Setshedi, 2005b – 'Are Mainstream NGOs failing Africa ?', in ZNet Commentary, June 21 2005

Patrick Bond, ed, 2005 - Fanon's Warning : A Civil Society Reader on the New Partnership for Africa's Development, second edition. Trenton, NJ : Africa World Press, Durban : Centre for Civil Society, and Cape Town : AIDC

Patrick Bond and Meshack Khosa, eds, 1999 – An RDP Policy Audit. South Africa : HSRC (Human Sciences Research Council) Press

Olivier Bonfond, 2007 — '*Forum Social Mondial de Nairobi : Premier bilan*' ['World Social Forum in Nairobi : First results', in French], available at <http://www.cadtm.org/spip.php?article2470>, last accessed February 22 2008. Translation by the authors

Border Social Forum, Assembly of Border Social Movements, October 2006 – 'Final Declaration'. Ciudad Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico, October 15 2006, <http://www.forosocialfronterizo.blogspot.com/>

Pierre Bourdieu, 2001 – '*Contra la política de despolitización : Los objetivos del Movimiento Social Europeo*' ['Against the Politics of Depoliticisation : The Objectives of the European Social Movement', in Spanish]. Accessed js 19.01.2011 at <http://www.scribd.com/doc/25395122/bourdieu-pierre-contra-la-politica-de-despolitizacion-los-objetivos-del-movimiento-social-europeo>

Naima Bouteldja, December 2001 – '*À part, bien sûr, Mme Thatcher*' ['Except, of course, Mrs Thatcher', in French], English version available at : [@http://www.voiceoftheturtle.org/show_article.php?aid=79](http://www.voiceoftheturtle.org)

Avtar Brah, 2004 – '*Diferencia, Diversidad y Diferenciación*' ['Difference, Diversity, and Differentiation', in Spanish], in Bell Hooks, Avtar Brah, Chela Sandoval, and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds, *Otras Inapropiables. Feminismos desde la Frontera* ['Inappropriate Others : Feminisms from the Frontiers', in Spanish]. Madrid : Traficante de Sueños

Sue Branford and Jan Rocha, 2002 – *Cutting the Wire : The Story of the Landless Movement in Brazil*. London : Latin America Bureau

Jeremy Brecher, Tim Costello, and Brendan Smith, 2000 – *Globalization from Below : The Power of Solidarity*. Cambridge Mass : South End Press

Timothy Brennan, 2003 – 'Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism', in Daniele Archibugi, ed, 2003 - *Debating Cosmopolitics*. London : Verso

Andre Brie, Carla Krüger, and Wolfram Adolphie, 2004 – '*Zum Geleit : Vorwort zur deutschen Ausgabe*' ['Foreword : Preface to the German edition', in German], in Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, Jai Sen, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 - *Eine andere Welt. Das Sozialforum* (German edition of *World Social Forum : Challenging Empires*, New Delhi : The Viveka Foundation), Berlin : Dietz Berlin

Robin Broad and Zahara Heckscher, 2003 - 'Before Seattle : The historical roots of the current movement against corporate-led globalisation', in *Third World Quarterly*, vol 24 no 4, pp 713-728

Janine Brodie, 2002 – '*Die Re-Formierung des Geschlechterverhältnisses und die Regulierung des Sozialen*' ['The re-formation of gender relations and the regulation of the social', in German], in *Widerspruch* 46 vol 24 no 1, pp 19-32

Kevin Brown, April 2003 — 'Outline of an Experiment', available at nettime@bbs.thing.net

Thomas Bruneau and William E Hewitt, 1992 – 'Catholicism and Political Action in Brazil : limitations and prospects', in Edward Clearly and Hanna Stewart-Gambino, eds, 1992 - *Conflict and Competition : The Latin American Church in a Changing Environment*. Boulder : Lynne Rienner

Malcolm Bull, 2004 - 'Smooth Politics', in Paul Passavant and Jodi Dean, eds, 2004 - *Empire's New Clothes : Reading Hardt and Negri*. London and New York : Routledge

John Burdick, 2004 – *Legacies of Liberation : The Progressive Catholic Church in Brazil*. Farnham, Surrey, UK : Ashgate

Nancy Burrows, 2002 – ‘The World March of Women at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, from January 31–February 5, 2002’, available at : <http://www.ffq.qc.ca/marche2000/en/fsm2002b.html>, accessed on February 13 2008

Ray Bush, 2007 – Poverty and Neoliberalism. London : Pluto Press.

CACIM, January 2007a – ‘Revisiting the Bamako Appeal : Issues of Democracy and Substance in World Movement’. A Discussion Note for a Workshop organised at the World Social Forum, Nairobi, Kenya, on January 21 2007, by CACIM (India Institute for Critical Action : Centre in Movement) and co-sponsored by CCS (Centre for Civil Society), Durban, South Africa; <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=CACIMWSF2007Events>

CACIM, January 2008 - The WSF’s Global Call to Action : A Directory, @ <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=GDA08Directory>

CACIM, June 2009 – ‘Opening Up The WSF : Rediscovering Its Spirit’. A Report on a Seminar organised by CACIM at the World Social Forum at Belém, Brazil, on January 29 2009, on ‘Critically Engaging With The Principles Underlying The WSF’. Available @ <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=CACIMatBelem>. Report prepared for CACIM by Anil Varghese, New Delhi, India; jv.anil@gmail.com

CACIM, September 2009a – ‘The Art Of Protest : Cultures Of Protest, Protest As Art’. Revised request for support to CACIM’s Social Justice Fellowship Programme in the area of Culture and Social Justice. CACIM, New Delhi, December 2008, revised September 2009

CACIM, with ABN - African Biodiversity Network, Climate SOS, GGJ - Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, IEN - Indigenous Environmental Network, and NFFPFW - National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers, January 2011 - ‘Confronting the Consequences of Climate Change : Conflict, War, Resistance, and Movement in the Coming Half Century – Looking Ahead : What Do We Need To Do ?’. Event Outline in English for Workshop being organised at the World Social Forum at Dakar, Senegal, on February 9 2011. Available at <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=CACIM+at+WSF+2011>

CACIM, with AFM - Articulaci3n Feminista Marco Sur, ATTAC France, Canada Research Chair in Social Justice, GGJ - Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, Kenya Network of Grassroots Organisations (KENGONET), Mémoire des lutes, Mouvements, and People’s Parliament (Kenya), January 2011a – ‘Facing the Challenges of the Present and the Future : How Well is the World Social Forum Doing ?’. Event Outline in English for Workshop being organised at the World Social Forum at Dakar, Senegal, on February 8 2011. Available at <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=CACIM+at+WSF+2011>

CACIM and NFFPFW, May 2009 – ‘Indigenous Peoples : ‘Another World Is Possible’ Only If...’. A Report on the seminar titled ‘The Politics, Potentials, and Meanings of the WSF in Belém : The Significance for the World Social Forum of the Participation of the Indigenous Peoples of the World’, held in Belém, Brazil, on January 29, 2009, organised by CACIM (India) & NFFPFW - National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (India). Available @ <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=CACIMatBelem> and @ http://openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=798. Report prepared for CACIM by Anil Varghese, New Delhi, India; jv.anil@gmail.com

Alex Callinicos, 2003 - An Anti-Capitalist Manifesto. Cambridge, UK : Polity

Alex Callinicos, 2004a - 'The Future of the Anti-Capitalist Movement', in Hannah Dee, ed, 2004 - Anti-Capitalism : Where Next ? (London : Bookmarks)

Alex Callinicos, 2004b - 'Building on the Success of the London ESF', November 26 2004, circulated by email

Alex Callinicos, July 2006 - 'Alternatives to Neoliberalism', in Socialist Review, July 2006

Alex Callinicos and Chris Nineham, 2005 - Critical Reflections on the Fifth World Social Forum", February 8 2005

Alex Callinicos and Chris Nineham, 2012 - 'At an impasse ? Anti-capitalism and the Social Forums', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 - World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Leslie J Calman, 1992 - Toward Empowerment : Women and Movement Politics in India. Boulder, CO : Westview Press

Jill Carr Harris, 2004 - Interview with Janet Conway, Mumbai, India

Giuseppe Caruso, December 2004 - 'Conflict management and hegemonic practices in the World Social Forum 2004', in International Social Science Journal, Issue no 182, pp 577-590. Available at http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=20&highlight=giuseppe

Giuseppe Caruso, 2012 - 'Difference and Conflicts in the World Social Forum in India : Towards an 'open' cosmopolitanism ?', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 - World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord Books

Mariangela Casalucci, Massimo De Angelis, Stuart Hodgkinson, Javier Ruiz, Matt Sellwood, and Laura Sullivan, March 2004 - 'ESF in London : a celebration for all and an invitation from few horizontals'. Dt March 10 2004. Available 06.12.2010 @ http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-download_file.php?fileId=205

Bernard Cassens, 2003a - Tout a commence à Porto Alegre...Mille forums sociaux! ('Everything started in Porto Alegre... A thousand Social Forums!', in French). Paris : Mille et une nuits

Bernard Cassen, 2003b - 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness', in The Second Wave, volume 2, number 1

Manuel Castells, 1997 - The Power of Identity. Oxford : Blackwell

Blanca Chancosa, 2004a - Interview with Janet Conway, translated by Carlos Torres, Quito, Ecuador

Blanca Chancosa, 2004b - Presentation for worktable '*Nacionalidades y pueblos indigenas*,

movimientos sociales y Foro Social Mundial [‘Indigenous nationalities and peoples, social movements, and the World Social Forum’, in Spanish], at the Segundo Cumbre Continental de los Pueblos y Nacionalidad Indigenas de Abya Yala (‘Second gathering of indigenous peoples and nationalities of the Americas’, in Spanish), Quito, Ecuador

Christopher Chase-Dunn, Ellen Reese, Mark Herkenrath, Rebecca Giem, Erika Guttierrez, and Christine Petit, 2008 - ‘North-South Contradictions and Bridges at the World Social Forum’, in Rafael Reuveny and William R Thompson, eds, 2008 - North and South in the World Political Economy. Oxford : Wiley-Blackwell

Graeme Chesters, 2008 - ‘Networks Plus ? Contribution to Networked Politics Reader for Seminar at the University of

California, Berkeley, December 5, 2008’, available at http://www.networked-politics.info/?page_id=168 (accessed June 7 2009)

Graeme Chesters, 2012 – ‘The Secret of Fire ! Encountering the Complexity of the World Social Forum’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh, 2006 - Complexity and Social Movements : Multitudes at the Edge of Chaos. International Library of Sociology Series. London : Routledge

Mayur Chetia, August 2008 – ‘World Social Forum and the Reaction from the Indian Left’. Critical Engagement Document no 5 published by CACIM, New Delhi, India; available @ www.cacim.net. Paper prepared as CACIM Forum Fellow 2007-8

John Brown Childs, forthcoming (2013) – ‘Boundary as Bridge’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Choike, 2007 – ‘World Forum on Food Sovereignty - Nyéléni 2007’. Accessed js 11-01.2011 @ <http://www.choike.org/2009/eng/eventos/42.html>

Aziz Choudry and Eric Shragge, 2011 – ‘Disciplining Dissent : NGOs and Community Organizations’, in Globalizations, vol 8 no 4, pp 503-517; available @ <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14747731.2011.585855>

Christian Aid, 2005 - The Economics of Failure : The real costs of ‘free’ trade for poor countries. London : Christian Aid

Christian Aid, May 2008 - Death and Taxes : The true toll of tax dodging. A Christian Aid Report, London

Paul Cilliers, 1998 - Complexity and Postmodernism. London : Routledge

CMI Brasil (*Centro de Midia Independente Brasil*, ‘Indymedia Centre Brazil’), 2005 – ‘*Manifestação Denuncia a Violência Contra Mulher no Acampamento da Juventude*’ [‘Demonstration Denounces Violence Against Women at the Youth Camp’, in Portuguese], available at : <http://www.midiaindependente.org/pt/blue//2005/01/305254.shtml>, accessed

on June 5 2008.

Alexander Cockburn, Jeffrey St Clair, and Allan Sekula, 2000 – Five Days That Shook the World : Seattle and Beyond. London : Verso

Gustavo Codas, 2003 – ‘*Cuál es el papel del Foro Social Mundial ?*’ [‘What is the role of the World Social Forum ?’, in Spanish], in Alternativas : Revista de Análisis y Reflexión Teológica, vol 10 no 25, pp 13-22

Jean L Cohen, 1985 – ‘Strategy or Identity’, in Social Research, vol 52, pp 663-716

Content and Methodology Commission, African Social Forum, July 2010 - ‘The WSF 2011 Concept Note’

Huned Contractor, 2004 – ‘No place for the disabled’,
http://www.infochangeindia.org/infochange_wsf17.jsp?wsf17

Janet Conway, 2002 – ‘Power of Social Forum is Its Global Diffusion’, in Humanity and Society, vol 26 no 3

Janet Conway, 2003 – ‘Engendering the World Social Forum’, in McClung’s, Spring 2003

Janet Conway, 2004a – Identity, Place, Knowledge : Social Movements Contesting Globalization. Halifax : Fernwood

Janet Conway, 2004b – ‘Place Matters : India’s Challenge to Brazil at the World Social Forum’, in Antipode : A Radical Journal of Geography, vol 36 no 3, June 2004

Janet Conway, 2007a – ‘Transnational Feminisms and the World Social Forum : Encounters and Transformations in Anti-Globalization Spaces’, in Journal of International Women’s Studies, vol 8 no 3, available at : <http://www.bridgew.edu/SOAS/jiws/April07/Conway.pdf>, accessed on February 13 2008

Janet Conway, 2007b – ‘Reflections on the 3rd International Feminist Dialogues : Notes from a Newcomer’, in Journal of International Women’s Studies, vol 8 no 3, available at : <http://www.bridgew.edu/SOAS/jiws/April07/Conway1.pdf>, accessed on February 13 2008

Janet Conway, 2008 - ‘Reading Nairobi as Place, Space, and Difference’, in Sociologists without Borders, vol 3 no 1, pp 48-70

Janet Conway, October 2010 – ‘Is the Global Justice Movement Colonial ? A Troubling Tale of Indigenous Peoples at the World Social Forum’. Social Justice Studies Annual Lecture, delivered at the University of Victoria, Victoria, BC, Canada, October 21 2010. Accessed js 260511 @ <http://web.uvic.ca/socialjustice/index.htm> and <http://vimeo.com/user2364625>

Janet Conway, 2011 – ‘Cosmopolitan or Colonial ? The World Social Forum as ‘contact zone’’, in Third World Quarterly, vol 32 no 2, pp 217–236

Janet Conway, 2012 - Edges of Global Justice : The World Social Forum and its ‘Others’. London and New York : Routledge

Janet Conway, forthcoming – ‘Troubling Transnational Feminism(s) : Contesting the Future of Feminism at the World Social Forum ?’, in Pascale Dufour, Dominique Masson, and Dominique Caouette, eds, Transnationalizing Women’s Movements : Solidarities Without Borders. Vancouver : UBC Press

Marc Cooper, March 2002 – ‘From Protest To Politics’, in The Nation, March 11 2002. Accessed vr 18.04.09 @ <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20020311/cooper>

Robert A Cooper, 2002 - ‘Why we still need empires’, in Observer, April 7 2002. Accessed vr 13.04.09 @ <http://observer.guardian.co.uk/worldview/story/0,11581,680117,00.html>

Lee Cormie, 2012 - Personal communication to Jai Sen

Lee Cormie, forthcoming (2013) – ‘Re-Creating The World : Communities of Faith in The Struggles For Other Possible Worlds’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Jeff Corntassel, 2013 – ‘Rethinking Self-Determination : Lessons from the Indigenous-Rights Discourse’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013b) - Worlds of Movement, Worlds in Movement. Volume 5 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord [Provisional book title]

Jose Correia Leite, 2005 – The World Social Forum : Strategies of Resistance. Chicago : Haymarket Books

José Corrêa Leite and Carolina Gil, 2003 – Fórum Social Mundial : A história de uma invenção política [‘World Social Forum : The History of A Political Invention’, in Portuguese]. São Paulo : Editora Fundação Perseu Abramo

Sonia Correa, 2003 – ‘Abortion is a Global Political Issue’, in A DAWN Supplement for the World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, 23-28 January 2003, available at : <http://www.dawn.org.fj/global/worldsocialforum/socialforum.html>, accessed on June 30 2003, no longer available online at time of writing (September 2008)

Daily Nation, July 19 2005

Daily Nation, January 23 2007

Anila Daulatzai, December 2004 – ‘A leap of faith : Thoughts on secularistic practices and progressive politics’, in International Social Science Journal, Issue no 182, pp 565-576. Available at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/servlet/useragent?func=showIssues&code=issj&open=2004#C2004> and at http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-view_articles.php?type=Article&topic=3

Anila Daulatzai, forthcoming (2013) – ‘Believing in Exclusion : The Problem of Secularism in Progressive Politics’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Donald Davidson, 1984 – Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation. New York : Oxford University Press

Mike Davis, 2006 – Planet of Slums. London : Verso

DAWN, November 2000 – ‘World Social Forum : Changes to the Agenda’, in Dawn Informs, November 2009, p 9

DAWN, February 2001 – No title, text begins ‘DAWN’S gender-focussed perspective on development was firmly present in the planning and implementation of the First World Social Forum’, in Dawn Informs, February 2001, p 3

DAWN, 2002 – ‘Globalization and Fundamentalism : A Genderscape’, in Addressing the World Social Forum : A DAWN Supplement, available at : <http://www.dawn.org.fj/global/worldsocialforum/socialforum.html>, accessed on June 30 2003, no longer available online at time of writing (September 2008)

DAWN, nd – ‘World Social Forum’, available at : http://www.dawnnet.org/ARCHIVE/social_forum.html, accessed on June 9 2008

Emmanuel De Kadt, 1970 – Catholic Radicals in Brazil. New York : Oxford University Press

Marisol de la Cadena, 2010 – ‘Indigenous Cosmopolitics in the Andes : Conceptual Politics Beyond “Politics” ’, in Cultural Anthropology, Vol 25, Issue 2, pp 334–370

Olivier de Marcellus, 2004 – ‘Divisions and Missed Opportunities in Bombay’, posted to the pga@lists.riseup.net list on 12 February 2004

Francisco de Oliveira, November-December 2003 - ‘The Duckbilled Platypus’, in New Left Review 24, November-December 2003

Francisco de Oliveira, November-December 2006 - ‘Lula in the Labyrinth’, in New Left Review 42, November-December 2006

J-P Olivier de Sardan, 1995 – Anthropologie du développement, Essai en socio-anthropologie du changement social [‘Anthropology of development, an essay in the socio-anthropology of social change’, in French]. Paris : APAD-Karthala

Bishakha De Sarkar and Satish Nandgaonkar, February 2004 – ‘ “It is a Dirty Business But I See it as a Challenge” : Patkar – Why Medha Wants to Join Politics’, in The Telegraph (Calcutta), February 28 2004

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 1995 - Toward a New Common Sense : Law, Science and Politics in the Paradigmatic Transition. London : Routledge

Boaventura de Souza Santos, 1998 – ‘Participatory Budgeting in Porto Alegre : Toward a Redistributive Democracy’, in Politics & Society vol 26 no 4

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 2003 - ‘The World Social Forum Towards a Counter Hegemonic Globalization’, Presented at the XXIV International Congress of the Latin American Studies

Association, Dallas, March 27-29 2003. Accessed vr 20.04.09 @ <http://www.duke.edu/%7Ewmignolo/publications/pubboa.html>

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, October 2004 - 'A Critique of Lazy Reason : Against the Waste of Experience', in Immanuel Wallerstein, ed, October 2004 - The Modern World-System in the Longue Durée. Boulder : Paradigm Publishers, pp 157-197

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, December 2004 – The World Social Forum : A User's Manual, available at : http://www.ces.uc.pt/bss/documentos/fsm_eng.pdf, accessed on January 4 2005

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 2004a – 'The World Social Forum : Toward A Counter-Hegemonic Globalisation (Part 1)', in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : Viveka), pp 235-245. Available at http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html.

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 2004b – 'The WSF : Toward a Counter-Hegemonic Globalisation (Part II)', in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 - World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : The Viveka Foundation), pp 336-343; available at : http://www.choike.org/documentos/wsf_s504_sousa.pdf

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 2005a – O Forum Social Mundial : Manual de Uso ['The World Social Forum : Usage Manual', in Portuguese]. Sao Paulo : Cortez. English translation available at www.ces.uc.pt/bss/documentos/fsm_eng.pdf

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 2005b - 'Beyond Neoliberal Governance : The World Social Forum as Subaltern Politics and Legality', in Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Cesar A Rodriguez-Garavito, eds, 2005 - Law and Globalization from Below : Towards a Cosmopolitan Legality. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press. Accessed vr 16.04.09 @ <http://www.ces.uc.pt/bss/documentos/chapter2.pdf>

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 2006a – The Rise of the Global Left : The World Social Forum and Beyond. London : Zed Books

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 2006b - 'The World Social Forum : Where Do We Stand and Where Are We Going ?' in Marlies Glasius, Mary Kaldor, and Helmut Anheier, eds, Global Civil Society 2005/6 (London : Sage), pp 73-78

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, June 2007 - 'Beyond Abyssal Thinking : From Global Lines to Ecologies of Knowledges', in Review Fernand Braudel Center, vol XXX no 1, pp 45-89. Accessed js 25.10.2011 @ <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2007-06-29-santos-en.html>

Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 2012 – 'A Left of the Future : The WSF and Beyond', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, 1987 - A Thousand Plateaus : Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Trans. Brian Massumi. Minneapolis, Minn : University of Minnesota Press

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, 2002 - A Thousand Plateaus, 4th edition. London : Continuum

Demba Moussa Dembele, October 2003 - Debt and Destruction in Senegal : A Study of 20 Years of IMF and World Bank Policies. London : World Development Movement

Demba Moussa Dembele, September 2005 - 'The IMF and the World Bank in Africa : A Disastrous Record', in Pambazuka News

Demba Moussa Dembele, 2012 - 'African Social Movements and the World Social Forum', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 - World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Jacques Derrida, 1978 - Writing and difference. Chicago : The University of Chicago Press

Jacques Derrida, 1995 - Sauf le nom ['Only the Name', in French]. Stanford : Stanford University Press

Yves Dezalay and Bryant G Garth, eds, 2002 - Global Prescriptions : The Production, Exportation and Importation of a New Legal Orthodoxy. Ann Arbor : University of Michigan Press

Julia Di Giovanni, March 2004 - 'After Mumbai : World Social Forum Report', in Newsletter, vol 7 no 1, March 2004, available at : http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/bulletin_liaison/2004/2004_03/en#art3, accessed on February 22 2008

Mario Diani, 1995 - Green Networks. Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press

Martin Dieckmann, 2004 - '*Gerechtigkeit und Freiheit : Ein langer Marsch durch die Aktion*' ['Justice and freedom : A long march through the action', in German], in Die Aktion 208, available at : www.labournet.de/diskussion/arbeit/prekaer/freiheit.html

Babacar Diop et al, 2006 - Contemporary Social Movements on the World and Local Scale. Dakar, Senegal : UNRISD, with CODESRIA, Cheikh Anta Diop University (Dakar), and Gaston Berger University (Saint-Louis)

Ana Maria Doimo, 1993 - '*O 'Movimento Popular' no Brasil Pos-70 : Formação de um Campo Ético-Político*' ['Popular Movement in Brazil Post 70s : The Formation of an Ethical-Political Field', in Portuguese]. PhD dissertation, University of São Paulo

Ana Maria Doimo, 1995 - A vez ea voz do popular : movimentos sociais e participação política no Brasil pós-70 ['A time for the popular voice : Social movements and political participation in Brazil post 70s', in Portuguese]. Rio de Janeiro : Relume-Dumará/ANPOCS

Fiona Donson, Graeme Chesters, Ian Welsh and Andrew Tickle, 2004 - 'Rebels with a Cause, Folk Devils without a Panic : Press Jingoism, Policing Tactics and Anti-Capitalist Protest in London and Prague', in Internet Journal of Criminology. Accessed vr 20.04.09 @ <http://www.internetjournalofcriminology.com/Donson%20et%20al%20-%20Folkdevils.pdf>

Emma Dowling, 2005 - 'The Ethics of Engagement Revisited : Remembering the ESF 2004', in ephemera, theory & politics in organization, Vol 5, No 2, pp 205-215; <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-2/5-2dowling.pdf>, accessed js 07.11.07

Emma Dowling, interviewed by Rebecca Shah, 2009 – ‘The World Social Forum, beyond Critique and Deconstruction’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2009 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires, revised and updated second edition. Montréal : Black Rose Books

André C Drainville, 2012 – A History of World Order and Resistance : The making and unmaking of global subjects. London and New York : Routledge

André C Drainville, forthcoming (2013) – ‘Beyond Altermondialisme : Anti-Capitalist Dialectic of Presence’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2013a – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Janice Duddy, 2004a – ‘4th World Social Forum : Interview with Carol Barton’, available at : <http://www.awid.org/go.php?list=analysis&prefix=msg&item=00158>, accessed on February 13 2008

Janice Duddy, 2004b – ‘What were the experiences of AWID staff at the WSF ?’, in Resource Net Friday File, issue 165, available at : <http://www.awid.org/go.php?list=analysis&prefix=msg&item=00167>, accessed on February 13 2008

Kevin Dunn, 2004 - ‘Africa’s Ambiguous Relation to Empire and *Empire*’, in Paul Passavant and Jodi Dean, eds, 2004 - Empire’s New Clothes : Reading Hardt and Negri. London and New York : Routledge

Enrique Dussel, 2002 – ‘Beyond Ethnocentrism : The World System and the Limits of Modernity’, in Hwa Yol Jung, ed, 2002 - Comparative Political Culture in the Age of Globalization (Lanham MD : Lexington Books)

Gwynne Dyer, 2010 – Climate Wars : The Fight for Survival as the World Overheats. Oxford, UK : Oneworld Publications

Barbara Epstein, 2001 – ‘Anarchism and the anti-globalization movement’, in Monthly Review, vol 53 no 4, pp 1-14

Catherine Eschle, 2004 – ‘Feminist Studies of Globalisation : Beyond Gender, Beyond Economism ?’, in Global Society, vol 18 no 2, pp 97-125

Catherine Eschle, 2005a – ‘ “Skeleton Women” : Feminism and the Antiglobalization Movement’, in Signs : Journal of Women in Culture and Society, vol 30 no 3, pp 1741-1770

Catherine Eschle, 2005b – ‘Constructing “the Anti-Globalisation Movement”’, in Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca, eds, 2005 - Critical Theories, International Relations and ‘the Anti-Globalisation Movement’ (London : Routledge)

Catherine Eschle and Bice Maiguashca, 2012 – ‘ ‘Skeleton Women’ at the World Social Forum : Feminist Struggles for Visibility, Voice, and Influence, 2001-5’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Arturo Escobar, 2001 – 'Culture Sits in Places : Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localisation', in Political Geography, vol 20

Arturo Escobar, February 2004 – 'Beyond the Third World : Imperial Globality, Global Coloniality and Anti-Globalisation Social Movements', Third World Quarterly, vol 25 no 1

Arturo Escobar, 2004 - 'Other Worlds Are (Already) Possible : Self-Organisation, Complexity, and Post-Capitalist Cultures' in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : Viveka), pp 349-358. Available at http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html and @ <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=WSFChallengingEmpires2004>

Arturo Escobar, 2008 - Territories of Difference. Durham, NC : Duke University Press

Gøsta Esping-Andersen, 1991 – The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism. Princeton : Princeton University Press

Fernanda Estima, February 2003 – 'The World March of Women at the World Social Forum 2003', in Newsletter, vol 6 no 1, available at : http://www.worldmarchofwomen.org/bulletin_liaison/2003/2003_02/en#c, accessed on February 22 2008

European Social Forum (ESF), 2004 – 'Programme of Events and Meetings at the London ESF', available at : [http://www.ukesf.net/en/esf.shtml?conds\[0\]\[category.....1\]=Programme+of+ESF+2004&als\[SECTION\]=Programme+of+ESF+2004](http://www.ukesf.net/en/esf.shtml?conds[0][category.....1]=Programme+of+ESF+2004&als[SECTION]=Programme+of+ESF+2004), accessed on February 13 2008

Peter Evans, 2000 - 'Fighting Marginalisation with Transnational Networks : Counter-Hegemonic Globalisation', in Current Sociology, vol 29, pp 230-241

Frantz Fanon, 1965 – The Wretched of the Earth. New York : Grove Press

Linden Farrer, 2002 – 'World Forum Movement : Abandon or Contaminate', www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/wsf/worldforum.htm, accessed on April 13 2005

Linden Farrer, 2004 – 'World Forum Movement : Abandon or Contaminate', in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : Viveka), pp 168-177. Available @ http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html and @ <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=WSFChallengingEmpires2004>

David Featherstone, 2012 – Solidarity : Hidden Histories and Geographies of Internationalism. London : Zed

Feminist Dialogues, 2007 – Feminist Dialogues Home Page, available at : <http://feministdialogues.isiswomen.org>, accessed on February 22 2008

James Ferguson, 2006 – Global Shadows. Durham : Duke University Press

Niall Ferguson, 2004 – Empire : How Britain Made the World. New York : Basic Books

Niall Ferguson, 2005 – Colossus : The Rise and Fall of the American Empire. New York : Basic Books

Sergio Ferrari, January 2007 – '*Concluye el Foro Social Mundial de Nairobi*' ['The Nairobi World Social Forum Concludes', in Spanish] in ALAI América Latina, January 26 2007

William F Fisher and Thomas Ponniah, eds, 2003 - Another World Is Possible : Popular Alternatives to Globalization at the World Social Forum. London : Zed Books

Lucio Flávio de Almeida and Félix Ruiz Sánchez, 2000 – 'The Landless Workers' Movement and Social Struggles against Neoliberalism', in Latin American Perspectives vol 27 no 5, pp 11-32

Bill Fletcher, Jr, July 2010 - 'The US Social Forum : The Anti-Tea Party Experience - The African World', in The Black Commentator, Issue 382, July 1 2010, @ http://www.blackcommentator.com/382/382_aw_anti_tea_party_printer_friendly.html, accessed js 12.10.2012

Kim Foltz and Suren Moodliar – 'The Future of the World Social Forum Process : Modest Reforms Needed', in ZMagazine / ZNet, available at : http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/wsf/portoalegre2005/0205future_wsf.htm, accessed on March 8 2005

Mary Margaret Fonow, 2006 – Email to the author

Foro Social Alternativo - Alternative Social Forum, October 2005 – 'Alternative Social Forum - Caracas, January 2006'. Tuesday, Oct 18 2005, 8:13pm, fsa@contrapoder.org.ve. On http://www.anarkismo.net/newswire.php?story_id=1532

Forum for Another Mali, World Forum for Alternatives, Third World Forum, ENDA (Senegal), and ors, January 2006 - 'The Bamako Appeal', January 18 2006. Text as circulated by Samir Amin, President of the World Forum for Alternatives. Available for signing @ <http://thirdworldforum.net/fren/index.htm>, and otherwise @ http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=66, <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/bamako.html>, <http://deletetheborder.org/node/698>. Also available as Section 7.1 in Jai Sen and Madhuresh Kumar, eds, with Patrick Bond and Peter Waterman, 2007 – A Political Programme for the World Social Forum ? Democracy, Substance, and Debate in the Bamako Appeal and the Global Justice Movements - A Reader, New Delhi : Critical Action : Centre in Movement (CACIM), and Durban : University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society (CCS), available on www.cacim.net and www.nu.ac.za/ccs

Fórum Social Mundial, 2003 – '*Coleção Fórum Social Mundial 2003*' ['World Social Forum Collection', in Portuguese], CD-Rom. Secretaria Internacional do Fórum Social Mundial 2003 / WSF 2003 International Secretariat

John W Foster and Anita Anand, eds, 1999 - Whose World is it Anyway ? Civil Society, the United Nations, and the multilateral future. Ottawa : United Nations Association in Canada

Michel Foucault, 1980 – Power / Knowledge. New York : Pantheon

Michel Foucault, 1998 – The History of Sexuality, Volume 1 : The Will to Knowledge. London :

Penguin

Michel Foucault, 1999 – 'Space, Power and Knowledge', in Simon During, ed, The Cultural Studies Reader, London and New York : Routledge

Michel Foucault, 2008 – 'The Birth Of Biopolitics'. Lectures at The College de France 1978-1979

Gigi Francisco, 2001 – 'Women Make their Mark at the World Social Forum', in Dawn Informs, February, pp 1-3

Nancy Fraser, 1992 - 'Rethinking the Public Sphere', in Craig Calhoun, ed - Habermas and the Public Sphere (Cambridge, Mass : MIT Press), pp 109-142

Nancy Fraser, May-June 1997 – 'A Rejoinder to Iris Young', in New Left Review vol I no 223, May-June 1997

Nancy Fraser, 1997 – Justice Interruptus : Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition. New York and London : Routledge

Jo Freeman, 1970 – 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness',
<http://www.bopsecrets.org/CF/structurelessness.htm>, accessed on April 13 2005

Jonathan Friedman, 1999 – 'Indigenous Struggles and the Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie', in Journal of World-Systems Research, vol V no 2

Thomas Friedman, 2003 - The Lexus and the Olive Tree : Understanding Globalization, cited in Notes From Nowhere, eds, 2003 - We are Everywhere : The Irresistible Rise of Global anti-Capitalism. London / New York : Verso, p 500. Online version at
<http://artactivism.members.gn.apc.org/stories.htm>, accessed ea 20.08.09,

Maxine Frith, 2005 – 'Celebrities "Hijacked" Poverty Campaign, say Furious Charities', in The Independent, 27 December

Francis Fukayama, 1992 - The End of History and the Last Man. London : Hamish Hamilton

Francis Fukuyama, 1996 - Trust : The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity. New York : Free Press

Vicente García-Delgado, 2005 – 'The Big Letdown : UN Summit Shortchanges the Poor', CIVICUS statement, New York, September 16 2005

Álvaro García Linera, 2004 – *La sublevación indígena popular en Bolivia* ('The indigenous and popular uprising in Bolivia', in Spanish), Chiapas, no 16. México : Instituto de Investigaciones Economicas, UNAM

Ernest Gellner, 1996 – Anthropology and Politics : Revolution in the Sacred Grove. Blackwell Publishers

Corinna Genschel, 2012 – 'Are Social Forums an Opportunity for Renewing Emancipative Gender Politics ? A Feminist Account of the Local Organisation of Social Forums', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the

Challenging Empires series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Susan George, 2004 - Another world is possible, IF.... London : Verso

Susan George, 2006 - 'A New Beginning for Attac France', Transnational Institute, December 28 2006

Luther P Gerlach and Virginia H Hine, 1970 – People Power, Change : Movements of Social Transformation. Indianapolis : Bobbs-Merrill

Kleber Bertrand Ghimire, October 2005 – 'The Contemporary Global Social Movements : Emergent Proposals, Connectivity and Development Implications', Paper 19 at United Nations Research Institute for Social Development Civil Society and Social Movements Programme, Geneva

Jeremy Gilbert, 2005 – 'The Forum and the Market : The Complexity of the Social and the Struggle for Democracy, in ephemera, theory & politics in organisation, Vol 5, No 2; www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-2/5-2gilbert.pdf

Stephen Gill, 2000 – 'Towards a postmodern Prince ? The battle in Seattle as a moment in the history of globalisation', in Millennium, vol 29 no 1

Marlies Glasius and Jill Timms, 2005 – 'The Role of Social Forums in Global Civil Society : Radical Beacon or strategic infrastructure ?', in Helmut Anheier, Mary Kaldor, and Marlies Glasius, eds, 2005-06 – Global Civil Society (London : Sage)

Marlies Glasius, Mary Kaldor, and Helmut Anheier, eds, 2006 - Global Civil Society 2005/6. London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi : Sage.
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/yearbook05.htm>

Lucien Goldmann, 1966 - Sciences Humaines et Philosophie. Suivi de structuralisme génétique et création littéraire ['Human Sciences and Philosophy. Monitoring Genetic Structuralism and Literary Creation', in French]. Paris : Gonthier

Lucien Goldmann, 1970 - Structures Mentales et Creation Culturelle ['Mental Structures and Cultural Creation', in French]. Paris : 10/18 Union Générale d'Editions

Luiz Alberto Gómez de Souza, 2001 – 'Lições do Fórum Social Mundial 2001' ('Lessons of the 2001 WSF', in Portuguese), in Fórum Social Mundial : Como é possível um outro mundo ('World Social Forum : How another world is possible', in Portuguese). Cultura Vozes : Petrópolis

Alex Gordon (RMT), Hannah Griffith (Friends of the Earth), Jonathan Neale (Globalise Resistance), Anna T (Crossroads Women's Centre), Dave Timms (World Development Movement), and Hilary Wainwright (Red Pepper), January 2004 – Letter of invitation to the European Social Forum to be held in London, UK, from the European Social Forum Programme Group, dated January 16 2004

Amanda Gouws, April 2007 - 'Ways of Being : Feminist Activism and Theorizing at the Global Feminist Dialogues in Porte Alegre, Brazil, 2005', in Journal of International Women's Studies Vol 8 no 3, April 2007

David Graeber, 2002 - 'The New Anarchists,' in New Left Review, vol 13

Antonio Gramsci, December 1929 - Letter from Prison, December 19 1929; see http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Antonio_Gramsci

Antonio Gramsci, 1971 – Selections from the Prison Notebook, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. London : Lawrence and Wishart, and New York : International Publishers

Mark S Granovetter, 1973 - 'The Strength of Weak Ties', in American Journal of Sociology, vol 78 no 6, pp 1360-1380

Duncan Green and Matthew Griffith, 2002 – 'Globalization and its discontents', in International Affairs, vol 78 no 1, pp 49-68

Peter Grottian, Wolf-Dieter Narr, and Roland Roth, 2003 – '*Alternativen zur Repressanda 2010*' ['Alternatives to Repressanda 2010', in German], available at : www.socialforum-berlin.de

Group of Nineteen, February 2005 – 'Porto Alegre Manifesto', dated February 20 2005. Available in The Los Angeles Independent Media Center @ <http://la.indymedia.org/news/2005/03/123579.php>, accessed AW on January 28 2008; and js 04.10.06 @ http://www.zmag.org/sustainers/content/2005-02/20group_of_nineteen.cfm. Also accessible @ the Choike portal : http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/2622.html

Andrej Grubacic, 2003 – 'Life After Social Forums', on Znet. Accessed vr 20.04.09 @ <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=41&ItemID=3010>

Cândido Grzybowski, May 2002 – 'Is a More Feminine World Possible ?', in Dawn Informs, May 2002, p 19

Cândido Grzybowski, 2003 - '*Olhar Atento Sobre o Forum*' ('Watchful eye on the Forum', in Portuguese) Earlier available at http://www.novae.inf.br/fsm2004/olhar_atento.htm; now available at <http://www.ibase.br/pubibase>

Michael Leon Guerrero, 2008 - 'The US Social Forum', in Societies without Borders, vol 3 no 1, pp 168-186

Michael Leon Guerrero, 2012 – 'The Second US Social Forum : What Did We Accomplish ?', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Michael Leon Guerrero, Tammy Bang Luu, and Cindy Wiesner, 2009 – 'The Road to Atlanta', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2009 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (revised and updated second edition, Montréal : Black Rose Books), pp 315-331

Ranajit Guha, 1988 – 'The Prose of Counterinsurgency' in R Guha and G Spivak, eds, 1988 - Selected Subaltern Studies (Delhi : Oxford University Press)

Stephanie Guilloud, 2009 - The First US Social Forum : Report from the Anchor Organization. In collaboration with the Executive Leadership Team of Project South

Jurgen Habermas, 1987 - The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press

Jurgen Habermas, 1990 - Die Moderne, ein unvollendetes Projekt : philosophisch-politische Aufsätze ['Modernity, an unfinished project : Philosophical-Political Treatises', in German]. Leipzig : Reclam

Sandra Halperin and Gordon Laxer, 2003 - 'Effective Resistance to Corporate Globalization', in Gordon Laxer and Sandra Halperin and Gordon Laxer, eds, 2003 - Global Civil Society and its Limits, pp 1-21

Christina Haralanova, 2005 - 'Is there an Equal Space for Women's Rights Discussions at the Forum ?', in Les Penelopes, available at : http://www.penelopes.org/Anglais/article.php3?id_article=1213, accessed on February 22 2008

Michael Hardt, March 2002 - 'Today's Bandung', in New Left Review, Vol 14, pp 112-118. Circulated in July 2002 as 'Porto Alegre : Today's Bandung ?', from Worker_a-infos-en@ainfos.ca dt July 30 2002 11:23:57 -0400 (EDT). Also in the World Social Forum WSF2002 Assessments, <http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/eng/>

Michael Hardt, 2002 - 'Porto Alegre : Today's Bandung ?', available at : http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic/eng_b_Michael_Hardt.php, accessed on February 22 2008

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, 2000 - Empire. Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, 2004 - Multitude. Cambridge, MA : Harvard University Press

Chris Harman, Autumn 2000 - 'Anti-Capitalism : Theory and Practice', in International Socialism 88

Simon Harrison, 2003 - 'Cultural difference as denied resemblance : Reconsidering nationalism and ethnicity', in Comparative Studies in Society and History vol 45. Cambridge, UK : Cambridge University Press

Dieter Hartmann, February 20 2004 - 'Produktives Missverständnis : Eine Zwischenbilanz der Berliner Sozialforumsinitiative' ['Productive misunderstanding : Interim results of the Berlin Social Forum Initiative', in German], in zeitung für linke debatte und praxis ['newspaper for left debate and practice', in German], vol 481

Heidi Hartmann, 1979 - 'The unhappy marriage of Marxism and Feminism : Towards a more progressive union', in Capital and Class, vol 8, pp 1-33

David Harvey, 1989 - The Condition of Postmodernity : An Inquiry Into the Origins of Cultural Change. Oxford : Blackwell

David Harvey, 1996 - Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Difference. Oxford, UK, and Malden, MA : Blackwell

David Harvey, 2003 - The New Imperialism. Oxford : Oxford University Press

Paul Hawken, 2000 – ‘Skeleton Woman Visits Seattle’, in Kevin Danaher and Roger Burbach, eds, Globalize This ! (Monroe, Maine : Common Courage Press), pp 14-34

Martin Heidegger, 1968 - What is called thinking ? Translated by F Wieck and J G Gray. New York : Harper

Andrew Herod, 1997 – ‘Labor’s Spatial Praxis and the Geography of Contract Bargaining in the US East Coast Longshore Industry, 1953–89’, in Political Geography, vol 16 no 2

Noreena Hertz, December 2005 – ‘We Achieved Next to Nothing’, in New Statesman, December 12 2005

Christopher Hill, 1984 [1972] - The World Turned Upside Down : Radical Ideas During the English Revolution. London : Penguin

Franz Hinkelammert, 2002 - Crítica de la Razón Utópica [‘Critique of Utopian Reason’, in Spanish]. Bilbao : Desclée de Brouwer

Joachim Hirsch, and Heinz Steinert, 2003 – ‘*Gibt es Alternativen zum neoliberalen Sozialumbau ? Umrisse eines Konzepts von Sozialpolitik als Infrastruktur*’ [‘Are there alternatives to the neo-liberal social reconstruction ? Outlines of a concept of social policy as infrastructure’, in German], available at : www.links-netz.de

Dieuwertje Hiujg, 2003a – ‘Porto Alegre 26th of January 2003’, in Daily Impressions from Porto Alegre, available at : <http://www.nextgeneration.net/projects/alterglobalisation/wsf2003/report3.html>, accessed on February 22 2008

Dieuwertje Hiujg, 2003b – ‘Porto Alegre 27th of January 2003’, in Daily Impressions from Porto Alegre, available at : <http://www.nextgeneration.net/projects/alterglobalisation/wsf2003/report4.html>, accessed on February 22 2008

Kathryn Hochstetler, Ann Marie Clark, and Elisabeth J Friedman, 2000 – ‘Sovereignty in the Balance : Claims and Bargains at the UN Conferences on the Environment, Human Rights, and Women’, in International Studies Quarterly vol 44 no 4, pp 591-614

Stuart Hodgkinson, October 2005 – ‘G8, Africa nil’, in Red Pepper, October 27 2005

Stuart Hodgkinson and Laura L Sullivan, 2004 - ‘Transgressions of Process from 6/7 March Assembly Until Now’, April 16 2004; the (obsolete by 2005) URL was <http://www.esf2004.net/wakka/EvidenceLogTwo>

John Holloway, 2002 - Change the World without Taking the Power : The Meaning of Revolution Today. London : Pluto Press

John Holloway, 2005 [2002] – Change the World Without Taking Power. London : Pluto Press

John Holloway and Elvoína Pela’ez, eds, 1998 – Zapatista ! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico. London : Pluto

Gerardo Honty, nd – ‘*Las lecciones de Mumbai*’ (“The Lessons of Mumbai”, in Spanish). Text circulated by the author

The Horizontals, February 2004a - ‘Log of Evidence’. First draft of document prepared at the meeting of The Horizontals, February 7 2004. Accessed js on 29.11.2010 @ <http://web.archive.org/web/20040803225756/http://www.esf2004.net/wakka/EvidenceLog>

The Horizontals, February 2004b - ‘A Call for Democracy in the ESF Process, 26/02/2004’. Originally accessible at <http://esf2004.net/en/tiki-index.php?page=CallForDemocracy>; now archived on the ‘Democratise the ESF’ email list, https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/democratise_the_esf; also available 06.12.2010 @ http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-download_file.php?fileId=203

The Horizontals, 2004 – ‘The Horizontals Come To Town : Who are we and what kind of ESF process do we want ?. The Horizontals’ Statement’. Originally accessible at <http://esf2004.net/en/tiki-index.php?page=HorizontalsStatement>; now archived on the ‘Democratise the ESF’ email list, https://lists.riseup.net/www/info/democratise_the_esf; accessed js 24.12.2010 @ http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-list_file_gallery.php?galleryId=25

François Houtart, 2007 – ‘The World Social Forum in Nairobi’. Mimeograph

François Houtart, forthcoming (2013) – ‘Mahmoud Mohamed Taha, Islamic witness in the contemporary world’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

François Houtart and François Polet, eds, 2001 - The Other Davos : The Globalization of Resistance to the World Economic System. London : Zed

Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, 2001 – Civil Society and Development : A Critical Exploration. London : Lynne Rienner

L'Humanité, January 21 2007

L'Humanité, January 26 2007

IBASE (Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses), 2005 – ‘An X-Ray of Participation in the 2005 Forum : Elements for Debate’, Rio de Janeiro : IBASE, available at : http://www.ibase.org.br/userimages/relatorio_fsm2005_INGLES2.pdf, accessed on February 13 2008

INCITE ! Women of Color Against Violence, eds, April 2007 - The Revolution Will Not Be Funded : Beyond The Non-Profit Industrial Complex !. Boston : South End Press

Initiative für ein Berliner Sozialforum (‘Project for a Berlin Social Forum, in German), 2003a – ‘*Leitlinien für Zusammenarbeit*’ [‘Guidelines for Cooperation’, in German], available at : www.socialforum-berlin.de

Initiative für ein Berliner Sozialforum (‘Project for a Berlin Social Forum, in German), 2003b –

'Was ist das SFB : Raum oder Bewegung ?' ['What is the BSF : Space or movement ?', in German], available at : www.socialforum-berlin.de

International League for People's Struggles (ILPS), World People's Resistance Movement (WPRM), South Asia, Anti-Imperialist Camp (Austria), Bayan (Philippines), Confederation of Turkish Workers in Europe (ATIK), and others, September 2003 – 'Introducing MR-2004 : Mumbai Resistance-2004 - Against Imperialist Globalisation & War'. September 5 2003. Available at <http://andorra.indymedia.org/new/2003/11/698.php>

Intercontinental Youth Camp Organising Committee, January 2003 – 'Call-out for the 3rd Intercontinental Youth Camp, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 18-29 January 2003', in Intercontinental Youth Camp Organizing Committee, 2003 - [Camper's Guide to the Third Intercontinental Youth Camp](#), pp 9-10. Translated from the original Portuguese by Rodrigo Nunes, 2010. Posted ss 07.11 @ http://openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-download_file.php?fileId=210 (IYCOC.jan2003.callout.pdf)

Intercontinental Youth Camp Organising Committee, nd, c.May 2004 – 'Intercontinental Youth Camp : A history, a concept'. Note presented at a meeting with the International Council, the Executive Secretariat, and the 5th WSF Organising Committee, Porto Alegre, May 21-23 2004. Translated from the original Portuguese by Rodrigo Nunes, 2010. Posted ss 07.11 @ http://openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-download_file.php?fileId=211 (IYCOC.may2004.history.concept.pdf)

Humiera Iqtidar, February 15 2004 – 'NGO Factor At WSF Worries Activists', in [ZNet](#), available at : http://www.zmag.org/content/print_article.cfm?itemID=4989§ionID=1, accessed on January 23 2008

Micheline Ishay, 1995 - [Internationalism and its Betrayal](#). Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press

Isis Women, 2005 – 'Feminist Dialogues 2005 Focus on Militarism, Fundamentalism and Globalisation', on [Isis](#), available at : <http://www.isiswomen.org/pub/we/archive/msg00202.html#fd>, accessed on July 6 2005

Jane Jacobs, 1961 – [The Death and Life of Great American Cities](#). New York : Vintage

Jane Jenson and Boaventura de Sousa Santos, 2000 - [Globalizing Institutions : Case Studies in Regulation and Innovation](#). Aldershot, UK : Ashgate

Steven Johnson, 2002 – [Emergence : The Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities, and Software](#). Touchstone Books. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, and Singapore : Simon Schuster

Katherine Jones, 1998 – 'Scale as Epistemology', in [Political Geography](#), vol 17

Journal on International Women's Studies, April 2007 – [Women's Bodies Gender Analysis, Feminist Politics at the Forum Social Mundial](#), vol 8 no 3, available at : www.bridgew.eduSoAS/jiws/April07

Jeffrey S Juris, 2004a – 'Networked Social Movements : Global Movements for Global Justice', in Manuel Castells, ed, 2004 - [The Network Society : A Cross-Cultural Perspective](#) (London :

Edward Elgar), pp 341-362

Jeffrey S Juris, 2004b – 'Digital Age Activism : Anti-Corporate Globalization and the Cultural Politics of Transnational Networking'. Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of California, Berkeley

Jeffrey S Juris, 2005b – 'Social Forums and Their Margins : Networking Logics and the Cultural Politics of Autonomous Space', in Ephemera, special edition on the World Social Forum, Vol 5 no 2, pp 253-272; Steffen Boehm, Sian Sullivan, and Oscar Reyes, eds; accessed @ <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-2/5-2juris.pdf>

Jeffrey S Juris, 2005c – 'The New Digital Media and Activist Networking within Anti-Corporate Globalization Movements', in Eric Klinenberg, ed, 2005 - 'Cultural Production in a Digital Age', The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Special Edition, pp 189-208

Jeffrey S Juris, 2008a - 'Spaces of Intentionality', in Mobilization, vol 13 no 4 pp 353-371

Jeffrey S Juris, 2008b - Networking Futures. Durham NC : Duke University Press

Jeffrey S Juris, 2012a – 'Social Forums and Their Margins : Networking Logics and the Cultural Politics of Autonomous Space', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Jeffrey S Juris, 2012b – 'Opening Spaces at the US Social Forum', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Jeffrey S Juris and Geoffrey Pleyers, forthcoming (2013) – 'Incorporating Youth or Transforming Politics ? Alter-Activism as an Emerging Mode of Praxis among Young Global Justice Activists', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Nancy Kachingwe, 2007 – 'WSF007 ? Loved It !!!', in African Agenda, vol 10 no 1

Fouad Kalouche and Eric Mielants, 2008 – 'Transformations of the World-System and Antisystemic Movements : 1968-2005', Chapter 4 in William G Martin and ors, eds, 2008 - Making Waves : Worldwide Social Movements, 1750-2005, pp 128-167. Boulder, CO : Paradigm Books

Fouad Kalouche and Eric Mielants, forthcoming (2013) – 'Antisystemic Movements and Transformations of the World-System, 1968–1989', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Deniz Kandiyoti, 1991 – Women, Islam and the State. Philadelphia : Temple University Press

Bruce Kapferer, 1973 – 'Social Network and Conjugal Role in Urban Zambia', in Jeremy Boissevain and J Clyde Mitchell, eds, Network Analysis (The Hague : Mouton), pp 83-

Maria Karadenizli, Bénédicte Allaert, and Carmen de la Cruz, 2003 – “‘Another World is Possible... It’s on HER Way!’”. A WIDE Report on the World Social Forum’, available at : <http://www.trra.ca/library/edocuments?id=%7bB4A55011-BC28-47E5-99B6-6950C4CF1694%7d>, accessed on June 9 2008

L A Kaufman, 2002 – ‘A short history of radical renewal’, in Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk, eds, 2003 - From Act Up to the WTO : Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization (New York : Verso)

John Keane, 2001 – ‘Global Civil Society ?’, in Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius, and Mary Kaldor, eds, 2001 - Global Civil Society 2001, pp 28-47. Accessed js 09.10.09 @ <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/yearbook01chapters.htm#part1>

John Keane, 2003 - Global Civil Society ?. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press

Margaret Keck, 1992 – The Workers’ Party and Democratization in Brazil. New Haven, CT : Yale University Press

Margaret E Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, 1998 - Activists Beyond Borders : Advocacy Networks in International Politics. Ithaca : Cornell University Press

Philip F Kelly, 1999 – ‘The Geographies and Politics of Globalisation’, in Progress in Human Geography, vol 23 no 3

kenya indymedia, 2007 – ‘WSF 2007 Assembly of Social Movements’, available at : <http://kenya.indymedia.org/news/2007/01/531.php>

Chloé Keraghel and Jai Sen, Editorial Advisers, December 2004 – ‘Explorations in Open Space : The World Social Forum and Cultures of Politics’, Issue no 182 of the International Social Science Journal. Full content of issue available at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/servlet/useragent?func=showIssues&code=issj&open=2004#C2004> and at http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=15

Sanjeev Khagram, James V Riker, and Kathryn Sikkink, eds, 2002 – Restructuring World Politics : Transnational Social Movements, Networks, and Norms. Minnesota : University of Minnesota Press

Aamir Khan, 2010 – Peepli Live, @ www.peeplilivethefilm.com

Taran N Khan, 2004 – ‘Trio’, in International Social Science Journal, vol 56 no 182

Taran N Khan, 2012 – ‘Trio’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord Books

Alex Khasnabish, forthcoming (2013) – ‘Forward Dreaming : Zapatismo and the Radical Imagination’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New

Delhi : OpenWord

Jamie King, 2004 – 'The Packet Gang', in Metamute 27, <http://info.interactivist.net/article.pl?sid= 04/01/30/1158224&mode=nested&tid=9>, accessed jj on April 13 2005

Naomi Klein, 2000a – 'Does Protest Need a Vision ?', in New Statesman, July 3 2000

Naomi Klein, 2000b – 'The Vision Thing', in The Nation, July 10 2000

Naomi Klein, March 2001 - 'A Fete for the End of the End of History', in The Nation (New York), March 19. Available @ <http://www.thenation.com/docPrint.mhtml?l=20010319&s=klein> (accessed js 16.09.2011) and @ <http://nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/wsf/fete.htm> (accessed on February 13 2008)

Naomi Klein, January 2003 – 'The Hijacking of the WSF', <http://www.nologo.org>

Naomi Klein, 2003a - 'More Democracy – Not More Political Strongmen', in Znet. Accessed vr 20.04.09 @ <http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=41&ItemID=2946>

Naomi Klein, 2003b – 'More Democracy – Not More Political Strongmen', in The Guardian, February 3, available at : http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic.php?pagina=balanco_klein_2003in, accessed on February 22 2008

Barbara Klugman, April 2007 – 'Parallel or Integrated 'Other Worlds' : Possibilities for Alliance-building for Sexual and Reproductive Rights', in Journal of International Women's Studies Vol 8 no 3, April 2007; accessed js 06.12.2010 @ <http://www.iiav.nl/eazines/web/JournalofInternationalWomensStudies/2007/April/bridgew/index.htm>

Sara Koopman, 2007 – 'A Liberatory Space ? Rumors of Rapes at the 5th World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, 2005', in Journal of International Women's Studies, vol 8 no 3, available at : <http://www.bridgew.edu/SOAS/jiws/April07/Koopman.pdf>, accessed on February 13 2008

Stathis Kouvelakis, Autumn 2005 - 'France : The Triumph of the Political', in International Socialism 108

Ernesto Laclau, 1979 - Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory. London : Verso

Leilah Landim, 1993 – '*A invenção das ONGs : Do serviço invisível à profissão sem nome*' ['The invention of NGOs : The invisible service to the profession with no name', in Portuguese]. PhD dissertation, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Antropologia Social, Universidade Rio de Janeiro : Museu Nacional

Sabine Lang, 2001 – '*Reprivatisierungen im neoliberalen Geschlechterregime*' ['Privatizations in the neoliberal regime of gender', in German], in femina politica 2/2001, pp 91-104

Aurelie Latoures, 2007 – 'Gender in the Bamako Polycentric World Social Forum (2006) : Is another World Possible', in Journal of International Women's Studies, vol 8 no 3, available at :

<http://www.bridgew.edu/SoAS/JIWS/April07/Latoures.pdf>, accessed on February 13 2008

David Lehmann, 1992 – Democracy and Development in Latin America : Economics, Politics and Religion in the Post-War Period. Philadelphia : Temple University Press

Jose Correa Leite, 2005 - World Social Forum : Strategies of Resistance. Chicago, IL : Haymarket Books

Vladimir Lenin 1964 [1920] – ‘Left-Wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder’, in V I Lenin, 1964 - Collected Works, Volume 31, pp 17-118 (Moscow : Progress Publishers)

Irene León, 2006 — La Otra América en Debate : Aportes del I Foro Social Américas [‘The Other America Debate : Contributions from the Americas Social Forum I’, in Spanish]. Quito : Consejo Hemisférico del Foro Social Américas

Irene León, ed, 2002 — Retos feministas en un mundo globalizado : Foro Social Mundial, Porto Alegre, 2002 [‘Feminist challenges in a globalized world : World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, 2002’, in Spanish]. Quito : Agencia Latinoamericana de Información

Michael Lerner, 2000 - Spirit Matters. Hampton Roads : Walsch Books

Les Levidow, December 2004 – ‘Making a new world possible ? The European Social Forum’, in Radical Philosophy, November/December 2004, accessible 16.12.2010 @ http://www.radicalphilosophy.com/default.asp?channel_id=2187&editorial_id=16577

Charmain Levy, 2000 – ‘*Foi et Politique : La relation entre les Communauté Ecclesiales de Base et le Mouvement Populaire Urbain dans la Ville de Sao Paulo entre 1985 et 1995*’ (‘Faith and Politics : The relation between the Christian Base Communities and the Urban Popular Movement in the city of Sao Paulo between 1985-1995’, in French). PhD dissertation, University of Paris VIII

Charmain Levy, 2009 – ‘*Influência e contribuição : a igreja católica progressista brasileira e o fórum social mundial*’ [‘Influence and contribution : The Brazilian Progressive Church and the World Social Forum’, in Religião & Sociedade, vol 29 no 2, 2009 (Rio de Janeiro); accessed js 24.11.2011 @ http://www.scielo.br/scielo.php?pid=S0100-85872009000200009&script=sci_arttext

Charmain Levy, 2012 – ‘Influence and Contribution : Liberation Theology, the Progressive Church in Brazil, and the World Social Forum’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Xochitl Leyva Solano, forthcoming (2013) – ‘Geopolitics of Knowledge and the Neo-Zapatista Social Movement Networks’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Xochitl Leyva Solano and Christopher Gunderson, forthcoming (2013) - ‘The Tapestry of Neo-Zapatismo : Origins and Development’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming

(2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Joao Batista Libânio, 1987 – Teologia da Libertação ['Liberation Theology', in Portuguese]. São Paulo : Loyola

Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, 2000 - The Many-Headed Hydra : Sailors, Slaves, Commoners, and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic. Boston : Beacon

Ronnie D Lipschutz, Winter 1992 - 'Reconstructing World Politics : The Emergence of Global Civil Society', in Millennium - Journal of International Studies, vol 21, pp 389-420

Rolando Lopez, Theo van Koolwijk, and Nandita Shah, 2006 - 'World Social Forum Financial Strategy : Report and Recommendations', <http://www.wsflibrary.org/images/7/79/WSF-FinancialStrategyReport.pdf>

Isabel Loureiro, José Corrêa Leite, and Maria Elisa Cevalco, eds, 2002 – O espírito de Porto Alegre ['The spirit of Porto Alegre', in Portuguese]. São Paulo : Paz e Terra

Roberto Lovato (New America Media), April 2010 – 'Planeta o Muerte — Evo Morales and the Revolutionary Politics of Mother Earth', on Wednesday 21 April 2010 @ <http://envivo.cmpcc.org.bo/Planeta-o-Muerte-Evo-Morales-and>

James Lovelock, 2000 – Gaia : A New Look at Life on Earth. Oxford : Oxford University Press

Geert Lovink, 2002 – Dark Fiber. Cambridge, Mass : MIT Press

Michael Löwy, 1996 – The War of Gods. New York : Verso

Michael Löwy, 2006 – '*Les penseurs de l'altermondialisme : la théologie de la liberation : Leonardo Boff et Frei Betto*' ('The thinkers of alterglobalisation : Liberation theology : Leonardo Boff and Frei Betto', in French), in Chiara Bonfigliani and Sebastien Budgen, eds, 2006 – La planète altermondialiste ('The alterglobalist world', in French). Paris : Textuel

Michael Löwy, 2007 – '*Negativité et utopie du mouvement altermondialiste*' ('Negativity and utopia in the alter-globalisation movement', in French). Mimeograph; to be published in edited form in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2012) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds (New Delhi : OpenWord)

Edward Luce, Lionel Barber, and Guy Dinmore, 2007 - 'How Rice is Learning to Play a Weaker US Hand', in Financial Times, April 23 2007

George Lukacs, 1972 – History and Class Consciousness. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press

Kevin Lynch, 1960 – The Image of a City. Cambridge, MA : MIT Press

Marianne Maeckelbergh, 2009 – The Will of the Many : How the Alterglobalisation Movement is Changing the Face of Democracy. London : Pluto Press

Archie Mafeje, 2002 – 'Democratic Governance and New Democracy in Africa : Agenda for the Future', paper presented to the African Forum for Envisioning Africa, Nairobi, April 26-29 2002,

<http://www.uneca.org/itca/governance/Documents/ArchieMafeje2.pdf>

Scott Mainwaring, 1986 – The Catholic Church and Politics in Brazil 1916-1985. California : Stanford University Press

Scott Mainwaring, 1989 – ‘Grassroots Catholic Groups and Politics in Brazil’, in Scott Mainwaring and Alexander Wilde, eds, 1989 – The Progressive Church in Latin America (South Bend : University of Notre Dame Press)

Amina Mama, Charmaine Pereira, and Takiwaa Manuh, 2005 – ‘Editorial : Sexual Cultures’, in African Gender Institute's Gender & Women's Studies Project, Feminist Africa, Special Issue on Sexual Cultures vol 5, available at : <http://www.feministafrica.org/05-2005/editorial.html>, accessed on January 31 2006

Firoze Manji, January 2007 – ‘World Social Forum : Just another NGO fair ?’, in Pambazuka News, January 26 2007; accessed js 27.10.10 @ <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/category/features/39464>

Firoze Manji, November 2011 – ‘African awakenings : Daring to invent the future’. Paper for TrustAfrica Roundtable, Cape Town, South Africa, November 2011

Firoze Manji and Sokari Ekine, 2011 - African Awakenings : The Emerging Revolutions. Cape Town, Dakar, Nairobi, and Oxford : Pambazuka Press

Subcomandante Marcos, interviewed by Gabriel García Márquez and Roberto Pombo, May-June 2001 - ‘The Punch Card and The Hourglass’, in New Left Review, vol 9, May-June 2001; accessed js 20.04.09 @ <http://www.newleftreview.org/A2322>

Peter Marcuse, 2005 – ‘Are Social Forums the Future of Urban Social Movements?’, in International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, vol 29 no 2, pp 417-424

Gustavo Marin, 2002 – ‘Beyond Porto Alegre’, available at : http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic/eng_b_GustavoMarin.php, accessed on February 22 2008

Mike Marquese, 2012 - ‘On “pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will” ’, @ <http://www.mikemarqusee.com/?p=1316>

Sallie A Marston, 2000 – ‘The Social Construction of Scale’, in Progress in Human Geography, vol 24 no 2

Elizabeth Martínez, 2000a - ‘Where was the Color in Seattle ?’, in Colorlines, vol 3 no 1

Elizabeth Martínez, 2000b – ‘Where Was the Color in Seattle ? Looking for Reasons Why the Great Battle Was So White’, in Kevin Danaher and Roger Burbach, eds, 2000 – Globalize This ! The Battle Against the World Trade Organization and Corporate Rule (Monroe, Maine, USA : Common Courage Press), pp 74-81

Karl Marx, 1999 [1852] – ‘The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte’. Available @ <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/>

Doreen Massey, 1992 – ‘Politics and Space / Time’, in New Left Review, vol 196

Doreen Massey, 1994 – Space, Place, and Gender. Cambridge, UK : Polity Press

Wangui Mbatia and Hassan Indusa, 2012 – ‘The World Social Forum 2007 : A Kenyan Perspective’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Doug McAdam, John D McCarthy, and Mayer N Zald, eds, 1996 - Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements : Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. New York : Cambridge University Press

Doug McAdam, Sydney Tarrow, and Charles Tilly, 2001 - Dynamics of Contention. New York : Cambridge University Press

David McNally, forthcoming (2013) – ‘From the Mountains of Chiapas to the Streets of Seattle : This is What Democracy Looks Like’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

J R McNeill and William H McNeill, 2003 - The Human Web : A Bird’s Eye View of World History. New York, NY : W W Norton

MDG Gap Task Force, 2010 - Millennium Development Goal 8 : The Global Partnership for Development at a Critical Juncture. MDG Gap Task Force Report 2010. Accessed js 04.12.2010 @ www.un.org/esa/policy/mdggap/mdggap2010/mdg8report2010_engw.pdf

Roel Meijer, 2013 – ‘Fighting for Another World : Yusuf Al-‘Uyairi’s Conceptualisation of Praxis and Permanent Revolution’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2013a – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Roel Meijer, ed, 2009 - Global Salafism : Islam’s New Religious Movement. London : Hurst & Company

Roel Meijer, forthcoming (2013) – ‘Fighting for Another World : Yusuf Al-‘Uyairi’s Conceptualisation of Praxis and Permanent Revolution’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Alberto Melucci, 1989 – Nomads of the Present. Philadelphia : Temple University Press

Alberto Melucci, 1996 - Challenging Codes : Collective Action in the Information Age. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press

Rachel Meneguello, 1989 – PT : A Formação de um Partido, 1979-1982 [‘PT (Workers’ Party) : The Formation of a Party 1979-82’, in Portuguese]. São Paulo : Paz e Terra

Philippe Merlant et al, 2003 – Où va le mouvement altermondialisation? [‘Where is the alterglobalisation movement headed?’ in French]. Paris : La Découverte

- Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1947 - *Humanisme et Terreur* ['Humanism and Terror', in French]. Paris : Gallimard
- Tom Mertes, ed, 2004 - *A Movement of Movements : Is another world really possible ?*. London : Verso
- Methodology Commission, African Social Forum, March 2006 – 'Concept Paper'
- China Miéville, 2005 - *Between Equal Rights*. Leiden : Brill
- Walter D. Mignolo, 2000a – 'The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis : Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism', in *Public Culture*, vol 12 no 3
- Walter D. Mignolo, 2000b – *Coloniality, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking*. Princeton : Princeton University Press
- Gianni Miná, ed, 2003 – *Um Outro Mundo é Possível : Propostas do Fórum Social Mundial de Porto Alegre para um futuro melhor* ['Another World Is Possible : Proposals from the World Social Forum of Porto Alegre for a Better World', in Portuguese]. São Paulo : Record
- Ann Mische, 2008 – *Partisan Publics : Communication and Contention across Brazilian Youth Activist Networks*. Princeton : Princeton University Press
- Andile Mngxitama, January 2005 – Editorial, in *WeWrite* vol 2 no 1, <http://www.wewrite.org>
- Maxine Molyneux, 1985 – 'Mobilization without Emancipation ? Women's interests, state and revolution in Nicaragua', in *Feminist Studies*, vol 11 no 2
- Evo Morales Ayma (as President of the Plurinational State of Bolivia), January 2010 – 'Peoples' World Conference On Climate Change And The Rights Of Mother Earth'. January 5 2010. Accessed @ www.cmpcc.org
- Ronaldo Munck, 2007 - *Globalisation and Contestation : The New Great Counter-Movement*. London and New York : Routledge
- Ronaldo Munck, 2009 - *Globalisation and Migration : New Issues, New Politics*. London : Routledge
- Ronaldo Munck, 2012 – 'The Great Counter-Movement : Empire, Multitudes, and Social Transformation', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – *World Social Forum : Critical Explorations*. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord
- Muto Ichiyo, forthcoming (2013) – 'Toward Global People's Autonomy : Need for a meta-movement to animate people's alliance processes', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – *The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds*. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord
- Jean Nanga, 2009 – 'The World Social Forum in Africa', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2009 – *World Social Forum : Challenging Empires* (revised and updated second edition, Montréal : Black Rose Books), pp 276-291

Nancy A Naples, 2002 – ‘Changing the terms : Community activism, globalization, and the dilemmas of transnational feminist praxis’, in Nancy A Naples and Manisha Desai, eds, 2002 - Women’s Activism and Globalization : Linking Local Struggles and Transnational Politics. New York : Routledge

Vicente Navarro, June 2004 – ‘Meet the New Head of the IMF’, in Counterpunch, available at : <http://www.counterpunch.org>, June 19 2004

Léonce Ndikumana and James K Boyce, April 2008 – ‘New Estimates of Capital Flights from Sub-Saharan African Countries : Linkages with External Borrowing and Policy Options’. Political Economy Research Institute (PERI), University of Massachusetts Amherst

Jan Nederveen Pieterse, 2000 - ‘The World Trade Organisation After the Battle of Seattle’, in Review of International Political Economy, vol 7 no 3

Jan Nederveen Pieterse, 2004 - Globalisation or Empire ?. New York and London : Routledge

Trevor Ngwane, January 2007 – ‘What happened in Nairobi’, posted on WSFDiscuss by Patrick Bond, 29 January 2007, 7:46:11 PM GMT+05:30; accessed js 19.12.2010 @ http://www.openspaceforum.net/pipermail/worldsocialforum-discuss_openspaceforum.net/2007-January/000395.html

Chris Nineham, Winter 2006 - ‘Anti-Capitalism, Social Forums, and the Return of Politics’, in International Socialism 109

Peter North and Dave Featherstone, forthcoming (2013) – ‘Localisation as radical praxis and the new politics of climate change’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Notes From Nowhere, eds, 2003 - We are Everywhere : The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism. London / New York : Verso. Online version at <http://artactivism.members.gn.apc.org/stories.htm>, accessed ea 20.08.2009

Rodrigo Nunes, October 2004 – ‘Territory and Deterritory : Inside and outside the ESF 2004, New Movement Subjectivities’, on Interactive Info Exchange, accessible 16.12.2010 @ <http://interactivist.autonomeia.org/node/3677>

Rodrigo Nunes, May 2005 – ‘Networks, open spaces, horizontality : Instantiations’, in Ephemer, Vol 5 no 2, special edition on the World Social Forum, pp 297-318; Steffen Boehm, Sian Sullivan, and Oscar Reyes, eds. Accessed js 10.11.08 @ www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-2/5-2nunes2.pdf

Rodrigo Nunes, 2005 – ‘Nothing is what democracy looks like : Openness, horizontality and the movement of movements’, in David Harvie, Keir Milburn, Ben Trott, and David Watts, eds, 2005 – Shut Them Down ! The G8, Gleneagles 2005 and the Movement of Movements, pp 299-319. Leeds : Dissent, and Brooklyn, New York : Autonomie. Available 14.07.10 @ <http://www.shutthemdown.org/contents.html>

Rodrigo Nunes, 2010 – ‘The Global Moment : Seattle, Ten Years On’, in Radical Philosophy 159,

January/February 2010, accessible @

http://www.radicalphilosophy.com/default.asp?channel_id=2187&editorial_id=28817

Rodrigo Nunes, 2012 – 'The Intercontinental Youth Camp as the Unthought of World Social Forum, Revisited', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Rodrigo Nunes, 2013 – 'Nothing Is What Democracy Looks Like : Openness, Horizontality, and The Movement Of Movements', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2013a – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Ana Elena Obando, 2005 – 'Sexism in the World Social Forum : Is Another World Possible?', in Association for Women's Rights in Development, WHRnet, available at : http://www.whrnet.org/docs/issue-sexism_wsf.html, accessed on October 29 2006 and on February 13 2008

Onyango Oloo, December 2005 – 'Eastern Caravans, Western Odysseys : A Raconteur's Dispatch from Conakry, Guinea Republic'. Posted December 3 2005, at 10:15 pm, on <http://jukwaa.proboards.com/index.cgi?board=general&action=print&thread=255>. Accessed js 11.01.2011

Onyango Oloo, 2006 – 'Gendering WSF Nairobi 2007', available at : <http://globalpolicy.org/ngos/advocacy/conf/2006/0720gendering.htm>, accessed on February 13 2008

Onyango Oloo, March 2007 – 'Critical Reflections on WSF Nairobi 2007', March 19 2007, available at http://www.cadtm.org/article.php3?id_article=2544, last accessed February 28 2008

Organising Committee of WSF 2007, April 2007 – 'Narrative Report 'People's Struggles, People's Alternatives' '. Nairobi, Kenya

One Sky, August 2010 – Letter dt August 2010

Pablo Ortellado, 2003 – 'Whose Movement ? ', @ www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/wsf/whosemovement.htm, accessed on April 13 2005

Mario Osava, 2004 – 'WSF draws young, elite, educated participants, says study. Where are the poor and marginalized ?', http://www.infochangeindia.org/infochange_wsf06.jsp?wsf06

Michal Osterweil, 2004 – 'De-Centering the Forum : Is Another Critique of the Forum Possible ?', in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : The Viveka Foundation), pp 183-190

Michal Osterweil, December 2004 – 'A cultural-political approach to reinventing the political', in International Social Science Journal, Issue no 182, pp 495-406. Available at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/servlet/useragent?func=showIssues&code=issj&open=2004#C2004> and at http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-view_articles.php?type=Article&topic=3

Michal Osterweil, 2008 – 'A Different (Kind of) Politics is Possible : Conflict and Problem(s) at the USSF', in Judith Blau and Marina Karides, eds, 2008 - The World and US Social Forums : A better world is possible and necessary (Leiden & Boston : Brill), pp 71-92

Miguel Palacín, June 2010 - Statement at the Inter-Alliance Dialogue Peoples Movement Assembly at the US Social Forum, Detroit, USA, 'Grassroots Responses to the Economic Crisis and the Critical Issues of our Time', June 25 2010

Heikki Patomäki and Teivo Teivainen, 2004 – 'The World Social Forum, an Open Space or a Movement of Movements ?', in Theory, Culture & Society, vol 21 no 6, pp 145-154

Romualdo Paz de Oliveira, 2005 – 'Constructing the Intercontinental Youth Camp', in ephemera, Vol 5 no 2, special edition on the World Social Forum, pp 319-333; Steffen Boehm, Sian Sullivan, and Oscar Reyes, eds. Accessed js 13.01.2010 @ <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-2/5-2index.htm>

Anne Penketh and Steve Bloomfield, January 2007 – 'US Strikes on al-Qa'ida Chiefs kill Nomads', in The Independent, January 15 2007

People's Parliament, 2007 – 'The World Social Forum 2007 : A Kenyan perspective', available at http://www.cadtm.org/article.php3?id_article=2437 (last accessed March 4 2008)

People's Democracy, January 2004 – 'Left Parties' Programmes in WSF', vol 28 no 3, January 18 2004, http://pd.cpim.org/2004/0118/01182004_wsf_%20left.htm

Cynthia Peters, 2002 – 'Another World is Possible', in Zmagazine, available at : <http://www.zmag.org/ZMag/articles/march02peters.htm>, accessed on February 22 2008

James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, 2002 – Globalization Unmasked. London : Zed Books

Francis Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, 1978 - Poor People's Movements. New York : Vintage

Geoffrey Pleyers, 2004 – 'The Social Forums as an ideal model of convergence', in International Social Science Journal, vol 182

Geoffrey Pleyers, 2007c - Forums Sociaux Mondiaux et Défis de l'Altermondialisme ['World Social Fora and the Challenges of Alter-globalisation', in French]. Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium : Academia

Geoffrey Pleyers, 2008 – 'The World Social Forum, A Globalisation from Below ?', in Societies Without Borders, vol III no 1

Geoffrey Pleyers, 2010 - Alter-Globalization : Becoming Actors in the Global Age. Foreword by Alain Touraine. London : Polity Press

Geoffrey Pleyers and Raúl Ornelas, 2012 – 'Alter-globalisation Hits New Ground : Bamako and Caracas 2006', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Karl Polanyi, 1957 – The Great Transformation : The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time. Boston : Beacon Press

Karl Polanyi, 2001 - The Great Transformation : The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time. Boston : Beacon Press

Francesca Polletta, 2002 - Freedom is an Endless Meeting. Chicago : University of Chicago Press

Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle, 2002 – '*Organisations de défense des droits de l'Homme, syndicats, firme multinationale et État : Des lieux de pouvoir en interaction*' ['Organisations for the defence of human rights, unions, multinational firms, and the State : Some sites of power and interaction', in French], in Afrique Politique, Bordeaux, Karthala, pp 301-311

Marie-Emmanuelle Pommerolle and Nicolas Haeringer, 2012 – 'The WSF at Test : Extraversion and Controversies during the World Social Forum in Nairobi', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Thomas Ponniah, 2007 - 'The Contribution of the US Social Forum : A reply to Whitaker and Bello's debate on the Open Space'. Accessed vr 09.05.09 @ http://www.lfsc.org/wsf/ussf_contribution_thomas.pdf and js 26.11.2010 @ www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/noticias_textos.php?cd_news=405

Thomas Ponniah and William F Fisher, 2003 – 'Introduction', in Thomas Ponniah and William F Fisher, eds, 2003 - Another World is Possible (London : Zed Books), pp 1-20

Programa de Estudios sobre Democracia y Transformación Global, Centro de la Mujer Peruana Flora Tristán, Red por la Democratización Global – Perú, Articulación Feminista Marcosur, ABONG, and Instituto Paulo Freire, January 2008 [sic; 2007] – '*En Diversidad, otro mundo es posible*' ['In Diversity, Another World is Possible', in Spanish], letter to the WSF International Council. Accessed js 20.10.2011 @ <http://www.ciranda.net/documentos/ciranda-net/forum-social-mundial-2007-nairobi/article/en-diversidad-otro-mundo-es>. Version in English titled 'Another World is Possible in Diversity : Affirming the Struggle for Sexual and Reproductive Rights'; accessed js 20.10.2011 @ <http://www.cadtm.org/Another-World-is-Possible-in>

Project South, February 2009 – The First US Social Forum : Report from the Anchor Organization. Written by Stephanie Guilloud in collaboration with the Executive leadership Team of Project South. Accessed js 26.11.2010 @ http://projectsouth.mayfirst.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9&Itemid=21

Katherine Quarmby, May 2005 – 'Is Oxfam Failing Africa ?', in New Statesman, May 30 2005

Lee Quinby, 2004 - 'Taking the Millennialist Pulse of *Empire's* Multitude : A Genealogical Feminist Diagnosis', in Paul Passavant and Jodi Dean, eds, 2004 - Empire's New Clothes : Reading Hardt and Negri. London and New York : Routledge

Milan Rai, January 2004 – 'Blogging the WSF : Neoliberalism, war, and the significance of the WSF', in The New Standard, @

http://newstandardnews.net/wsfblog/index.cfm?action=show_entry&itemid=129

Vinod Raina, 2004 – 'Public Address', during orientation for delegates to the 2004 WSF from Canada and Quebec, organised by Alternatives, Mumbai, India

Vinod Raina, October 2007 – 'Guiding Principles for Holding WSF Events', draft 1, 26.10.2007; @ http://openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=501

Tariq Ramadan, 2003 – 'The Left's Unspoken Cultural Chauvinism', available at http://www.voiceoftheturtle.org/show_printer.php?aid=345

Bobby Ramakant, April 2007 – 'People's issues ignored in UP elections', on [Rediff.com](http://www.rediff.com), April 26 2007, available at: <http://www.rediff.com/news/2007/apr/26uppoll2.htm>

Rahul Rao, 2012 – 'Included Out ?', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – [World Social Forum : Critical Explorations](#). Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord Books

Raka Ray, 1999 – [Fields of Protest : Women's Movements in India](#). Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press

Raka Ray and A C Korteweg, 1999 – 'Women's Movements in the Third World : Identity, Mobilization, and Autonomy', in [Annual Review of Sociology](#), vol 25, pp 47-71. Accessed js 18.01.2011 at <http://www.jstor.org/pss/223497>

Judy Rebeck, May 2002 – 'Catching up with the Call', in [Dawn Informs](#), May 2002, pp 17-18

Judy Rebeck, July 2007 – 'US Social Forum : The View from Canada', on ZNet, July 8 2007

Judy Rebeck, 2007 - 'Another US is Possible', in [Rabble News](#), July 2 2007, http://openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-print_article.php?articleId=455 (accessed Jeff Juris June 7 2009)

Judy Rebeck, 2009 – 'Another US is Happening !', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2009 – [World Social Forum : Challenging Empires](#), revised and updated second edition (Montréal : Black Rose Books), pp 305-314

Michael Renov, ed, 1993 – [Theorizing Documentary](#). New York : Routledge

Michael Renov, 1999 – 'New Subjectivities : Documentary and Self-Representation in the post-Verité Age', Yamagata Film Festival Documentary Box

Richard Renshaw, February 2004 – 'World Social Forum and irruption of the poor', in [Catholic New Times](#), February 29 2004

Research Unit on Political Economy, 2003 – [The Economics and Politics of the World Social Forum : Lessons for the Struggle Against 'Globalisation'](#). Mumbai : Sai Shakti Press

Roland Robertson, 1992 – [Globalisation : Social Theory and Global Culture](#). London : Sage

Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo, 1980 - 'The Use and Abuse of Anthropology : Reflections on

Feminism and Cross-Cultural Understanding', in Signs, vol 5 no 3, pp 389-417

Justin Rosenberg, 2002 - The Follies of Globalisation Theory. London and New York : Verso

Martha Rosenberg, 2002 – 'Which Other World is Possible', in WGNRR Newsletter, 75, March, available at : <http://www.wgnrr.nl//newsletter/NL75eng.pdf>, accessed on February 13 2008

Pierre Rousset, 2012 – 'The Karachi Social Forum and Its International Significance', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Paul Routledge, 2004 – 'Convergence of Commons', in The Commoner, Autumn/Winter 2004, www.thecommoner.org, accessed on April 13 2005

Arundhati Roy with Amy Goodman, March 2006 – 'Baby Bush Go Home : Arundhati Roy on Massive Protests Against Bush's Visit to India', on Democracy Now, March 3 2006, accessed 17.05.09 at http://www.democracynow.org/2006/3/3/baby_bush_go_home_arundhati_roy

RUPE (Research Unit for Political Economy), September 2003 – The Economics and Politics of the World Social Forum : Lessons for the Struggle against 'Globalisation'. 'Aspects of India's Economy' series, no 35. Published by Rajani X Desai for Research Unit for Political Economy, Sidhwa Estate - Ground Floor, N A Sawant Marg, Colaba, Mumbai 400 005, India. <http://www.rupe-india.org/35/contents.html>

Eder Sader, 1988 – Quando novos personagens entraram em cena : Experiências, falas e lutas dos trabalhadores da Grande São Paulo (1970-80) ['When new characters came into play : Experiences, discourses and struggles of workers in Greater São Paulo (1970-80)', in Portuguese]. São Paulo : Paz e Terra

Emir Sader, forthcoming (2013) – 'The Weakest Link ? Neoliberalism in Latin America', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) - The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the Challenging Empires series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Martha Salazar, 2004 – 'Fourth World Social Forum, Mumbai, India, 16-21 January 2004, in WIDE Briefing Paper, Brussels : WIDE

Maria M Santiago, 2005 – 'Global Solidarity through Feminist Dialogues', available at : <http://www.isiswomen.org/wia/wia2-04/mari.htm>, accessed on June 9 2008

Lydia Sargent and Michael Albert, March 2004 – 'Another World is Possible but Apparently Unimaginable', in Z Magazine, Commentary, March 2004, pp 6-8

Saskia Sassen, 2001 – The Global City : New York, London, Tokyo. Princeton : Princeton Paperback (second edition)

Birgit Sauer, 2003 – 'Gender makes the world go round', in Globale Restrukturierung und Geschlecht ['Global Restructuring and Gender', in German], pp 98-126

Jennifer G Schirmer, 1989 – 'Those Who Die for Life Cannot Be Called Dead : Women and Human Rights Protest in Latin America', in Feminist Review, vol 32

Albert Scharenberg, and Oliver Schmidtke, eds, 2003 — Ende der Politik? Globalisierung und Strukturwandel des Politischen [‘The End of Politics ? Globalization and Structural Change of the Political’, in German]. Münster : Westfälisches Dampfboot

Quirin Schiermeier, August 2011 — ‘Climate cycles drive civil war : Tropical conflicts double during El Niño years’, published online in Nature, 24 August 2011, doi:10.1038/news.2011.501 @ <http://www.nature.com/news/2011/110824/full/news.2011.501/box/1.html>. Accessed js 31.08.2011

Schnews, October 2004 — ‘Endless Shit Flinging’, on October 22 2004 @ <http://www.schnews.org.uk>

James C Scott, 1976 - The Moral Economy of the Peasant : Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia. New Haven, CN : Yale University Press

Jai Sen, December 1999 - ‘A World to Win – But whose world is it, anyway ?’, Chapter 9 in Whose World Is It Anyway ? Civil Society, the United Nations, and the multilateral future, edited by John W Foster with Anita Anand, 1999 (Ottawa : United Nations Association in Canada), pp 337-390

Jai Sen, January 2002a — ‘The World Social Forum – Some Concerns and Considerations for a WSF Process in India’, dt January 5 2002. Available at <http://www.choike.org/PDFs/concerns.pdf>. Subsequently published in : Jai Sen with Madhuresh Kumar, compilers, August 2003 - Are Other Worlds Possible ? : The Open Space Reader on the World Social Forum and its Engagement with Empire, pp 198-206

Jai Sen, January 2002b — ‘Thinking Strategy : Some Suggestions for the World Social Forum’s Strategic Perspective’, dt January 12 2002. Available at <http://www.choike.org/PDFs/thinking.pdf>

Jai Sen, January 2003c — ‘The Long March to Another World : Porto Alegre - Hyderabad - Porto Alegre : Reflections on the World Social Forum process in India and internationally. A paper for discussion’. 65 pp, plus Annexures. Available @ http://www.choike.org/cgi-bin/choike/links/page.cgi?p=ver_informe&id=967

Jai Sen, January 2003e - ‘The Long March to Another World’, @ <http://www.choike.org/PDFs/introduc.pdf> (accessed Jeff Juris December 15 2003)

Jai Sen, May 2003d - ‘The WSF as logo, the WSF as commons : Take a moment to reflect on what is happening in the World Social Forum’, in Choike. Accessed vr 20.04.09 @ http://www.choike.org/documentos/Jai_Sen_wsf2004_as_logo.pdf

Jai Sen, 2003 — ‘The Long March to Another World’. Unpublished mss

Jai Sen, 2004b — ‘How Open ? The Forum as Logo, the Forum as Religion - Scepticism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will’, in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 — World Social Forum : Challenging Empires, pp 210-227. Available at http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html and at http://www.choike.org/documentos/wsf_s315_jai.pdf

Jai Sen, 2004c – ‘The Long March to Another World : Reflections of a member of the WSF India Committee in 2002 on the first year of the World Social Forum process in India’, in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires, pp 293-311. Available at http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html and at http://www.choike.org/documentos/wsf_s409_jai.pdf

Jai Sen, 2004d – ‘A Tale of Two Charters’, in Jai Sen Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 - World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : The Viveka Foundation), pp 72-75. Available at <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=WSFChallengingEmpires2004> and at http://www.choike.org/documentos/wsf_s113_jai.pdf

Jai Sen, January 2005c [June 2004] – ‘Seeking pheromones ? On the architecture of the WSF as an emergent movement’. Revised and re-titled version of June 2004 paper for a lecture at DPU – Development Planning Unit, University College London, June 9 2004

Jai Sen, 2005 – ‘Breaking boundaries’, in Jai Sen and Mayuri Saini, eds, 2005 - Talking New Politics (New Delhi : Zubaan), pp 26-41

Jai Sen, March 2006 – ‘Understanding the World Social Forum : The WSF as an Emergent Learning Process - Notes on the Dynamics of Change’, in Mainstream (New Delhi), March 25 2006, pp 9-24. Available at http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-download_file.php?fileId=34

Jai Sen, January 2007 - ‘The World Social Forum as an emergent learning process’, in Futures vol 39 (2007), pp 505-522. Available through subscription @ <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2006.10.006>

Jai Sen, June 2007a – ‘The Biology of Movements’. Notes for a workshop @ The Concordia Institute in Management and Community Development’s Summer Program on June 11 2007, in Montréal, Canada. Available @ http://instdev.concordia.ca/summer_program/Programme_ete2007/2007-ExplorationSess/SessionG.html

Jai Sen, November 2007d – ‘The power of civility’, in Mikael Löfgren and Håkan Thörn, eds, 2007 – ‘Global Civil Society – More Or Less Democracy ?’, special issue of Development Dialogue, no 49, pp 51-68. Full issue available for download @ www.dhf.uu.se

Jai Sen, 2009 – ‘On Open Space’, @ <http://www.openspaceforum.net> (accessed JJ June 7 2009). Edited version published in 2010, ‘On open space : Explorations towards a vocabulary of a more open politics’, in Antipode, vol 42 no 4 (ISSN 0066-4812), pp 994–1018

Jai Sen, 2010b – ‘On open space : Explorations towards a vocabulary of a more open politics’, in Antipode, Vol 42 No 4, 2010 (ISSN 0066-4812), pp 994–1018; accessible free 10.10 @ <http://www.antipode-online.net/issue.asp?vid=42&iid=4&aid=11&s=0>. (Full original unedited version available @ <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications.>)

Jai Sen, 2012c – ‘Towards Understanding the World Social Forum : Three Proposals’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012a – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the

Challenging Empires series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Jai Sen, 2012d – ‘Towards Building the Future Together : An Open Letter from a Fellow-traveller to the Puno Cumbre’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Jai Sen, forthcoming (2012e) – ‘What ‘Other Worlds’ Are Being Given Shape To ? : Critical Explorations of the World Social Forum, continued’

Jai Sen, forthcoming (2013a) – ‘Lifting The Veil : Engaging Critically with the Concept and Reality of Civil Society’, forthcoming in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2013a – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Jai Sen, ed, 2011a - Interrogating Empires, Book 2 in the *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* series. New Delhi : OpenWord and Daanish Books

Jai Sen, ed, 2011b - Imagining Alternatives, Book 3 in the *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* series. New Delhi : OpenWord and Daanish Books

Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires. New Delhi : Viveka. Slightly reduced version available @ <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=WSFChallengingEmpires2004> and @ http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html

Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2005 - Sekai Shakai Forum Teikoku eno Chosen [‘World Social Forum Challenges to empire(s)’, in Japanese], Japanese edition of World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : Viveka, 2004). Translation supervisors (*kanyakusha*) : Muto Ichiyo, Ogura Toshimaru, Toda Kiyoshi, and Oya Sadaharu. Tokyo : Sakuhin-Sha

Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, y Peter Waterman (Editores), nd, c.2005 – El Foro Social Mundial : Desafiando Imperios [‘World Social Forum : Challenging Empires’, in Spanish]. Mataró (Barcelona) : El Viejo Topo

Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2006 - Nayi Subah Ki Or [‘Towards a New Dawn’, in Hindi], Book 1 in a 4-volume expanded Hindi edition of Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : Viveka); translated by Kishan Kaljaye. Volume 4 in the Samrajya Se Sangharsh (‘Challenging Empires’) series, published by Prakashan Sansthan and CACIM, New Delhi. Associate editors : Kishan Kaljaye and Madhuresh Kumar

Jai Sen with Madhuresh Kumar, compilers, August 2003 - Are Other Worlds Possible ? The Open Space Reader on the World Social Forum and its Engagement with Empire, pp 29-31. Available from : CACIM (India Institute for Critical Action : Centre in Movement), A-3 Defence Colony, New Delhi 110 024, India. Eml cacim@cacim.net, web www.cacim.net

Jai Sen and Madhuresh Kumar, compilers, with Patrick Bond and Peter Waterman, January 2007 – A Political Programme for the World Social Forum ? Democracy, Substance, and Debate in the Bamako Appeal and the Global Justice Movements - A Reader. Published by CACIM

(Critical Action : Centre in Movement), New Delhi, India, and University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society (CCS), Durban, South Africa. Soft copy available @ <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications> and <http://www.nu.ac.za/ccs/files/CACIM%20CCS%20WSF%20Politics.pdf>

Jai Sen and Mayuri Saini, eds, January 2005 – Are Other Worlds Possible ? Talking New Politics. Book One of the *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* series; New Delhi : Zubaan Books. For information, see <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Book:+Talking+New+Politics>; and for most of its contents, see <http://books.google.co.in/books?id=yeh6sswTy8MC&pg=PA1986&dq#v=onepage&q=&f=false>

Jai Sen and Mayuri Saini, eds, March 2006 - Nayi Rajniti ['New Politics', in Hindi], Delhi : Prakashan Sansthan. Volume 1 in a new series co-published by Prakashan Sansthan and CACIM, the Samrajyon Se Sangharsh ('Challenging Empires') series. Associate editors : Kishan Kaljayee and Madhuresh Kumar. Hindi edition of Jai Sen and Mayuri Saini, eds, January 2005 – Are Other Worlds Possible ? Talking New Politics. Book One of the *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* series. New Delhi : Zubaan Books

Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2009 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires, updated second edition. Montréal : Black Rose Books. <http://www.blackrosebooks.net/wsf.htm>

Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, February 2011 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations – A Sampler to Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord. Available @ www.openword.in/ce3.sampler

Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, with Madhuresh Kumar, December 2003 - 'The World Social Bibliography : A Bibliography on the World Social Forum and the Global Solidarity and Justice Movement'. Ongoing, 105 pp. Available @ <http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Explorations+In+Open+Spaces> and @ <http://www.cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=CACIMHome>

José Seoane and Emilio Taddei, 2001 – '*De Seattle a Porto Alegre – Pasado, presente e futuro do movimento antimundialização neoliberal*' ['From Seattle to Porto Alegre - Past, present and future of the anti-neoliberal globalisation movement', in Portuguese], in José Seoane and Emilio Taddei, eds, Resistências Mundiais : de Seattle a Porto Alegre ['Global Resistance : From Seattle to Porto Alegre', in Portuguese]. Petrópolis : Editora Vozes, CLACSO, LPP

Rachel Shabi and John Hooper, 2005 - 'Now the Reckoning', in The Guardian, January 22 2005

Martin Shaw, 1994 - Global Society and International Relations : Sociological Concepts and Political Perspectives. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press

Martin Shaw, 2004 – 'Western wars and peace activism : Social movements in global mass

mediated politics', in Sarai Reader : Crisis / Media, New Delhi : Sarai

Rupert Sheldrake, 1988 - The Presence of the Past : Morphic Resonance and the Habits of Nature. New York, NY : Times Books

Rupert Sheldrake, February 2005 – 'Morphic Resonance And Morphic Fields : An Introduction'. Accessed js 21.03.12 @

http://www.sheldrake.org/Articles&Papers/papers/morphic/morphic_intro.html

Rupert Sheldrake, 2009 [1981] - Morphic Resonance : The Nature of Formative Causation. Rochester, Vermont & Toronto : Park Street Press

Benjamin Shepard, 2002 – 'Introductory Notes on the trail from ACT UP to the WTO', in Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk, eds, From Act Up to the WTO : Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization (London : Verso)

Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk, eds, 2002 – From Act Up to the WTO : Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization. London : Verso

Steven Sherman and Ganesh Trichur, 2004 - '*Empire* and *Multitude* : A Review Essay', in Journal of World-Systems Research, vol 3, pp 819-845

Beverly Silver and Giovanni Arrighi, 2003 - 'Polanyi's "Double Movement" : The *Belle Époques* of British and US Hegemony Compared', in Politics and Society, vol 31, no 2, pp 325-355

Satya Sivaraman, February 2002 – ' "The alternative is not civil society but civil disobedience" - Naomi Klein', in Terra Viva. Accessed js 16.04.09 @ http://ipsnews.net/terraviva/05_alternativaeng.shtml

Leslie Sklair, 1991 – Sociology of the Global System. Hemel Hempstead, UK : Harvester Wheatsheaf

Andrea Smith, forthcoming (2013) – 'Indigenous Feminism and the Heteropatriarchal State', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series (New Delhi : OpenWord)

Jackie Smith, Christopher Chase-Dunn, Donatella Della Porta, and others, 2007 – Global Democracy and the World Social Forums. Boulder, CO : Paradigm Publishers

Jackie Smith, Charles Chatfield, and Ron Pagnucco, eds, 1997 - Transnational Social Movements and Global Politics : Solidarity Beyond the State. Syracuse, New York : Syracuse University Press

Michael Peter Smith and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, eds, 1998 – 'Transnationalism From Below', special issue of Comparative Urban and Community Research, vol 6, 1998. New Brunswick : Transaction Publishers

Neil Smith, 1993 – 'Homeless / global : Scaling Places', in Jon Bird, ed, 1993 - Mapping the Futures : Local Cultures, Global Change (London : Routledge and Kegan Paul)

Social Movements Indaba (SMI), December 2004 – Statement distributed at the Africa Social Forum on December 12 2004

David Sogge, June 2004 – ‘Civil Domains in African Settings : Some Issues’. Discussion paper prepared for the Hivos Africa Consultation, Arusha, June 7 2004

Edward Soja, 1999 – ‘History : Geography : Modernity’, in Simon During, ed, 1999 - The Cultural Studies Reader (London and New York : Routledge)

António Sousa Ribeiro, 2004 – ‘The reason of borders or a border reason ? Translation as a metaphor for our times’, on Eurozine, accessed js 19.01.2011 at <http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2004-01-08-ribeiro-en.html>

Gayatri Spivak, 1996 – ‘ “Woman” as Theatre : United Nations Conference on Women, Beijing 1995’, in Radical Philosophy, January/February 1996, available at : http://www.radicalphilosophy.com/default.asp?channel_id=2187&editorial_id=10716, accessed on May 15 2005

Robert Stam, 1983 - ‘Television News and Its Spectator’, in E A Kaplan, 1983 - Regarding Television – Critical Approaches : An Anthology. American Film Institute Monograph Series, Vol 2 (Frederick, MD : U Publications of America), pp 23-43

Amory Starr, 2004 – ‘How can Anti-Imperialism not be Anti-Racist ?’, in Journal of World-Systems Research, vol X no 1, pp 119-151

Anthony Starr, 2004 - ‘How Can Anti-Imperialism Not Be Anti-Racist ? The North American Anti-Globalisation Movement’, in Journal of World-Systems Research, vol 1, pp 119-151

Kathleen Staudt, Shirin Rai, and Jane Parpart, 2001 – ‘Protesting World Trade Rules : Can We Talk About Empowerment?’, in Signs vol 26 no 4

Joseph Stiglitz, 2001 – ‘Foreword’, in Karl Polanyi, 2001 - The Great Transformation (Boston : Beacon Press)

Laura Sullivan, 2012 – ‘Activism, Affect, and Abuse : The Emotional Contexts and Consequences of the ESF Organising Process 2004’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Sian Sullivan, 2004 - ‘We are Heartbroken and Furious !’ : Violence and the (Anti-)globalisation Movement(s). CSGR Working Paper No 133/04. Accessed vr 28.04.09 @ <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/csgr/research/workingpapers-copy/13304>

Sian Sullivan, 2005 - ‘Viva Nihilism !’ : On Militancy and Machismo in (Anti-)globalisation Protest. CSGR Working Paper No. 158/05. Accessed vr 28.04.09 @ <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/csgr/research/abstracts/15805/>

Erik Swyngedouw, 1997 – ‘Neither Global Nor Local : ‘Glocalisation’ and the Politics of Scale’, in Kevin R Cox, ed, 1997 - Spaces of Globalization : Reasserting the Power of the Local. New York

and London : The Guildford Press

Sidney Tarrow, 2002 – 'Rooted Cosmopolitans : Transnational Activists in a World of States', available at

http://sociology.berkeley.edu/faculty/evans/evans_pdf/Tarrow%20RootedCosmops%204-03%20Soc190.pdf, last accessed February 29 2008

Teivo Teivainen, 2002 – 'The World Social Forum and global democratisation : Learning from Porto Alegre', in Third World Quarterly, vol 23 no 4, pp 621-632

Teivo Teivainen, July 2003 – 'World Social Forum: What should it be when it grows up?', in openDemocracy, July 9 2003, available at : http://www.opendemocracy.net/democracy-world/article_1342.jsp

Teivo Teivainen, 2006 (forthcoming) - Democracy in Movement : The World Social Forum as a Political Process. London and New York : Routledge, accepted for publication, 2008

Ana Claudia Teixeira, 2003 – Identidades em Construção : As Organizações Não-Governamentais no Processo Brasileiro de Democratização ['Identities in Construction : Non-Governmental Organisations in the Brazilian Process of Democratisation', in Portuguese]. São Paulo : Annablume; Fapesp; Instituto Pólis

Anand Teltumbde, forthcoming (2013) – 'Anti-Imperialism, Dalits, and the Annihilation of Caste', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2013a – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Carol Thompson, January 1997 – 'Economic Policy Toward Africa', in Foreign Policy in Focus vol 2 no 23

Charles Tilly, 2004 – Social Movements 1768-2004. Noble Court : Paradigm

James Toth, 2013 – 'Local Islam Gone Global : The Roots of Religious Militancy in Egypt and its Transnational Transformation', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2013a – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Simon Tormey, 2004 – Anti-Capitalism : A Beginner's Guide. Oxford : Oneworld Publications

Transform! Europe, 2004 - 'The new global resistance and the emergence of the WSF', in World Social Forum : A debate on the challenges for its future, Newsletter, Transform! Italia, Transnational Institute, and Red Pepper Magazine. Accessed js 17.04.2012 @ http://www.tni.org/archives/socforum-docs_transform

Paul Treanor, 2002 – 'Who controlled the Florence ESF ?', <http://www.indymedia.ie/newswire.php?id=16942&start=1840>, accessed on April 13 2005

Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, 2004 – Friction : An Ethnography of Global Connection. Princeton University Press

John F C Turner and Robert Fichter, eds, 1970 - Freedom to Build. New York : Macmillan

Terence Turner, 1993 - 'Anthropology and Multiculturalism : What Is Anthropology That Multiculturalists Should Be Mindful of It ?', in Cultural Anthropology, vol 8 issue 4, pp 411-429

UNCTAD, 2001 - Economic Development in Africa. Performance : Prospects and Policy Issues. New York and Geneva : United Nations

UNCTAD, 2007 - Economic Development in Africa - Reclaiming Policy Space : Domestic Resource Mobilisation and Developmental States. New York and Geneva : United Nations

UNCTAD, 2010 - Towards A New International Development Architecture For LDCs : The Least Developed Countries Report 2010. New York and Geneva : United Nations

John Urry, 2003 - Global Complexity. London : Routledge

Sarah van Gelder, September 2006 – 'Southern Revival', in YES! Magazine, September 1, 2006, <http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/health-care-for-all/southern-revival?searchterm=None>

Sarah van Gelder, July 2007 – 'USSF : We Saw Another World in Atlanta', in YES! Magazine, July 29 2007.

Willard van Orman Quine, 1969 - Ontological Relativity and Other Essays. New York : Columbia University Press

Achin Vanaik, 2009 – 'Globalising the WSF : Ironies, Contrasts, Challenges', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2009 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires, revised and updated second edition (Montréal : Black Rose Books), pp 245-257

Jan Vandemoortele, Kamal Malhotra, and Joseph Anthony Lim, June 2003 – 'Is MDG 8 on Track as a Global Deal for Human Development ?', United Nations Development Programme Bureau for Development Policy, Socio-economic Development Group, New York;
<http://www.hks.harvard.edu/cchrp/mhr/projects/r2development/documents2.php>

Gina Vargas, 2004 – 'The World Social Forum : Tensions in the Construction of Global Alternatives', in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : Viveka)

Virginia Vargas, 2001 – 'Is Another World Possible ?', available at :
<http://www.socialwatch.org/en/informesTematicos/38.html>, accessed on February 13 2008

Virginia Vargas, May 2002 – 'A Space of Our Own', in Dawn Informs, May 2002, pp 20-21

Virginia Vargas, 2003 – 'Feminism, Globalization, and the Global Justice and Solidarity Movement', in Cultural Studies, vol 17 no 6, pp 905-920

Virginia Vargas, 2009 – 'International Feminisms : New Directions', in Jane Jaquette, ed, 2009 - Feminist Agendas and Democracy in Latin America (Chapel Hill, NC : Duke University Press)

Virginia Vargas, 2012 – 'A Look at Nairobi's World Social Forum', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Virginia Vargas, forthcoming (2013) – 'International Feminisms : New Syntheses, New Directions', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2013a) – The Movements of Movements : Struggles for Other Worlds. Volume 4 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Lawrence Venuti, 1998 – The Scandals of Translation : Towards an Ethics of Difference. London : Routledge

America Vera-Zavala, 2004 – 'A Space of Freedom : The World Women's Forum', in openDemocracy Ltd, openDemocracy, available at : <http://www.opendemocracy.net/home/index.jsp>, accessed on October 28 2006

America Vera-Zavala, 2012 – 'A Space of Freedom : The World Women's Forum', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Paolo Virno, 2004 - A Grammar of the Multitude. New York : Semiotext(e)

Shiv Visvanathan, July 2001 – 'The Problem', in Seminar 503, available at www.india-seminar.com/2001/503.htm

Sweta Vohra and Jordan Flaherty (Fault Lines), March 2012 – 'Race, Gender, and Occupy'; accessed js 29.03.2012 @ <http://pulsemedia.org/2012/03/22/history-of-an-occupation/>

Judy Waguma, 2007 – 'Clean Water for All!', available at : <http://www.ipsterraviva.net/tv/nairobi/en/viewstory.asp?idnews=838>.

Hilary Wainwright, March 2005 – 'World Social Forum on Trial', in Red Pepper, available at : <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/world-social-forum-on-trial/>, accessed on February 22 2008

Hilary Wainwright, June 2005 - 'Why Participatory Democracy Matters, and Movements Matter to Participatory Democracy'. Available on the TNI web site, accessed vr 13.04.09 @ http://www.tni.org/archives/archives_wainwright_matter

Hilary Wainwright, October 2011 – 'Indignados movement takes root in Barcelona', in Red Pepper and @ <http://www.tni.org/article/indignados-movement-takes-root-barcelona> (accessed js 30.05.2012)

Immanuel Wallerstein, 1998 - Utopistics, or, Historical Choices of the Twenty-First Century. New York : New Press

Immanuel Wallerstein, February 2004 – 'The Rising Strength of the World Social Forum', February 1 2004, available at : <http://www.sociologistswithoutborders.org/essays/The%20Rising%20Strength%20of%20the%20World%20Social%20Forum.pdf>

Immanuel Wallerstein, February 2007 – 'The World Social Forum : From defense to offence', in Commentary, 202, February 1 2007

Immanuel Wallerstein, March-April 2010 – 'Structural Crises', in New Left Review, No 62,

March-April 2010, pp 133-142

Immanuel Wallerstein, February 2011 – ‘The World Social Forum, Egypt, and Transformation’, Commentary no 299 dt February 15 2011, accessed js 03.06.2011 @ <http://www2.binghamton.edu/fbc/archive/299en.htm/>

Immanuel Wallerstein, 2012 – ‘The World Social Forum : Great Success, Shaky Future, Passé ?’. Foreword to Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord Books

Shannon Walsh, 2007 – ‘We Won’t Pay to Discuss Our Own Poverty’, in Archivos de las protestas globales, ESF, www.agp.org

Shannon Walsh, 2012 – ‘Opening Up the ‘Open Space’ of The World Social Forum’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Brian Wampler, 2007 – Participatory Budgeting in Brazil : Contestation, Cooperation, and Accountability. University Park, PA : The Pennsylvania State University Press

Luiz Eduardo Wanderley, 1984 – Educar para transformar : educação popular, Igreja católica e política no MEB [‘Educate to transform : Popular education, the Catholic Church and politics in MEB’, in Portuguese]. Petropolis : Vozes

Peter Waterman, 2002 – ‘What’s Left Internationally ?’, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, Working Paper Series 362, <http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/GoSoDia>, accessed on May 19 2004

Peter Waterman, March 2003 – ‘From Agreements of Comrades to the Reinvention of Emancipation : The 3rd World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, Brazil, January 23-8, 2003’, draft March 15 2003, sent in personal email

Peter Waterman, 2003a - First Reflections on the 3rd World Social Forum. Accessed vr 20.04.09 @ http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/wsf/waterman_poa.htm

Peter Waterman, 2003b – ‘2nd Thoughts on the WSF : Place, Space and the Reinvention of Social Emancipation on a Global Scale’, available at : <http://www.labournet.de/diskussion/wipo/seattle/pa03/waterman.html>

Peter Waterman, 2003c – ‘Place, Space and the Reinvention of Social Emancipation on a Global Scale’, in LabourNet Germany, available at : <http://www.labournet.de/diskussion/wipo/seattle/pa03/waterman.html>, accessed on January 28 2008

Peter Waterman, 2004a – ‘The Global Justice and Solidarity Movement and the World Social Forum : A Backgrounder’, in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : Viveka), pp 55-66. Available at http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html

Peter Waterman, 2004c - ‘The Secret of Fire’, in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter

Waterman, eds – The World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : Viveka), pp 148-160. Available @ http://www.choike.org/documentos/wsf_s307_waterman.pdf

Peter Waterman, 2007a – ‘The Bamako Appeal of Samir Amin : Another Modern Janus ?’, in Jai Sen and Madhuresh Kumar, compilers, with Patrick Bond and Peter Waterman, January 2007 – A Political Programme for the World Social Forum ? Democracy, Substance, and Debate in the Bamako Appeal and the Global Justice Movements - A Reader (CACIM (Critical Action : Centre in Movement), New Delhi, India, and University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society (CCS), Durban, South Africa), pp 357-390. Soft copy available @ www.cacim.net and www.nu.ac.za/ccs

Peter Waterman, 2007b – ‘Labour at the World Social Forum, Nairobi, January 20-25, 2007 : Reviving Labour as a Sword of Justice’, http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=334&page=1

Peter Waterman, forthcoming (2013) – Recovering Internationalism - Creating the New Global Solidarity : Labour, Social Movements, and Emancipation in the 21st Century. Helsinki : Into Books

Peter Waterman and Jai Sen, November 2006 – ‘Challenging Empires – The Series : An Invitation’. Draft 2

Duncan J Watts and Steven H Strogatz, 1998 - ‘Collective Dynamics of “Small World” Networks’, in Nature, vol 393, pp 440–442

Marco Aurélio Weissheimer, 2004 - ‘*Porto Alegre Começa a Construir Território Social Mundial*’ [‘Porto Alegre starts building World Social Territory’, in Portuguese], accessible @ http://www.cartamaior.com.br/templates/materiaMostrar.cfm?materia_id=2773

Marco Aurélio Weissheimer, 2005 – ‘*Território Social Mundial Deve Receber 100 Mil*’ [‘World Social Territory expects 1,000 people’, in Portuguese], accessible @ http://www.cartamaior.com.br/templates/materiaMostrar.cfm?materia_id=10952

Francisco Whitaker, 2002 – ‘World Social Forum : Origins and Aims’, cited January 29 2003, available at : www.forumsocialmundial.org.br ¹

Chico Whitaker, March 2003 – ‘Notes about the World Social Forum’, dt March 17 2003; accessible @ http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic.php?pagina=bal_whitaker_ing. (Edited version published as ‘The WSF as Open Space’ in Sen, Jai, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires, pp 111-121. New Delhi : Viveka)

Chico Whitaker, October 2003 – ‘*Les Trois Défis Actuels pour le FSM*’ (‘The Three Challenges for the WSF’, in French), in Philippe Merlant and others, October 2003 - Où va le mouvement altermondialisation ? [‘Where is the alterglobalisation movement headed ?’] (Paris : La Découverte)

Chico Whitaker, 2004 – ‘The WSF as Open Space’, in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : Viveka), pp 111-121. Available at http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html and at

http://www.choike.org/documentos/wsf_s302_whitaker.pdf

Francisco Whitaker, January 2005 – Interview with Janet Conway, Porto Alegre, Brazil

Chico Whitaker, 2005a - *O Desafio do Fórum Social Mundial : Um modo de ver* ['The Challenge before the World Social Forum : A Way of Seeing', in Portuguese]. São Paulo : Edições Loyola and Barcelona : Icara Editorial

Chico Whitaker, 2005b – *El desafío del Foro Social Mundial : Un Modo de Ver* ('The Challenge before the World Social Forum : A Way of Truth', in Spanish). São Paulo : Edições Loyola, and Barcelona : Icara editorial

Francisco Whitaker, 2005c – *Changer le Monde : Une (nouveau) mode d'emploi* ['Changing the World : A (New) Way', in French]. Paris : Les Editions de l'Atelier

Francisco Whitaker Ferreira, 2006 – *Towards a New Politics : What Future for the World Social Forum ?*. New Delhi : Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam Publications

Chico Whitaker, May 2007 - 'Crossroads do not always close roads (Reflection in continuity to Walden Bello)'; dt May 23 2007. Accessed vr 09.05.09 @ http://www.wsflibrary.org/index.php/Crossroads_do_not_always_close_roads

Chico Whitaker, 2007 – *A New Way of Changing the World*. Nairobi : World Council of Churches

Chico Whitaker, January 2012 – 'New Perspectives in the WSF Process', in *Alternatives International*, January 30 2012, accessed at www.alterinter.org/article3745.html?lang=fr

Chico Whitaker, 2012 – 'Crossroads Do Not Always Close Roads', in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – *World Social Forum : Critical Explorations*. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Chico Whitaker, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, and Bernard Cassen (independent essays), 2006 – 'The World Social Forum : Where Do We Stand and Where Are We Going ?', in Marlies Glasius, Mary Kaldor, and Helmut Anheier, eds, 2006 - *Global Civil Society 2005/6* (London, Thousand Oaks, and New Delhi : Sage), pp 64-89

WHRNet, 2005 – 'An Interview with Ticiana Studart, February 2005', available at : <http://www.whrnet.org/docs/interview-studart-0502.html>, accessed on February 13 2008

Patricia Willis, 2007 – 'A Conversation with Onyango Oloo at the WSF Nairobi 2007', in *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol 8 no 3, available at : <http://www.bridgew.edu/SOAS/jiws/April07/Willis.pdf>, accessed on June 9 2008

Ara Wilson, 1996 – 'Report : Lesbian Visibility and Sexual Rights at Beijing', in *Signs* 22 (Autumn), pp 214-218

Ara Wilson, 2007 – 'Feminism in the Space of the World Social Forum', in *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol 8 no 3, available at : <http://www.bridgew.edu/soas/jiws/April07/Wilson.pdf>, accessed ps on February 13 2008

Ara Wilson, 2012 – ‘Feminism in the Space of the World Social Forum’, in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, 2012 – World Social Forum : Critical Explorations. Volume 3 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Edward O Wilson, 1971 – The Insect Societies. Cambridge, Mass : Harvard University Press

Edward O Wilson, 1998 – Consilience : The Unity of Knowledge. New York : Vintage Books

Edward O Wilson and Bert Hölldobler, 1990 – The Ants. Cambridge, Mass : Harvard University Press

Raphaël Wintrebert, 2007 - Attac, la politique autrement ? [‘Attac, the political alternative ?’, in French]. Editions La Découverte

Women’s Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO), 2002 – ‘Planet Earth, meet Planeta Fêmea’, in WEDO News and Views, vol 15 no 1, p 5

Women’s International Coalition for Economic Justice (WICEJ), 2003 – Women’s Voices from Porto Alegre, I, January 25, available at : <http://www.wicej.addr.com/wsf03/note1.html>, accessed on February 13 2008

Leslie J Wood and Kelly Moore, 2002 – ‘Target Practice : Community Activism in a Global Era’, in Benjamin Shepard and Ronald Hayduk, eds, From ACT UP to the WTO : Urban Protest and Community Building in the Era of Globalization (London : Verso)

Theresa Wolfwood, 2004 – ‘Another World is Possible : Globalisation by the People’, in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 - World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : The Viveka Foundation)

World Bank, 2005 - African Development Indicators. Washington DC : World Bank Publications

World Dignity Forum, 2004 – The Making of the World Dignity Forum,. New Delhi : World Dignity Forum, Heinrich Böll Foundation, and National Conference of Dalit Organisations

World March of Women (WMW), 2002 – ‘The World March of Women at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, from January 31-February 5, 2002’, available at : <http://www.ffq.qc.ca/marche2000/en/fsm2002.html>, accessed on July 13 2005

World March of Women (WMW), 2003 – ‘2003 World Social Forum : Perspective of Women of the World March of Women’, available at : http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic.php?pagina=bal_march_mulher_ing, accessed ps on February 22 2008

World Social Forum (WSF), 2001 – ‘World Social Forum Charter of Principles’, available at : http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=4&cd_language=2, posted 08.06.2002, accessed ps on February 13 2008

World Social Forum (WSF), 2003 – ‘Panels’, available at : http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=7_2_1&cd_language=2, accessed ps on February 22 2008

World Social Forum (WSF), 2004c – ‘Methodology of WSF 2005’, available at : http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic.php?pagina=temas_fsm2005_ing, accessed on February 13 2008

World Social Forum (WSF), 2005b – ‘Global Feminism : Searching to Build a New Mentality’, available at : <http://wsf.amarc.org/pressrelease.php?action=shownews&id=214>, accessed on June 7 2005

World Social Forum (WSF), 2006 – ‘See the General Objectives Defined for WSF 2007’ available at : http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/noticias_01.php?cd_news=2253&cd_language=2, accessed on October 29 2006

World Social Forum (WSF) India, July 2002a – ‘WSF India Policy Statement : Charter of Principles - World Social Forum India’. 3 pp. Earlier available on the WSF India website www.wsfindia.org. Published in : Jai Sen with Madhuresh Kumar, compilers, August 2003 - [Are Other Worlds Possible ? The Open Space Reader on the World Social Forum and its Engagement with Empire](#), pp 29-31

World Social Forum (WSF) India, 2004a – ‘Structure of Indian Process’, available at : <http://www.wsfindia.org/?q=node/5>, accessed ps on February 22 2008

World Social Forum (WSF) India, 2004b – ‘India Working Organisations’, available at : <http://www.wsfindia.net/IWClst.php>, accessed ps on February 22 2008, discontinued / no longer available, js 25.11.2011

World Social Forum (WSF) International Office, October 2008 - [WSF Bulletin](#), dated October 7 2008; accessed js 15.10.08 at http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/download/2008-10-07-newsletter_EN.htm#2

World Social Forum (WSF) Office, nd – Untitled (List of US Groups Who Attended IC Meetings prior to 2003), copy obtained from Michael Leon Guerrero July 3 2009, who received the list from the WSF Office

World Social Forum (WSF) Organising Committee and World Social Forum International Council, June 2001 – ‘World Social Forum Charter of Principles’; dt June 10 2001. Revised and approved version of original April 2001 Charter. Available at http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.asp?id_menu=4&cd_language=2 and at http://opendemocracy.typepad.com/wsf/2005/02/previous_posts_.html (accessed ea 20.08.2009)

World Social Forum (WSF) Secretariat, 2002 – Minutes of the Meeting of the International Council of the WSF held on April 28–30 2002. Report available on http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=4_2_2_4&cd_language=2

World Social Forum (WSF) Technical Office, nd, c.2006 – ‘Report of the World Social Forum IC Meeting, Nairobi, Kenya (March 20-22 2006)’. Issued by the World Social Forum Technical Office, São Paulo, Brazil. Accessed js 01.12.2010 @ www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/download/relat_nairobi_eng.pdf

World Social Forum (WSF) Technical Office, nd, c.February 2007 – ‘Brief Report of the World

Social Forum IC Meeting, Nairobi, Kenya (January, from 26th to 27th, 2007) at Stadia Guest House (Kasarani)'. Issued by the World Social Forum Technical Office, São Paulo, Brazil

Angus Wright and Wendy Wolford, 2003 – To Inherit the Earth : The Landless Movement and the Struggle for a New Brazil. Oakland, CA : Food First Books

Tuomas Ylä-Anttila, 2005 - 'The World Social Forum and the Globalization of Social Movements and Public Spheres', in Ephemera, vol 5 no 2, pp 423-442

Grigory Zinoviev, 1922 – 'A Five-Years' Lesson', available at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/zinoviev/works/1922/11/07.htm>, accessed April 5 2008

Links referred to (other than those appearing within citations) :

<http://15october.net/>

www.activist-trauma.net

<http://www.adbusters.org/campaigns/occupywallstreet>

www.altspaces.net

<http://www.babels.org>

<http://www.barackobama.com/>

<http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=CACIMatBelem>

<http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-page.php?pageName=Learning%20from%20the%20US%20Social%20Forum>

<http://www.choike.org/PDFs/introduc.pdf>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1968>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2011%E2%80%932012_Spanish_protests

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communalism>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Communalism_in_South_Asia

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diggers>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Propaganda_during_the_Reformation

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhizome>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rhizome_disambiguation

<http://esf2004.net/en/tiki-index.php?page=AutonomousSpaceForESF2004>

<http://www.facebook.com/occupytheworld>

<http://fntg.org/about/index.html>

<http://www.forosocialfronterizo.blogspot.com/>

<http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/>

http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.php?id_menu=2&cd_language=2

<http://www.indiaagainstcorruption.org/index1.html>

www.indymedia.org.uk

www.indymedia.org.uk/en/2004/10/299292.html

<http://infrontandcenter.wordpress.com>

<http://www.jadaliyya.com/>

www.jwj.org

<http://www.metamute.org>

<http://motherearthrights.org/2010/04/27/world-peoples-conference-on-climate-change-and-the-rights-of-mother-earth/>

www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/space/hubproject.htm

www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/space/index.html

http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/pgaeurope/leiden/autonomous_space.htm

<http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/en/pgainfos/bulletin0.htm>

www.novox.ras.eu.org

www.October2011.org

<http://organize.ussf2010.org/content/future-world-social-forum-2-learning-us-social-forum-process-audio-recording>

<http://organize.ussf2010.org/news-stories>

<http://pma2010.org/resolutions>

http://projectsouth.mayfirst.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=9&Itemid=21

<http://openfsm.net/projects/sfexintercom/project-home>

<http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=EIOSCollective>

<http://www.redpepper.org.uk/>

www.rosalux.de

www.socialforum-berlin.de

http://www.tehelka.com/story_main35.asp?filename=Ne031107gujrat_sec.asp

<http://theconversation.edu.au/spain-dispatches-from-the-frontline-of-the-indignados-movement-7091>

<http://www.ussf2007.org/en/news>

<http://www.wiserearth.org/organization/view/40de2e805c5d0d776e4462faf2fe3de1>

<http://www.wombles.org.uk>

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cpPABLW6F_A

¹ Note : Since the author Whitaker is variously listed either by his proper first name Francisco or by his nickname Chico, we are here combining the entries to his work into one list, organised datewise.

Other Publications

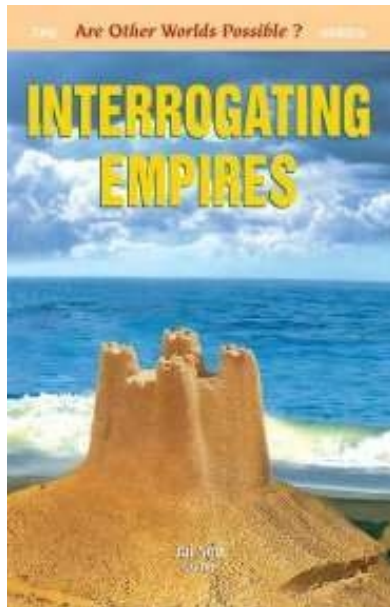
from OpenWord

and from CACIM and other associated publishers

From OpenWord

www.openword.in

Interrogating Empires



Jai Sen, ed - **Interrogating Empires**, Book 2 in the *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* series. New Delhi : OpenWord and Daanish Books (2011); <http://www.openword.in/interrogating-empires>

As much as empires exist out there, regulating our lives, they also exist within our minds. Unless we comprehend these empires as being not only 'out there' but also as within us, and locate ourselves in relation to them, there is no way in which we can even begin to understand the world, let alone imagine the changes that are required towards making it a more open, just, peaceful, and joyful world.

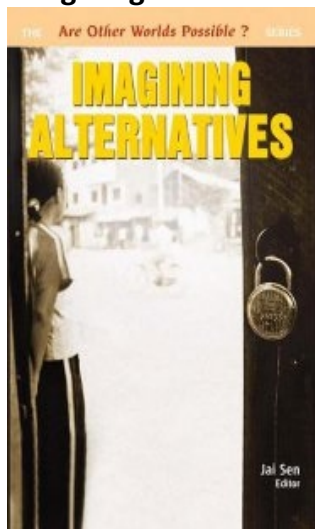
This book is a close look at some of the empires that govern our lives and that we are constantly socialised to believe in and accept, by society, by family, by education, by the market and the media, and by the institutions we are all part of at one point or another in our lives : The empires of patriarchy, casteism, racism, nationalism, and religious communalism - and where each of these is quite aside from what is popularly referred to as 'globalisation', even as they interlock with it.

Organised as five 'open spaces' of conversation and debate, each one distilled from the content of seminars organised at the University of Delhi, the Open Space Seminar Series, the book attempts to itself be an open space that challenges readers to engage with themselves and with the worlds around us. The debates also explicitly and implicitly raise the question, and concept, of *power* – of realms of power, of how power is exercised, and of the nature of power - and therefore also questions of emancipation and of liberation.

At the same time, since these are among the major themes or areas of concern of the World Social Forum, the debates also equip us to understand and take part in this important world institution in a far more informed way.

This book is a companion volume to *Talking New Politics* and *Imagining Alternatives*, Books 1 and 3 in the *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* series.

Imagining Alternatives



Jai Sen, ed - **Imagining Alternatives**, Book 3 in the *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* series. New Delhi : OpenWord and Daanish Books (2012); <http://www.openword.in/imagining-alternatives>

The history of the twentieth century actually makes it clear that a wide range of ideas have proved to be 'possible'. Aside from socialism, fascism and Nazism have also been proved to be possible... Instead of just talking about possibilities, we need to talk about desirability, and necessity. ... Politics is not merely the art of the possible; it is the science of the desirable, and of necessity.

- Dipankar Bhattacharya, General Secretary, CPI(ML) Liberation, India

People in social and political movements – especially those involved with the World Social Forum - quite commonly say that “Another world is possible”; a world very different from the one we today know. But what do they mean by this ? What ‘other world/s’ ? Do such worlds only exist in some people’s imaginations ? And even if they are real, how do we get into these other worlds ? And anyway, are such other worlds necessarily more open and more just than the one we know ?

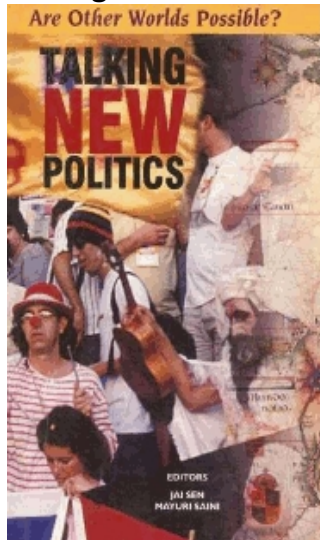
This book, the third in the *Are Other World Possible ?* book series and preferably read along with the other two (*Talking New Politics* and *Interrogating Empires*), critically explores three of the most important ‘other worlds’ that human beings have so far tried building : Socialism, Cyberspace, and the University.

The *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* books have come out of a series of seminars organised in late 2003 at the University of Delhi called the ‘Open Space Seminar Series’ that was conceptualised as preparation for the World Social Forum held in Mumbai, India, in January 2004.

Publications by CACIM and Other Associated Publishers

All publications are available in hard copy from CACIM and many in soft copy @ www.cacim.net

Talking New Politics



Jai Sen and Mayuri Saini, eds – **Talking New Politics**. Book 1 in the *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* series. New Delhi : Zubaan Books (January 2005); <http://www.openword.in/talking-new-politics>

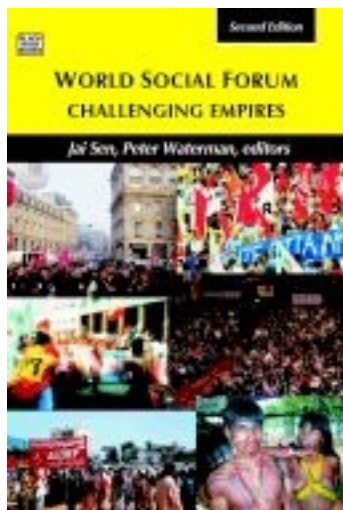
In the run-up to the fourth World Social Forum held in Mumbai, India, in January 2004, civil activists and students organised a major series of seminars at Delhi University to discuss the Forum and its politics. The 'Open Space Seminar Series', as it came to be called, picked up on the idea of the Forum as a relatively free and open space, where all kinds of ideas could meet and be discussed.

This book, the first in a series of three that explore the new ideas generated by the discussions that took place, comprises of chapters based on the presentations made by academics and activists during the seminars, as well as the discussions arising from the presentations. Can the World Social Forum help us to conceptualise and actualise a new politics ? Can this new politics be free from violence – of all kinds ? Can the experience and knowledge of great movements such as the movement for the environment, and the women's movements, contribute to the creation of a new politics ? How can such a politics be sustained ?

The essays in this book, written in an easy and accessible style, offer the reader different and complex ways of understanding the processes that have helped shape the World Social Forum and the new politics that seem to be emerging, and what all this represents, for life, society, and politics.

The other two volumes in this series, collectively titled *Are Other Worlds Possible ?*, are *Interrogating Empires* and *Imagining Alternatives*, and have been separately co-published by OpenWord and Daanish Books (2011 and 2012, respectively).

World Social Forum : Challenging Empires



Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds – **World Social Forum : Challenging Empires**, updated second edition, Montréal : Black Rose Books (2009); <http://www.blackrosebooks.net/wsf.htm>

Experimenting with a politics that can cope with uncertainty... This comprehensive volume provides a glimpse into the wide-ranging discussions, debates, and arguments that have gone into making the World Social Forum one of the more prominent platforms of alternative ideas and practices in the present world. Building on the very well received First Edition (Viveka Foundation, New Delhi, 2004), this comprehensively revised Second Edition in 2008-9 was updated to include coverage of Social Forums that took place till the summer of 2007.

This stellar collection of essays will bring you into the middle of the debates about the most important locus of anti-systemic activity today, the World Social Forum.

Indispensable reading - Immanuel Wallerstein, Fernand Braudel Center, Binghamton, New York, USA

A stupendous collection of essays, documents and statements, a critical self-consideration of the WSF process... an absolutely unmissable book for anyone interested in the WSF – Milan Rai, anti-militarist activist and author, London, UK

A useful array of writings on the entire WSF process — the global context in which it emerged, the manner in which different movements and ideologies have interacted and shaped this process and the manner in which it has itself grown in the past four years - Aniket Alam, in *The Hindu*

A Political Programme for the World Social Forum ? Democracy, Substance and Debate in the Bamako Appeal and the Global Justice Movements

**A Political Programme
for the World Social Forum ?
Democracy, Substance and Debate
in the Bamako Appeal and the Global Justice Movements**

A Reader



Jai Sen and Madhuresh Kumar
with
Patrick Bond and Peter Waterman
January 2007



CACIM

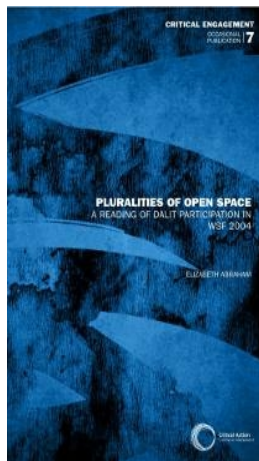


Jai Sen and Madhuresh Kumar with Patrick Bond and Peter Waterman - **A Political Programme for the World Social Forum ? Democracy, Substance and Debate in the Bamako Appeal and the Global Justice Movements. A Reader.** CACIM, New Delhi and CCS, Durban (January 2007); available @ <http://www.cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications> and @ www.nu.ac.za/ccs

The immediate purpose of this Reader, published in January 2007, was to facilitate critical engagement with the content and the process of a document called 'The Bamako Appeal', at a workshop then being organised at the World Social Forum at Nairobi, Kenya, titled 'Revisiting the Bamako Appeal : Issues of Democracy and Substance in world movement', on January 21 2007. It did so by bringing together not only the intense and wide-ranging debate that had taken place around the Appeal over the year after it was announced (on January 19 2006, at Bamako, Mali) but in order to locate the Bamako Appeal in history, also several key documents in history and some discussion around them. It is therefore also a unique reference document.

The historical documents that the editors have chosen to feature in the Reader are the Communist Manifesto (1848), the Bandung Final Communiqué (1955), two key documents authored by the Zapatistas (1996 and 2006), and the Charter of Principles of the World Social Forum (2001). Also included are the so-called 'Porto Alegre Manifesto' that was announced at the end of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in January 2005, and two of the 'Calls' made by the Assembly of Social Movements that has come to be held and/or in relation to during the WSF (2002 and 2003); and the summary of another related major meeting in 2006. The editors had also wanted to include the Havana Declaration from the Tricontinental Meeting held there in 1966, but were unable to find a soft copy of that in time for inclusion here.

Pluralities of Open Space : A Reading of Dalit Participation in WSF 2004



Elizabeth Abraham – Pluralities of Open Space : A Reading of Dalit Participation in WSF 2004.

Final paper as CACIM Forum Fellow 2008-9. Volume 7 in *Critical Engagement* - CACIM's Occasional Publications Programme (May 2010); available @ <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications/Elizabeth+Abraham>

The concept of 'open space' adopted by the World Social Forum (WSF) made it more than just an 'anti- globalisation platform'. It moved it in the direction of a more open new politics of diversity and pluralism. The idea that there cannot be a single counter narrative to the system of oppression, and the recognition of diversity and pluralism, were inevitable prerequisites for fostering the new politics. It was an acknowledgement of diverse forms of struggles and movements that were taking place in different parts of the world.

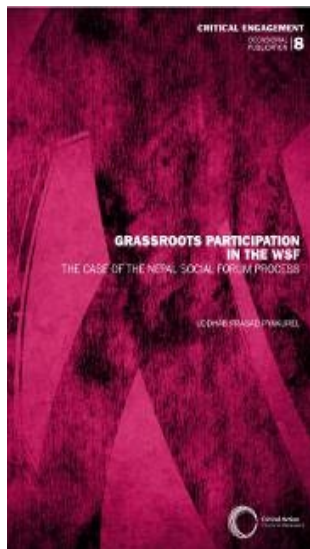
The concept of open space has been much discussed in the debates and literature that evolved around the WSF. Most of the deliberations have centred on the linearity of the 'open space', whether the space was controlled top-down or bottom-up, the grammar and language of the concept, the liminality of the space, the indeterminacy of the process, etc.

The Mumbai 2004 WSF is celebrated for its radical shift from earlier Forums and for the celebration of diversities. The relevance of open space to silenced communities is therefore an important domain for exploration. The monograph attempts to see the openness of 'open space'. Is the openness limited to the participation or representation of different groups ? Or is it defined through the interaction and intercommunication of different possible worlds ? Or is the Forum just a space for showcasing different groups and movements ?

Immediately after WSF 2004, most of the writings marked the significant political presence of dalits through seminars, demonstrations, and cultural shows. While dalit presence in the Indian socio-economic and cultural sphere is marginal, what was the significance of dalit interaction with the WSF's open space ? This question is all the more relevant as the WSF took place in a space where deeply entangled upper caste and dalit histories confront each other.

The present study is an exploration of the way the concept of open space was encountered by the dalit section of Indian society, and how the Forum responded to the voices of dalit movements in the country.

Grassroots Participation in WSF : The Case of the Nepal Social Forum Process



Uddhab Prasad Pyakurel – **Grassroots Participation in WSF : The Case of the Nepal Social Forum Process**. Final Paper as CACIM Forum Fellow 2008-09. Volume 8 in *Critical Engagement* - CACIM's Occasional Publications Programme (May 2010); available @ <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications/Uddhab+Prasad+Pyakurel>

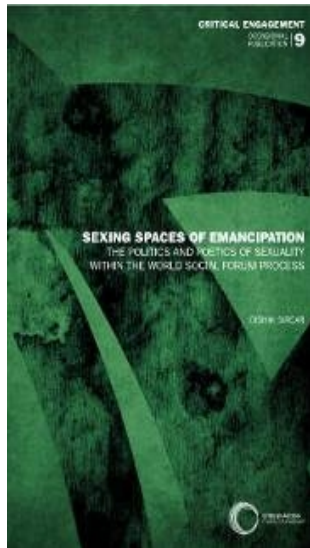
The idea and importance of ‘participation’ came to the fore in the 1960s when contributors like Paulo Freire started advocating a radical reorientation of the whole process of generating knowledge so that the poor and marginalised would be empowered to “generate their own knowledge”. There are various movements in the world today campaigning for a redefinition of the concept of participation, with the aim of transforming it from a hitherto ritualistic to a more real (enthusiastic) participation. The World Social Forum (WSF) is one such global movement, aiming to be more inclusive of those who have most directly borne the brunt of imperialist and neoliberal forces. Though the WSF process is a young one, it has achieved great success within a short period. Credit can be given to its Charter of Principles which focuses on it being an ‘open space’. That is why movement groups and individuals viewed it as a process of global democratic dialogue where, in principle, anyone can who adheres to the WSF’s Charter of Principles can participate on an equal footing, and with equal access to influence and the shaping of alternatives.

At the same time, observing the list of participants in various WSFs, the question of participation from grassroots groups in relation to those who are associated with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) has been frequently raised. The idea of the Forum as an ‘open space’ has also been widely debated. Such critiques seemed to acquire a solid basis when research disclosed that the largest groups amongst the participants of the WSF are not from the grassroots. Not only the critics but also some of the WSF activists have started wondering whether the WSF can be termed an ‘open space’ or not.

Even the Mumbai WSF, considered the most inclusive and participatory WSF till date in terms of the characteristics of participation, is not free of the question of whether the dalits, adivasis, and vernacular groups attended the meeting with their own spontaneous will or whether they were mobilised or even ‘taken’ by the NGOs just to make up the numbers in the Forum.

With this background, this study tries to engage with the very real challenge of preserving the WSF’s open space principle with its assumption of equal access on an equal footing for a democratic dialogue.

Sexing Spaces of Emancipation : The Politics and Poetics of Sexuality Within The World Social Forum Process



Oishik Sircar – **Sexing Spaces of Emancipation : The Politics and Poetics of Sexuality Within The World Social Forum Process**. Final Paper as CACIM Forum Fellow 2008-2009. Volume 9 in *Critical Engagement* - CACIM's Occasional Publications Programme (May 2010); available @ <http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications/Oishik+Sircar>

The World Social Forum (WSF), which began in 2001 in Porto Alegre in Brazil, is an initiative committed to resisting injustice not just by using the political language of rights but also through the aesthetic idioms of art, indigenous knowledge, and oral histories and cultures. The WSF process creates a global space for solidarity building and reflection not hitherto available to movements across the world. This renders imperative the need to engage with the process and to continue to refine it. This is not because the WSF will completely transform the world but because it makes us realise that the foundations required for effecting transformation can be built through solidarity.

However, lest we end up romanticising the WSF as an artefact, it is necessary that we rigorously critique it and the ideas that it stands for. This critique is not to discredit the WSF, but to be able to work through its drawbacks and overcome its in-built biases.

There can be several indices for measuring the solidarity-quotient of the WSF and one such register is what can be called the 'lens of marginality'. This lens can be used to gauge how well the most marginalised find visibility and recognition within the WSF space. The 'lens of marginality' then recognises the cruel reality of in-built hierarchies within spaces of promised emancipation. One way of identifying this hierarchy – how and how much it exists within the WSF space – can be through the story of sexuality's articulation within this space, by understanding the context in which sexuality appeared on the WSF stage, especially because it finds no mention in its Charter of Principles (2001 and 2004), or in later documents like the Manifesto of Porto Alegre (2005) and the Bamako Appeal (2006).

The story of sexuality within all spaces of solidarity building is fraught with opposition, laden with premonition, and yet empowered through its ability for subversion. The idea behind this monograph is to offer a critical reading of how sexuality inhabits 'spaces of emancipation' like the WSF. Although the WSF (and its Indian avatars) will be the sites of inquiry, the essay attempts to establish commonality in the trajectory that the articulation of sexuality tends to take within other emancipatory sites like UN conferences internationally and women's

conferences in India. It offers a mapping of sexuality and sexual rights articulation across these diverse locations through space and time, to tease out the machinations of solidarity-politics in an era of liberal populism.

The WSF and the Debate on Alternative Development in India



Janaki Srinivasan – **The WSF and the Debate on Alternative Development in India**. Final paper as CACIM Forum Fellow 2008-9. Volume 10 in *Critical Engagement* - CACIM's Occasional Publications Programme (May 2010); available @ <http://www.cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications/Janaki+Srinivasan>

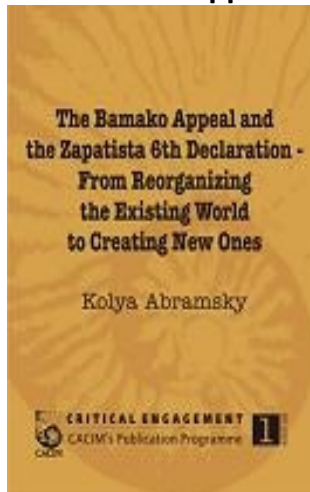
In 1975 the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation brought out *What Now : Another Development*, a report widely held as bringing into focus the questioning of mainstream conceptions of development and calling for alternative principles, strategies, and content of development. Not only did its concerns carry the imprint of debates regarding the inequities of the international system, given the context of the Cold War and decolonisation, it also gave voice to the then emerging concerns over ecological consequences, the need for structural transformation within societies, and the propriety of universalistic definitions of development.

A quarter of a century later the first World Social Forum (WSF) meet was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001, with the ringing slogan forever to be associated with it – ‘Another World is Possible’. This slogan was meant to counter the orthodoxy – entrenched the world over since the collapse of the socialist bloc – that ‘There is No Alternative’ (TINA) to neoliberal globalisation. The WSF was envisioned as a “permanent process of seeking and building alternatives”. Indeed, one of the precursors of the WSF was ‘The World Forum for Alternatives’, a meet organised by intellectuals in January 2000 parallel to the annual World Economic Forum in Davos. The WSF itself is a product of the wave of mass anti-globalisation movements which emerged globally after the mid 1990s as a reaction to the multiple ill-effects of neoliberal globalisation. The search for alternatives followed from the need for resistance, and as an attempt to further deepen resistance. Hence, the projects of resistance and alternatives are linked, and this constitutes “the critical utopia” of the WSF. In this sense, the WSF is all about alternatives.

This monograph seeks to engage with one specific regional dynamic of this ‘global’ search for alternatives : The debate over alternative development in India. The period of the WSF process in India is a useful lens to examine the main contours of this debate, and the role played by the WSF is in itself a question worth exploring. This paper first examines the debate

over development as it panned out in the post second world war world and then locates the debate in the Indian context as well as the WSF within this debate. It goes on to examine the deliberations over the WSF India process and outlines the main contours of conceptions of alternative development as articulated by a selected set of movements. Based on this, the paper engages with the key theoretical frameworks through which these ideas are conventionally processed and interrogates the efficacy of these frameworks.

The Bamako Appeal and the Zapatista 6th Declaration



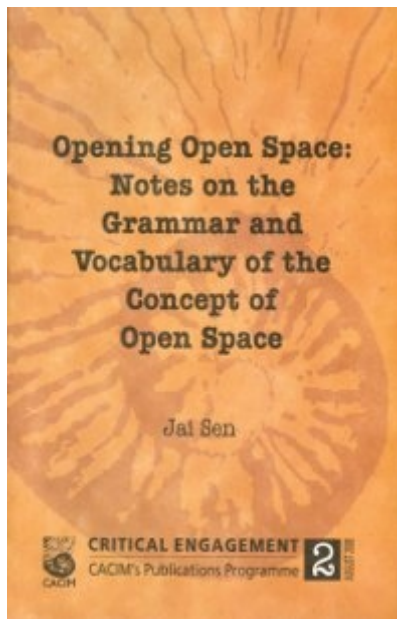
Kolya Abramsky - **The Bamako Appeal and the Zapatista 6th Declaration**. Volume 1 in *Critical Engagement* – CACIM's Occasional Publications Programme (August 2008); available @ <http://www.cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications>

Between summer 2005 and winter 2006, emancipatory global movements produced two far-reaching documents, the Bamako Appeal and the Zapatista 6th Declaration.

Unrecorded by the world's mainstream media, these documents - both aimed to raise hope in bleak times - slowly and quietly began to circulate around the world. Both documents attempted to understand how local, national, regional and global structures and processes interact with one another. Both called for some degree of confrontation with the existing order of a capitalist world-system infatuated with militarism and violence. Both sought to provoke long-term questions and paths of action, aimed at the construction of viable and lasting alternatives to capitalism. Both dealt with the thorny but crucial question of how local struggles relate to wider global processes, how the particular relates to the universal. Finally, both documents aimed at a wide global audience, and aimed to circulate as far and wide as possible, linking those already in struggle with one another as well as inspiring new processes of resistance.

As such, both documents were significant contributions that emancipatory movements around the world have felt inspired by, and were deemed worthy of translating into a wide range of languages, debating, and acting upon the texts. Despite their broad similarities however, the Bamako Appeal and the Zapatista 6th Declaration were also substantially different. They were premised in different understandings of the social relations that shape our lives in today's capitalist world-system, and consequently offered substantially different insights and suggestions to those trying to find their way towards collectively imagining and constructing more humane worlds than the one in which we currently live. By critically comparing them, Kolya Abramsky makes a significant contribution to such debate.

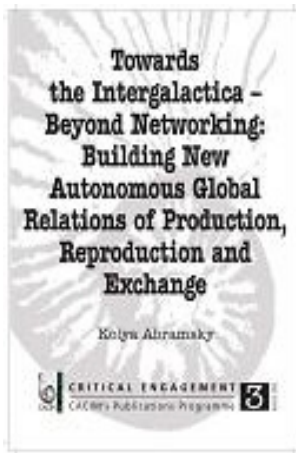
Opening open space : Notes on the grammar and vocabulary of the concept of open space



Jai Sen - **Opening open space : Notes on the grammar and vocabulary of the concept of open space.** (May 17 2007 version.) Volume 2 in *Critical Engagement* – CACIM's Occasional Publications Programme (August 2008); available @ <http://www.cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications>

Drawing both on the author's successive work in architecture, urban planning, socio-political movement, and the World Social Forum, and the work of several others, this paper attempts to critically engage with the increasingly widely used concept of *open space* (which is what the protagonists of the WSF like to describe it as, as a mode of social and political organising). Arguing that open, space, horizontality, and networking are now emerging as general tendencies in the organisation of human social relations, and that the WSF is a major historical experiment in this idea, the paper seeks to open up the concept towards a more critical understanding of it – but also, since the idea of the WSF as an open space is under increasing criticism, with the aim of not seeing the baby thrown out with the bathwater. While doing so, this working draft of this paper also attempts to explore the vocabulary and grammar of a practice of open space, and to draw out some organising principles for this practice, for discussion.

Towards Intergalactica. Beyond Networking : Building New Autonomous Global Relations of Production, Reproduction and Exchange



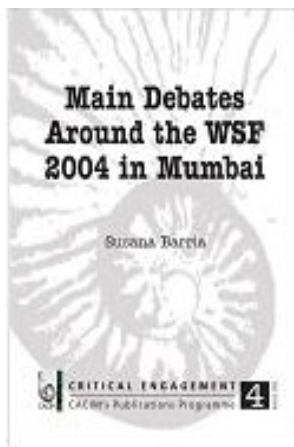
Kolya Abramsky - **Towards Intergalactica. Beyond Networking : Building New Autonomous Global Relations of Production, Reproduction and Exchange.** Volume 3 in *Critical Engagement* – CACIM’s Occasional Publications Programme (August 2008); available @ <http://www.cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications>

In 1996 and 1997, Zapatista Intergalacticas took place in Mexico and the Spanish state. These large international gatherings aimed at weaving a global network of grassroots struggles. They had a profound effect on inspiring and galvanising a major new circulation of global struggles. And once again, in the summer of 2005 the Zapatistas issued their 6th Declaration of the Lacandona Jungle, calling for a Third Intergalactic Encuentro, “from below and to the left”.

The call came at a moment in which two seemingly contradictory trends were taking shape within global networks of struggle. On the one hand, these networks, together with the War on Terror and food/energy/financial crises, have provoked a profound loss of legitimacy for established institutions of power. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organisation all find themselves in the midst of deep crises. And, so too the US state and its military apparatus also face a major crisis of legitimacy, both beyond and within the US itself. Yet, on the other hand, the global networks seem incapable of slowing and reversing the rapid lurch towards an authoritarian global politics based on fear, coercion, militarism, racism and religious fundamentalisms. Apparently, they are reaching the limits of their ability to move forward, and are finding it increasingly difficult to go beyond their unexpectedly successful assaults on major summits of many of global capitalism’s key institutions (as well as large, but less successful, anti-war protests) in a way that deepens and expands the existing networks in order to make them functional enough to be able to go beyond protest in order to create alternative social relations.

By taking the time to build a solid and meaningful global process, based on broad participation from different struggles around the world, the Zapatista Intergalactica may offer the possibility to collectively create a global space for struggles to address these three concerns. Who might participate in building the Intergalactica and on what basis ? And how might it come about and around which political contents ? There are many good reasons to believe that the 6th Declaration could have as important an inspirational and catalytic effect as the previous Intergalacticas did. The Zapatistas have set the ball rolling. However, the Intergalactica is not just the responsibility of the Zapatistas but of all those who identify with it throughout the world. Kolya Abramsky urges that we collectively respond to their invitation by creating a space for collectively moving beyond protest towards creating lasting alternative social relations of (re)production, exchange and livelihood.

Main Debates Around the WSF 2004 in Mumbai

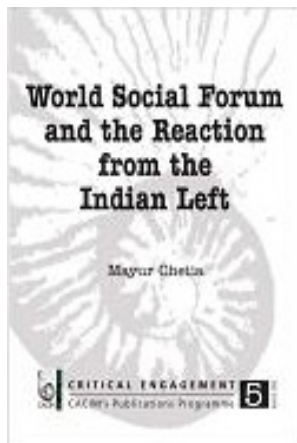


Susana Barria and O J Nelson - **Main Debates Around the WSF 2004 in Mumbai**. Volume 4 in *Critical Engagement* – CACIM's Occasional Publications Programme (August 2008); available @ <http://www.cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications>

In this paper, Susana Barria and O J Nelson discuss specific debates around the World Social Forum 2004 in Mumbai and try to extract reflections and lessons related to the World Social Forum process's limitations and shortcomings. They look at the context in which the debates emerged, discussing the first steps of the World Social Forum in India and the process which lead to the Asian Social Forum in Hyderabad, and their legacy to the World Social Forum 2004 and the various other events that took place at the end of January 2004 in Mumbai, and their contributions to the debates. Are the ideas of the World Social Forum at all adapted to the Indian context ? Was the World Social Forum India inclusive and what role did its structure play in this matter ? What was the quality of the participation to the World Social Forum 2004, and which are the difficulties related to this issue ? What are the outputs that were expected, that could have reasonably be expected, and tht have concretely been created ? Are the World Social Forum India events economically sustainable ?

These different debates are discussed in terms of the perspective of the expectations and frustrations for key actors in these different processes, and on the ways that the fluid ideas of the World Social Forum were transformed into action, in order to open trails for further reflection on 'the way forward for World Social Forum India'.

World Social Forum and the Reaction from the Indian Left



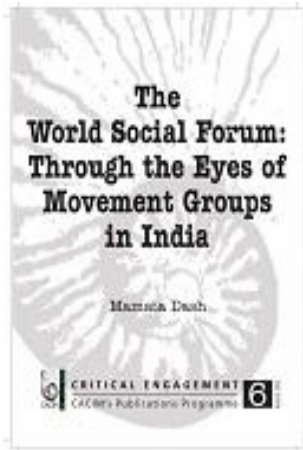
Mayur Chetia – **World Social Forum and the Reaction from the Indian Left**. Volume 6 in *Critical Engagement* - CACIM's Occasional Publications Programme (August 2008); available @ <http://www.cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications>

In this paper, Mayur Chetia examines how the specific culture and configuration of the

Indian organised left shaped the World Social Forum process in India. The advent of the World Social Forum produced an unprecedented upheaval within the progressive circles of India and the history of the World Social Forum's relation to the Left in India has been a history of paradoxes and ironies. On the one hand the WSF brought hope, optimism, and energy to a large section of the progressive forces; on the other, it raised doubts, anxiety, and confusion within another segment of the organised left of the Indian political society.

This paper examines different conceptions of the World Social Forum - as an open space organisation, as an event, and as a process. It looks deeply into different positions within the organised left, the arguments provided for and against it, and the modes of participation by the left parties in this debate, and key controversies for the Left : The question of violence, a determinist view of history, and the 'funding of non-governmental organisations' question as well as the relation of the organised left with ideologies associated with the World Social Forum, such as Post-Modernism, Revisionism, and Trotskyism. This paper seeks to unearth the ways left activists in India understood and acted upon the World Social Forum and its associate processes and looks for theoretical engagement on these issues.

The World Social Forum : Through the Eyes of Movement Groups in India



Mamata Dash - **The World Social Forum : Through the Eyes of Movement Groups in India.** Volume 6 in *Critical Engagement* - CACIM's Occasional Publications Programme (August 2008); available @ <http://www.cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Publications>

This study looks at popular notions, beliefs, and practices related to the World Social Forum from the points of view of 'people's movement groups' in India. It is a discussion around their struggles, and the nature and extent of their engagement with, support for, and strength from the World Social Forum. It documents how these groups have viewed the WSF, their experiences in participating or not participating in it, whether and how it has helped in furthering their struggles on the ground, and their expectations from such a vast forum.

Based on discussions with the representatives and key individuals of seven major people's movement groups working with indigenous communities, Dalits, and landless masses – all communities fighting against global capital and imperialist forces and for larger socio-economic and political space in the country - it tries to address several questions of key relevance to the World Social Forum as a world process : How do these people's movement understand the World Social Forum ? What significance does the World Social Forum hold for people and activists who face the threat of state repression ? To what extent has the World Social Forum, as an open space, or as a movement, or a process, helped in fostering these communities' struggle for larger socio-political and economic space ? What has a process, an event, and a movement like the World Social Forum meant for all the struggling masses ? How do groups who wage valiant battles to protect their socio-political identities find themselves in

the space that the World Social Forum offers ?

OpenWord (<http://openword.in>) is a new publishing initiative towards promoting open expression, critical engagement, and a spirit, culture, and practice of critical openness. It is the publishing arm of **cacim.net** (India Institute for Critical Action : Centre in Movement; www.cacim.net) and has grown out of the experiences of the members and associates of cacim.net and their attempts to practise and promote criticality in socio-political and cultural action and movement. We do so on the understanding that critical thinking and critical engagement, and, through this, critical action contribute to broader and more effective transformational social power.

Starting with work in the area of social and political movements, **OpenWord** plans to publish in different fields over time, looking beyond the boundaries of political, economic, cultural, and academic dogma. In particular, it attempts to privilege authors from among those who have been and are structurally marginalised in, among other areas, the production of knowledges, and, in particular, indigenous peoples, Dalits, and women.

OpenWord seeks, in particular, to reach out to young people – students, activists, workers, thinkers, and artists. Through commissioning and/or sourcing work from all walks of life and depths of experiences, it aims at producing publications that challenge us to think beyond the accepted boundaries of knowledge and are yet enjoyable.

OpenWord aims to practise and promote a culture of open publishing. It critically engages with emerging practices and principles in this area, such as copyleft, open, and non-conventional models of content ownership regimes. **OpenWord** will constantly attempt to push these boundaries and spell out ever-clearer and more empowering principles in the crucial areas of the authorship, ownership, and dissemination of knowledge.

Initially based in India, **OpenWord** is exploring the possibilities of building a transcultural, global Editorial Collective and to publish material from across the world over time. It will actively seek to be transnational, transcultural, and transcommunal in its approach and in the body of work it produces, contributing to a planetary awareness and consciousness. With the help of this network, it will constantly seek existing and new thinking from all parts of the world.



<http://www.openword.in>
openword@openword.in

A division of CACIM

A-3 Defence Colony

New Delhi 110 024

India

cacim@cacim.net