WHEN THE EMPIRE FALLS: THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM, BETWEEN PROTEST AND POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

by

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Abstract

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by

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Within the last decade, a new generation of activists has emerged to protest the increasing power of supranational financial institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, International Monetary Fund and the World Economic Forum, and the accompanying deterioration of democratic structures and institutions in various regions of the world. The World Social Forum (WSF) was founded as a site in which these new social and political actors are attempting to move beyond protest and toward the construction of alternative, radically democratic social and political institutions and advocacy networks.

This dissertation is a study of the WSF from the perspective of political organization, which problematizes the decades-old issue of the fragmentation of left-wing activism and corresponding debates over centralization and autonomy. It looks at the three most prominent groups in the WSF—anarchist and autonomist social movements, NGOs and other "civil society" actors and left political parties—in terms of their respective theories of social change and democratic praxis. It understands each of these groups as contemporary political organizational forms--with political assumptions, functions and power resources--that share a common opposition to neoliberal globalization, yet operate in contention with each other over issues of agency and social change.

In addition, the text analyzes the WSF itself as a political organizational form, identified as an “open space” rather than an organization. It provides a theoretical discussion of the WSF’s open space paradigm, both in terms of the way the space is theorized and produced, as well as the various concepts of openness its constituents employ. It argues that current conceptions and practice of the WSF open space tend to reiterate liberal democratic political forms rather than contest them. Given the WSF’s objective to oppose neoliberalism, it recommends that the WSF adopt the alternative view of the open space conceived by autonomist social movement actors under the rubric of “horizontalism.”

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Dedicated to William L. Jukes, Jr.

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Introduction

With the end of the Cold War, changes in the structure of national sovereignty and the emergence of supranational institutions have been accompanied by a redistribution of power among states, market actors and civil society. Liberals and conservatives alike agree that while globalization has opened new horizons for the betterment of humankind, it has also ushered in a new set of difficulties, from the decay of democratic structures and associational life, especially in the West, to the ominous problem of uneven development--not only in the global South, but in advanced industrial societies as well. An expansive complex of non-electoral organizations—philanthropic, non-governmental (NGO), social movement—has emerged to meet these challenges. Not only do they play a significant role in the direct provision of social services, but they are calling into question the predominant neoliberal model of citizenship and economic development that has failed to ensure the security and well-being of masses of people around the globe, from New Orleans to Darfur and beyond.

The World Social Forum (WSF) is a collection of such organizations--a space in which grassroots activists, church groups, NGOs and civic and political leaders meet to discuss contemporary social problems and, within the context of globalization, develop new strategies to address them. In concrete terms, it is an annual meeting--often called a process–that takes place over the course of four to five days, involving hundreds of workshops and conferences on topics varying from indigenous rights to human trafficking to resistance against U.S. imperialism, and so on. The Forum was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil for the first three years (2001 to 2003) and moved to India in 2004.

It moved back to Porto Alegre in 2005, and in 2006 operated concurrently at three sites: Caracas (Venezuela), Bamako (Mali) and Karachi (Pakistan). The event itself is organized by the WSF Organizing Committee and overseen by an International Committee, both of which are comprised of public intellectuals, activists and NGO and church representatives from around the world.

Although its "success" is impossible to measure given its short lifespan, the WSF has grown from a modest assembly of 20,000 participants to a large-scale international event attracting some 160,000 persons from over 120 countries. It has also become a global network. In addition to its annual meetings, local and regional social forums (over 200 total) now meet in over 100 countries, spanning six continents. Local and regional forums operate within their specific locales, but maintain ties to the WSF through information sharing (via the Internet) and adherence to the WSF Charter of Principles. The Forum has also attracted a broad variety of public figures, including heads of state, Nobel Prize winners and renowned intellectuals and activists. It played a central role in calling for the largest anti-war protest in history and is the site from which countless demonstrations, direct actions, counter-summits (conferences) and lobbying campaigns have been organized and implemented on local and regional levels. In this respect, the World Social Forum has functioned as a kind of clearinghouse for activists and NGOs to coordinate their projects and actions and create issue-based and direct action networks.

The WSF grew out of the Global Justice Movement (GJM). It is part of the upsurge over the last several decades against the increasing concentration of power in international financial institutions, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Economic Forum (WEF), and the devastating effects of their policies

on people around the world, especially the poor. Initially, the WSF was conceived as a counter-summit to the WEF in Davos, Switzerland and a mechanism through which the GJM could develop its struggle(s) in positive terms. It was a response to criticisms of the GJM's tendency to elevate protest to the status of politics and failure to articulate social and political objectives beyond resistance and opposition. While the movement raised public awareness of the adverse effects of corporate globalization, critics (to both the right and left of the political spectrum) contended that it still appeared as a loose, incoherent constellation of local and regional struggles that were short-sighted and oftentimes short-lived. The WSF was developed to complement the movement's protest activities with the more practical and intellectual project of constructing participatory democratic institutions and economic and social alternatives to neoliberal models of globalization. Activist-journalist Naomi Klein and Mark Engler (of Foreign Policy in Focus) both describe the Forum in these terms:

> If Seattle was, for many people, the coming-out party of a resistance movement, then, according to Soren Ambrose, policy analyst with 50 Years Is Enough, 'Porto Alegre is the coming-out party for the existence of serious thinking about alternatives.' The emphasis was on alternatives coming from the countries experiencing most acutely the negative effects of globalization: mass migration of people, widening wealth disparities, weakening political power (Klein, 2005).

> a place that invites people who sacrifice their energies to these movements to devise transnational strategies for confronting globalized problems. Against the riches of Davos, there is need for a place that draws legitimacy from its participatory character…a unique opportunity for setting an alternative agenda for globalization (Engler, 2005).

In essence, the WSF was established so that the GJM and its constituents could begin to identify the fault-lines of existing power arrangements (on a variety of scales) and answer the fundamental question of when the Empire falls, what will take its place?

The Significance of Political Organization

While the GJM and WSF were indeed founded in reaction to shifting power arrangements associated with globalization, they should also be understood as a response to the failures of Old and New Left methods of contesting them. The innovative structure and organizational practices of both the GJM and WSF were largely enabled by (and modeled after) new technologies like the Internet, increasing transnational migration, the strengthening of international institutions, such as the G8 and World Economic Forum (WEF) and the proliferation of international NGOs. They are the brainchildren of a new generational of activists who, like their counterparts on the New Left, eschew hierarchical organization and authority in all its forms and seek to establish more participatory democratic forms of organizing and decision-making; i.e., to disrupt existing power relations consolidated in corporations and electoral political regimes and reorient political power toward the grassroots. Unlike the New Left, however, the GJM ostensibly rejects identity politics--for some, in favor of issue-based politics that involve more heterogeneous sets of political actors, and for others, towards a more generalized anti-authoritarianism. In both cases, these movement and NGO actors acknowledge the intersection of various forms of oppression—manifest at the site of particular social problems or in relation to capitalism itself. Given its global nature, the movement also struggles with questions of scale, in regards to the extent of some socials problems as well as strategies of resistance. For the WSF, scale remains a major organizational concern: activists tend to focus less on interests and rights associated with race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation (as organizing principles) than on developing relationships

among local, regional and global actors and institutions and navigating the new geography of political action/resistance.

The WSF's organizational form—the "open space"—is derived from the GJM's practice of "horizontal" (i.e., non-hierarchical) organizing, which attempts to avoid privileging any one participant group or individual and mitigate existing (and potential) inequalities among them by embracing difference rather than ignoring or suppressing it. The paradigm of the open space was based on organizers' desire to be as inclusive as possible—to create a (physical and virtual) space open to a broad variety of individuals, groups and movements, bound by their common opposition to neoliberal globalization. The purpose of the space is to enable the coordination of large-scale, collective efforts aimed at constructing alternative political practices and social institutions. The idea was that such alternatives must be formulated in a non-coercive environment—one that prefigures the political communities and social forms that the WSF and its constituents seek to create. As Michael Menser (2005) put it:

> The great strength of this bottom-up mode of organizing is that…it permits incredible inclusiveness among groups on the so-called Left…the emergence of this phenomenon, as well as its spread and entrenchment, gives those on the Left both a referent and a glimpse of the manner in which the global justice movement of movements might sit down together and collectively ponder its tactics and visions as well as its capacities and strategies to bring about the future harked towards in the slogan 'Another World is Possible.'

Menser explains that the "Another World is Possible" slogan encapsulates the key, underlying problematic of the WSF open space: "how are we to create a politics that is capable of confronting neo-liberalism—and various other forms of domination—on many fronts, while creating institutions, organizations, relationships, cultural practices and so forth which are shaped by desires for democratic participation, human rights and social

justice but do not exclude other possible practices that also aim to cultivate these norms and goals?" Although umpteen proposals for actions and projects have emerged from within the WSF over its six-year lifespan, the most significant development for forum participants (and for the global left) involve contests over the open space itself, through which a variety of views regarding political organization have been debated, practiced and modeled. As Klein (2001) pointed out:

> So the question is, if there needs to be more structure, what kind should it be? An international political party that pushes to democratize world government? New national parties? How about a network of city and town councils committed to introducing participatory democracy? Should it exist entirely outside of electoral politics and concentrate exclusively on creating counter-powers to the state?...these questions are more than tactical, they are strategic and often philosophical…while there is near consensus on the need to sit down and start sorting through these questions, there is precious little on the next set of obvious questions: at whose table? And who gets to decide?...the World Social Forum was by far the most ambitious attempt so far to get this process underway…

In his seminal work, *History and Class Consciousness*, George Lukacs (1972) conceptualized political organization as the dialectical relation between a class formation's (or social movement's) objective and the concrete steps toward its realization. For Lukacs, political organization (for him, the party) was the mechanism (1) through which identity and the subjective elements of a class formation combine with the objective historical conditions in which it exists; and (2) through which the theoretical underpinnings of a movement intermix with its practice. It is the mediation between the subjective desires of people and the objective conditions in which they live and the process through which they, as collectives, comprehend themselves within larger historical processes. It is the means through which movements come to understand their

power in relation to the general landscape of power relations they seek to infiltrate and contest.

In a recent interview on anarchist political organization, Noam Chomsky asserted that “Talk of tactics sounds sort of trivial, but it is not. Tactical choices are the ones that have real human consequences. We can try to go beyond the more general strategic choices – speculatively and with open minds – but beyond that we descend into abstract generalities. Tactics have to do with decisions about what to do next…” (Chomsky, 2005:237). While Chomsky emphasizes the importance of strategy, Lukacs’ work on political organization extends such questions to the realms of ideology and subjectivity as they relate to broader issues regarding historical agency and social change. For him, political organization was not only a mechanism for change, it was also a method through which questions of strategy could be considered in terms of their link to more holistic theories of social change.

The problem of political organization identified by Lukacs has been taken up by other contemporary theorists concerned with the seeming lack of coherence of left social movements and political struggles. Stanley Aronowitz (2005), for example, has argued for the development of a new radical left party through which the fragmentation of social movement struggles and generalized lack of realization of contemporary movements’ historical agency could be resolved. For him, a radical political party could serve as a necessary link among disparate struggles, some of which may not presently comprehend themselves within the broader context of global capitalism or even as social movements. Aronowitz’s view is echoed by *Dawn* journalist Humeira Iqtidar (2004) who argued, with regard to the WSF, that “Politicization allows each participant to understand the links

between seemingly disconnected events or groups and his/her own position within the larger phenomenon and movement. A common understanding serves as a glue within the movement, allowing automatic coordination of remote actions."

This study understands political organization as the conceptual framework underlying the WSF's efforts to define and maintain the integrity of its open space and to coordinate disparate social movements and NGO projects on the left. It looks at distinct views of political organization from the three most prominent groups within the Forum: (1) NGOs; (2) anarchists and autonomist social movement actors; and (3) political parties. While these categories should be understood as what Max Weber called "ideal types" – abstractions from which to draw comparisons and not reproductions of the concrete reality of the situation in its true diversity--this delineation of groups has appeared in other works on the WSF. Naomi Klein (2002), for example, pointed out that:

> There are serious debates to be had over strategy and process…Part of the problem is structural. Among most anarchists, who are doing a great deal of the grassroots organizing, direct democracy, transparency and community self-determination are not lofty political goals, they are fundamental tenets governing their own organizations. But although fanatical about process, anarchists tend to resist efforts to structure or centralize the movement.

She contrasts the anarchist (autonomist) view of political organization with that of

> many of the key NGOs' that tend to agree with anarchists about democracy, but are themselves organized as traditional hierarchies. They are run by charismatic leaders and executive boards, while their members send them money and cheer them from the sidelines. The International Forum on Globalization – the brain trust of the North American side of the movement – lacks transparency in its decision-making and isn't accountable to a broad membership. Meanwhile, traditional membership-based structures like political parties and unions have been reduced to bit players in these wide webs of activism.

Like Klein, Linden Farrer (2002) characterizes struggles over political organization within the WSF as follows:

> While the actions of activists engaged in direct action and militants on the street have captured the headlines and brought about concrete – but arguably short-lived – results, others such as liberal-reformists (who want to reform capitalism), Non-governmental organizations (who want money to carry out their activities and are often happy to enter into negotiations with big-business and government), and authoritarian leftists (who want to enter government to affect reform or build a mass party for revolution) enter into dynamic push-and-shove to hash out a way forward in the form of the Social Forums.

Michal Osterweil (2003) reiterates Klein's point, stressing the centrality of political organization to the WSF process and the left in general:

> Criticisms of organization structure, vision and political approach existed long before (as well as during) this particular Forum. Such criticisms did not emerge only as reactions to the technical and functional difficulties evidenced at the Forum, but from larger ethico-political disagreements and debates about what resistance to this phase of neo-liberal globalization and the political crises that accompany it ought to look like. In fact, for some, notions of 'true democracy,' hierarchical and non-hierarchical organization, self-organization and anti-authoritarianism, are at the heart of the political projects they seek to develop—at the Forum and within the movement of movements more generally.

In his work on the WSF, Michael Hardt (2002) links questions of political organization to national sovereignty by looking at how different political tendencies within the WSF theorize neoliberal globalization and contemporary forms of resistance to it. According to Hardt, "anti-globalization" actors in the WSF want to "reinforce the sovereignty of nation-states as a defensive barrier against the control of foreign and global capital." This view understands "neoliberalism as the primary analytical category" and names the enemy as "global capitalist activity with weak state controls." Anti-globalization activists—such as the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for Assistance to Citizens (ATTAC) and the Partido dos Trabalhadores (Brazilian Worker's Party, or PT)—promote a form of political organization in which "national sovereignties, even if linked by international solidarity, serve to limit and regulate the forces of

capitalist globalization." Hardt contrasts the anti-globalization position with that of the "altermondialist" or "alternative globalization" movement actors in the Forum who seek

> a non-nation-centered solution, whose enemy is capitalism itself, which seeks a more democratic form of globalization that does not rely on nation-based solutions and regulation. In the WSF, this position is epitomized by many of the social movements present in Seattle, Genoa, etc. who are more interested in horizontally based distributions of power rather than reinforcing centralized authority especially in state structures.

For Hardt, the division between these dominant perspectives on national sovereignty in the context of the WSF is not simply one of North versus South, but rather, "the conflict corresponds to two different forms of political organization:" hierarchically-organized political parties versus networks of autonomous actors.

The Organization of the Text

This study understands political strategy as a theoretical question. It looks at distinct sets of ideas regarding political organization and social change in terms of the development of the WSF. It also analyzes the most prominent political tendencies among participants in the WSF with regard to how they inform, facilitate or hinder the Forum's objective to create alternatives to neoliberalism. Given the WSF's role as one of the premier events for organizing and building international solidarity, this work can also be understood as a case study of contemporary paradigms of left political organization. It asks (and has begun to answer)[1]: What kinds of movements, groups and organizations participate in the WSF? What are their political orientations, to which political traditions are they connected and what are their perceived and potential power resources? What is their vision of social change and how do they see that intervention taking place in concrete

[1] The methods used to research these questions are presented in appendix one of this text.

terms? What is the open space? What model of civil society is operative in its definition and how is it being contested? What is the relationship between the open space and existing power structures – is the WSF open space a power resource, does it signify a retreat from politics, or does it constitute a transitional point between protest and other forms of political agency?

The first chapter of this text provides a prehistory of the WSF. It introduces the reader to the organizations, forces and events that shaped it, including the Global Justice Movement, the World Economic Forum (WEF), and the founding organizations of the WSF, including ATTAC and the Brazilian Worker's Party. This prehistory resumes in chapter three, with a discussion of the growth of international NGOs in the last two and a half decades and their influence on the structure of the WSF and its ongoing development. In chapter two, the text documents the annual development of the WSF, with particular attention to the most salient debates and controversies over political organization and ideas regarding the development of the WSF and the constitution of its open space. Chapters three through five provide a detailed explication of the three most prominent political tendencies within the WSF mentioned previously: NGOs, anarchists and anti-authoritarian groups, and political parties. Chapter six closes the text with a conceptual discussion of WSF open space: (1) in terms of the WSF's objective to oppose neoliberal globalization; (2) as a new organizational form that came out of a uniquely global movement; and (3) as the product of a new generation of activists seeking to avoid the pitfalls of previous waves of left-wing activism and solve the problems of centralization, coherence and strategy that preoccupied social movement protagonists in previous eras.

Chapter One: The Origins of the World Social Forum, a Prehistory

The WSF has, over its short history, taken on many lives and many faces. Nonetheless, it was spawned from an assemblage of distinct social and political forces that coalesced at a particular moment in history, in a particular place. This chapter focuses on the Forum's prehistory and the four most influential forces that shaped its early development: (1) the Global Justice Movement (GJM), which prefigured the WSF's opposition to neoliberalism and its "open space" structure and served as an important impetus for its formation. The WSF was seen as the mechanism through which the GJM would transition "from movement to society," a means through which the movement would formulate and articulate alternatives to neoliberal globalization and a more equitable organization of social life; (2) the World Economic Forum (WEF), which served as the "enemy" of the GJM and WSF, but also provided the initial organizational model for the WSF; and (3) the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for Assistance to Citizens (ATTAC) and (4) the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) the Brazilian Worker's Party, which both conceived of the WSF as a venue for the GJM to develop alternatives to neoliberal globalization and consolidate their political power, themselves departures from traditional parties and interest groups.

This chapter looks at these forces in terms of their respective and overlapping histories, organizational norms and political orientations. It considers how these four actors converged to produce the World Social Forum and which elements of their politics are embedded in and continue to inform its objectives and praxis.

The Global Justice Movement

In broad strokes, the Global Justice Movement (GJM) is comprised of movements of indigenous peoples, human rights and ecology movements; anarchists, socialists and communists; NGO and trade union activists from a variety of backgrounds; and many other left-leaning groups and individuals. It has often been called "a movement of movements" to capture the way in which it operates in a decentralized, network fashion. Often misidentified as the "anti-globalization" movement, the GJM is better understood as a product of globalization: a collection or network of local movements around the world linked by their common opposition to neoliberalism and its accompanying models of free trade, privatization, market liberalization and fiscal austerity. As anarchist David Graeber (2002) put it:

> Insofar as this is a movement against anything, it's against neoliberalism, which can be defined as a kind of market fundamentalism—or, better, market Stalinism—that holds there is only one possible direction for human historical development...The phrase 'globalization movement', though, is really quite apropos. If one takes globalization to mean the effacement of borders and the free movement of people, possessions and ideas, then it's pretty clear that not only is the movement itself a product of globalization, but the majority of groups involved in it…are far more supportive of globalization in general than are the IMF or WTO.

The movement's charge against neoliberalism, according to *The Orion* journalist Rebecca Stolnit (2005), is an opposition to "the ideology of unfettered capitalism manifested as deregulation, as privatization of resources and services, as drastically reduced social services, and as dismissal of the value of community, civil society, and the public – as in public lands or public good." Stolnit's definition echoes that of Graeber, who wrote that "the neoliberal vision of 'globalization' is pretty much limited to the movement of capital and commodities, and actually increases barriers against the free flow of people,

information and ideas—the size of the US border guard has almost tripled since the signing of NAFTA" (Graeber, 2002).

In addition to the GJM's opposition to supranational financial institutions and elite powerholders, the movement is also a rejection of the hierarchy and rigidity of Old Left political organization and New Left identity politics. As labor activist and scholar Peter Waterman (2003) points out, the movement is characterized by flexibility and lack of hierarchy: "any movement peak or plateau, any institutionalization of the movement will be…immediately challenged. This flexibility is a necessity because of the 'iron law of oligarchy' that for a century or more has afflicted social movement institutions." In the case of the United States, for example, the flexibility to which Waterman refers materialized in the use of the GJM's network structure and non-hierarchical decision-making practices, such as the spokescouncil, a regular feature at activist meetings in the United States (in and outside of protest sites). The spokescouncil was a "horizontal," participatory and deliberative structure in which representatives from various groups gathered in an inner circle and their members formed spokes behind them. In these settings, meeting facilitation was rotated on a regular basis so that each person or group had an opportunity to run the meeting (i.e., there were no permanent leaders). The idea, as described by Graeber, was to avoid the kind of top-down organizing that beset both the Old and New Left and to allow for a diversity of ideas and theories to emerge on questions of strategy:

> Perhaps the best way to start thinking about these organizations…is to see them as the diametrical opposite of the sectarian Marxist groups [and]…sectarian Anarchist groups. Where the democratic-centralist 'party' puts its emphasis on achieving a complete and correct theoretical analysis, demands ideological uniformity and tends to juxtapose the vision of an egalitarian future with extremely authoritarian forms of organization in the present, these openly seek

> diversity. Debate always focuses on particular courses of action; it's taken for granted that no one will ever convert anyone else entirely to their point of view…Their ideology, then, is immanent in the anti-authoritarian principles that underlie their practice...(Graeber, 2002).

Spokescouncil meetings were entirely open to the public and at the beginning of each meeting, participants collectively decided the agenda as well as common ethical standards called "Points of Unity." Decisions regarding the way movements would relate to the media as a group (around a particular action), the use of violence at any given protest, and various other political and action-oriented issues were discussed, debated and decided by consensus. These decisions were arrived at by way of a consensus-building process that could be time-consuming, but also functioned to build solidarity and affinity among the various groups in attendance. While the U.S. model was not necessarily practiced in other locales, horizontal network structures were a defining characteristic of the GJM, especially when diverse groups converged at international counter-summits at the meetings of the IMF, World Bank and so on.

Contrary to popular belief, the history of the GJM does not begin with Seattle, although the protests in 1999 against the World Trade Organization (WTO) brought increased visibility to the movement and heightened its political stakes. The origins of the GJM must be traced further back – to the anti-IMF riots of the 1970s (in Peru, Egypt, Ghana, Jamaica and Liberia) and more recently, the 1989 anti-IMF uprising in Venezuela, in which "the police and army shot to death more than 300 people and wounded thousands of others" (Global Exchange, 2001; Katsiaficas, 2001). The Zapatista uprising against the North Atlantic Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on January 1, 1994 (the first day NAFTA was passed into law), however, marked a decisive moment in the development of the GJM. According to Naomi Klein, "the strategic victory of the

Zapatistas was to insist that what was going on in Chiapas could not be written off as a narrow 'ethnic' or 'local' struggle—that it was universal. They did this by identifying their enemy not only as the Mexican state but as 'neoliberalism'" (Klein, 2002). The Zapatistas' broad, "universal" appeal to oppose neoliberalism, their ability to rescale their local struggle in global terms and their clever use of the Internet not only spurred *The New York Times* to declare it the world's first "postmodern revolutionary movement," but provided a necessary spark for a linking of anti-neoliberal activism across national borders. The world's "first informational guerrilla movement," the Zapatistas' struggle is often cited as a critical moment in the history of left social movements in which the Internet played such a vital role (Castells, 1997; Cleaver, 1998).

Drawing from the Zapatista uprising and other struggles against neo-liberal globalization, protests against the WTO in 1995 and the shutdown of the Multilateral Agreement on Investments in 1998 set the stage for the November 1999 demonstrations in Seattle, WA. Despite the traditional antagonism between environmental activists and labor, Seattle featured a "teamster-turtle alliance" alongside a diverse collection of social forces: students against sweatshops, anti-GMO and "fair trade" activists, antimilitarists, anarchists and so on. The point of the Seattle demonstrations was to highlight the detrimental effects of unregulated corporate globalization around the world and protest the way in which powerful institutions like the WTO act on behalf of corporate interests over those of everyday people.

Although Seattle drew a relatively small number of protesters (40,000), the effects were legion: *The Atlantic Journal and Constitution* called the protests "one of the nation's worst urban riots in decades" and *The Washington Post* asserted that "a guerilla

army of anti-trade protesters took control of downtown Seattle…forcing the delay of the opening of a global meeting of the World Trade Organization" (Deans, 1999; Burgess and Pearlstein, 1999). The mayor of Seattle declared a state of civil emergency in the city and the governor brought in the National Guard (Deans, 1999). In the end, the event was declared a victory for the movement as protestors temporarily shut down the meeting and brought their claims against the WTO to the mainstream media.

The GJM gained substantial momentum after Seattle, staging protests at nearly every meeting of the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF), WTO and Group of Eight (G8) to demand increased accountability from these and other supranational institutions, and for some, to demonstrate their opposition to capitalism itself. In September 2000, for example, 15,000 protested the IMF and World Bank summit in Prague. In April 2001, 100,000 were present outside the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) Summit in Quebec City, which was secured by a three-meter high fence of concrete and wire. The fence encircled a large section of Quebec City's downtown area, including the meeting site – a veritable fortress with a $100 million price tag (*The Gleaner*, 2001). In June 2001, 50,000 protested the EU-US Summit in Göthenburg (called the "Göthenburg Riots") and just one month later, 300,000 swarmed the streets of Genoa, the largest of the GJM protests.

As Quebec City foreshadowed, the exponential growth in the numbers of protesters at GJM counter-summits was met with increased security and police repression. The Göthenburg protests involved a near fatal shooting of a protester by security police, but it was not until Genoa that the violence reached its climax. At the July 2001 anti-G8 summit in Genoa (which was organized by the Genoa Social Forum), police

raided the Armando Diaz school complex (a "convergence center" for protesters) and a building across the street from the school that housed the Independent Media ("Indymedia") Center. According to various reports, dozens of people were seriously injured, including several "internationals" from other European countries. According to *the Wall Street Journal*:

> Italian police raided a school building housing activists and arrested all 92 people inside. Afterward, the building was covered in pools of blood and littered with smashed computers. Several reporters at the school were hurt; one had his arm broken. Police said 61 of the detainees had been wounded in riots that preceded the raid, but neighbors described hours of beatings and screaming coming from the school during the raid (Trofimov and Johnson, 2001).

In addition to the extreme brutality perpetrated by the Italian police outside the protest route, a 23-year old protestor – Carlo Giuliani – was shot during the protests. The police involved in the incident did not stand trial because an Italian commission concluded that the officer did not fire directly at Giuliani, but rather, the bullet that hit him supposedly was deflected mid-air by a stone. The officer who fired the bullet would later suggest that he was involved in a cover up, and shortly after issuing the statement, he was involved in a fatal car accident.

The events at Genoa – and the subsequent exoneration of the Italian police--had a significant impact on the GJM. Ideas regarding the use of violence at protests and direct confrontation of police were widely (and hotly) debated. Just two months after the Genoa protests, however, the GJM would be faced with an even greater challenge: the September 11th attack on the Pentagon and World Trade Center. It is not an exaggeration to say that September 11th catapulted the movement into a tailspin. Both George Caffentzis of the Midnight Notes Collective and Naomi Klein describe the enormous consequences of the event:

> The events of September 11 and their consequences have been a tremendous blow against the antiglobalization movement, since it has given the governments all over the planet to close public spaces and to repress dissent from whatever source (Caffentzis, 2001).
>
> After September 11 (S11), politicians and pundits around the world instantly began spinning the terrorist attacks as part of a continuum of anti-American and anticorporate violence: first the Starbucks window, then, presumably, the WTC. *New Republic* editor Peter Beinart seized on an obscure post to an anticorporate Internet chat room that asked if the attacks were committed by 'one of us.' Beinart concluded that 'the anti-globalization movement...is, in part, a movement motivated by hatred of the United States'--immoral with the United States under attack (Klein, 2001b).

The association of the movement with anti-Americanism reflected a much broader tendency in the U.S., especially in New York, toward a vindictive kind of patriotism in which the Bush ethic of "You are either with us or against us" became pervasive. Much of the anti-war activity organized around the invasion of Afghanistan--which increased significantly when the U.S. invaded Iraq--consisted of peace marches and vigils that incorporated significantly less confrontational approaches than the GJM protests, despite some bouts of contentious civil disobedience. The invasion of Iraq and inauguration of the War on Terror did, however, bring many new activists onto the streets. With GJM networks already in place and members of the anti-Vietnam (of the 1970s) and anti-nukes (of the 1980s) movements still active, an anti-Iraq war movement emerged in the U.S. (and around the globe) that was much larger – in sheer numbers – that the GJM.

As a result of the war, many GJM activists maintained their critique of neoliberalism but linked it to the problem of war and imperialism. This merger did not occur across the board, however: for many GJM activists in neutral countries, Austria for instance, neo-liberalism tended to remain a primary focus of opposition. GJM protests gradually re-emerged after the S11 attacks, yet on a smaller scale. The first major event

occurred when the WEF moved from Davos to New York City in 2001 and roughly 15,000 people--organized by the Anti-Capitalist Convergence – protested the meeting. In addition, the WTO ministerial in Doha in November 2001 "brought far more people into the streets than had gathered in Seattle" (George, 2002). In September 2003, anti-WTO protests in Mexico attracted roughly 20,000 and the failure of the Cancun trade talks was seen as a victory for anti-WTO campaigners.

The GJM's horizontal network mode of organization prefigured the World Social Forum's opposition to neoliberalism and its "open space" structure and served as an important impetus for its formation. As GJM journalist Naomi Klein described, the WSF "was initially billed as an opportunity for [the GJM]…to stop screaming about what it is against and start articulating what it is for" (Klein, 2001a). Walden Bello deemed it "the prime expression of a surging movement against corporate-driven globalization" (Bello, 2003). According to Gupta and Purkayastha (2003), "It was felt that it was not enough to meet in protests but there was a need for movements to dialogue, share experiences and information and engage with each other. The World Economic Forum as used as the peg to organize the first WSF in Porto Alegre" (Gupta and Purkayastha, 2003).

The World Economic Forum

> The World Economic Forum: "the meeting place of the masters of the world [which] has undoubtedly become the center of hyperliberalism, the capital of globalization, and the main home of the pensée unique [the single thought]" - *Le Monde Diplomatique* (Graz, 2003).

As mentioned, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has been a regular protest site of the GJM since the mid-1990s and was a major impetus for the founding of the World Social Forum. Founded in 1971 by Klaus Schwab, a Swiss business professor and entrepreneur,

the origins of the WEF can be traced to the Centre d'Etudes Industrielles (CEI), an executive business school founded in 1946 by Alcan[2] to help business managers develop international careers. Schwab joined CEI in 1969 and organized the European Management Symposium as part of its 25th anniversary. Over time, he expanded the thematic scope of the Symposium beyond managerial questions to cover larger economic, political and strategic issues. As a result, the name of the meeting was changed in 1987 to the "World Economic Forum" and was henceforth transformed from a venue in which management experts could share their knowledge with business leaders to one in which major corporations could network with each other and develop new strategies and business paradigms (Ibid.).

In its own words, the WEF is a non-profit, member-based organization of "the world's 1,000 leading companies, along with 200 smaller businesses, many from the developing world, that play a potent role in their industry or region." It is "an independent international organization committed to improving the state of the world by engaging leaders in partnerships to shape global, regional and industry agendas" (World Economic Forum, 2006). Although it started out as a small, predominantly European event, in the 1990s the WEF became popular among North American and Asian business elites and the number of participants increased, with the addition of high-ranking politicians, media, academic scholars and executive officers of research foundations. In recent years, high-profile members of the entertainment industry have regularly attended the elite event—including Bono Vox (lead singer of U2), Angelina Jolie (actor and United Nations High Commission for Refugees Goodwill Ambassador) and actors Richard Gere, Sharon Stone and others—as well as select members of the press, union

[2] Alcan is the Canadian subsidiary of the American Aluminum firm Alcoa.

leaders, NGO officials and leading intellectuals. Cindy Milstein (2001) describes the elite character of the WEF as follows:

> The WEF is ahead of its day in forging an organizational culture and structure capable of stylish world dominance in the age of globalization. It is certainly not alone in its quest to 'further economic growth and social progress' for a limited few - social progress being measured by economic growth. Institutions from the World Bank to the European Union to the U.S. government share the same pursuit. What sets the WEF apart is its innovative means, potentially making it all the more dangerous. To borrow its own language, the WEF's membership meets in 'a unique club atmosphere,' always luxurious, 'to shape the global agenda,' 'to mold solutions,' with the aim of controlling sociopolitico-economic processes to its own advantage.

In addition to its annual meeting, the WEF holds between five and ten regional meetings per year and the choice of location often reflects its constituents' interests in newly emerging markets (Graz, 2003).

To qualify for membership in the WEF, a company or entrepreneur must have an annual turnover of at least one billion U.S. dollars and pay annual meeting and other kinds of dues, which essentially excludes poor countries from participating. In 2002, for example, 75 percent of the WEF's annual meeting participants were from Europe and the U.S. combined (despite the fact that they represent only 17 percent of the world's population). West Asian participants were roughly five times over-represented and although 60 percent of the world population lived in Asia, they represented only eight percent of WEF participants (Woodall et al., 2002). The choice of which developing countries to include in the WEF is often made strategically:

> As one regular academic participant to the annual meeting notes with euphemism 'the Forum invests heavily in the emerging markets, like Turkey, Portugal, Mexico, or South Africa, but a number of participants from these countries are second-tier'…The sectoral origins of the participants to the Forum reflect the increasing power of financial capital and the boom in information and telecommunication sectors that took place during those years. An ever-increasing number of CEOs from multinational banks fraternize not only with CEOs of

> major industrial firms, but also with finance ministers and governors of central banks, be it from OECD or developing countries (Graz, 2003).

In addition to political-geographic exclusions, the WEF leadership has a poor record in terms of its gender constitution: prior to 2001, the WEF's Board of Directors and the Council Board of Directors were all male. In 2001, nine new members were added to these boards, but only one of them a woman. Despite its attempt to bolster participation from women through its "Women Leaders Program," women's participation in the WEF annual meeting is estimated to have increased by only four percent between 2001 and 2004 (Woodall et al., 2002).

On its website, the WEF describes itself as a foundation that is "impartial and not-for-profit…tied to no political, partisan or national interests." The guest list of politicians at the annual meeting in Davos tells a different story: in 2000 alone, the WEF was attended by 33 national leaders, including former U.S. President Bill Clinton, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, King Abdullah II Ibn Hussein of Jordan, Indonesian President Abdurrahman, South African President Thabo Mbeki and then-president of Argentina, Fernando de la Rua (who would later resign during the collapse of the Argentine economy in 2001). In 2002, 27 elected national leaders, three members of royalty, nine U.S. senators and nine members of the U.S. House of Representatives attended the event (Ibid.).

The Global Justice Movement has staged protests outside the annual WEF meeting site in Davos since the mid-1990s and the Bern Declaration established a counter-summit, beginning in 2000. Founded in 1968, the Bern Declaration is a Swiss NGO that campaigns on development issues, whose mission is "to work towards more

equitable North-South relations through research, public education and advocacy work." An independent entity that derives most of it revenues from individual membership fees and donations, the Bern Declaration has roughly 19,000 members. In 2000, the Bern Declaration initiated its "Public Eye on Davos" campaign aimed at establishing

> an international NGO presence at the World Economic Forum… (calling) on WEF members to make decisions of public interest more transparent, accountable and sustainable. This includes concerns on trade and financial policies, investment treaties, the social and environmental records of transnational corporations (Ibid.).

After the 2002 WEF meeting, in which Public Eye members engaged in a debate with members of the WEF, Public Eye decided to change its approach. According to Public Eye members, "a debate did not take place, but rather, offered the WEF an opportunity to counter its critics by saying it had engaged in open dialogue with them." As such, Public Eye gave up on the idea of fostering a direct dialogue with the WEF and moved toward organizing its own conference "for globalization critics to counterbalance the proceedings of the WEF" (Berne Declaration, 2006).

The first Public Eye Conference, held in January 2001 during the WEF in Davos, attracted some media attention and drew roughly twenty NGO representatives and academics from around the world. In 2002, Public Eye moved with the WEF to New York and its conference, including roughly forty speakers and nine panel discussions, attracted over 1500 attendees and numerous journalists. Public Eye returned to Davos in 2003 and continues to organize counter-summits to the WEF.

In addition to the Public Eye conferences, protests against the WEF have been staged outside its annual meeting site in Davos and at regional meetings around the world. Anti-WEF demonstrations began in 1994, when the Chiapas Solidarity Movement

protested the meeting and Kurdish and Turkish groups held an anti-WEF rally at the meeting site. In 1998, the Actions Alliance "Freedom for Patricio Ortiz" mobilized a demonstration in Davos, together with anti-racist and anti-sexist groups, the Kurdistan Centre and the Anti-WTO Coordination. In each of the following five years, demonstrations were staged by the Anti-WTO Coordination and other GJM organizations. In addition, at the WEF's 2000 Asia Pacific Summit in Melbourne, Australia protesters successfully blocked a large number of delegates from entering the meeting and as mentioned the 2002 anti-WEF protests in New York City drew roughly 15,000 demonstrators.

The WEF has responded to GJM protests, criticisms and counter-summits first, by beefing up security and second, by inviting NGO representatives to participate in its annual meeting. As a result of the protests and September 11th attacks, security costs for the WEF soared, from a few hundred thousand Swiss francs in 1997 to several millions in 2001 (Graz, 2003). Although explained as a show of solidarity to the people of New York City, the WEF's temporary move to New York in 2002 was also due to the high costs of security: "the security operation for the 2001 conference (WEF) was the Swiss government's most expensive since the Second World War, provoking cries of protest from within Switzerland" (Farrer, 2002). Milstein (2001) describes the impetus for the WEF's move to New York as follows:

> The social costs, especially for the Swiss authorities, had gotten too high. WEF leaders also likely hoped to discredit such opposition altogether by meeting in New York City so soon after Sept. 11. They could claim to be both mourning the dead and doing their bit to rebuild NYC by convening at the opulent Waldorf-Astoria hotel. In contrast, so the WEF probably assumed, the protesters would be seen as funeral crashers, dishonoring the dead by running wildly through the streets of a still-grieving city without regard for property or propriety. Once and for all, resistance would be tainted, thereby allowing institutions such as the WEF

> to go about the lofty mission of governing capitalist society without any pesky interference from 'anti-globalist marginals,' to cite one WEF member.

For 2003, the WEF moved back to Davos, a more peaceful, "club-like" atmosphere than New York. The security bill in 2003 was roughly $10.3 million, including the use of fighter jets that circled around the venue and the import of hundreds of German police. The cost was in part covered by local, regional and federal public finance from Switzerland (Swissinfo, 2003).

The WEF's second response to the protests was to invite NGO representatives to the meeting that did not fit the typical profile of the WEF membership. Public Citizen reports that in 2000, seven NGOs were invited to the WEF's annual meeting, including: Amnesty International, the World Wildlife Fund for Nature, Transparency International, Friends of the Earth, Oxfam, Focus on the Global South and Save the Children (the last three of these organizations fund the World Social Forum). Friends of the Earth and Focus on the Global South were not invited back in 2001 because they were deemed too critical (Walden Bello of Focus on the Global South would become an outspoken protagonist of the World Social Forum). In 2001, key members of left-leaning NGOs were invited to the WEF annual meeting, including: Lori Wallach (Public Citizen), Martin Khor (Third World Network in Malaysia), Vandana Shiva (Research Foundation for Science, Technology and Ecology in India) and Vicki Tauli (Indigenous People's International in the Philippines). None of these representatives were invited back to the WEF the following year.

In addition to these short-lived attempts at opening a dialogue, in 2003, 2004 and 2005 the WEF held the "Open Forum Davos" parallel to its annual meeting. According to

the *Financial Times*, the Open Forum was the WEF's way of silencing its critics: "the Forum says it is not inviting organizations that contribute only negative views and do not support its 'mission' to narrow global divisions" (Graz, 2003). Graz points out that such "image control" tactics are related to the WEF's hegemonic project. In his estimation, the WEF must grapple with the contradiction between maintaining its elite status and its original vision to operate as a worldwide network, the latter of which requires that the WEF include "broader elements of the society…to obtain widespread acceptance of its claim to embody the general interest."

The Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens (ATTAC)

Founded in 1997 by Bernard Cassen, Susan George and Ignacio Ramonet of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, ATTAC is "a coalition of unions, farmers and intellectuals that has become the most public face of the antiglobalization movement in much of Europe and Scandinavia" (Klein, 2001a). The Coalition was first known as the Association for a Tobin Tax for the Aid of Citizens. The title reflected ATTAC's primary objective, which was to lobby for Economics Nobel Laureate James Tobins' proposal in 1978 for a tax on speculative financial transactions as a way of controlling their ability to circulate worldwide and generate money to reduce global inequality and promote development. The group's name was changed to the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens (ATTAC) to highlight the organization's shift toward bolstering public services. According to its Vice President, Susan George, one of ATTAC's main goals is "to solve problems associated with world poverty." She explains:

> The cash is out there. It can be found not only by taxing financial transactions but in tax havens where, as Bush himself has proven, it's possible to identify, target and close down accounts belonging to anyone the United States identifies as a terrorist--so why not the accounts of drug barons and traffickers in women, children, endangered species and armaments? Thanks to these same cozy locations in the Caribbean and other fiscal paradises, taxes on transnational corporations are undermined while taxes on labor and consumption contribute far more than their fair share (George, 2002).

As stated in its Platform (see appendix four), adopted in 1998, ATTAC aims to use a Tobin-like tax to help reduce global inequalities, "to promote education and public health in poor countries, and for food security and sustainable development" (ATTAC, 2006). It was also actively campaigning against the WTO, tax havens, the privatization of public services, genetically modified food and various others institutions and issues (Moberg, 2001).

The formation of ATTAC was in part spurred by the financial crisis in Asia, when the currencies of Thailand, Indonesia and South Korea were significantly devalued and the debt doubled. ATTAC sought to use the Tobin tax to temper such speculative activity and at the same time generate funds for social welfare. In general, it aimed to establish global rules for financial transactions as a way of limiting the power of the world's financial elite (Van Daele, 2004; Moberg, 2001).

ATTAC's social democratic political strategy is both pro- and anti-globalization: the organization seeks to reinforce the sovereignty of nation-states, which they perceive as being undercut by supranational institutions (and agreements) that act on behalf of investors' rights. At the same time, it identifies as an "international movement for democratic control of financial markets and their institutions" and

> a network, with neither 'hierarchical' structures nor a geographical 'center.' Pluralist, it is enriched by the variety of its components and makes the common action easier without limiting it in any way, nor dictating their freedom of

> contribution. It aims to reinforce, to link and to coordinate, at an international level, the contribution of all of its partners who see themselves as fitting within the structure of its platform. In the same way, it wishes to reinforce its cooperation with all the other networks whose objectives converge with its own (ATTAC, 2006).

Michael Hardt (2002) has described ATTAC as "a hybrid organization whose head, especially in France, mingles with traditional politicians, whereas its feet are firmly grounded in the movements." Organizationally, it is part-NGO, part international (mostly European) lobby. Prior to the 2002 French presidential elections, for example, Susan George explained that

> While we [ATTAC] have no intention of becoming a party, we do promise to harass all the candidates unmercifully around our issues. Next month, ATTAC-Hungary will be launched, the fortieth country to join this international movement. The CGIL, Italy's largest and most progressive trade union, recently decided to become a 'founding institutional member' of ATTAC-Italy (George, 2002).

As Hardt points out, ATTAC's leadership is close to French politicians (Hardt cites Jean-Pierre Chevènement), who advocate for "strengthening national sovereignty as a solution to the ills of contemporary globalization." But it avoids direct affiliation with political parties and has a large support base among grassroots movements, not only in France, but in at least forty other countries. As of 2001, ATTAC had roughly 30,000 supporters all over France and had produced roughly 190 ATTACs in other countries, including Brazil, Italy, Hungary and any others. Germany houses the second largest ATTAC, and in many of these countries, ATTAC has significant ties to national governments and mainstream political processes (ATTAC, 2006).

Echoing Hardt, Peter Evans (2005) describes ATTAC as one of the "paragons of organizations explicitly designed to build omnibus transnational networks aimed at

transforming neo-liberal globalization into a social protection-oriented, market-subordinating, difference-respecting mirror image." He asserts, however, that ATTAC is "doomed to obscurity" because of the limits of its strategy and because its "homeland – France – an archetypically 'anti-globalization' political milieu, [is] characterized much more by chauvinism than global solidarity, [which] makes it even an even more unlikely candidate to be a paradigmatic promoter of 'counter-hegemonic' globalization." In his discussion of ATTAC's politics, Evans points to Ancelovici's concept of "associational statism," which

> involves two strategies of trying to reassert the primacy of political/social decision making in the face of the growing dominance of global markets. On the one hand it has a very traditional (French) affection for the regulatory power of the nation-state. At the same time it rejects bureaucratic/representational/party control of public/political decision-making in favor of locally-based participatory structures.

Evans further describes ATTAC in terms of Ruggie's concept of "embedded liberalism," which emphasizes social protections embedded in national structures and new forms of participatory democracy. According to Evans, "rescuing traditional social democratic agendas of social protection, which are otherwise in danger of disappearing below the tide of neo-liberal globalization, is a significant part of the agenda of both ATTAC and the World Social Forum" (Evans, 2005).

Since the founding of the WSF in 2001, ATTAC has played a major role in its organizational and thematic development. Susan George is a former member of the WSF Organizing Committee and was one of the premier speakers at the Forum for the first three years. During the initial years, she and Cassen have served (informally) as spokespersons for the Forum and several issues of *Le Monde* have been dedicated to the WSF and related events. Moreover, ATTAC has played a major role in funding local and

regional social forums in Europe, especially the European Social Forum. According to Naomi Klein, ATTAC's impetus for organizing the WSF was a result of its

> frustration with the less coherent focus of the North American anticorporate movement. 'The failure of Seattle was the inability to come up with a common agenda, a global alliance at the world level to fight against globalization,' says Christophe Aguiton of ATTAC, who helped organize the forum" (Klein, 2002).

Klein explains that ATTAC saw the WSF as an opportunity to assemble

> the best minds working on alternatives to neoliberal economic policies--not just new systems of taxation but everything from sustainable farming to participatory democracy to cooperative production to independent media. From this process of information swapping ATTAC believed its 'common agenda' would emerge (Ibid.).

The Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) and Porto Alegre

The WSF was initially conceived by two Brazilian activists in collusion with Bernard Cassen. In addition to the symbolic value of Porto Alegre's (PoA) southern location, Cassen was knowledgeable of the city's participatory programs, which he had written about in an article entitled "Brazil's new experiment" in *Le Monde* in 1998 (Cassen, 1998). Cassen suggested that the Forum be held in PoA because of its sympathetic political climate, headed by the Brazilian Worker's Party, and unique experience with participatory democratic procedures. Cassen explains the initial idea for the Forum, recounting a conversation between himself and his other co-founders:

> They said they had been to Davos, and they asked, 'Why don't *Le Monde Diplomatique* and ATTAC organize a counter-Davos?' I replied: 'That's already been tried, at Davos itself. But access to the place is tightly controlled, the Swiss police are murder, and to organize a counter-Davos in France doesn't make much sense.'…'We need a symbolic rupture with everything Davos stands for. That has to come from the South. Brazil has the ideal conditions for doing so, as a Third World country with gigantic urban concentrations, a wretched rural population, but also powerful social movements and friendly political bases in many cities. Why don't we launch something in Porto Alegre, as a symbol of the alternatives

> to neoliberalism?'…'we should call it the World Social Forum, to challenge the World Economic Forum, and hold it on the same day of the same month of the year' (Cassen, 2003).

In addition to Cassen's connection to the PT and PoA, one of the Brazilian co-founders, Oded Grajew, was a coordinator of the Brazilian Business Association for Citizenship (CIVES), which "has sometimes been characterized as an association of business representatives that support the PT" (Teivainen, 2003).

PoA is located in the southernmost province of Brazil, the Rio Grande do Sol, and its population is approximately 1.3 million. In the last fifteen years, it has been home to a variety of socially progressive measures, including the participatory budget process and a now national leadership associated with the left-wing Workers Party, or PT. According to Gianpaolo Baiocchi (2004), the PT first emerged in 1978, during factory worker strikes at the Scania plant in São Paulo. The Party was formally founded in 1980, when: (1) Brazil did not have independent unions and autonomous political organizations were illegal; (2) there was widespread dissatisfaction with the populist Brazilian Labor Party (the Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro or PTB), with Brazil's Old Left and with the failures of socialism in Eastern Europe; and (3) a new union movement was emerging that was responsive to the new social movements in the region. The PT broke with traditional left electoral parties (in Brazil and elsewhere) – it rejected vanguardist understandings of the party and adopted a view of itself as a "reflex" of civil society groups and social movements. In addition, the PT fostered what Baiocchi describes as "an open structure of 'tendencies' within the party that compete internally to shape party positions and programs, but that come together in electoral contests" (Baiocchi, 2004). The PT's version of political

organization differed from typical electorally-focused organizations in that it understood participatory structures and relationships with social movements as central to democracy.

> In the early 1980s, the PT gained visibility through its involvement in the Diretas Já mobilizations (a movement for direct elections) and in the mid-1980s won some electoral victories at the municipal level. Around this time, the party expanded its focus from workerism to include broader social issues. For example, in addition to its focus on issues related to public works, the party attempted to advance legislation around reparations and racial and gender equality (Ibid.).

In 1989, the PT formed the Popular Front - an electoral alliance headed by the PT that included other left parties – then initiated various projects to democratize and decentralize administration. According to Baiocchi (2001),

> Attending to a longstanding demand of The Union of Neighborhood Associations of Porto Alegre (UAMPA), which already in its 1985 congress called for a participatory structure involving the municipal budget, PT administrators developed a set of institutions of popular control over municipal budgeting priorities.

In the 1990s, the PT won mayoral seats in 36 cities, including PoA and São Paulo, such that 10 percent of all Brazilians were living in PT-run jurisdictions. The PT's electoral success was based on its appeal to social movements and broad base of support among the country's disadvantaged populations, largely through its success in establishing participatory programs. The participatory budget process, for example, involves technical training aimed at empowering people to participate and reducing ability-related inequalities. Baiocchi describes how the process

> evolved into a complex structure of meetings throughout the city where elected delegates from civic groups…meet regularly to discuss, prioritize, and eventually monitor the types of investments needed in each district…The overarching political conclusion that the PT has drawn is that broad-based participation, under a clear system of rules, has the potential of generating legitimacy for a broad-based, redistributive governmental agenda…These measures have…transformed the party, including its practice, make-up, and relationship to social movements.

> In the course of its twenty years of experience in government…the PT has shifted its ideology away from staid socialist slogans toward its current emphasis on radical democracy (Ibid., 2001).

As mentioned, participatory reforms like the participatory budget were part of the impetus for the location of the World Social Forum in PoA. After several meetings with city and state officials, the Rio Grande do Sul agreed to host the WSF and provide financial support, with the aid of ATTAC-France. According to Cassen, the PT did not occupy a leadership position in the organization of the Forum and in fact, its Charter of Principles explicitly prohibits participation by political parties (see appendix two). The exclusion of parties from the WSF reflects a sensitivity to the norms governing the participatory budget process in PoA: the participatory budget process was established as a self-regulating, non-partisan space for discussion that was open to broad sectors of society.

Despite the exclusion of political parties in the WSF, the PoA government contributed significant resources to the Forum as did the state (the Rio Grande do Sul) during the first two WSFs when the PT was in office. In turn, the WSF may have played a key role in bolstering the PT's international (and national) reputation. During WSF 2001, for example, the WSF was a point of contention between the PT and Cardoso, the country's president. Tariq Ali (2001) reported that after Cardoso publicly denounced the PT for funding the event, "the local Chamber of Commerce denounced Cardoso for his remarks, claiming that the out-of-season guests were benefiting the local economy." According to Ali, "What worries Cardoso is that the example might spread in Brazil itself, thus propelling the PT to power nationally." Ali further explained how the tensions between the Cardoso government and the PT were further exacerbated when the federal

police arrested Jose Bové, the renowned French farmer/activist. Bové and the MST had occupied a Monsanto field growing genetically modified plants. Although the local government had banned genetically modified crops in the province, the federal government granted Monsanto permission to farm them there. Bové and the MST destroyed some 400 hectares of Monsanto land and Bové was arrested and served an expulsion order. Ali reports that the event "enraged much of the media and gave incredible publicity to the Forum."

According to Marc Cooper (2002) of *The Nation*, in 2002 the PT subsidized the WSF with $1.5 million from the local city and state administration. Baiocchi reports that the PT supported the WSF during a time when the party was experiencing financial difficulty. He speculates that while the impetus for the PT's support of the WSF may have been based on increasing its visibility, especially outside Brazil, it was also a function of the PT's commitment to participatory spaces as ends in themselves. Baiocchi points to similar projects, such as the July 1990 "Foro de Sao Paulo," co-sponsored by the PT and the Cuban government, as evidence of the PT's interest in expanding its participatory practices (Baiocchi, 2004).

According to Ramos (2005), the PT's base of support from social movements has waned significantly in recent years and at some moments, the relationship has become contentious. Take, for example, conflicts over Lula's agrarian reform program, which was a major issue during his presidential campaign. One percent of Brazil's entire population controls roughly 45 percent of the land; this drastic inequality is one of the root causes of the devastating impoverishment that afflicts a large portion of Brazil's population. Although popular land reform movements in Brazil have been active for over

100 years, they were wiped out during the dictatorship and did not emerge until the mid-1980s when the Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST, Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra) began to fight for land reform. The MST has played a central role in the Brazilian political landscape; it "consistently challenges and redefines the hegemonic power relations in Brazilian society" and although it has not attempted to eradicate the existing system of private property, it has forced the state to take on a distributive role in land reform (Gilbert, 2006). Ramos (2005) writes that "the MST has won land for more than 400,000 families by forcing the government to implement constitutionally mandated land reform."

While the PT and MST were once allies, the relationship has weakened considerably since Lula's inauguration. According to Ramos (2005), Lula's National Plan for Agrarian Reform has set "landless families at a slower pace than did his neoliberal predecessor, Fernando Henrique Cardoso." In May 2005 roughly 13,000 landless workers marched (200 km) to Brasília to demand that Lula implement his agrarian reform plan rather than pay off the national debt. Although Lula responded with a variety of promises, the march was met by police and fifty protestors were wounded. According to Ramos,

> The PT has been under strong criticism for becoming a mouthpiece for the government while losing connection with its grassroots…the Workers Party did not win a congressional majority and so cannot govern without cross-party alliances. The government often relies on the votes of the congressional rural caucus – controlled by large landowners – to pass its initiatives.

In addition to failures over land reform, Lula's Zero Hunger program has been under-funded and in keeping with structural adjustment procedures, he has cut back on social spending in order to finance the foreign debt. Moreover, Lula has attempted to please investors by implementing austerity programs, including raising interest rates to 19.50

percent. Having won the presidential campaign of 2006 in spite of accusations of corruption, Lula's political coalition appears stable, although his grassroots supporters increasingly see him as a traitor. Lula was booed when he addressed the 2005 WSF and it remains uncertain whether the Forum will return to PoA after the 2007 WSF in Africa.

Conclusion

The first World Social Forum took place in PoA in January 2001, three to four months after the Quebec City protests and less than a year before the September 11th attacks. As this chapter demonstrates, the momentum of the Global Justice Movement, its claims against neoliberal financial institutions and treaties associated with neoliberal globalization and in particular, its contention with the World Economic Forum (WEF), were all operative in creating the climate for the emergence of the World Social Forum. Against the WEF and its focus on "economic" development, the WSF was billed as a "social" forum – a space that would attempt to not reproduce capitalist social relations, one in which sociality would be privileged over private interests. The choice of venue and structure were critical to staging such a "counter-Davos:" the WSF would take place in the Global South and be completely open and public, as opposed to the exclusive nature of the WEF and its location in the posh village of Davos.

Critics of the WSF assert that its location in PoA may have served to depoliticize the movement's contention with the WEF: (1) contrary to the direct confrontation with police in Davos, the WSF created a non-confrontational space, much like the "parallel" NGO Forums that accompany UN summits (see chapter three). The presence of protests in Davos served as a major inconvenience to the WEF in terms of security costs and administration and the police brutality toward protesters highlighted the WEF's sordid

alliance with repressive elements of the state, despite its claim to be "committed to improving the state of the World." Moreover, the WSF's plan to mimic the organizational, network structure of the WEF, and serve as its counterpoint was, according to critics, fraught with difficulties. As Cindy Milstein (2001) put it:

> …wittingly or not, in trying to parallel the WEF's meetings as its alternative, the WSF ends up mimicking its hierarchical structure: a supranational, nongovernmental body that seeks to shape the global agenda, with no accountability to and far removed from those whose daily lives are affected. Like the WEF, the WSF offers an informal, fluid, and centralized networking environment for the globally influential – in this case, those in the 'nonprofit' and 'movement' sectors.

Milstein's essay reflects the central values of the GJM--accountability, transparency and non-hierarchical structure--and the "open space" design of the WSF can in part be located in these practices. A defining characteristic of the GJM was its ability to create non-coercive spaces for deliberation – sometimes spontaneously--that were not beholden to any one political identity; the WSF open space was initially inspired by that idea of openness.

The concept of the open space can also be attributed to WSF co-founders, the Brazilian PT and ATTAC, which were both interested in participatory structures as a way for social movements to relate to political parties and states. Much like the PT's participatory budget process in Brazil, the WSF was established as a nonpartisan venue for networking – an umbrella organization for the various groups and movements opposed to neoliberal globalization. ATTAC advocated a similar project: in between transnational social movements and political parties and the state, its critique of financial speculation and market domination was a strong impetus for its founding role in the WSF and the Forum's open space paradigm. As Moberg (2001) reports, "The group argues not

only for more regulation of the market, but the preservation of a realm free from market values. ‘People feel like there’s a public sphere, a social sphere – something outside the market, where there is the republican principle of equality of opportunity.’ ” In addition, ATTAC harbored a strong desire to bring coherence to the GJM and augment its political power: “to come up with a common agenda…a global alliance at the world level…” (Christophe Aguiton)

Politically, ATTAC is a social democratic organization and the PT are democratic socialists. Needless to say, there is a great deal of overlap between them in terms of their political orientations and practices. Both groups seeks to bolster national social programs and redistribute wealth away from multinational corporations and other elites, but make use of (or seek to use) participatory processes to check states and corporations. Richard Falk (2004) points out, such forms of “civic globalization” are new social forces engaged in what he terms struggles over “the soul of the state.” For Falk, “At issue is whether the state continues to be predominantly instrumentalized by and responsive to market forces or manages to be socially reempowered through the agency of transnational activism as reinforced by social democratic elites…” He suggests that “if the state is reempowered, there would exist a renewed regulatory relationship of governance structures and processes to the market and a shift away from rigid adherence to the policy postulates of neoliberalism” This idea of a “strong state” – one that provides social services and protects disadvantaged populations – is, for Falk, not synonymous with the strong state that supports the military and other coercive elements of state power, a distinction that is often refused by Marxist and anarchist critics of social democracy both in and outside the Forum.

The MST's recent clashes with the PT demonstrate the tenuousness of ATTAC's version of "civil globalization." As we will see in the upcoming chapters, the role of the state in the development of an alternative politics and a "globalization from below" occupies a central role in debates within the WSF. Within the context of the WSF, ATTAC and other social democratic organizations are often criticized by anarchist and other anti-capitalist social movements because they view both the state and corporations as inherently authoritarian. As such, their concept of "open (autonomous) spaces" differs considerably from the Habermasian public sphere imagined by ATTAC and the PT as well as liberal democratic version being promoted by some of its founders.

Chapter Two: The World Social Forum, 2001 to Present: Issues and Debates

This chapter picks up where the last one left off by tracing the organizational and political development of the World Social Forum since its inception in 2001. Although six years is a short period from which to draw conclusions about any institution, the aim of this chapter is to record some of the key events in the WSF's short lifespan and isolate the most salient debates among the various groups that constitute it. It particular, it looks at the context in which the WSF formulated its "open space" practices and accompanying Charter of Principles and how these important elements of its organizational structure have been contested, especially with regard to the limits it places on what kinds of political actors are invited to participate and how the space itself is utilized. In doing so, the chapter tells the story of the tremendous growth of the World Social Forum – geographically, thematically and politically - in just six short years, despite fundamental political differences among its participants and the difficult social and political climate(s) in which it continues to operate.

The World Social Forum, 2001

The first World Social Forum (WSF) took place on January 25 to 30, 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil. It was planned by an Organizing Committee comprised of its founding groups, most notably, ATTAC and various Brazilian NGOs, social movements and trade unions. The four major themes of the event were: the Production of Wealth and Social Reproduction; Access to Wealth and Sustainability; Civil Society and the Public Arena; and Political Power and Ethics in the New Society. The event was structured to include: (1) large-scale *Conferences* comprised of panelists chosen by the WSF Organizing

Committee. These consisted of presentations by high profile intellectuals and activists in large stadium-like venues; (2) *Self-organized workshops* organized by "delegate" organizations, which took place in small venues and were usually run like assemblies with significant interaction between presenters and audience. Proposals for self-organized workshops were submitted by participant organizations and approved by the WSF Organizing Committee. These events were "intended to allow groups, coalitions, networks to meet, exchange experiences, interlink, plan and define strategies, always in view of their present and future action" (World Social Forum, 2006); and, (3) *Testimonies* from "individuals with a distinguished record of activity on behalf of freedom and human dignity." In 2001, the WSF event included 16 conferences, 420 self-organized events and 22 Testimonies. There were 103 panelists total, 28 of whom were from Brazil.

The registration structure of the 2001 WSF included: *Delegates* - registrants that represented specific organizations or groups; and *Observers* - individual attendees and representatives from governments and political parties. Since 2001, parties and state officials have been barred from participating as delegates, but those "that host WSF may be partners in its organization" and "governors and parliamentarians that commit to the Charter of Principles can be invited to participate on a personal basis." Armed groups and (para) military organizations were banned from the Forum from the start.

In 2001, the WSF attracted a total of 20,000 participants from 117 countries; 4,700 of whom registered as delegates (World Social Forum, 2006). Countries with the largest delegations included Brazil (2,566), Argentina, France, Uruguay and Italy. In addition, the 2001 WSF attracted 1,486 members of the national press and 386 members

of the international press, plus the 2,000 participants who were housed in the "Youth Camp" - an expansive campsite located near the Forum for (but not limited to) young people. The Youth Camp consisted of a tent city, food stands and informal spaces (lawns and park area) for discussion and cultural events. In addition to the tens of thousands of participants, forty mayors of Latin American cities attended the 2001 WSF, including the mayor of Montevideo, two ministers from the French cabinet and the Brazilian PT leader Lula.

Amidst the momentum of the GJM protests, the 2001 WSF was a politically charged event. As described in chapter one, José Bové and the MST made headlines when they raided a Monsanto farm on which genetically modified crops were being grown, thereby adding to existing tensions between the local and federal governments. In addition to controversies around Bové, a live debate via satellite was staged between twelve WSF participants and four WEF representatives in Davos, including the head of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and billionaire currency speculator George Soros. According to Walden Bello, one of the WSF representatives, "the press termed the…1-1/2 hours not as a debate but as an emotional exchange that, as the *Financial Times* put it, 'sometimes degenerated into personal insults.'" Bello further explains:

> For this constituency…globalization was a deadly business, and many undoubtedly shared the feelings of Hebe de Bonafini when she screamed at Soros across the Atlantic divide, 'Mr. Soros, you are a hypocrite. How many children's deaths have you been responsible for?' That Soros in the course of the debate made some utterances regarding the need to control the negative impacts of globalization hardly endeared him to this crowd, who saw him mainly as a finance speculator who had made billions of dollars at the expense of third world economies (Bello, 2001).

During the debate, 50 Years Is Enough Network Director, Njoki Njoroge Njehu, challenged the UNDP to call for an end to the structural adjustment programs advocated by the World Bank and the IMF and attacked the "UN Global Compact," which allowed corporations (like Nike and Shell) to declare themselves defenders of human rights (Ambrose, 2001). Participants at the WSF echoed Njehu's sentiments and called for massive counter-summit protests at the September 2001 meetings of the IMF and World Bank in Washington, DC.

Despite its overall success, organizers of WSF 2001 were criticized by various groups for not being transparent and inclusive enough in planning the event. According to Naomi Klein (2001), the organizational structure of the WSF was "so opaque that it was nearly impossible to figure out how decisions were made." Anarchist participants expressed their discontent with the organizers by marching "through the PUC university campus (WSF headquarters) in protest, capturing headlines throughout the global alternative media." The Partido Socialista Dos Trabalhadores Unificado (PSTU), a splinter faction of the PT, interrupted speeches to push its anti-capitalist agenda and protest the PT's role in the event (Klein, 2002; Adams, 2002). The WSF 2001 organizers were also criticized for failing to solicit participation from a broader array of organizations and activists, especially those from the United States and Africa (Klein, 2002; Adams, 2002). These critics pointed out that the Forum was not inclusive of indigenous and other people who did not have the financial resources to attend the meeting or follow its proceedings online. According to Tariq Ali (2002), the Forum was also missing "Russians, Eastern Europeans, Chinese…citizens who are suffering the effects of 'shock-therapy' capitalism."

Following WSF 2001, the Organizing Committee responded to its critics by pledging to internationalize the social forum process and organize the Forum in places other than Brazil (World Social Forum, 2006). To achieve these goals, the organizers established an international steering committee – the International Council – in June 2001. In its own words, the WSF International Council (IC) is

> a political and operational body that contributes both to defining the WSF's strategic directions and to mobilizing support, besides its other organizational activities…The IC was set up in such a way as to express the conception of the World Social Forum as an open, democratic meeting place favouring the growth of an international movement to bring together alternatives to neoliberal 'right thinking' (World Social Forum, 2006).

According to Teivo Teivainen (2003) of the Network Institute for Global Democratization and co-founder of the WSF International Council, the "formal decision-making power of the WSF process has been mainly in the hands of the Organising Committee (later renamed the Secretariat) consisting of the Central Trade Union Confederation (Central Única dos Trabalhadores (CUT)), the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST)) and six smaller Brazilian civil society organizations[3]," including Brazil's national association of NGOs and ATTAC. Among these organizations, the Instituto Brasiliero de Analises Socias e Econômicas (IBASE) has been especially instrumental in procuring financial support for the Forum. The eight members of the WSF Organizing Committee included themselves on the WSF International Council and hand-picked the other 100+ organizations that comprised it. Critics contend that the Organizing Committee exercised too much control

[3]Associação Brasiliera de Organizações Não Governamentais; Ação pela Tributação das Financeiras em Apoio aos Cidadãos (ATTAC); Commissão Brasiliera Justiça Paz (CBJP); Associação Brasiliera de Empresários pela Cidadania (CIVES); Instituto Brasiliero de Analises Socias e Econômicas (IBASE) and Rede Social De Justiça e Direitos Humanos.

over the process and that the Committee itself was not adequately diverse, consisting predominantly of persons from the Americas and Western Europe. In addition to the core membership of the International Council, fifteen observer organizations were invited to attend its meetings.

Aside from developing standing committees to organize and steer the WSF, in 2001 the WSF Organizing Committee drafted a Charter of Principles (see appendix two) to define its objectives and organizational values. The basic ethical and operational guidelines contained in the WSF Charter define it as an "open space:"

> an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth.

It also defines the limits of the space, in terms of who participates:

> The World Social Forum is a plural, diversified, non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party context that, in a decentralized fashion, interrelates organizations and movements engaged in concrete action at levels from the local to the international to build another world.

Phrases like "open meeting place" and "plural and diversified" reflect organizers' goal to create a non-coercive, non-hierarchical space in which movements and groups can network with each other. It also defines the parameters of participation in the Forum, banning political parties and armed groups from direct participation, and identifies the Forum's overarching goal to oppose neoliberalism. Another notable section of the Charter defines the Forum as "nondeliberative." It says that the WSF "does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by participants in its meetings" and that no one is authorized to speak on behalf of the Forum or represent it as a whole. Over the next

five years of the Forum, the WSF Charter of Principles would play a central role in disputes over the WSF's objectives, its political limitations and the organization of its annual event. Most notably, participants have questioned the way in which the Charter itself was developed and why it continues to be immune to amendment.

The World Social Forum, 2002

As noted in chapter one, several major historical events followed the first meeting of the WSF: (1) the anti-FTAA protests in Quebec City attracted record numbers of protesters and police violence against GJM protesters increased significantly at Göthenburg and especially Genoa; (2) the United States sustained terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which fundamentally changed the social and political landscapes in which the WSF and GJM would operate; (3) Enron and other corporate scandals began to unravel, which broke public confidence in "free market" economics. Corporate powerholders were increasingly seen as corrupt and unethical; and (4) the Argentine economy collapsed, which was widely attributed to the failure of U.S. neoliberal economic policies on an international level. The *New York Times* reported:

> Argentina's declaration of a moratorium on repayment of its foreign debt marks the end of a failed economic experiment that has cost this country dearly. But it is also a blow to the United States and the International Monetary Fund, which had invested much of their credibility and prestige here, yet proved unwilling to help when things began falling apart. 'I think this is going to end up being a very costly experience for the United States,' Walter Molano, chief of research for BCP Securities, a brokerage firm based in Connecticut that focuses on Latin America, said today. 'It was very clearly the Department of the Treasury that pushed Argentina over the edge and allowed it to collapse, so I think the issue of accountability has to come up (Rohter, 2001).

Against this backdrop, the second WSF took place in Porto Alegre from January 31 to February 5, but its counterpoint, the WEF, had been moved to New York City. While the move was said to be an expression of solidarity with New York after the bombing of the World Trade Center, skeptics suggest that Swiss officials requested the WEF change its meeting location because of the steep costs of policing the protests in Davos. In New York City, protesters numbered roughly 15,000 and the police force (over)prepared for the WEF's presence with some 4,000 officers.

The four thematic areas adopted for the 2001 WSF were repeated in WSF 2002, but a great deal of discussion focused on the spectacular events of the year, including the September 11th attacks, issues related to the burgeoning War on Terror and what the movement termed "the defeat of neo-liberalism." The structure of the event also remained the same, except for the addition of a fourth category - *Seminars*. Seminars were organized for the purpose of identifying and developing "specific themes which [had] not yet come to be embodied in clear proposals or social subjects, as well as to permit related public debate and the socialization of strategic thinking from a World Social Forum perspective" (WSF, 2006). The 2002 WSF included 27 conferences, 96 seminars and 622 workshops. The conferences featured well-known intellectuals and activists, such as Noam Chomsky, Vandana Shiva, Lori Wallach, Naomi Klein, Maude Barlow and Samir Amin. AFL-CIO President John Sweeney addressed the opening ceremony through a live satellite video feed from the trenches of the anti-WEF protests in New York.

Attendance at the second WSF dramatically increased, more than twofold: over 50,000 participated, including 12,247 delegates from 123 countries. In addition, 3,356

journalists attended (1,866 of who were from Brazil) and roughly 10,000 people were housed in the Youth Camp. Like WSF 2001, the largest delegations were from Brazil, Argentina, Italy, France and Uruguay.

While the Forum had its fair share of problems in the first year, its internal critics became more outspoken in the second. One of the main criticisms of the WSF process that carried over from the previous year regarded the organization of the Forum and lack of transparency and openness in deciding its content and objectives. During WSF 2002, a local organization called the Federacao Anarquista do Gaucha (FAG) organized a parallel event called “Jornadas Anarquistas” (Anarchist Journeys), which drew participants from a variety of countries, including Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay, Argentina, Sweden, Spain, France, Italy and the United States. Anarchists associated with the People’s Global Action (PGA) were also present at WSF 2002 in relatively large numbers and participated in both the Anarchist Journeys event and the Youth Camp. During the Forum, 600 members of Anarchist Journeys and the Peoples Global Action (PGA) occupied a three-story house to protest the lack of democratic process around the WSF. According to Indymedia, local police were directed by the PT to clear the house, which created a great deal of antipathy toward WSF organizers connected to the local government. Participants at an open assembly of over twenty organizations in the Youth Camp aired similar complaints. While debating internal WSF problems, these organizations criticized the WSF for being dominated by what they saw to be a reformist agenda and “the hegemony of social democratic ideology despite large numbers of clearly anti-capitalist participants” (Adams, 2002). Jason Adams (2002) further describes the problem:

> As is well known, anarchists have played a key role in the 'anti-globalization' movement the world over, from Seattle's Direct Action Network, Independent Media Center (IMC), IWW and Black Block on to Quebec's Le CLAC, IMC and Black Block on to Genoa's Social Centers, IMC, and Black Bloc. For all of these reasons (if not the basic principles of participatory democracy) anarchists should have had, like any other group, full access to the decision-making infrastructure of the World Social Forum.

In addition to criticizing the process through which the decisions were made regarding the organization of the WSF, participants also complained of inadequate translation services. The issue of translation was deemed especially critical given the increasingly global nature of the event. These critics emphasized how translation in the Forum reflected its hierarchical organization as large-scale, WSF-organized events with big names were well-equipped, while organizers of smaller panels and assemblies were left to their own devices and in many cases could not accommodate non-Portuguese and non-Spanish speakers.

In light of the police brutality against the anarchist protesters and the PT's visible presence at the Forum (despite the Charter's ban on political parties) many participants objected that the PT exercised too much control over the event. The tension between the local and federal government had taken center stage during moments of WSF 2001, and the PT helped fund both WSF 2001 and WSF 2002. In 2002, Lula made another appearance, but this time during an election year. Despite the PT's vital support, these participants felt that "it should become a basic principal of the WSF that no single party or group will be allowed to exert any type of universal control over the planning and execution of the event in any way" (Adams, 2002).

In addition to the problem of the PT's sketchy involvement, the Forum was criticized for not taking its internal differences seriously enough. While many people in

the Forum, especially its organizers, celebrated the Forum's diversity and plurality – which they attributed to the nonpartisan, nonmilitant, nondeliberative character of the "open space" - others asserted that key political differences among Forum participants should have been further discussed and explicated. For example, following WSF 2002, Michael Hardt (2002) commented that:

> The encounter should…reveal and address not only the common projects and desires, but also the differences of those involved – differences of material conditions and political orientation…The Forum provided an opportunity to recognize such differences and questions for those willing to see them, but it did not provide the conditions for addressing them. In fact, the very same dispersive, overflowing quality of the Forum that created the euphoria of commonality also effectively displaced the terrain on which such difference and conflicts could be confronted.

After WSF 2002, organizers responded to criticisms regarding the way it was organized in two different ways: First, they altered the event structure to include *Dialogue and Controversy Roundtables*, which included representatives of institutions that were banned from participating as official delegates (e.g., members of political parties and state officials), but whose contributions to the Forum were deemed important by the Forum's organizers. They also attempted to democratize the process through which speakers were chosen by giving registrants the opportunity to suggest speakers (with the exception of self-organized workshops), from which the International Council could select panelists.

Second, the organizers called for the decentralization and diffusion of the social forum model to operate on multiple geographic scales. The result was that regional and thematic forums began to emerge worldwide. Local and regional social forums operated within their specific locales, but maintained ties to the WSF through information sharing

(via the Internet) and adherence to the WSF Charter of Principles. The first (2002) European Social Forum (ESF) in Florence drew 60,000 participants and ended with a massive demonstration of one million people. The location of the Forum – so soon after Genoa – sparked a great deal of controversy within Italy. Local Tuscan authorities squared off against the right-wing Berlusconi government and its supporters, including renowned Italian journalist Oriana Fallaci. The Italian right attempted to instill fear among the public in and outside Florence, arguing that the event would result in large-scale riots, similar to what happened in Genoa, only worse. On the other side of the debate were various activists and social forum organizers, and a sizeable cadre of intellectuals who signed an appeal in favor of the Forum. Despite the political controversy, the event ensued without incident.

In addition to the European event, local and regional social forums mushroomed in various countries. Italy alone was home to some fifty local forums and Germany was a close second. While substantial variability existed among them, the social forums' model of assembly and projects to create open spaces for debate and deliberation – focused on local and regional issues - became increasingly popular, especially in the European context. Plus, at the 2002 ESF, various groups made an initial call for a global day of protests against the Iraq war, naming February 15, 2003 as the target date.

The World Social Forum, 2003

The third WSF took place in Porto Alegre from January 23 to 28, 2003. Similar to prior years, two kinds of activities took place: (1) core events planned by the WSF Organizing Committee that consisted of panels, conferences, roundtables and testimonies; and (2)

activities sponsored by participant organizations, such as seminars and workshops. The core WSF-organized activities at WSF 2003 included ten conferences, 22 testimonies, four dialogue and controversy roundtables and 36 panel debates. These activities brought together almost 400 speakers from organizations and social movements around the world. The number of self-managed activities totaled roughly 1,300, four times as many as in the first year. The major themes of WSF 2003 included: Democratic Sustainable Development; Principles and values, human rights, diversity and equality; Media, culture and counter-hegemony; Political power, civil society and democracy; and the Democratic world order: the fight against militarism and promoting peace (WSF, 2006). Like years prior, the 2003 event featured big name speakers in a large stadium, including Noam Chomsky, Arundhati Roy, Susan George and several others. In addition, Lula, as the new president of Brazil, gave a speech in a nearby amphitheater and Hugo Chávez spoke outside the event.

The 2003 WSF saw a tremendous increase in the number of participants to approximately 100,000, including 20,000 delegates from a total of 123 countries. The Youth Camp drew 25,000 participants and over 4,000 journalists attended. Like years prior, the largest delegations were from Brazil (13,046), France, Italy, Argentina and Uruguay, but WSF 2003 also saw a massive increase in the number of participants from the United States (World Social Forum, 2006). During the Forum, the ESF's call for a global day of protest against the war was reinforced by WSF participants. The result was the largest set of protests in world history. According to the *BBC News* (2003), between six and ten million people took part in the protests in up to sixty countries; other sources estimate the range from eight to thirty million (Simonson, 2003). The demonstration in

Rome, which alone involved some three million people, is listed in the *2004 Guinness Book of World Records* as the largest anti-war rally in world history (Guinness, 2004).

Despite the euphoria associated with its exponential growth, the Forum experienced significant administrative setbacks in 2003 when the local government pulled out of funding the event. Although Lula and the PT had won seats in the national government and throughout the country, the PT lost governance of the state Rio Grande do Sul (in Fall 2002). The consequences of the financial loss were apparent: the official program was not released until well into the Forum, many of the workshops were not properly publicized, and in general, the event was poorly organized.

As the Forum grew in size and popularity, so did the number of its critics. Pablo Ortellado (2003) of the Brazilian Indymedia describes a growing tension – present to a lesser degree during the first two WSFs - between participants who organized open, "autonomous spaces" like Anarchist Journeys and organizers of the "core activities" of the Forum, which included representatives from the PT, ATTAC, Brazilian CUT, the MST, the Catholic Church and others. The main, WSF-organized activities were consistently staged in large, well-equipped venues with translation and were well publicized (even in 2003 when resources were scarce), whereas the marginal activities suffered from "the outrageous organizational boycott during WSF III to every single autonomous activity within it, from Radio Muda (probably the most free radio in Brazil) to Indymedia" (Ortellado, 2003). Indymedia – a major force in the GJM – was highly critical of Forum organizers in 2003, "as all the space for media [was] occupied by mainstream media, leaving no space for the alternative or the independent" (Adamovsky, 2002). In addition, Life After Capitalism (LAC) – a series of panels planned well in

advance of the 2003 WEF by *Z Magazine* - suffered poor attendance due to WSF organizers' failure to advertise the LAC events and last minute changes in venue.

In addition to the marginalization of autonomous spaces and events in the Forum, the Youth Camp was severely neglected, despite the significant growth in the number of participants. According to *Z Magazine's* Michael Albert (2003):

> there were the youth who were housed in a camp with barely running water and barely acceptable sewage. That the roughly 30,000 people in the youth camp made it a vibrant community in which there were no hierarchies is immensely admirable, but that praiseworthy fact doesn't excuse that so many people were treated as a separate entity, with so little effort to incorporate them.

My observations at the Youth Camp in the 2003 Forum corroborate Albert's findings. The Camp was woefully unsanitary, especially after rainfall, and the showers were not covered such that participants, especially women, were not afforded privacy. The tent city was located off the beaten path of the Forum and most of the autonomous spaces – such as Intergalaktica – were located there. Laboratorio Intergalaktica was born out of the Intercontinental Meeting Against Neoliberalism and For Humanity in 1996, called by the Zapatistas and attended by people from over 43 countries (Osterweil, 2003). Spaces like Intergalaktica and the Youth Camp were dramatically different from the rest of the Forum. Intergalaktica, for example, consisted of a large tent with hundreds of fold-up chairs inside. There were no microphones and no translation services, although bilingual participants generously helped translate when possible. Even when attendance numbered in the hundreds, meetings were organized assembly-style, in which the distinction between speaker and audience was not readily apparent. The physical contrast between Intergalaktica and the events held in the stadium and other central venues pointed to the

fundamental split described by Ortellado, between the bureaucratic and more grassroots participants in the Forum.

The split between these groups manifested in other ways as well. According to Ezekiel Adamovsky (2003) of the Argentine Asambleas movement, the collection of groups that control the WSF – ATTAC France, CUT and MST (Brazil), Focus on the Global South (Thailand) and the World March of Women (Quebec) – all called for the creation of a "Social Movement World Network" at the 2003 WSF. Although he acknowledged the merit of creating such a network, Adamovsky criticized these groups for their failure to consult and include grassroots social movements in organizing the network:

> Grassroots activists of real social movements were simply not there at the meetings. And no substantial effort was made to make sure the initial proposal was available in advance, so that the movements could at least discuss it at home and send their opinions.

Peter Waterman (2003) sheds some light on the process by which the Network was initiated:

> Two previous Forums have issued a 'call of social movements' at the prompting of various members of the OC [Organizing Committee] and IC [International Council], some being recognisable social movements, others being recognisable NGOs. Both calls have been publicly presented and then signed by 50-100 other organisations and networks.

In addition to the increasing division between social movements and the more institutionalized members of the Forum, the PT's involvement continued to be a point of contention. As Ortadello (2003) pointed out, in previous years: "the PT…used the WSF as propaganda for its policies, presenting Porto Alegre as the socialist paradise it certainly isn't." But problems associated with the Party's role in the WSF became more pronounced at WSF 2003 when Lula made a public speech at an amphitheater on the

grounds of the Forum to 75,000 onlookers. Naomi Klein wrote what is perhaps one of the strongest indictments of Lula's presence at the Forum in a February 2003 piece in *The Guardian* entitled "No More Political Strongmen." In the article, Klein asks: "how on earth did a gathering that was supposed to be a showcase for new grassroots movements become a celebration of men with a penchant for three-hour speeches about smashing the oligarchy?" She continues with a well-crafted summary of grassroots social movements' response to Lula's appearance:

> For some, the hijacking of the World Social Forum by political parties and powerful men is proof that the movements against corporate globalisation are finally maturing and "getting serious". But is it really so mature, amidst the graveyard of failed left political projects, to believe that change will come by casting your ballot for the latest charismatic leader, then crossing your fingers and hoping for the best? Get serious.

What Klein leaves out of her essay are the details of Lula's performance, in which he disclosed his plan to participate in the World Economic Forum and take "the message of Porto Alegre to Davos. I will be saying the same thing as I say here. There will not be two faces. I will tell Davos that their economic policies are making a terrible mistake" (Wainright, 2003).

Following Lula's speech, an anarchist group called "Confectioners Without Borders" threw a pie the face of PT president Jose Genoino at a press conference on Lula's visit to Davos. The woman who threw the pie stated, "Lula does not represent us! The people in the streets represent us!" After the incident, the group issued a communiqué, which explained: "The hope of change which we bring cannot be co-opted again and frustrated by politicians and parties who wish to promote themselves at our expense." The statement ended with "Que se vayan todos!" ("that they all go") - the rally

cry of the 2001 Argentine uprising of *piqueteros* and other social movements, which called for *all* politicians to leave the country. Paul Burrows (2003) reflected on how the pie was symbolic of the larger split within the Forum:

> There's a split between those who want to pin their hopes on the latest volley of so-called 'great men,' old-style Left parties with old-style hierarchies, and the 'primacy' of electoral politics on the one side. And on the other side are those who want the movement to embody the principles we profess to hold, and the values we ostensibly aim to foster 'after the revolution' – namely, equality, diversity, solidarity, self-management, democratic participation, accountability, and so on.

This split was further exacerbated when an indigenous Mapuche woman (a delegate of the WSF) was arrested while bathing nude in a river near the WSF grounds. After the woman was arrested under charges of "obscene acts," a non-violent, nude protest by 400 activists in the Youth Camp ensued, which was attacked by local police, injuring protesters as well as journalists and bystanders.

Following the 2001 WSF, when organizers committed to internationalizing the WSF process, the International Council decided to hold one of the future WSFs in India. The success of the 2003 Asian Social Forum in Hyderabad (which attracted roughly 8,000 participants) confirmed their decision. At the close of the 2003 WSF, the Council announced that the event would be held in India the following year. Its timing could not have been better. Criticisms of the PT's involvement in the Forum were mounting as were complaints regarding access to the Forum from Asian and African activists. According to Portuguese sociologist Boaventura De Sousa Santos (2004), a member of the WSF International Council, the Porto Alegre WSF attracted a modest number of Asian and African delegates, which created the appearance that it was a predominantly

Brazilian or Latin American event. The large number of WSF Organizing Committee and International Council members from Brazil added to this impression (Kagarlitsky, 2004). Moreover, despite allowing Lula and Chávez to make their appearances, organizers wanted to prevent the Forum from becoming consumed in Latin American (especially Brazilian) politics. As Boris Kagarlitsky (2004), Director of the Institute of the Problems of Globalization (in Moscow), pointed out, "The Forum faced a dilemma: either become a platform to criticize the new Brazilian government, of fall under its influence." Moreover, the WSF was conceived – by its organizers and participants - as what Santos (2004) called a "universal aspiration:" in addition to the success of local and regional projects like the European Social Forum, which attracted 50,000 participants in Paris in 2003, the world forum needed to expand, both geographically and thematically.

The World Social Forum, 2004 (Mumbai, India)

The city of Mumbai was strategically chosen as the site of the 2004 World Social Forum. Mumbai is the center of India's Bollywood enterprise and home to the country's wealthiest people as well as the world's poorest. According to Santos (2004), "More than half of the population lives in slums (roughly two million on the streets), whereas 73 percent of the families, usually large, live in one-room tenements. The recent spread of the informal economy has turned two percent of the population into street vendors." For these and other reasons, Mumbai is what Santos called "a living symbol of contradiction of capitalism in our time." A city of 16 million people, Mumbai is the "largest financial center in the world outside the OECD, as well as being the location of some of the most aggressive and violent acts of religious sectarianism that the subcontinent has witnessed"

(WSF India, 2004). Development analyst Devinder Sharma estimates that "by 2010 Mumbai will be 80 percent slum" (Conant, 2004). Despite the gaping chasm between rich and poor, Mumbai boasts of a

> militant trade union movement, vibrant *dalit* and women's movements and has allowed the growth of alternatives to mainstream arts, performing arts and cinema…[it is] a plural, cosmopolitan and permissive city with every language of the subcontinent spoken here and just about every faith of the world…(WSF India, 2004).

The fourth WSF was held in Mumbai from January 16 to 21, 2004. In place of the Brazilian WSF Organizing Committee, a local India WSF Organizing Committee planned the event with guidance from the International Council. According to Teivainen (2004), the planning committee involved in organizing the WSF in India veered from the Porto Alegre model and "issues of representatives…[were] more explicitly debated than in the construction of the global World Social Forum process." For example, the Committee not only attempted to reach out to social movements and NGOs already active in the Forum, but opened the dialogue to political parties and groups typically marginalized in political discussion, such as: "workers, peasants, indigenous peoples, *dalits* ('untouchables'), women, hawkers, all minorities, immigrants, students, academicians, artisans, artists, the media as well as parliamentarians, sympathetic bureaucrats an other concerned sections from without and outside the state" (India Working Committee, 2004).

An India General Council (IGC) consisting of 135 members was established as the decision-making body for the WSF in India. According to the WSF India website (2004), "membership to the IGC [was] open to all social movements and organizations…committed to the WSF Charter of Principles." In addition, an India

Working Committee "responsible for formulating policy guidelines that [formed] the basis for the functioning of the WSF India Process" was established that consisted of 67 organizations nominated from the IGC. The India Working Committee was made up of

> fourteen national trade union and workers' organizations, eight national women's organizations, six national farmer's networks, and four national platforms each of *dalits*, adivasis, four students and youth bodies, as well as 27 social movements other organizations and NGOs.

Finally, the India Organizing Committee served as the "executive body of the WSF 2004, responsible for organizing the event." It consisted of 45 individuals, each of whom served on one of eight functional groups, including: Program; Venue and Logistics; Communication and Media; Liaison; Finance; Culture; Mobilization; and Youth and Students.

WSF India also expanded the way in which thematic categories were used to bring coherence to the event. While the WSF had previously adopted an opposition to neoliberalism as the main theme through which other themes would intersect, the WSF India organizers added other dimensions, which they termed "traversals." The idea was that each of the main themes of the Forum traversed with more general categories, including opposition to patriarchy, imperialism and others. For the 2004 WSF, the main themes included: Democracy, Ecological and Economic Security; Discrimination, Dignity and Rights; Media, Information and Knowledge; and Militarism, War and Peace and "Transversal" themes included: Imperialist globalization; Patriarchy; Casteism, Racism and Social Exclusions; and Religious sectarianism, Identity Politics, Fundamentalism (WSFIndia, 2004, Gupta, 2003). More than in prior years, the Iraq War

and related issues of terrorism, fundamentalism and security took center stage. Some complained that “the anti-Bush stance dominated the Forum” (Chaudhry, 2004).

The 2004 WSF in India attracted roughly 80,000 to 100,000 participants from over 120 countries, including 20,000 to 30,000 *dalits*. Roughly 2,700 were housed in the Youth Camp and 3,200 journalists from over 45 countries attended. Notable speakers included Arundati Roy, former Indian president K.R. Narayanan, Nobel Peace Prize winner Shirn Ebadi and another Nobel Prize winner (in Economics), Joseph Stiglitz, the former chairman of Clinton’s Council of Economic Advisors and ex-chief Economist of the World Bank. Even former President Clinton acknowledged the Forum in an address he made at the WEF in Davos (Capdevila, 2004).

Registration was structured in the same way as WSF 2003, except there was a general effort to democratize the process by reducing the number of WSF-organized events and increasing the number of those that were self-organized. Plus, self-organized events were expanded to include conferences, panels and testimonies in addition to workshops. The WSF India organizers planned a total of thirteen events, in the form of panels, conferences, roundtables or public meetings. The event also included 35 large-scale self-organized activities (e.g., panels, conferences and roundtables) as well as 1,200 smaller events (e.g., seminars, workshops and meetings). In addition, “more than 1,500 artists, poets writers and film directors took an active part with their cultural works. There were 150 street theatre plays and also a film festival with more than 85 titles related to the WSF themes.” Countless participants reflected in written evaluations how women played a more visible role in India than they had in previous years. In addition, “the attendee composition altered dramatically from being overwhelmingly South American

with a significant U.S. and European presence, to being overwhelmingly Asian with a significant African and some U.S. and European presence" (Albert, 2004).

A key development in the India WSF process was the decision to include political parties. According to Alex Callinicos (2004) of Globalise Resistance in Britain,

> India has the largest Communist movement in the world – two mass parliamentary parties, the quasi-Maoist Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Communist Party of India (pro-Moscow in the days of the USSR), plus various Marxist-Leninist organizations that often lead very large and militant movements in the country.

Affiliated with a political party (the Socialist Workers Party) himself, Callinicos asserted that in India the WSF could not have operated without political parties: "their presence in the Indian Organizing Committee…was discreet but important."

Despite the India WSF's rejection of the Charter of Principles' ban on political parties in 2004, armed resistance groups were still excluded. The ban on militant groups had been criticized at earlier Forums, especially when WSF organizers invited ministers from France, Belgium and Portugal, but denied participation to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia (FARC) and Basque nationalists. Several critics have questioned whether the Zapatistas – a veritable vanguard of the Global Justice Movement – would also be excluded under these guidelines (Wallerstein, 2004). In 2004, however, the issue became increasingly important: some Marxist-Leninist groups were, according to Callinicos, still involved in guerilla activity in some regions of India's countryside and a small, but vocal band of Maoist organizations - Mumbai Resistance (MR) – wanted to see the WSF become more open to different tactics of resistance. According to political theorist Immanuel Wallerstein (2004), MR

> denounced the World Social Forum as a combination of Trotskyists, Social Democrats, reformist mass organizations, NGOs financed by transnationals – in short, a stalking-horse for quietism and counter-revolution. They specifically attacked the concept of the open forum (merely a talk show, they said), the slogan (not "another world," but socialism as the objective, they said) and the financing of the WSF (the fact that some money had come in the past from the Ford Foundation).

In addition, MR wanted the Forum and its constituents to express solidarity with the Iraqi resistance (Whitehouse and Lal, 2004). One of the WSF's notables, Arundhati Roy, attended both the WSF India and Mumbai Resistance; her support for the Iraqi resistance was well documented: "The Iraqi resistance is fighting on the front lines of the battle against Empire. And therefore that battle is our battle" (Roy, 2004).

Mumbai Resistance took place alongside the WSF from January 17 to 20, 2004 and attracted roughly 2,000 participants. It was a product of the International Coordinating Group of the International League of Peoples' Struggles (ILPS) – a coalition of over 100 organizations. In its own words, Mumbai Resistance was "a continuation of the militant traditions set in the antiglobalisation and anti-war movements that assumed a new intensity after Seattle" (*The Spark*, 2003). In light of its militant orientation, MR criticized the WSF process on the following grounds:

> MR-2004 is of the strong opinion that justice, equality and liberation can be achieved only through peoples' struggles. In this process we do not exclude any form of struggle that the situation may demand. The achievement of justice, equality and liberation is the primary objective, and the people choose the method of struggle according to the specific situation. Any restriction based on the forms of struggle can only serve to divide the forces standing up against imperialism (*The Spark*, 2003).

Aside from MR's push for the Forum to be more inclusive, two additional criticisms were waged against the India forum, both of which did not originate (or end)

there: First, participants began to express a desire to see the WSF take political positions or express shared political values, against the War in Iraq, for instance, or the FTAA. While the WSF International Council debated whether the Forum should move in this direction, they ultimately decided to adhere its Charter and remain "nondeliberative" (Patomaki and Teinaiven, 2005). The second major criticism, inherited from previous years, regarded the organization of the Forum. Despite the India Committees' attempts to make the process more transparent, critics point to the failure of the WSF to open its steering and organizing committees to the grassroots. According to Michael Albert (2003) (a former member of the WSF International Council), "We want transparency, democracy, participation, even participatory democracy in the world around us. But these qualities don't exist regarding the WSF's own operations and that creates an abiding tension…" Albert further asserted that "having an international decision making council composed of people who are largely unaccountable and even unknown to anyone outside the convened room…is not a recipe for lasting and even accelerating success."

Despite these and other criticisms, the India WSF was generally viewed as a remarkable success. The experiment of relocating the Forum seemed to paid off and many participants marveled at how the Forum in India felt more community- and grassroots-driven and less like a middle class event (especially in contrast the European Social Forum). Like in previous years, a general call went out for a global anti-war march on March 20th, the anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Several months after the India WSF, the European Social Forum (ESL) was held in London from October 14 to 17, 2004. To the dismay of many participants, the event was largely organized by the Great London Authority (the municipal government) and

the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP). The 2004 ESF attracted some 35,000 people from all over Europe, a little less than half of the number in previous years. Although autonomous spaces, such as "the Hub," had been organized in prior years, 2004 saw a proliferation of them because of the SWP and Greater London Authority's involvement. A replica of the divisions between bureaucratic and grassroots participants at the WSF, the schism between "horizontals[4]" and "verticals" marred the 2004 ESL.

According to *The Guardian* (2004), "6,000 of the mainly young people attending the three-day Forum (ESF) had to queue for many hours in the rain to register…because only 900 [were] allowed in at one time, the police were called to clear the premises. Fights ensued, and a man was arrested." Participants speculated that the organizers were responsible for the police presence (although Callinicos has denied their involvement). Soon after, at a session that was slated to feature Ken Livingston (he cancelled), anarchists and other "horizontals" stormed the podium in protest. For many who attempted to participate in the ESF, while emphasizing their autonomy from its organizers, the London event would be the last social forum they would attend.

The World Social Forum, 2005

The fifth WSF was held in Porto Alegre (PoA) between January 26 and 31, 2005. It was attended by 155,000 people from over 135 countries, almost eight times as many as in its first year. As with previous forums in PoA, the largest delegations were from Brazil (80 percent) and other Latin American countries. For 2005, the Brazilian WSF Organizing

[4] Elizabeth Block provides a useful definition: "Horizontalism does not ignore informal hierarchies, but rather seeks mechanisms to control them, without re-inscribing vertical structures into our formal organizational architectures. At the same time, horizontalism always means remaining open and flexible to diversity and difference – within certain limits, of course" (Block, 2004).

Committee was expanded from the initial eight members to 23, subdivided into the following working groups: Spaces; Solidarity and Popular Economy; Environment and Sustainability; Culture; Translation; Communication; Mobilization; and Free Software.

The organizing process and structure of the 2005 WSF was radically altered from previous years: Forum organizers began the process by soliciting ideas for major thematic "terrains" and like their counterparts in India, made use of "traversals" to frame issues. According to ZNet staff member Daniel Morduchowicz (2002), 1,800 organizations took part in deciding the thematic terrains for the Forum[5], which were used to organize the workshops and panels. Unlike previous WSFs, all of the events were self-organized and participatory in 2005. The result was over 2,500 events in which 6,880 participants spoke on panels and at workshops. In addition, the Youth Camp housed 35,000 people and for the first time in WSF history was located within the formal space of the Forum.

While translation was again raised as a significant problem, most critics focused on the general unwieldiness of the new geographic-thematic arrangement and lack of opening and closing ceremonies to tie things together. As in previous years, participants testified to the ease at which one could get lost in the endless sea of workshops and events, which were, in many cases, inaccessible to non-Portuguese and non-Spanish speakers. According to Callinicos and Nineham (2005):

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[5] Thematic terrains for the 2005 WSF included: Assuring and defending Earth and people's common goals – as alternative to commodification and transnational control; Arts and creation: weaving and building people's resistance culture; Communication: counter-hegemonic practices, rights and alternatives; Defending diversity, plurality and identities; Human rights and dignity for a just and egalitarian world; Sovereign economies for and of people – Against neoliberal capitalism; Ethics, cosmovisions and spiritualities – Resistances and challenges for a new world; Social struggles and democratic alternatives – Against neoliberal domination; Peace, demilitarisation and struggle against war, free trade and debt; Autonomous thought, reappropriation and socialisation of knowledge and technologies; Towards construction of international democratic order and people's integration.

Transversal themes: Social emancipation and political dimensions of struggles; Struggle against patriarchal capitalism; Struggle against racism and other types of exclusion based on ancestry; Gender; Diversities

> the division of the site into 11 distinct 'thematic terrains' fragmented 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.

Such criticisms appeared throughout reviews of the 2005 WSF: "Although hailed as a victory for democratic planning, this diminished the sense of common purpose at the summit. It enhanced the feeling that there were many forums, large and small, going on at once" (Engler, 2006).

In addition to experiments with the structure of the event itself, prior to the event, the organizers of WSF 2005 attempted to aggregate groups working on similar topics in order to facilitate networking among them. They also responded to critics from prior years by creating a Solidarity Fund to help offset travel costs for participants from poor countries. They financed the Fund with monies spent in previous years on paying big name speakers. Still, the event had its headliners, including Brazilian pop star and Minister of Culture Gilbert Gil, writer Frei Betto and theologian Leonardo Boff. Other celebs, such as Arundhati Roy, Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein and Kofi Annan were listed on the program, but did not show up (Engler, 2005).

The most contentious celebrity speaker at the 2005 Forum was the country's president, Lula. Like in 2003, when he was first elected, Lula spoke in a large amphitheater at the beginning of the Forum. This time, however, he faced a somewhat cooler reception. During his speech, Lula lauded the Forum and proposed that it become a permanent institution in Brazil, but according to Roger Burbach (2005):

> there was a palpable sense of disillusionment with Lula in the stadium. While he endorsed progressive international policies such as standing up to Bush on the war in Iraq, his government's economic policies in the main have followed the neo-liberal policies of his predecessors, appeasing foreign capital and the big banks.

> When Lula announced that he was flying off to Davos, Switzerland for the World Economic Forum the next day…[and] proclaimed he wanted to be 'a bridge' between the two forums. The word 'traitor' rippled through the stadium and some people booed. Outside the pavilion where Lula spoke a scuffle broke out between former members of the Workers Party who were protesting. Twenty people were arrested.

Lula's notion of serving as "a bridge" between the two Forums marked a radical departure from the contentious interchange between WSF participants and George Soros only four years prior. Despite Klein's (and many others') plea that the Forum not be dominated by "political strongmen," Hugo Chávez also spoke at the 2005 WSF, which he deemed "the world's most important political event" (Dujisin, 2005). During his speech, Chávez denounced the "hegemony" of the United States and bellowed, "Only with socialism can we transcend capitalism!" He suggested that the WSF enter into a "new phase" and over its next five years develop "a strategy of power." Chávez explained

> It is a matter of power and counter-power, of hegemony and counter-hegemony, of seeing which proposal prevails in the world. Whether it is the project of destroying this beautiful planet, or our project, which is the project of life, against the project of death, and see which prevails in the end (Ibid, 2005).

The crowd responded warmly to Chávez and at points, cried, "Chávez Sí, Lula No." But Chávez signaled for them to stop and instead called for the development of a broad-based "anti-imperialist front" (Burbach, 2005). Marc Becker, a professor of Latin American History at Truman State University, points to the Chávez administration's effects on the WSF and its constituents in his evaluation of the 2005 WSF:

> Placing elected political officials at the middle of WSF discourse is rather ironic given that the forum began explicitly as a gathering of civil society that discarded state-centered solutions to social problems. Many activists, however, are rethinking the relationship between social movements and political parties. This has led back to an emphasis on the importance of the state in achieving fundamental social changes.

In addition to the growing contention among WSF participants regarding the involvement of state officials, a new, yet related controversy surfaced over the "Porto Alegre Consensus," a manifesto drafted at the close of WSF 2005 by a group of nineteen high-profile activists and intellectuals. The "Porto Alegre Consensus" is a 12-point call to action that lists what its authors believe to be the main themes of the WSF.[6] Despite the WSF Charter, which states that no one is authorized to speak on behalf of the Forum as a whole, the Consensus was drafted by some members of the WSF International Committee and other notable participants.[7] Chico Whitaker, co-founder of the WSF and adamant defender of its "open space" structure, pleaded with the signatories to add their 12-point plan to the WSF Mural of Proposals instead of making a separate appeal. The Mural was a new feature of the 2005 WSF that was created as a mechanism for collecting proposals and calls to action (from *all* participants), which would later catalogued online. The database of proposals could then be used as a tool for activists to coordinate future projects and actions. Needless to say, Whitaker refused to sign the Consensus, but other WSF International Council members stood by it (at least initially). *Le Monde's* Ignacio Ramonet (also a member of the WSF International Council) was perhaps the most fervent of its supporters: "Now, nobody can say we have no programme. Now we have the Porto Alegre Consensus and we are sure – we're confident – that the great majority of the

[6] The themes outlined in the Porto Alegre Consensus include: debt cancellation, adoption of the Tobin tax on international financial transfers, dismantling of tax havens, the promotion of equitable forms of trade, a guarantee on the sovereignty of a country's right to not only be able to produce affordable food for its citizens, but also to police its food supply; the implementation of anti-discrimination polices for minorities and women, and democratisation of international organisations, which would include moving the United Nations headquarters far South of its current New York location.

[7] Signatories include: Aminata Traore, Adolfo Perez Esquivel, Eduardo Galeano, Jose Saramago, Francois Houtart, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Armand Mattelart, Robert 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.

people of the Forum will agree with this proposal" (Anthony and Silva, 2005). While the Consensus was simply a play on words – a rebuttal to the "Washington Consensus" - many people in the Forum expressed disdain for the group's audacity in suggesting that the document constituted a consensus among WSF participants. Unfortunately for Ramonet and his cohort, WSF participants may have agreed with the proposals, but many of them did not support the way in which they were drafted. Writer-activists, Debra Anthony and Jose Antonio Silva (2005) summed it up nicely:

> For its proponents, the Manifesto represents the courageous, bold step necessary to convert the WSF into an effective political force for global change. To others, as one Brazilian official told *TerraViva,* it is just the same old 'celebrities' who cannot swallow being part of the masses they once led.

Peter Waterman (2005) provided a similar analysis of the general reception of the document:

> [It] provoked the anger or ridicule of many at the WSF…many of whom considered it, variously, as some kind of attempted coup, as elitist (dominated by white, male intellectuals, emanating from a chic hotel), as circumventing the well-established Call of Social Movements and (in my case…) of being both meager in extent and lacking in bite.

Although the authors of the Porto Alegre Consensus intended to stimulate discussion on the future of the Forum – and in some ways resuscitate it - their manifesto was "largely ignored or disapproved by the majority of the Forum's attendants" (Muruchowicz, 2005). Joao Stedile of the MST stated at the close of the conference that the authors of the Consensus "were not asked by anybody for a document nor did they invite others in the various social movement present in Porto Alegre to participate in its elaboration" (Ibid.).

Amidst debates over the Lula and Chávez appearances and the PoA Consensus (both during and after the WSF), two major trends became apparent: First, despite the general disdain for the way the PoA Consensus was put together, there was indeed a

desire among WSF participants to engage in a more public expression of its opposition to neoliberalism and perhaps, develop a political program. While some argued that a consensus among such a large group was not possible and might only serve to "straitjacket…WSF delegates into an artificially-constructed consensus on policy positions," others suggested that there are might in fact be some issues upon which all of WSF participants could agree. The latter group argued that the Forum was becoming mired in technical questions of organization – protecting the nondeliberative character of the open space – and thereby losing sight of its goal to oppose neoliberalism. Ignacio Ramonet, for example, wrote in the January 2006 issue of *Le Monde*, that the initial objective of the WSF was to "thwart the process of liberal globalization," but points out that

> [it] was clear at Porto Alegre in 2005… that the original idea had lost momentum. Many felt that the forum had to be more than a venue for discussions that did not lead to action: a minimum platform was needed so that words could be transformed into actions. The platform would provide meaning and design for alternatives to neoliberal proposals, incorporating the common objectives of citizens from North and South. If it failed, the forum risked losing political credibility and becoming a showpiece for civil society in which, despite the best intentions, good governance would become the main focus of attention.

Ramonet and his cohort argued that if the WSF exercised its collective and intellectual power, it might have a real impact on world events (Márquez, 2005). Nobel Prize winner Jose Saramago (a signatory of the PoA Consensus) took a similar position during a debate with Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano in a large, overcrowded auditorium at the 2005 WSF. While Galeano "defended the utopian impulse as a force for social change," Saramago remarked:

> I consider the concept of utopia worse than useless…What has transformed the

> world is not utopia, but need…The only time and place where our work can have impact—where we can see it and evaluate it—is tomorrow…Let's not wait for utopia (Engler, 2005).

Despite the fact that the WSF was founded on the idea of creating a utopian "open space" – in the present - Saramago's response was met with a standing ovation (Ibid.).

The second trend that became apparent at the close of the 2005 WSF was a general ambivalence regarding the role of political parties and government officials in the Forum. On the one hand, Chávez's flagrant opposition to the Bush Administration and international financial institutions like the IMF and WTO has appealed too many on the international left and the PT's participatory programs are often lauded as the premier model of direct democracy at work, despite Lula's capitulations. While his quasi-nationalist and Thirdworldist[8] claims are somewhat troubling for many participants, his accomplishments in redistributing Venezuela's wealth and creating worker cooperatives have had a wide appeal. On the other hand, anarchists in the WSF have typically rejected parties and "political strongmen" outright and many activists find existing communist and socialist parties to be either too dogmatic or hierarchical, or both. In addition, the repeated failures of center and center-left parties to meet the needs of their respective citizens has caused many people to lose faith in electoral politics altogether. A series of IBASE-sponsored studies[9] on the population of the 2003 to 2005 WSFs confirm these observations: while 24.3 percent of the 2005 participants claimed to be affiliated with political parties in some way, 58 percent of those at the 2004 WSF expressed a lack of

[8] Peter Waterman (2006) described Thirdworldism as "the notion that the primary contradiction of capitalism was that between core and periphery, and that the states and/or peoples of the Third World were the primary force for development and/or revolution."
[9] The IBASE study, entitled "A Cross Section of Participation in the 2005 Forum" involved 2,540 interviews with participants (Osava, 2005).

confidence in them.

At the close of the 2005 Forum, participants lamented the possibility that the WSF might never return to Porto Alegre, its birthplace. In 2006, the WSF would go "polycentric" – i.e., operate out of three "centers" – and in 2007 re-centralize in Nairobi, when Africa celebrate the 200th anniversary of the elimination of the slave trade and the 50th anniversary of Ghana's independence.

The World Social Forum, 2006 "Polycentric"

Following its mandate to spread the social forum process around the globe, the WSF International Committee decided to make the 2006 WSF "polycentric" – meaning, that it would occur simultaneously in three venues: Caracas, Venezuela (the WSF of the Americas), Bamako, Mali and Karachi, Pakistan. WSF International Council member, Eric Toussaint, explains that the decision to hold polycentric events came out of a debate within the Council regarding whether the Forum should continue to operate on an annual basis. Rather than compromise its momentum, the Council decided to decentralize the WSF in 2006; its primary concern was "to develop regional dynamism while avoiding fragmentation" (Farrari, 2005).

In spite of proposals to the opposite effect, the WSF International Council decided that the three polycentric WSFs would not follow a standard model. Rather, Chico Whitaker (2005) asserts,

> the work of each forum ensues from the activities proposed and self-managed by its participants. The registration process enables them to find out about the proposals from others with common themes…And each of these themes can be deepened based on the real interests of the participants, and not by decisions by a higher authority, this latter being non-existent and unacceptable in the Forum process.

According to Whitaker, the polycentric Forums would expand the opportunity "for strengthening civil society in each of the three countries as a new political actor independent of governments, parties, and political leaders" (Whitaker, 2005). The WSF in Caracas – understood by many as an effort to support the Chávez administration - did not exactly work according Whitaker's plan. Author-activist Jai Sen (2006) acknowledges that the Council's choice of locations reflected their desire

> To open up social and political space: In Venezuela as an apparent ally of anti-imperialist popular forces in Latin America (and now made only more so, with the election of Morales in Bolivia…)…and in Pakistan, still formerly a dictatorship, with the army and a general in firm control (of state power, at least).

Logistically, the location of these countries enabled the WSF to operate on a truly global scale and significantly increase the diversity of its participant-base and thematic approach. Yet, as Edgardo Lander of the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (LACSS) pointed out, political actors in these contexts could not help but use the Forum to garner public support: "To think that the Forum has no impact on the regional agenda is to underestimate its potential" (Márquez, 2006). Regardless, the polycentric event was billed by the WSF International Committee as "an expansion and rooting" of the independent WSF process around the world (World Social Forum, 2006).

The Americas Social Forum: Caracas, Venezuela (South America)

The 2006 Polycentric WSF in Caracas took place from January 24 to 29, 2006. Venezuela was a likely choice for hosting one of the polycentric events due to the country's left wing leadership and its democratic socialist platform. Since re-taking office

in 2002, after a coup to unseat him (which was followed by an unsuccessful recall referendum in 2004), Chávez has implemented a serious of programs to redistribute the wealth of the country and bolster social welfare. Key aspects of his social(ist) democratic program include: (1) Venezuelan economic and political sovereignty; (2) participatory democracy through popular votes and referenda (3) economic self-sufficiency (food, consumer items, energy) and (4) equitable distribution of the country's resources, especially its oil industry.

In 2004, Venezuela was the world's ninth largest oil producer and the fifth largest net exporter; it has been a long-time member of Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (EIA, 2006). Needless to say, the petroleum sector dominates the country's economy and has provided the Chávez administration with the necessary wealth to implement a variety of social programs both in and outside Venezuela. Chávez is also well-known for his quips against the Bush Administration and bold efforts to undermine the WTO and IMF.

In addition to growing excitement about Chávez, just months before the WSF, a major development in South American politics took place: Evo Morales was elected President of Bolivia. Among other things, Morales is celebrated as the first indigenous person to be elected head of state in hundreds of years. He is a leader of the Bolivian *cocalero* movement, a federation of coca leaf growers who have resisted attempts by the U.S. government to eradicate coca in the province of Chapare. He is also a leader of Movimento al Socialismo, the political party recently involved in nationalizing Bolivia's natural gas economy. Morales and Chávez have been closely aligned in efforts to build a pan-Latin American alliance – for trade, political support and so on – and to socialize the

gas and other industries in their respective countries (Bolivia has the second largest resource of natural gas, second only to Venezuela).

Within this context, the WSF in Caracas attracted 60,000 to 80,000 participants representing 2,000 organizations. Like other WSFs, Brazil provided the largest number of delegates, followed by Venezuela, Columbia and the United States (2,500). The number of participants may have been affected by the closing of the bridge on the Caracas La Guaira highway - the principal link between the city and the international airport – just days before the launch of the Forum. The result of the closing was that several flights were delayed or cancelled and the average 30-minute trip between the airport and downtown turned into a four to five hour trek through the barrios and steep mountain passes that surround the city. The Chávez government softened the blow by providing free shuttle service between the airport and the city and free subway tickets to all Forum delegates. He also waived visa requirements and airport taxes.

The Forum in Caracas was comprised of approximately 2,000 conferences, workshops and panels, some of which were staged in giant auditoriums and others (self-organized) in smaller venues. Notable speakers included Cindy Sheehan, Eduardo Galeano and Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Perez Esquivel. Like in 2005, a consultation was opened prior to the Forum to solicit themes for organizing panels and workshops (see appendix three). In the end, 25 percent of the panels were organized by people from Venezuela, which may have contributed to monolingual nature of the event. Critics assert that while the event was billed as a WSF of the Americas, most of the panels and workshops were almost entirely conducted in Spanish. Even the WSF's

official newspaper *Terraviva*, which was normally published in several languages, was only available in Spanish in 2006.

The Youth Camp, on the other hand, had its own daily newspaper (*Querrequerre*, named after a bird that dies if it is held captive), which was presented in both English and Spanish (Becker, 2006). While I observed only one of them, there appeared to be two Youth Camps in Caracas. One was located a significant distance from the center of the Forum (one hour by bus), while the other was relatively close to it (a ten minute walk). The more central Camp was located adjacent to an enormous market area, where hundreds if not thousands of vendors sold a panoply of items – from Chávez action figures to leather crafts to homemade honey (literally, with live bees buzzing around). Inside the camp were covered showers (much better than in PoA), dozens of picnic tables and some covered spaces for cultural events and small workshops. The other Youth Camp did not seem to be quite as well-equipped: two to three representatives from the Camp disrupted a plenary session on the future of the WSF to protest unsanitary conditions (there was no running water) and its distance from the Forum's center. Nonetheless, various reports and the official website reported that the less central Youth Camp included a pressroom with computers and a radio station--significant improvements from previous years.

Despite the Forum's overall success, critics said that the lack of formal wrap-up at the end of the event made it feel disjointed and incoherent. In addition, events were held in nine different locations throughout the city; participants had a difficult time traveling between them and oftentimes got lost (I had this experience several times). Errors in the printed program only exacerbated the problem. Moreover, some venues where entirely

empty. For example, I visited one of the largest venues at the WSF in Caracas—a massive military airport outside the city center—on the third day of the Forum. The venue was heavily guarded by military police and the site itself consisted of fifteen to twenty large tents, spread across a half acre of land. Each tent was equipped with translation facilities and hundreds of chairs. The space was lined with food stands, had a tent-covered Internet café with hundreds of computers, and in general, was remarkably well-furnished. But the site was difficult to locate and despite the fact that dozens of workshops were scheduled for that two hour timeslot, the place was almost entirely deserted. A notable exception: a well-attended panel (conducted entirely in Spanish) in one of the large tents included four speakers, one of which was a military officer and another, a public official accompanied by a bodyguard.

Another criticism that surfaced at the Forum regarded the participation of grassroots social movements and community activists from within Venezuela. Sujatha Fernandes (2006) from Princeton reports:

> the Caracas Forum for the most part was boycotted by popular social movement leaders and organizations within Venezuela who have been at the base of Chávez's Bolivarian revolution. While official government programmes and top-down initiatives were given space within the programme, many experiences of community organizing from poor 'barrios' or urban shantytowns such as La Vega, San Agustin, Caricuao, Petare, and others were not included.
>
> Panels about community media, an important and growing movement within Venezuela, were organized by the National Commission of Telecommunications (CONATEL), an official regulatory agency for broadcast services. CONATEL has a tense relationship with community media activists and hence activists boycotted these panels. It was ironic that while a large, regional conference addressing social justice issues was being held in Caracas, many local activists most connected with social justice movements in the barrios for several decades did not participate.

Fernandes' review article points out that even the Zapatistas were not given a space in the Forum and had to organize their events on its margins. She explains that the problem was not simply a function of the domination of the Chávez government, but is embedded in the nature of the WSF itself, "in which advocacy groups and NGO logics have often come to predominate over the needs and demands of social movements themselves" (Fernandes, 2006). In keeping with Fernandes' observation, Sen (2006) argues that the Americas Forum in Venezuela was entirely sponsored by the Chávez government, and against Whitaker's assertion that it would operate independently of political forces, could not help but be used to promote its platform. Citing an article by Rafael Uzcategui entitled "Caracas: Shroud for Venezuela's Social Movements," Sen asserts that "some reports suggest that his [Chávez's] practice of politics is enervating independent social movements in the country and one opinion is that the WSF being held in Caracas is a shroud for such politics." Humberto Márquez (2006) suggests that by addressing Forum participants twice outside the official program, Chávez was using his position to guide the WSF process toward taking a more political stance in favor of his government.

In Caracas, the lifting of the WSF Charter of Principles' ban on political parties and state officials went hand in hand with the ban on militant or armed groups. In addition to the presence of Venezuelan military personnel at panels, meeting sites and government-sponsored markets (which showcased the government's latest tanks), several WSF-sponsored speakers (mostly on panels dedicated to imperialism) called for the development of a pan-Latin American army to thwart an invasion from the North. These and other factors gave the 2006 WSF a militarized feel, radically different from previous Forums. The Chávez administration's imprint on the 2006 Forum was not only visible

through the iconographic t-shirts and propaganda slogans that colored the event, but also through the presence of young recruits in fatigues, with weapons in hand.

Bamako, Mali (Africa)

The 2006 Polycentric WSF in Bamako, Mali took place from January 24 to 29, 2006 concurrent to the Caracas WSF. Located on the Niger River, Bamako is Mali's main administrative and regional trade center, with a population of roughly fifteen million. Mali is among the poorest countries in the world: 65 percent of its land is desert and most of the country's work force consists of farmers and fishermen; about ten percent of its population is nomadic. The BBC News (2006) reports that since Mali established its independence from France in 1960, the country has suffered droughts, rebellions, a coup and 23 years of military dictatorship. In 1992, the country's first democratically elected president--Amadou Toumani Toure--took power. His government provided 150 million CFA (almost US $29,000) in support for the WSF in Bamako and use of public meeting facilities (Geloo, 2006). According to the WSF Bamako website, Mali was "the first country federator of the people in western Africa. Since the sixties, Mali has showed entire commitment to strengthening progressive forces in Africa: it has been full member of the coalition which fought neocolonialism through its key representatives within the Group of Casablanca" (WSF Bamako, 2006).

The Polycentric WSF in Bamako attracted some 15,000 to 17,000 participants. The attendance was half what organizers expected, but still, a radical improvement from prior WSFs, in which only 100 or so African NGO representatives could participate (Geloo, 2006). Participants included over 300 people from the rural areas of Mali, and

another 8,000 from neighboring countries (Murphy, 2006). According to CodePink co-founder, Gael Murphy, “there was wide national news coverage of the forum in Mali” and Madame Aminata Traore, the former Minister of Culture, was involved in planning the event (Ibid.).

The Bamako WSF involved 300 to 700 activities daily, more than organizers had originally expected, and some new features that were markedly different from previous Forums. For example, the Bamako WSF’s Youth Camp, renamed the Youth Forum, was staged as a parallel event, organized to provide “young men and women the rare opportunity to interact with village elders and other ‘older citizens’ on issues that affect their lives, including unemployment, migration and education” (Geloo, 2006). Moreover, the Youth Forum served as a space for discussion around “children’s issues such as alternative tools for educating children in rural settings” (Ibid.) Another new invention in Bamako was the 15 km “Solidarity Run,” a public critique of the “commercialization of sport, with sportsmen and women, particularly from Africa, being traded on the international market” (Ibid.).

Criticisms of the WSF in Bamako tended to focus on typical logistical difficulties associated with staging such a large-scale event in a poor country with a weak infrastructure. Accommodation and sanitation were meager (in some cases, running water was scarce) and similar to other WSFs, general administration weak. Like the WSF in Caracas, for example, participants complained that some organizers and speakers did not show up to workshops and while French, Bambara and some English speakers had few complaints regarding translation, Portuguese speakers reported having some difficulty.

The most controversial event at the WSF in Bamako, however, took place outside the Forum territory at a conference held on January 18, 2006. The result of the conference was the "Bamako Appeal" (a.k.a the "Appeal of 19"), a 9,000-word manifesto "containing a 10-point programme for a global social transformation" (Waterman, 2006). The Appeal was drafted by a small group of intellectuals and NGO representatives, lead by Samir Amin and Francois Houtart, and was disseminated for endorsement via the World Forum of Alternatives website. Similar to the Porto Alegre Consensus (of which Houtart and Amin were also signatories), the Appeal marked a second attempt by high-profile activists to push the Forum toward the formation of political positions/actions. While its authors claim that the Appeal was an independent effort, the drafting session was convened in relation to the WSF in Bamako.

The general response of WSF participants to the Bamako Appeal (BA) was similar to that of the PoA Consensus. As Peter Waterman put it:

> [The] document [was] produced by a tiny group of individuals, complemented by an invited audience, edited by the original groups, and 'accepted' (whatever that might mean) at the event and apparently, at (not by) the WSFs in Bamako and Caracas. I myself had originally considered endorsing it the document. But it struck me that it would have been more in the spirit of our new movement if the BA had been used issued for discussion in the wider community of social movements and critical intellectuals worldwide (Ibid.).

The Appeal was more vehemently opposed by WSF International Council members, Chico Whitaker and Antonio Martins, who criticized its authors for the elitism behind its construction and how, in effect, the exercise served to reinforce "the barrier between those who think and those who fight" (Ibid).

Karachi, Pakistan (Asia)

The Polycentric WSF in Karachi, Pakistan took place from March 24 to 29, 2006. Karachi's population is approximately 15 million and it is the capital of Sindh Province, situated in the south, along the coast of the Arabian Sea. Karachi is the Pakistan's largest city and its main financial, commercial and manufacturing center.

Karachi and all of Pakistan is under the control of a military regime – flanked by religious fundamentalists (called "sectarian movements") on the one side and agents of the U.S. War on Terror on the other. Moreover, according to Rousset Pierre (2006), long-time activist in the Asian context and member of the Europe Solidaire Sans Frontiers, the Karachi WSF marked "the first time that a forum of this breadth has met in the Muslin world." Moreover, he asserts, "the political situation in the country is not good. There are key struggles…but the trade union and social movement remains fragmented and globally weak. The country is extremely divided," especially along ethnic and religious lines.

Though initially scheduled to operate simultaneously with the other polycentric WSFs, the Karachi WSF was delayed due to the October 2005 earthquake in the northern part of the country. The earthquake killed 80,000 people and left some 3.5 million homeless. In addition to natural disasters in the region, the Karachi WSF took place in an environment of tightened security in light of recent terrorist attacks and suicide bombings in the city.

Nonetheless, the Karachi WSF attracted over 30,00 to 40,000 people (twice as many as predicted) from 46 countries, featuring such notables as Tariq Ali, Yasin Malik of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), several Pakistani politicians, British

Parliament member Jeremy Corbyn and Indian Parliament member, Kumari Nirmala Deshpande, who chaired the opening ceremony. While the opening ceremony involved big-name activists and government officials, the closing ceremony was run by young people and other lesser-known participants, who were seen as the heart of the WSF process (Jammu and Kashmir, 2006). Participants included a diverse array of people: "small fishers from the Karachi region; peasants from the province of Punjab; trade unionists in struggle against privatization; nationalists from Sind (where Karachi is located), Baluchistan (in the west) or Kashmir (in the north); and a myriad of women's organizations." In addition, an Indian delegation was able to attend, despite difficulties getting into the country and while the Forum incorporated a variety of themes (see appendix three), India-Pakistan relations and Kashmir were central (Pierre, 2006).

Critics of the Karachi WSF assert that while the Forum attracted a variety of participants (58 countries were represented there), it lacked an international audience beyond South Asia (despite a sizeable French delegation). In addition, some Pakistani social movements were conspicuously absent, such as the feminist organizations of Lahore (Ibid.). In addition, critics suggested that poor people were invisible in the panels at the forum, just as they are in society in general. This criticism was linked to the broader problem of NGO involvement in the WSF, especially in Karachi. While the increased presence of NGOs had become an issue at the Indian WSF in 2004 (see chapter three), high-profile activist-writers, such as Tariq Ali and Arundhati Roy, waged major criticisms of NGOs during the Karachi WSF, pointing to their depoliticizing effects it. Environmentalist Ingmar Lee (2006) echoed their criticisms:

> [The World Social Forum is] turning into a Big NGO-dominated event, which is overshadowing its grassroots roots. Just as the environmental movement is being

> disempowered by collaborationist ENGOs [Environmental NGOs] which are choosing to negotiate compromises with government and industry, similarly, the WSF is apparently swinging towards entrenchments which transform flexible, energized grassroots action-oriented effort to entrenched, professional, celebrity NGO pyramidical power structures (Lee, 2006).

While the role of NGOs in the Forum will be discussed at length in the following chapter, it is important here to add Rahman's (2006) response--that perhaps NGOs at the WSF are only filling "the gaping vacuum created by the absence of an organized left."

Conclusion

Since its first meeting in 2001, the WSF has grown from a modest assembly of 20,000 to a large-scale, international event, attracting 150,000+ participants, activists, world leaders and renowned intellectuals from around the world. As the first two chapters of this text demonstrate, the growing popularity of the WSF over the last six years has been accompanied by an increased awareness of important political-organizational differences among its constituents, and economic and political instability in various parts of the world has only heightened the stakes of their debates.

The WSF was founded initially as a venue in which various left and left-leaning organizations and social movements could meet to formulate political, economic and social alternatives to neoliberal globalization. An extension of the Global Justice Movement, these groups shared a general critique of capitalist globalization and were skeptical of electoral regimes and other kinds of political organizations that tended to operate in a top-down fashion. Constituents of the WSF were also bound by their "broad conception of power and oppression," which served as an impetus for its nonpartisan, nondeliberative character (Santos, 2003). Groups became part of the WSF by committing to the open space process, rather than adopting a particular ideological line.

In a commentary on the European Social Forum (ESF), Elizabeth Block (2006) pointed out that "Intense struggles over political vision, tactics and organizational form…are constitutive of the process that characterizes the forums and the broader movement from which they emerged." In the process of the WSF's development, key debates over political-organization have crossed a variety of substantive issues: Is capitalism, and are institutions like the World Bank and IMF, reformable? If so, what are the mechanisms through which supranational financial institutions and states can be made more accountable to the people whose lives they affect? If the IMF and World Bank were dissolved, what institutions and models of development would replace them? How can politically and socially disparate groups in the WSF – NGOs, grassroots social movements and other nonparty actors–create more participatory democratic institutions? In the process of forging alternatives, how will the WSF and its constituents relate to political parties and militant groups – i.e., how does it conceive of its own power in relation to state power and violence? What are the key social and political characteristics of the contemporary world order and what strategies are available for radical social change?

Embedded in organizers' and constituents' conceptions and practice of the WSF open space lies a diverse set of political-theoretical assumptions about power and political organization. As Taimar Rahman (2006) of Lehore University pointed out, "A brief look at the Charter…quickly reveals much in the way of the concept that the builders of the WSF have about a new world." The recurring contest between "horizontals and "verticals" over the organization of the WSF is part of a larger tension among various political traditions and their corresponding visions of social change and its

agents. For autonomous social movements and anarchists, for example, meetings and the development of participatory democratic processes are an important part of doing politics, and organizational values such transparency, accountability and "horizontal" methods of decision-making, are hallmarks of an anarchist/autonomist lifestyle. These groups seek to create open, autonomous spaces as part of a countercultural, "prefigurative" project. For them, free spaces like the Forum should prefigure what a new, radically democratic society would look like. In this regard, everyday, rudimentary procedures and processes of decision-making – no matter how mundane the subject - are an integral part of anarchist/autonomist political organization. Given the top-down nature of WSF decision-making, these groups question the integrity of the WSF's claim to operate as an open space. They contend that the WSF organizers have not adequately applied key democratic principles--accountability, transparency and equality--to planning the event and determining its structure and objectives. While the term "verticals" has been applied most often to political parties associated with the WSF, it is a general category for top-down organizations, like ATTAC, that may value participatory models of democracy, but do not apply them to their own organizations. Traditional political parties and their front groups, most NGOs and some contemporary social movements all operate in a vertical fashion, with hierarchical structures and a defined leadership. These groups dominate the International Council and WSF Organizing Committee and tend to adopt a more institutional, reform-oriented view of social change.

At the center of political-organizational concerns in the WSF is the issue of geographic scale. Social forums tend to form around urban centers (e.g., Rome, New York City, Berlin, Boston), at regional (e.g., Mediterranean, Northwestern, Pan-

Amazonian) and continental levels, and beyond them (e.g., Asian and African Social Forums, Social Forum of the Americas). The World Social Forum mediates among local, regional and global struggles in which local concerns – from environmental issues to immigration--are often conceptualized in a global context and vice versa. Santos (2003) describes this process in terms of "dominant scales" and the "ecology of trans-scale." On the one hand, dominant scales (characteristic of neoliberalism) reflect a version of globalization that "privileges entities or realities that widen their scope to the whole globe, thus earning the prerogative to designate rival entities as local. Non-existence is produced under the form of the particular and the local." An ecology of trans-scale, on the other hand,

> confronts the logic of global scale by recuperating what in the local is a not the result of hegemonic globalization. The local that has been integrated in hegemonic globalization is…globalism, that is, the specific impact of hegemonic globalization on the local. The de-globalisation of the local and its eventual counter-hegemonic re-globalisation broadens the diversity of social practices by offering alternatives to localized globalisms...[which requires] the use of cartographic imagination, to deal with cognitive maps that operate simultaneously with different scales, namely, to identify local/global articulations.

Autonomists and other WSF participants have argued for a decentralization of the WSF so that it could become less unwieldy and more responsive to local concerns, while maintaining its ties to a larger process. Michael Albert's work on the WSF reflects this view. In more than one essay he has pointed out that the organizational practices of local and regional social forums have tended to be more transparent and more accountable to their constituencies than the larger World, European and Asian Social Forums because of their direct ties to local social movements and communities. According to Albert, "some local forums excellently generate shared program and actions among subsets of

participants. But even short of that, by at least enhancing solidarity and enlarging vision, all the local forums powerfully aid movements" (Albert, 2003).

Amidst considerations of organization and scale is the question of whether the WSF should engage in deliberation—i.e., whether it should become a decision-making body capable of issuing political statements, planning actions or engaging in more mainstream political processes. Manifestos like the Porto Alegre Consensus and Bamako Appeal point to a growing desire among participants to push the Forum toward political engagement, even though the methods by which these documents were constructed conflict with the organizational principles of transparency and equality valued by so many participants. Related to the issue of deliberation is the question of how the WSF should relate to political parties and states, especially sympathetic government officials currently in power. In the upcoming chapters, questions of organization, the nature of political engagement, scale and political culture will be discussed from the standpoint of the three major sets of actors in the WSF: (1) NGOs who see the Forum as a space for networking, without allegiance to any one political standpoint; (2) Anarchists and grassroots social movements actors, most of whom promote an anti-capitalist politics and tend to see the potential of the WSF open space as a prefigurative project and (3) traditional communist and socialist political parties as well as democratic socialist parties in Latin America.

Chapter Three: Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in the World Social Forum

Table 1: Glossary of International Organizational Forms

Transnational Social Movements (TSMs) - Sidney Tarrow (1998:11) defines TSMs as "socially mobilized groups with constituents in at least two states, engaged in sustained contentious interaction with powerholders in at least one state other than their own, or against an international institution, or a multinational economic actor."

Transnational Activist (or Advocacy) Networks (TANs) - Coalitions of International NGOs (INGOs), social movements and other political actors who join forces on issue-specific campaigns, such as the environment or human rights. Composed of "insiders" and "outsiders," they are "partially autonomous" and "issue-specific political life form(s)" that operate on a variety of geographic scales (Burgerman, 1998). For example, "Human rights network activists of European origin maybe found lobbying the US Congress advocating aid to an African nation, a London-based Amnesty International letter writing campaign will mobilize individuals of many nationalities to address protests to the Syrian government, and so on" (Ibid.:907).

"Networks of activists [that] operate across borders, within political systems irrespective of their nationality, occupying a political space that ignores the boundaries between states; they infiltrate government and intergovernmental bureaucracies; they attempt, with varying degrees of success, to engage in the arena of international politics formerly considered the sole preserve of states; they are simultaneously insiders and outsiders. As insiders, they are citizens whose political voice may be based entirely on resources provided by international allies. As outsiders, they are politically active non-citizens who 'stay involved over a period of time, still identified with international sources of power,' who 'become built into the political institutions of the country'" (Ibid., 1998:921)

According to Tarrow (1998:13), TANs should not be considered as alternatives to social movements, rather "they contain them—in the loose way that networks contain anything—as well as containing government agents in either their official or unofficial capacities."

International NGOs (INGOs) – "operate independently of governments, are composed of members from two or more countries, and are organized to advance their members' international goals and provide services to citizens of other states through routine transactions with states, private actors, and international institutions" (Tarrow, 2001:12)

TANs, INGOs and TSMs that participate in the World Social Forum and Global Justice Movement tend to be lumped together in academic and popular discourse because they appear to share many of the same social change goals. Tarrow distinguishes INGOs from TSMs, which tend to engage in more non-institutional forms of contentious action against powerholders. According to his definition, INGOs are independent advocates and

service-providers that engage in "routine transactions" with state, private and international actors. TANs, on the other hand, may include INGOs, TSMs and "those relevant actors working internationally on an issue, who are bound together by shared values, a common discourse, and dense exchanges of information and services" (Keck and Sikkink 1998:2).

In both popular and academic discourses, non-governmental organizations, or NGOs, tend to be understood, in aggregate, as constitutive of a sphere of "civil society," separate from states and untainted by corporate interests. While some NGOs, called GONGOs (government-organized NGOs) or QUANGOS (quasi-NGOs), are explicitly identified with states, most identify as nonstate actors that act politically on behalf of special interests. This chapter begins with a general reading of NGOs' social and political work, power resources and relationships to other political actors. It then moves to a discussion of NGOs' involvement in the World Social Forum and how it is being contested. While a catalogue of NGOs' political activities and relationships is far beyond the scope of this text, the intent here is to provide context for examining the nongovernmental organization as a contemporary political organizational form, with political assumptions, functions and sets of power resources that are distinct from and in contention with other actors in the World Social Forum. Needless to say, the term "NGO," even in the context of the WSF, covers a diverse set of organizations and actors. But the kinds of work they do—advocacy, service provision and knowledge production—involve a common set of political assumptions that will be examined alongside those of other WSF actors.

As countless political scientists and sociologists have pointed out, the latter part of the 20th century witnessed a rapid emergence and growth of NGOs. The World Watch Institute reported that some two million NGOs are now operative in the United States, the majority of which (70 percent) are less than thirty years old. The number of "grassroots

groups" in India has hit the one million mark and roughly 100,000 NGOs were formed in Eastern Europe between 1988 and 1995 (*The Economist*, 1999). There were over 65,000 NGOs in Russia in 2002 and in Kenya, approximately 240 new NGOs were being created each year (*The Economist*, 2000).

In addition to the influx of domestic NGOs, International NGOs (INGOs) have proliferated at an alarming rate. Boli and Thomas (1999:20) report that nearly 6,000 INGOs were founded between 1875 and 1988, most of which emerged after 1945 when the United Nations was established. According to *The Economist*, the number of INGOs rose from 6,000 in 1990 to 26,000 in 1996.[i] The 2002 UN Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Report corroborates these numbers, stating that nearly one-fifth of the world's 37,000 INGOs were formed in the 1990s. The recent surge in INGO activity has been accompanied by the emergence of other new organizational forms listed in Table 1.

The term "non-governmental organization" is said to have originated with the establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945. Article 71 of the United Nations Charter reserves an institutional space for UN consultation with organizations that neither are governments nor member states (UN Charter, Article 71, Chapter 10). Aside from serving a consultative role at the UN, the category of "nongovernmental organization" encompasses a broad array of actors and projects:

(1) *NGOs are direct service providers*. They provide a variety of direct services, such as family planning, health care and housing and water resources. In addition, they play a central role in implementing development agendas, from the delivery of foreign aid to the

institution of microcredit. According to *The Economist* (1999, 2000) NGOs deliver more aid than the entire UN system:

> Much of the food delivered by the World Food Programme, a UN body, in Albania [in 1999] was actually handed out by NGOs working in the refugee camps. Between 1990 and 1994, the proportion of the EU's relief aid channeled through NGOs rose form 47 percent to 67 percent. The Red Cross reckons that NGOs now disburse more money than the World Bank."

Groups like Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), CARE and Oxfam (which funds the WSF) provide aid and services, and some supplement their aid delivery efforts with advocacy campaigns. In addition, a host of religious organizations, like Catholic Relief and Christian Aid (another WSF funder), are involved in aid delivery as part of their missionary work. In the case of Christian Aid, for example, the organization itself does not claim to be engaged in missionary work, but it is listed as a "mission organization" on the UK's OSCAR, an information service that helps place Christian missionaries throughout the world.

Despite their claims to the contrary, NGOs involved in the delivery of aid are also – directly or indirectly – involved in political questions over economic development. In his famous *Monthly Review* essay entitled "Imperialism and NGOs in Latin America," James Petras (1997) argues:

> On the surface the NGOs criticized the state from a 'left' perspective defending civil society, while the right did so in the name of the market. In reality, however, the World Bank, the neoliberal regimes, and western foundations co-opted and encouraged the NGOs to undermine the national welfare state by providing social services to compensate the victims of the multinational corporations (MNCs). In other words, as the neoliberal regimes at the top devastated communities by inundating the country with cheap imports, extracting external debt payment, abolishing labor legislation, and creating a growing mass of low-paid and unemployed workers, the NGOs were funded to provide 'self-help' projects, 'popular education,' and job training, to temporarily absorb small groups of poor, to co-opt local leaders, and to undermine anti-system struggles.

Moreover, he argues, NGOs cannot provide services at the level and consistency of states and they are often accountable to foreign donors, thereby undermining "democracy by *taking social programs out of the hands of the local people* and their elected officials to create dependence on non-elected, overseas officials and their locally anointed officials" (Ibid.) One of the more common forms of "self-help" aid delivery is microcredit, a system of making loans to populations previously deemed unbankable. Oxfam, a funder of the World Social Forum, is one of many aid organizations that have been active in establishing microcredit systems in the developing world. While microcredit has been widely lauded as a successful means of empowering poor and disadvantaged populations, especially in developing countries, Randy Martin (2003) tells how Village Banks that administer these small loans "operate through 'peer pressure,' in which village authorities ensure that debts are repaid. This has led to violence and abuse against women otherwise deemed good credit risks" (Martin, 2003:214). Martin describes microcredit as part of the "financialization of the poor:" "In the 1980s, the global poor fell into that vast trench of the 'unbankable'…By 1999, microcredit had been extended to 23 million clients, 75 percent of whom were women…As some studies of the Grameen Bank suggest, being a good credit risk may not be good for women. Far from creating self-sufficiency, the global initiative…might more readily increase dependency" (Ibid.) Moreover, Martin points out that while "past development schemes rested upon large-scale infusion of first-world industrial products to create urban centers of cheap labor. In contrast, the financialization of the poor can proceed with comparatively little investment. Bamboo stools can be made without advances in public health or infrastructure…"

(2) *NGOs serve as information brokers and experts*. NGOs serve as “expert” or technical consultants to the UN and in broad array of other settings. For example, in coalition with various other groups, the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) has sponsored teams of forensic scientists to exhume the mass graves of people massacred during Guatemala's 35-year civil conflict. AAAS experts have played an important role in providing forensic evidence to scientifically document massacres perpetrated by members of the Guatemalan military and paramilitary, some of whom still hold positions in the Guatemalan government (Network of Concerned Historians, 2006). The National Research Council (NRDC) is another example: NDRC employs teams of scientific and legal experts in a broad range of high-profile campaigns for environmental justice, within juridical and legislative spheres.

In addition to consultative work, NGOs engage in what Keck and Sikkink (1998) call “information politics.” They gain influence with states and other target actors by “generating politically usable information,” disseminating it through (sometimes sophisticated) network channels and “serving as alternative sources of information” for states and other institutions (Keck and Sikkink 1998:19). NGO-generated information may be technical or testimonial, or be used to frame and present “the facts.” In Keck and Sikkink’s formulation, information politics involves using information to enact policy change and garner support, but it also involves struggles over norms and values, including what is defined as technical knowledge and the significance of local knowledges and experience.

On the terrain of "information politics," development NGOs have been criticized for pushing western values and economic practices with little regard for cultural particularities. Moreover, as Keck and Sikkink (1998) point out, "local people…sometimes lose control over their stories in a transnational campaign" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998:19). Post-colonial theorists like Pheng Cheah (1997) have criticized NGOs' tendency toward cultural imperialism vis-à-vis the imposition of universal normative conceptions of "human rights" or "feminism" that may be at odds with local realities and practices.

(3) *NGOs serve as advocates and lobbyists*. In many cases, NGOs' roles as information providers and delivers of foreign aid overlap with their advocacy efforts. A strong tendency among NGOs, especially those involved in TANs, is their identification as watchdogs, whose goal is to make states, corporations and international institutions more accountable to their publics (Keck and Sikkink 1988: 2). The examples are countless: Amnesty International carries out its mission "to protect human rights worldwide" by working to "mobilize the public to put pressure on governments and others with influence to stop the abuses"; the Global Policy Forum's mission is "to monitor policy making at the United Nations, promote accountability of global decisions, educate and mobilize for global citizen participation, and advocate on vital issues of international peace and justice,"[10] Human Rights Watch is "dedicated to protecting the human rights of people around the world," it aims to "challenge governments and those who hold power to end abusive practices and respect international human rights law" by "enlist(ing) the public

[10]http://www.globalpolicy.org/visitctr/about.htm.

and the international community to support the cause of human rights for all"[11] and so on. These and other NGOs attempt to shape public opinion and engage in media crusades to force changes in domestic policy and in some cases protect citizens from abuses generated or ignored by their own governments.

NGOs as Political Actors

The explosion of NGOs onto the world political scene since the latter part of the 20th century contributes to the adage that there is strength in numbers. As Jessica T. Matthews, Head of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, stated in *Foreign Affairs*

> The end of the Cold War has brought no mere adjustment among states but a novel redistribution of power among states, markets, and civil society. National governments are not simply losing autonomy in a globalizing economy. They are *sharing powers* -- including political, social, and security roles at the core of sovereignty -- with businesses, with international organizations, and with a multitude of citizens groups, known as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). The steady concentration of power in the hands of states that began in 1648 with the Peace of Westphalia is over, at least for awhile (Matthews, 1997).

The direction of this "power shift" and the character of what Saskia Sassen (1999) has called a "new geography of power" remains open to debate and sometimes, wild speculation. While NGOs are generally acknowledged as new and important players in the international arena, their political significance remains an open question. Are they constituents of a "new layer of suprastate power" that is reconfiguring the Westphalian sovereign order? (see Connolly 2005; Sassen 1999; Hardt and Negri, 1999) Or, are they part of a world order (or system), ultimately governed by powerful states? (see Smith, 2003; Wallerstein, 1996; Aronowitz and Bratsis, 2002; Tarrow, 2005). Are NGOs part of

[11] http://www.hrw.org/about/

dominant political and economic power structures or do they represent a different way of doing politics from below – a politics of "civil society"? Although the jury remains hung on such questions, the debates, including Matthew's provocative essay, provide an important frame for understanding the political stakes of NGOs and their activities.

It is safe to say that NGOs both share *and contest* state power. And not all of them are created equal in the eyes of states, international institutions or other NGOs. In a 1998 study, for example, Clark et al. look at NGOs' involvement in UN meetings to assess their general significance in the international political arena and whether they are indeed constitutive of a newly emerging "global civil society" (Clark et al., 1998:1-3). In particular, the authors study how NGOs shape UN meeting agendas by documenting NGO participation at three UN "megaconferences" (as well as their historical precedents), including the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development (in Rio), the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights (in Vienna) and the 1995 Conference on Women (in Beijing). At these and other UN meetings, NGOs

> avidly target intergovernmental politics as they lobby and help formulate, implement, and monitor the policies of states and intergovernmental organizations, while other supplement or eschew traditional political channels. In practice, many NGOs adopt goals that straddle that division, coordinating dialogue with the grassroots sector *and* (use) lobbying tactics to target governmental and international policymakers (Ibid.:3).

In addition to participating at UN meetings, many NGOs attend parallel "NGO Forums," often located in close proximity to the main UN meeting. Clark et al. report that NGO Forums are essentially polarized into two groups: "lobbyists" and "networkers." The lobbyist NGOs tend to be powerful, resource-rich organizations from the north that are afforded entry to the UN's official program. The networkers, on the other hand, are from

the Global South, with significantly less resources and political capital and no access to the main UN meeting.

Information is the political sword of the typical NGO and for NGOs at the UN, knowledge and experience of complicated UN processes is an important resource. According to Clark et al., as the NGO Forum grew in size and scope, so did the disparity of knowledge and competition between lobbyists and networkers. While the more powerful NGO lobbyists perceived networkers as a threat to their hard-won positions in the main UN meetings, "(n)etworkers saw the lobbyists as legitimating an illegitimate process and wasting time and resources on useless governmental proposals" (Ibid.:6). On the upside, southern NGOs broadened the agendas of NGO Forum meetings and created opportunities for North-South alliances. For example, a disparate collection of NGOs working on women's issues developed a Women's Caucus to solve the problem of competing agendas. By combining forces, they improved their lobbying efforts: "Whereas individual NGOs had been limited in the past to presenting single position papers and lobbying individual official delegates, the Women's Caucus presented joint concerns to the conference as a whole" (Ibid.:8).

From their study, Clark et al. conclude that although NGOs have established a strong presence at the UN, their involvement has not necessarily translated into significant influence, let alone a circumvention of states' sovereignty. The researchers argue against "global civil society" theorists and assert that states still dominate the agenda at the UN, especially over issues directly related to state sovereignty. NGOs do exercise a degree of power at the UN, largely derived from their legitimating functions. A primary power resource of the NGOs in the study was their ability to shape public

opinion and spur outrage from other states and international actors by taking advantage of the media presence at the UN and making use of their strength in numbers (i.e., developing issue networks) (Clark et al., 1998:4).

Susan Burgerman's (1998) study of transnational human rights NGOs complements Clark et al.'s findings. Burgerman studied the formation of advocacy networks that promoted human rights in Guatemala and El Salvador in the late 1970s and 80s. In particular, she looked how human rights activists challenged the Guatemalan and Salvadoran governments by lobbying their state officials to take action and installing "themselves as quasi-members of the domestic political systems, providing vulnerable populations with sources of protection alternative to the state itself" (Burgerman 1998: 906).

Burgerman charts the processes through which NGOs organize themselves into networks and apply political pressure: the NGOs and TANs in her study operate outside, but in relation to states, forging alliances with some state actors, while admonishing others. Network-building, in these cases, involves political-geographic flexibility and jumping local, regional and global scales. Burgerman's multinational network actors enter countries' political systems through local channels. In doing so, they simultaneously maintain and bridge the outsider/insider divide that separates local from international actors and institutions. This flexibility allows non-locals direct participation in domestic affairs, while making claims and garnering support among a variety of actors that operate on different – often international - scales (Burgerman, 1998:907).

Like Clark et al., Burgerman demonstrates how NGOs pool expertise, information, financial and other resources (including geographic proximity and local

political access) through the development of advocacy networks. She identifies NGO networks as "moral regimes" that perform legitimating (or de-legitimating) functions for states. While these moral and technical regimes tend to lack the resources of a typical political action committee, they do shape public opinion and can stimulate moral outrage through large-scale media campaigns, enabled by new technologies. Hence, despite their position(s) as "outsiders," they are important players in shaping public opinion within particular states as well as internationalized institutions.

Moreover, the normative dimension to their work reflects how, under globalization, legitimacy is sometimes conferred outside the boundaries of nation-states, with international NGOs acting as watchdog intermediaries, and perhaps on occasion, as autonomous agents. As Tarrow speculates,

> If norms could be shown to have an autonomous role in structuring international debate irrespective of the policies of strong states, and if it could be shown that interests are constituted and reconstituted around learning, norm diffusion, and identity shift, then nonstate actors in transnational space – not only hegemonic states – could be shown to have teeth.

In essence, NGOs and TANs wield state power without consolidating it. They manipulate states' interdependence and power differentials: powerful states may be sensitive to claims that tarnish their international reputations, while economically dependant states may be vulnerable to sanctions (from another state), as in the case of South Africa during apartheid (Ibid.: 909). Despite the weight of human rights NGOs' claims and their successes in leveraging states against each other, however, Clark et al. and Burgerman both demonstrate decisively that these crusades are often executed with careful diplomacy and are still very much subject to the whims of state power.

NGOs in the World Social Forum

> The nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that descended on Seattle were a model of everything the trade negotiations were not. They were well organized. They build unusual coalitions (environmental and labor groups, for instance, bridged old gulfs to jeer the WTO together). They had a clear agenda to derail the talks. And they were masterly users of the media (Brecher, 2002:82).

The above statement, quoted in Brecher, appeared in a December 1999 issue of *The Economist*. Despite the glaring conflation of NGOs with social movements, the passage attests to the fact that advocacy NGOs have played a prominent role in the Global Justice Movement (GJM). Anti-sweatshop campaigners, anti-GMO advocates and various others were out in force in Seattle and groups like Public Citizen helped organize the protest over the Internet. As discussed in chapter two, the WSF is often cited as the mechanism through which GJM activists and NGOs could move beyond "counter-summit" protests and toward a more nuanced articulation of the Movement's social and political goals. In addition to GJM protests, the NGO networks and NGO Forums described in Clark et al. (see also Brecher, 2002:86-90) should also be understood as important precursors.

Many of the actors involved in NGO networks are now involved in the WSF. A London School of Economics (LSE) study associated with the *Global Civil Society 2004-2005* yearbook reported a sharp increase in the involvement of NGOs (and other activists) at "civil society" meetings with no corresponding "official summit" (i.e., at local, regional and the World social forum(s)). The study found that in 2005, social forums – local, regional and global – accounted for 30 percent of all "global civil society events," whereas parallel summits accounted for 26 percent and UN conferences, 9 percent. Moreover, the LSE study reported that 50 percent of respondents took part in a "global civil society event" (without a corresponding "official summit"), while 37 percent

attended UN conferences (an increase from 12 percent in the early 1990s). These data suggest that NGO attendance at social forums is on the rise and may actually be replacing NGO Forums as a preferred meeting venue (Pianta et al., 2005).

In addition to sharing personnel, NGO Forums influenced the timing and location of the WSF as well as its organizational and normative structures.

(1) *Timing and Location:* The WSF mimicked NGOs' practice of staging "parallel" summits at the UN and other meetings by scheduling the WSF annual meeting to coincide with that of the World Economic Forum (WEF). While Public Eye on Davos and other anti-WEF campaigns camped outside the meeting in Davos, the decision to locate the WSF in Porto Alegre was strategic. According to WSF founder, Chico Whitaker, the WSF "had to be in the 'Third World' - because that would also have a symbolic effect" (Whitaker, 2005). While the southern location could be seen as a critique of NGO "lobbyists" that alienated southern NGOs at the UN and other venues, some of the same conflicts between northern and southern NGOs persisted in the Forum. Walden Bello recounts:

> At the start, there were tensions between Northern-based civil society groups and Southern groups. Many Southern groups initially felt that some of the groups in Europe was driving the agenda too much. There was a sense among many that the European and Latin American presence in the WSF was too strong and the presence of groups from Asia and Africa was quite weak (Calpotura, 2004).

Nonetheless, the WSF's identity as a forum of the Global South was operative in attracting grassroots social movements and highlighting the northern elitism of the WEF.

(2) *The WSF's "open space" structure was in part derived from the NGO Forum*. While the "open space" of the Forum can be attributed to the organizational insights of social

movement and anarchist actors (see chapter four), its structure should also be understood as informed by NGO Forums. According to the WSF Charter of Principles (see appendix two), the Forum's "open space" is meant to facilitate the production of solidarity networks, while remaining open to the variety of issues that occupy its constituents' agendas. The Charter describes the WSF as an "open meeting place" for "free exchange" that is "plural and diversified," "decentralized," nonpartisan and "non-governmental"--a non-coercive, non-hierarchical space in which NGOs can network without having to adopt a political line. Other parts of the Charter that support this objective specify that the WSF is not a representational body and that no one person or group is empowered to speak on behalf of the Forum as a whole. This is especially meaningful for NGOs that deny explicit involvement in party politics, represent special interests and tend to work within the limits of single issue campaigns. Moreover, while the WSF has not published data on the actual number of NGOs in the Forum, the registration structure privileges organizations over individuals. Individual persons can register as "observers," but one must represent an organization to be granted "delegate" status.

(3) *The WSF Charter of Principles reflects NGO norms*. In addition to establishing the WSF as a nonpartisan event, the WSF Charter of Principles identifies the Forum as constituted by groups and movements of "civil society" – which, in popular parlance, is code for NGO. Furthermore, the Charter explicitly excludes militant groups that engage in armed resistance efforts or advocate political violence. Within the context of the GJM, NGOs have denounced violence at protests, including property damage executed by

"black bloc" and other activists.[12] In this light, the WSF appears as a welcome alternative for NGOs that wish to avoid interacting with the more confrontational groups in the GJM. In an interview with OpenDemocracy (2004), Ford Foundation Program Officer Lisa Jordan stated that continued funding of the WSF would be contingent upon its effectiveness in facilitating public discourse instead of protest and violence: "Whether or not the forum is the best way to get public voices engaged in global debates in a way that is not to do with violence and is much more than protest." In addition to Ford, policies on nonviolence are a norm among NGOs, which for some, is related to their nonpartisan stances and for others (like Christian pacifist missionaries), their religious affiliations. Amnesty International, for example, seeks to protect all persons against torture, but will only employ political actors with a stated commitment to nonviolence in its media campaigns (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 15).

In addition to their influence on the structure and objectives of the WSF, NGOs have played a significant role in funding and organizing the WSF since its inception. The Brazilian Association of Nongovernmental Organizations (ABONG) was among the first organizers of the WSF, and according to Peter Waterman, the WSF International and Organizing Committees are largely comprised of NGOs and international unions (Waterman, 2003). In addition, while the WSF has been largely funded by political parties - in India, Brazil and Venezuela (see chapter five) and some local (Brazilian) businesses, it has also garnered financial support from NGOs, many of them religious, including: ActionAid; Comité Catholique contre la Faim et pour le Développement; Christian Aid; Enfants et developpement "Save the Children;" the Catholic Fund for Overseas Development; Oxfam GB; Novib; and the Interchurch Organization for

[12] For a discussion of the role of violence at GJM protests, see Callinicos in Aronowitz and Gautney, 2002.

Development Cooperation (ICCO). It has also received financial support from the Ford, Rockefeller Brothers and H. Boll foundations.

Among the myriad financial supporters of the WSF, the Ford Foundation – which supported the first three WSFs -- has drawn the most controversy. In the interview cited above, Jordan describes Ford's involvement in the WSF: "We value global dialogue around global problems. We don't necessarily believe solutions lie with any one sector. Government, business and civil society cannot solve problems separately" (Open Democracy, 2004). While some WSF participants criticize Ford for its partnership with the World Bank (a common target of the Global Justice Movement), others dismiss it for its links to corporate enterprises and privatization efforts in poor communities. Still others, like the Communist Party of India (Marxist), condemn Ford's involvement based on its political history. According to Jordan:

> We are not supporting this year's forum because the Indian Organising Committee (IOC)…includes some groups who have objected to Ford's activities in India since 1953 – especially support for the Green Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. They feel that contributions made by the Ford Foundation helped prevent India from undergoing communist revolution. In the beginning the idea for the WSF in India had been for a very broad funding base with Ford, Britain's Department for International Development (DfID), the MacArthur Foundation, the European Union and others. But in the end, the IOC chose not to seek funding from any of these.

According to Sitaram Yechury,[13] the CPIM's opposition to Ford is part of the Party's larger critique of NGO involvement in the WSF:

> The CPI(M) has consistently been against imperialist backed foreign-funded NGOs and the associated motives of such NGOs in advancing imperialist agendas on the one hand, and seeking to disrupt the growing democratic progressive mass movements on the other….To the extent possible we have been able to influence the WSF process in India to not approach to fund the WSF in Mumbai such

13 Sitaram Yechury is former President of the Students Federation of India and member of the Central Committee of the CPI(M). Currently, he is Head of the International Department and Editor of the CPI(M) Central Weekly, *Peoples' Democracy*.

> organizations as the British government's DFID, USAID and corporate controlled funding agencies such as Ford and Rockefeller foundations. Similarly, the India committee has decided not to accept funds from large corporations in India aligned to imperialist globalization.

Yechury and the CPI(M) reject NGOs' involvement in the WSF because like Petras(1997), they view them as mechanisms for compromise between radical social movements (and political parties) and agents of the capitalist ruling class, such as the World Bank or Ford Foundation. In the Marxist tradition, they see these organizations' (and the WSF's) use of "civil society" as a part of their larger objective to obscure the class relations (and struggles) that gave birth to the Global Justice Movement and still operate in the WSF, though to a more limited degree.

In addition to controversies over funding, contests over the growing NGO presence at the WSF have been waged by a politically diverse array of WSF actors. Given the Forums' roots in social movements and its stated opposition to neoliberalism, NGOs' involvement has raised concerns regarding their "politics" (political orientations and practices) and their ability to adopt an anti-neoliberal perspective in light of their tendency – implicit or explicit – toward liberal democracy. For example, after the first meeting of the WSF in 2001, anarchist Cindy Milstein[14] wrote a scathing critique of NGOs in the Forum, foreshadowing the growth in the number of NGO participants:

> …wittingly or not, in trying to parallel the WEF's meetings as its alternative, the WSF ends up mimicking its hierarchical structure: a supranational, nongovernmental body that seeks to shape the global agenda, with no accountability to and far removed from those whose daily lives are affected. Like the WEF, the WSF offers an informal, fluid, and centralized networking environment for the globally influential – in this case, those in the 'nonprofit' and 'movement' sectors.

[14] Cindy Milstein is a faculty member at the Institute for Social Ecology, board member of the Institute for Anarchist Studies and columnist for *Arsenal: A Magazine of Anarchist Strategy and Culture*.

Milstein continues:

> Once the WSF's annual meeting is seen as the premiere gathering of socially concerned leaders…big, bureaucratic NGOs will continue to flock to the WSF in ever-greater numbers; and unlike activists and community-based organizations operating on a shoestring, they will be able to attend meetings annually and serve as members of the organizing council in between. These NGOs…will largely set the themes and strategies discussed at the WSF, limiting from the start the concerns of grassroots groups and radical movements. Moreover, these NGOs have the financial and organizational resources to…lobby governments and corporations who are often involved with or monetarily supportive of (them) to implement their notions of social change, thereby assuring that any 'change' accords nicely with the status quo…Since these NGOs have their own agendas, such projects will always carry political, social, and/or cultural price tags….as private, nongovernmental bodies, NGOs don't have to worry about participatory processes, accountability, or transparency.

As Milstein points out, attending the WSF is cost prohibitive for most social movement activists from both the North and South, but especially for those from the South. As Humeira Iqtidar, a journalist for *Dawn*,[15] commented in regard to the 2006 WSF in Karachi, "the majority of participants were political activists from developed countries that could fund their own travel, while most of the participants from developing countries (like Pakistan) were from INGOs that funded them" (Iqtidar, 2004). WSF organizers have attempted to alleviate the problem by reducing the cost of admission for non-OECD[16] countries and by organizing low cost housing (in the Youth Camp or in "solidarity housing" provided by locals). And while concerned participants have proposed that the WSF provide travel grants to persons from developing countries (in 2005 they did provide some grants), the problem of unequal access identified by Milstein remains largely unsolved.

[15] *Dawn* is considered to be a leading English-language Pakistani newspaper.
[16] Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

The crux of Milstein's argument, however, is that by allowing NGOs to dominate the WSF and define its organizational structure, the Forum is becoming what it says it opposes. By de facto excluding grassroots groups and maintaining a hierarchical organizational structure--with no accountability to its constituents--the WSF, in Milstein's view, is becoming a "third sector" complement to the WEF rather than a source of opposition to it. While it is likely that Milstein would agree with Yechury, i.e., that NGOs are essentially aligned or at least in compromise with the ruling class, she focused more on what she sees as authoritarian organizational practices within NGOs and how they contribute to the WSF's lack of "openness"—accountability and transparency—despite its identity as a non-hierarchical open space.

Following Milstein, during WSF 2002 (its second year), a large coalition of Brazilian trade unionists widely disseminated an "open letter"[17] criticizing the WSF for its stated identity as a meeting of "civil society." For them, the Forum's identification with civil society "erases the borders between social classes that exist in society" because it includes "exploiters and the exploited, the bosses and the workers, the oppressors and oppressed" under the same rubric – groups whose interests "are in fact contradictory and diametrically opposed." In the letter, the trade unionists point to struggles over the Brazilian Labor Code to illuminate these contradictions:

> Let's take the example of the campaign in defense of workers' rights contained in the Brazilian Labor Code which we in the Brazilian trade union movement are now carrying out. The CUT has issued a call to prepare a General Strike in March 2002 to prevent the approval of PL 4583 by Minister Dornelles. It is clear that the CUT is determined to carry forth with this strike call should the situation require it.

[17] The letter was signed by the leadership and some members of Brazilian trade union confederation, CUT as well as members of CONDSEF, ANDES-SN, FNITST, FENAJUFE, SINDSEP, Sindicato dos Radialistas-SP and SINTSEF-CE (federais). January 2, 2002.

> What do the so-called ‘progressive bosses’ think of these workers' rights? What do the NGOs -- which both practice and promote ‘volunteerism’ and other forms of precarious and unregulated labor -- think about these workers’ rights? Don’t all the jobs ‘created’ by the NGOs, in fact, replace jobs in the public enterprises and services, in line with the policies implemented by [Brazilian President] Fernando Henrique Cardoso at the behest of the IMF?

The trade unionists go on to demonstrate how the World Bank has used the rubric of “civil society” to alleviate conflict with social movements and radical oppositional groups. In the letter, they quote the World Bank’s *World Development Report* in 2000/2001, which recommends that

> …financial institutions use their means…to develop an open and regular dialogue with the organizations of civil society, in particular those that represent the poor…Social fragmentation can be mitigated by bringing groups together in formal and informal forums and channeling their energies into political processes instead of open conflict.

The trade unionists conclude that “the politics of civil society obscure class differences that are critical to understanding the mechanisms underlying global capitalism and how it can be opposed,” and propose that the Forum “deny any legitimacy or authority to the NGOs to speak in the name of the exploited and oppressed” (Brazilian Trade Unionists, 2002).

One year later, the trade unionists’ critique was echoed by anarchists and grassroots social movement actors, some associated with the People’s Global Action (PGA) (see chapter four). Recalling chapter two, the Zapatista-inspired Intergalaktica tent at the 2003 WSF, located in the Youth Camp, essentially operated as an autonomous space on the margins of the Forum. While the WSF Organizing Committee located the official WSF events in more central venues, equipped with translation services and other administrative needs, Intergalaktica was entirely run and equipped by anarchists and

other grassroots social movement actors. Moreover, mainstream media were provided with access to a media resource center, but alternative media (including Indymedia) were not allowed access to WSF-provided media resources and like Intergalaktica, were left to their own devices to establish spaces of operation, outside the main venue of the Forum. In reaction to this and other such trends, Serbian anarchist Andrej Grubacic (2003) reinforced the trade unionists' critique of the "civil society" character of the WSF. In the passage below, he points to the relationship between grassroots activists' marginalization in the Forum and the growth of NGO participation as evidence of a larger trend toward de-politicization within the Forum.

> Although certain changes can be felt in the rhetoric (especially when the notorious 'civil society' is at issue), the practice has remained the same; trying to reform and humanize capitalism, lobbying around and through political parties, recruiting new party members to fight for a new transformation that will not be another 'revolution betrayed.' The traditional paradigm implies loyalty towards the old practices of political action, as opposed to the new radicalism's intentional breaking of the old paradigms. The traditionalists have understood…that there is something really new in the new movement…The danger of turning 'globalisation from below' into 'globalisation from the middle' is becoming more clearly evident. The phenomenon of 'NGO-isation of the movement' is increasingly present, connected to BINGO politics (Big International Non-Governmental Organizations).

While anarchists like Grubacic adhere to a different set of political-organizational principles than their trade union counterparts, both groups (as well as Milstein (an anarchist) and Yechury (a communist)) criticize the involvement of NGOs in the WSF (in Brazil) because they understand them as steering the Forum away from a more radical, anti-capitalist critique of globalization. Grubacic and other anarchists identify NGOs (or, at least BINGOs) as engines of neoliberal globalization that, armed with resources, are foreclosing the spaces in which social movements can intermix. They suggest a more

"confrontational approach to liberal democracy" – which in their formulation, involves contesting NGOs' presence in the Forum (Grubacic, 2003).

When the WSF moved to India in 2004, the issue of NGO involvement became even more salient. Alex Callinicos, an affiliate of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), reported that NGO participation in WSFIndia was a major point of contention: "much of the left [in the WSF] have developed a fierce critique of the NGOs for creaming off activists into well-aid bureaucratic jobs and confining the movements they back to relatively narrow issues." Callinicos further explains NGOs' involvement with Indian social movements:

> Dalit-lower caste coalitions are controlled by the Western NGOs that finance them; it was obvious from the banners that often prominently displayed the name and even the image of the movement's president that organizing the oppressed can become a vehicle for political entrepreneurship and clientalism; and movements to organize the Dalits and the lower castes have become integrated in complex ways in India's highly fragmented and corrupt political system (Callinicos, 2004).

Callinicos' statement on WSFIndia is corroborated by Sitaram Yechury,[18] speaking on behalf of the CPIM:

> A large number of NGOs do participate in the WSF…It is true that a large number of these NGOs are funded by agencies that belong to the same countries that promote and impose globalization. If this be the case, why do such NGOs play an important role in the WSF? Clearly, there is an ideological motivation behind this. The World Bank has consciously spoken in terms of sharing official and nonofficial platforms with political opponents of globalization. This is a conscious effort to ensure that the growing protests against globalization are kept within the framework of capitalism and imperialism and the people are allowed to speak, literally to let their steam off! Much of the NGO-sponsored anti-globalisation movement can be compared to the safety valve in the pressure cooker. Anti-globalisation pressure must be periodically released in order to protect the cooker and keep it functional!"

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18 Sitaram Yechury is a former President of the Students Federation of India, a member of the Central Committee of the CPI(M). He is currently Head of the International Department and Editor of the CPI(M) Central Weekly, *Peoples' Democracy*.

Addressing more recent developments at the WSF 2006 in Karachi, renown activist-writers Tariq Ali and Arundhati Roy continued in this vein. After attending the event, Ali (2006) wrote:

> The NGOs are no substitute for genuine social and political movements. There may be NGOs in Pakistan but in the global scale they are WGOs (Western Governmental Organizations), their cash flow conditioned by restricted agendas. It is not that some of them are not doing good work, but the overall effect of this has been to atomize the tiny layer of left and liberal intellectuals. Most of these men and women…struggle for their individual NGOs to keep the money coming; petty rivalries assume exaggerated proportions; politics in the sense of grassroots organization is virtually nonexistent.

Once an outspoken supporter of the Forum, Roy echoed Ali's concerns. She cites the "NGO-ization" of the Forum and its lack of political force as her impetus for boycotting the event altogether. Following is a selection from an interview with Roy, conducted by Amy Goodman on Democracy Now! (2006):

> Goodman: Finally, Arundhati Roy, you are headed to Pakistan, not to follow President Bush, but for the World Social Forum that will be taking place later this month. Can you talk about what you'll be saying there and the significance of this forum on the heels of this visit?
>
> Arundhati Roy**:** Well, actually, I'm not headed there…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-ized and…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…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.

Despite some dramatic differences in political orientation, these accounts attests to a growing concern among a variety of WSF participants that the increased NGO

presence at the WSF has had a depoliticizing effect – both on the Forum itself as well as on the Global Justice Movement (GJM) as a whole. Although the WSF was not established as a political body, it was conceived as an open space for the development of alternatives to neoliberalism and for the articulation of political values, ideas and actions by GJM activists and social movement actors. The above criticisms – waged by trade unionists, anarchists, leaders of radical political parties and renown activist-intellectuals – point to specific problems regarding the role of NGOs' in the Forum and their general political tendencies: (1) NGOs are engines of privatization that promote unregulated forms of labor vis-à-vis volunteerism; (2) NGOs focus on single issues at the expense of acknowledging larger systemic problems, seeking radical change and waging resistance efforts against capitalism – in part, because they are directly invested in the system or are a manifestation of class compromise;

(3) NGOs tend to co-opt social movements and have marginalized the more radical factions within the WSF. Due to the availability of travel budgets and other resources, they have greater access to the WSF and can control its agenda to serve their specific interests; (4) NGOs are hierarchically structured and are not accountable to their constituents. Their organizational structures run counter to the goals of the WSF and GJM to create new democratic structures and serve as an open space; and (5) Unlike social movements, NGOs do not fundamentally challenge power relations. Rather, by warrant of their funding and political relationships, they are beholden to moderate political agendas. Moreover, by assuming the role of "advocate" and "lobbyist," they do not challenge existing power structures, assuming that "real" power resides in them. They see the role of institutions like the WSF as informing and influencing states and corporate

enterprises, but not as posing fundamental challenges to them—a view that is reinforced by the WSF's own charter.

Conclusion: NGOs and Political Organization

A major contribution of Marxist scholars on the question of civil society was to recognize its legitimating functions and identify it as a site of class struggle. In *The Prison Notebooks*, for example, Gramsci (1971) analyzes the ideological and cultural underpinnings of capitalism, asserting that bourgeois hegemony and social inequality relied upon the consent of the masses, practiced within the domain of everyday life. Gramsci believed that a *war of position* could be forged within the realm of ideas and cultural practice - a *counter-hegemony* waged against the hegemony of the bourgeois state (which, for him, included civil society).

Writing roughly forty years later, Habermas (1991) shared Gramsci's concern over market domination of the public sphere. In his critique of contemporary liberal society, he points out that democracy, and the system through which private individuals and interests regulate public authority, had been weakened by the way in which the major spheres of social life - the market, the state, and civic organizations – were overrun by mass consumption and strategic ("instrumental") rationality. Habermas identified bourgeois civil society as a pseudo-public, marked by a level of cultural consumption and manufactured consent that precluded critical reflection. Alternatively, he sought to reconstitute a *public sphere* to mediate between society and the state –a domain in which people could organize, formulate public opinion and collectively express their desires to government officials. In his later work, Habermas (1984) continued in this vein, asserting

a theory of communicative action in which consensus and mutual understanding could be arrived at by way of universal procedures - a “discourse ethic” that enabled unrestrained (by market pressures and state coercion) communication and transparency at the level of public life and precluded domination by particular interests. In sum, he advocated a deliberative form of democracy within a public sphere that did not favor any one historical subject, but rather, privileged the communicative process itself.

Gramsci’s conception of civil society fundamentally differs from that of Habermas on the question of strategy. Unlike Habermas, revolution was always on the horizon for Gramsci, and it required mass participation. Since direct confrontation of state power (a *war of maneuver*) was untenable in his estimation in advanced democratic societies, he emphasized the importance of popular culture, communication and belief systems in upsetting the common sense and constituting a counter-hegemony (a war of position) against the ideological domination of the ruling class. For Gramsci, civil society was the site of class struggle, but rather than emphasizing class as a category of representation, he focused on processes of class formation. For him, civil society was a contested sphere in which new modes of revolutionary consciousness could be developed and realized through education, cultural production and the development of organic intellectuals; in short, through contesting the prevailing “common sense” and creating a new one. But the *telos* in Gramsci is a communist society; for Habermas, it is social democracy.

Because of the diversity of NGOs involved in the WSF, it is difficult to pinpoint a single, explicit model of political organization according to which these organizations operate. Nonetheless, they do politics. Many of them have strong links to national

governments and have made strategic use of the term “civil society” to garner support from the grassroots and emphasize their distinction from corporate and state actors. Although NGOs’ associations with corporate and political actors vary significantly, they often position and identify themselves as advocates, representatives and service providers that are not beholden to the precepts of profit maximization and political interest.

Given their relationship to both states and social movements, NGOs are in a unique position to influence public policy within states and among international institutions like the UN and World Bank. But they are a mixed bag, politically. Most progressive NGOs seek to bolster (nationally or internationally-sponsored) social programs and political influence within legal structures and the electoral sphere. And, while some side with social movements in demanding transparency and increased accountability from corporate and state actors, others alienate social movements (and other NGOs) in their pursuit of political influence. During the 2001 United Nations (UN) World Conference Against Racism in South Africa, for example, the Durban Social Forum (DSF), comprised primarily of community activists from poor neighborhoods like Chatsworth and Soweto, protested not only the main event, but also, the concurrent NGO Forum, for excluding communities and grassroots activists from their meeting and failing to acknowledge the effects of privatization on their communities. Drawing from the WSF experience in Porto Alegre, they appropriated the title ‘Social Forum’ to emphasize the open, grassroots nature of their assembly, counterpoised to the exclusivity of the UN and NGO meetings.

NGOs and other “civil society” actors advocate for disenfranchised groups and seek to bolster democratic process, but as we have seen in this chapter, they sometimes

radically diverge from other political currents in the WSF (e.g., anarchists, trade unionsts, political parties) on issues of political organization. As Grubacic pointed out, most NGOs are interested in reforming capitalism and making it a more humane system, rather than struggling for more fundamental social change. Their critics in the Forum contend that while NGOs identify as constituents of civil society, they ignore the class dimensions of the relationship between civil society and the state within the context of the capitalist system (as outlined by Gramsci). Rather, NGOs tend to focus narrowly on specific issues and detract from the collective interests of WSF participants; namely, their opposition to neoliberalism. NGOs also create the appearance that they are acting as independent agents, while collaborating with ruling class institutions in part by participating in the privatization of politics (advocating liberal democratic politics) as well as that of (formerly) public services.

NGOs' advocacy projects aimed at fostering transparency and keeping states and corporations accountable to their "publics" appear, on the surface, to follow within the Habermasian logic of rebuilding mechanisms through which states can be made more accountable to the people they govern. They fail to live up to Habermas' prognostication, however. As Keck and Sikkink (1998) point out, states are both guarantors of rights as well as violators of them. While some NGOs challenge states on behalf of vulnerable populations, they are not, on the whole, publicly accountable. Rather, they serve mediating functions between particular states and particular social subjects in ways that reinforce inequalities rather than mitigate them. Remembering Milstein, NGOs constitute a sphere of social activity (and enterprise) that is only accountable to the special interests they represent. As *The Economist* (2000) pointed out, "NGOs are now big business."

They are the primary constituents of the "third sector," which is deeply embedded in political economic structures that serve particular (class) interests. Despite their good intentions, for example, many NGOs provide services (once provided by national states) largely under conditions of IMF-imposed structural adjustment.

As WSF participants have pointed out, NGOs engage almost entirely in issue-based politics, rather than struggles over the "common sense": their "definition of effectiveness often includes some policy change by 'target actors' 'such as governments, international financial institutions like the World Bank, or private actors like transnational corporations" (Keck and Sekkink 1998: 23). For NGOs, the problem of fragmentation posed by Lukacs and later by Aronowitz (see chapter five) is largely reduced to problems of administration and pooling resources rather than exercising historical agency (or imaging the "other world" the WSF aims to be building). The NGO solution to the disjuncture among struggles – against human rights violations, environmental degradation, and so on -- is to construct "networks" that link disparate actors around specific issues, and in some cases, aggregate them (e.g. the Women's Caucus). Clark et al. (1998) and Rohrschneider and Dalton (2002) emphasize that although such networks appear to be non-hierarchical in their tendency toward horizontal organization, they are indeed stratified. In their study of environmental NGO networks, for example, Rohrschneider and Dalton criticize "globalization" theorists for overestimating the role of transnational networks in the emergence of a "global civil society:"

> These patterns of international action among environmental groups appear to follow many of the same asymmetries that are generally present in the international system. This is not a network of equals, with identical norms and goals as is often implied by the global civil society literature. The resource flows

> follow the same North/South patterns of many other first world-third world interactions. Moreover, the resource suppliers (western Environmental NGOs) often have distinct ideological and political goals that are not always shared by green NGOs in the developing world (Rohrschneider and Dalton, 2002:510, 529).

Although some networks function smoothly and channel the various resources of their constituent groups to adhere to common aims, others reinforce the deep structural inequalities among the NGO that constitute them. NGO networks are infrastructures that enable groups to augment their resources and perhaps become more politically effective, but without a concerted opposition to the systems that underlie their various "causes," they remain limited to incremental reform and thereby subject to structural conditions of inequality.

The World Social Forum has attempted to avoid the internal problem of inequality among NGO and social movement actors by creating an "open space" that does not privilege any one group or organizations. In essence, the Forum was conceptualized as an effort toward the renewal of a public sphere for nonstate and nonmarket actors – a utopian, anti-neoliberal space. Their critics in the WSF almost unanimously point out, however, that contemporary NGOs are both products and engines of neoliberal globalization. Despite their nonprofit status, NGOs are part of a larger trend toward privatization, in which privately-funded pressure groups, service providers and advocates serve important legitimating functions for (often liberal democratic) states as well as supranational institutions like the UN or World Bank. Given NGOs' role in the (world) political economy, many WSF actors suspect that NGO involvement is really about depoliticizing the Forum or turning it into a generic infrastructure, stripped of its contentious character.

Chapter Four: Anarchism and Autonomous Social Movements in the World Social Forum

After the smashing of the Niketown and Starbuck's windows at the 1999 Seattle protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO), the mainstream press began to marvel at the appearance of a seemingly new generation of "anarchist" protesters. *Time Magazine* journalist Michael Krantz wrote about "How Organized Anarchists Led Seattle into Chaos" to gripe about the "vandalism" of the young protestors and express his awe at how well-organized they seemed to be: "The anarchist movement today is a sprawling welter of thousands of mostly young activists populating hundreds of mostly tiny splinter groups espousing dozens of mostly socialist critiques of the capitalist machine. Ironically, the groups are increasingly organized…" (Krantz, 1999). Following Seattle, *Newsweek*, the *Wall Street Journal* and various other mainstream newspapers and magazines consistently described the activists as violent and destructive, politically incoherent, and young and uninformed.

While the Global Justice Movement (GJM) is composed of an infinitely diverse array of social and political actors, anarchists--especially black bloc protesters--have been the center of attention (within and outside the movement), not only because of their black masks and overall dramatic appearance, but because so many people in the movement identify as anarchist or anarchist-inspired, to varying degrees. As Barbara Epstein (2001) commented, "Many among today's young radical activists, especially those at the center of the anti-globalization and anti-corporate movements, call themselves anarchists...anarchism is the dominant perspective within the movement." David Graeber and Andrej Grubacic (2004) reiterate her point:

> anarchist principles are generating new radical…visions. Often their exponents do not call themselves 'anarchists.' There are a host of other names: autonomism, anti-authoritarianism, horizontality, Zapatismo, direct democracy…Still, everywhere one finds the same core principles: decentralization, voluntary association, mutual aid, the network model, and above all, the rejection of any idea that the end justifies the means…from the start [it has] been less about seizing state power than about exposing, de-legitimizing and dismantling mechanisms of rule while winning over every-larger spaces of autonomy and participatory management within it.

This chapter investigates anarchist and autonomist political organization in the context of the World Social Forum (WSF). It begins with a discussion of anarchist theories of political organization and some contemporary examples of organizations and networks that explicitly operate according to anarchist principles. It then discusses the role of anarchist-autonomist actors in the context of the World and European Social Forums, including their critiques of its centralized organization and the political practices of other participant groups, their ideas regarding what constitutes its open space, and their contributions to the content of the Forum, including the Youth Camp and other "autonomous spaces." Finally, it evaluates anarchism in relation to other modes of political organization debated within the WSF, with specific attention to its anti-statist, anti-capitalist and "prefigurative" principles and the power relations it seeks to contest.

Anarchism and Political Organization

As countless theorists have pointed out, it is nearly impossible to present a single theory of anarchism. Not only are there multiple strands of anarchism – from anarcho-syndicalism to primitivism to mysticism and so on - but anarchism itself generally eschews the very idea of formulating (for them, imposing) a general, all-encompassing theory to explain social phenomena, especially revolution and social change. Serbian anarchist Andrej Grubacic (2006) asserts that anarchism is perhaps better understood by

its practices, rather than through a single, unified theory of political action:

> Asking anarchism to provide a theory is like asking a cow to lay eggs. Anarchists, contrary to popular opinion inside the academy, do tend to think, and to employ many – as many as possible – different theories (always in plural, and always with a small 't'). But anarchist tradition always underscores the provisional and exploratory nature of all theory, and it is more likely to be oriented towards 'practical analysis/analytical practice'…then to obscurantism(s) of social theory (Grubacic, 2006).

In a 1970 piece entitled "Notes on Anarchism," Noam Chomsky draws a similar conclusion: "There have been so many styles of thought and action that have been referred to as 'anarchist.' It would be hopeless to try to encompass all of these conflicting tendencies in some general theory or ideology" (Chomsky, 2005:118). In the essay, Chomsky points out that due to the lack of a unified theory, anarchism has been widely criticized as "utopian, formless, primitive, or otherwise incompatible with the realities of a complex society." He argues, however, that much of anarchism is really about challenging and exposing illegitimate forms of social control and adopting a skeptical stance toward authority in general, including authoritarian forms of knowledge production. He thereby concludes that theories of social change are and should be understood as historically contingent, and "that any far-reaching doctrine must be treated with great skepticism" (Ibid.:119).

Anarchism may resist submission to a general theory, but it does not lack an organizational or institutional perspective. Murray Bookchin (1969) poses a corrective to the common misgiving that anarchism is against political organization; to the contrary: "Anarchist organizations have ranged from loose, highly decentralized groups to

'vanguard' movements of many thousands, like the Spanish FAI[19], which functioned in a highly concerted fashion." Nonetheless, Bookchin explains, the perception of anarchists as anti-social, nihilistic and violent is not unfounded; rather, it has its roots in a particular strand of anarchism, which he (and many others) calls "lifestyle anarchism." While lifestyle and social anarchism share a common opposition to the state (to authority), their visions and goals for change are radically different, if not sometimes opposed. According to Bookchin, whereas lifestyle anarchism involves "a personalistic commitment to individual autonomy," social anarchism is constituted by "a collectivist commitment to social freedom."

Bookchin traces the historical roots of lifestyle anarchism back to the individualism of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (in the early 19th century) and Max Stirner's egoism of the same period. The communalist tradition (social anarchism), on the other hand, was spawned by Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, both of whom identified as socialists. According to Bookchin, lifestyle anarchism re-emerged in the late 19th century among bohemians who "expressed their opposition in uniquely personal forms…outrageous behavior, and aberrant lifestyles…enamored of innovations in art, behavior, and clothing." Moreover, "in France, Spain and the United States, individualistic anarchists committed acts of terrorism that…earned anarchism its reputation as a violently sinister conspiracy." He identifies this period as the moment "when anarchists lost their connection with a viable public sphere."

Bookchin describes the resurgence of lifestyle anarchism in the 1990s:

> …issues of lifestyle are once again supplanting social action and evolutionary politics in anarchism…Ad hoc adventurism, personal bravura, an aversion to theory oddly akin to the antirational biases of postmoderism, celebrations of

[19] Federación Anarquista Ibérica.

> theoretical incoherence (pluralism), a basically apolitical and anti-organizational commitment to imagination, desire, and ecstasy, and an intensely self-oriented enchantment of everyday life, reflect the toll that social reaction taken on Euro-American anarchism over the past two decades.

He dismisses Hakim Bey's work on Temporary Autonomous Zones as "an insurrection lived in the imagination of a juvenile brain, a safe retreat into unreality" and poses a similar rail against primitivists and mystics within the anarchist lifestyle tradition. He remarks that among lifestyle anarchists:

> the basic social relationships of capitalist exploitation and domination are overshadowed by metaphysical generalizations about the ego and la technique, blurring public insight into the basic causes of social and ecological crises – commodity relations that spawn the corporate brokers of power, industry, and wealth.

Needless to say, Bookchin's assessment leaves much to be desired in the way of nuance: while today's anarchists can be found at demonstrations and political meetings, "social" anarchism is also being produced in art houses, bookshops and other "bohemian" social centers around the world. Moreover, in the U.S. bohemianism has been almost entirely focused on building communities and politicizing lifestyle in a collective way, although in keeping with Bookchin's assessment, bohemians did tend to romanticize their alienation from mainstream society. In this midst of his extreme polarization of anarchist tendencies, however, Bookchin makes a case for the development of a "democratic communalism," which understands individual persons as producers and products of social and historical processes. In short, he seeks to inspire anarchism and anarchists to move beyond lifestyle and subculture.

Almost thirty years after Bookchin published his critique of lifestyle anarchism, Dave Neal (1997) wrote that "social anarchism versus lifestyle anarchism [is] the most

public schism among anarchists, with the latter deriding class struggle as fruitless, pointless, and irrelevant, and the former declaring that the latter aren't anarchists at all, but are rather bourgeois poseurs." Neal sets out to redefine the debate in terms of "ideology" versus "methodology." He associates what he calls Big "A" Anarchism (Anarchism) with an ideological approach to political organization, and small "a" anarchism (anarchism) as methodologically oriented. Anarchists tend to participate in large federations, such as the North Eastern Federation of Anarchist Communists (NEFAC) or the International Workers of the World (IWW) and stress "ideological conformity as a prerequisite for social revolution" (Grubacic and Graeber, 2004). Small "a" anarchists, on the other hand, tend to build activist networks and collectives and experiment with radical democratic process (Neal, 1997). In some cases, the Direct Action Network (DAN) for example, anarchists interlink with non-anarchist organizations (including political parties) on direct actions and a variety of other political activities.

One should note that just as Bookchin's lifestyle and social anarchism are ideal types, the distinction between "A" and "a" anarchists is not empirically absolute. Both groups share an anti-statist, anti-capitalist politics, and while they tend to differ - sometimes fundamentally - on questions of tactics and theories of social change, in some cases, they overlap substantially. For example, Bookchin attempts to distinguish lifestyle anarchism by its commitment to personal autonomy, but contemporary anarchists almost unanimously identify autonomy as a central ethical value, equivalent (and not opposed) to self-determination and freedom. In fact, many contemporary "social" anarchists cite the Italian Autonomia (Autonomist Marxism) movement of the 1970s as a significant

influence and have adopted its concept of autonomy, which is fundamentally different from the egoist version described by Bookchin: “Not only is it freedom, but an anthropological growth that causes an accumulation of desires, of necessities, of will; it is, principally, a collective phenomenon, it is deeply cooperative. Autonomy is of the common” (Antonio Negri, quoted in Cuninghame, 2002). Similar to “social” anarchism, Autonomia's anti-authoritarian political program involved a rejection of political parties and other centralized political apparatuses and advocated a loosely coordinated network of local organizations and movements:

> [It] combined several single issue campaigns…under the umbrella of one heterogeneous and localist movement that was united only in its identification with the theory and practice of autonomy from the State, institutional political parties and trade unions or any form of political, social and cultural mediation between the interests of capital and those of the social actors of which it was composed (Ibid.).

The autonomist project is taken up (again) by Hardt and Negri in *Multitude*, in which the authors identify networks as a form of political organization (as both a theory and a practice), pointing to the Global Justice Movement (GJM) network as their empirical referent. Similar to Grubacic’s identification of anarchism as constituted by a multiplicity of theories, *Multitude* is not prescriptive: it is an unfolding project of direct democracy that is articulated in various ways – including moments of direct (unmediated) action and (mostly small-scale) institutions of grassroots assembly, but also in creative, relational net-working. According to Hardt and Negri, the political project of the multitude involves the “production of the common [that] is neither directed by some central point of command and intelligence nor is it the result of a spontaneous harmony among individuals, but rather, it emerges in the space *between*, in the social space of

communication" (Hardt and Negri, 2004:222). The concept of "the common" in Hardt and Negri and the anarchist value of mutual aid are similar: both point to the development of alternative (cooperative) economic structures and practices and social relations that resist commodification.

Another site of crossover between lifestyle and social anarchism is the black bloc, which is comprised of a diverse collection of anarchists who share an anti-state, anti-capitalist orientation and at demonstrations, make use of a common set of protest tactics. The term "black bloc" originated with the German police in the 1980s, which used the term to describe the militant squatter youth and Autonomen (autonomists). Contrary to popular belief, the black bloc is not a group or organization; rather, it is a *tactic*. Black blocs consist of anarchists and anarchist affinity groups operating in what they describe as "free association." They converge only temporarily for particular events or actions, are non-hierarchically organized and follow democratic decision-making procedures. Even when there is not agreement on tactics at a given moment, there is a strong culture of tolerance and autonomy: each member is free to decide how and when to participate. The signature black garb and handkerchief mask are also said to reflect anarchist practice: the uniform ensures a degree of anonymity and prevents the emergence of an identifiable leadership.

While the constitution of a black bloc changes with each action or venue, its function essentially remains the same: it provides solidarity against police repression, increases the visibility of protests (black blocs attract a great deal of media attention) and in some cases, escalates protests toward more direct confrontation with police and other targets of protest (such as delegates to IMF and World Bank meetings). Given the

flexible and fleeting nature of black blocs, street tactics tend to vary widely, from engaging in "snake marches" (roving, unsanctioned marches) to property destruction and clashes with the police. As Barbara Epstein has pointed out, black bloc and other anarchist tactics in the U.S. tend to differ from those in Europe:

> The fact that there is no section of the anti-globalization movement in the United States that defends or routinely engages in violence against people distinguishes the U.S. movement from the movement in Europe. Demonstrations in Prague and other European cities have included attacks on policemen, and such attacks have come to be expected as a part of any major mobilization of the movement (Epstein, 2001).

My experience bears this out. During the closing march at the 2003 European Social Forum (ESF) in Paris, anarchists engaged in fist fights with socialist party members and threw molotov cocktails at police. While Europeans describe such infighting as a common feature, it is unheard of among U.S. activists.

Because of their confrontational approach, the black bloc has been the subject of controversy within the GJM, especially among activists from bureaucratic organizations, pacifists, and those associated with political parties and state officials. Some have criticized the black bloc for escalating police violence and rendering fellow protesters vulnerable to attack, asserting that the black bloc "discredits the movement as a whole and that tactics should be decided democratically, not by small groups acting autonomously" (Epstein, 2001). Perhaps the most extreme criticism was waged by ATTAC's Susan George, who publicly denounced the black bloc after the Genoa anti-G8 protests and essentially blamed them for the death of Carlo Giuliani. At Genoa, the Italian police allegedly installed *provocateurs* into the demonstration; undercover officers and neo-fascists dressed as black bloc protesters vandalized cars and small businesses to

foster a poor image of the protesters and create divisions among them. In addition, the black bloc has been the subject of public scrutiny for increasing the police presence in various cities (and thereby stretching public budgets) and for destroying (private/corporate) property.

Despite the array of anarchisms operative at GJM protests, anarchists in the World Social Forum (WSF) generally fall into the small "a" category, interested in building horizontal networks and direct action coalitions. They play a central role in debates over political organization within the WSF and have significantly influenced the architecture of its open space. Graeber and Grubacic (2005) delineate three aspects of contemporary anarchist practice that have shaped debates over political organization within (and outside) the WSF: (1) its anti-state and anti-authoritarian orientation; (2) its anti-capitalism; and (3) its commitment to prefigurative politics and focus on democratic structure and process. Combined, these characteristics distinguish anarchists, anti-authoritarians and autonomists from other groups in the Forum (namely, social democrats, political parties and NGO activists) and are an important part of the anarchist-militant identity being (re)produced in the Forum.

(1) Anti-authoritarianism - Above all else, anarchism is critical of authority. In the GJM and WSF, anti-authoritarianism and anarchism are often used synonymously to describe political activity aimed at dissolving the state and other forms of social control. These actors seek to break down all forms of authority and coercion in social life and replace them with self-managed, voluntary institutions.

The anti-state, anti-authoritarian character of anarchism dates as far back to Bakunin, who warned of the dangers of a Marxist "red bureaucracy." For Bakunin, the

state was at the center of anarchism's break with Marxism, which saw the state as a product of the French Revolution and a manifestation of bourgeois interests. Marx theorized the transition from capitalist to communist society as involving a seizure of state power by the working class – a dictatorship of the Proletariat. Bakunin rejected this idea; he located the origins of the state in the Reformation and theorized it as irreducible to class relations. He argued for a complete dissolution of the state, which he saw as inherently despotic:

> You can see quite well that behind all the democratic and socialistic phrases and promises of Marx's program, there is to be found in his State all that constitutes the true despotic and brutal nature of all States, whatever may be the form of their government and that in the final reckoning, the People's State so strongly commended by Marx, and the aristocratic-monarchic State, maintained with as much cleverness as power by Bismarck, are completely identical by the nature of their objective at home as well as in foreign affairs (Bakunin, 1950).

Contrary to popular belief, not all of today's anarchists are interested in literally "smashing the state." Many of them acknowledge that states can and have been used to create equitable societies and in some cases, serve as protections against the detrimental effects of unregulated capitalism. Chomsky points out that in contemporary capitalist societies, "protecting the state sector today is a step towards abolishing the state" (Chomsky, 2005). David Graeber, on the other hand, explains anarchist anti-statism as based on an understanding of the state as "an instrument of domination (or better, violence)." Like Chomsky, he argues that "States do a lot of other things too…the anarchist perspective is not that a state is 'only domination' in the sense that a state doesn't do anything else – that would be absurd – but that states do what they do through a larger system of organization that is ultimately rooted in coercion and that this will always necessarily limit the libratory potential of anything else they do" (Graeber, 2006).

According to Chomsky, the anti-authoritarian project of anarchism is "to seek out and identify structures of authority, hierarchy, and domination in every aspect of life, and to challenge them" – not just the state – but all forms of coercion, from the family to the educational system to the media and so on (Chomsky, 178). This may be the basis for contemporary anarchists' affinity for postmodernist theory, which tends to focus on the normative dimensions and ubiquitous character of power rather than on consolidated power structures. Chomsky also explains that anarchists do not necessarily reject all forms of authority. Rather, he suggests that the "essence of anarchism…[is] the conviction that the burden of proof has to be placed on authority, and that it should be dismantled if that burden cannot be met." Graeber and Grubacic (2004) hone this point; for them, anarchism is constituted by

> a kind of faith: a belief that most forms of irresponsibility that seem to make power necessary are in fact the effects of power itself. In practice, though it is a constant questioning, an effort to identify every compulsory or hierarchical relation in human life, and challenge them to justify themselves, and if they cannot – which usually turns out to the case – an effort to limit their power and thus widen the scope of human liberty.

The flexibility exhibited in the thought of Chomsky, Graeber and Grubacic is not present in Holloway, who adamantly rejects any notion of the state as operating according to a logic outside that of domination and coercion. According to Holloway: "the state as a form of organization separates the leaders from the movement and draws them into a process of reconciliation with capital. Betrayal is already given in the state as an organizational form" (Holloway, 2004a). Pointing to the Soviet Union, China and Albania, Holloway asserts that "the failure to transform society through the state has to do with the nature of the state itself, that the state is not just a neutral institution but a specific form of social relations that arises with the development of capitalism. And that

it is a form of social relations that is based on the exclusion of people from power, that is based on the separation and fragmentation of the people" (Holloway, 2004b). The ambiguity regarding the question of the state within anarchist circles reflects its role within the larger history of left politics in the U.S. in which anarchism has, as a strategic orientation, varied in terms of its relevance. In the 1930s, for example, anarchism took a backseat to communist party and trade union New Deal politics and the industrial and unemployed workers' movements that underscored them. As Barbara Epstein pointed out "in a context in which the Left was, with some success, demanding a shift in the orientation of the state, anarchism had little place" (Epstein, 2001). Thirty years later, anarchist politics emerged in the context of the 1960s counterculture, which was critical not only of the state, but of most other forms of authority. The civil rights movement was primarily focused on juridical solutions to racial inequality, but anarchists made strange bedfellows with Christian civil rights activists who "had in common with anarchism a deeply moral approach to politics and a focus on direct action as a tactic" (Ibid.). While the anti-Vietnam movement produced a plethora of anarchist-style militants – SDS and later the Weather Underground - it was not until the anti-nukes movement of the late 70s that anarchist modes of organization would re-emerge in the form of affinity groups and consensus decision-making, popular among today's anarchists.

(2) Anti-Capitalism – Holloway's view of the state as a manifestation of capitalist social relations dates back to Marx of course, but also to Bakunin, who essentially shared Marx's assessment of class relations under capital:

> I shall therefore confine myself here to the statement that property owners and capitalists, inasmuch as they live not by their own productive labor but by getting land rent, house rent, interest upon their capital, or by speculation on land,

> buildings, and capital, or by the commercial and industrial exploitation of the manual labor of the proletariat, all live at the expense of the proletariat (Bakunin, 1950).

Marxist theorists assert that the ruling class' control over the means of production was (and is) the ultimate relation of oppression. Anarchists, on the other hand, see the state as an autonomous entity with its own logic; for them, the state is the ultimate relation of oppression (Mueller, 2003; Newman, 2004; Holloway, 2004). For anarchists, the seizure of the state by the working class translates to another form of tyranny. Moreover, Marx's identification of the working class as a "universal class" or "class in radical chains" does not translate well to the 21st century. In "Listen, Marxist!" Bookchin (1971) calls for a radical rethinking of Marxist revolutionary strategy with regard to the contemporary constitution of class struggle:

> a theoretical corpus which was liberating a century ago is turned into a straitjacket today. We are asked to focus on the working class as the 'agent' of revolutionary change at a time when capitalism visibly antagonizes and produces revolutionaries among virtually all strata of society, particularly the young…We have seen the working class neutralized as the 'agent of revolutionary change'…The class struggle in the classical sense has not disappeared; it has suffered a more deadening fate by being co-opted into capitalism…Our enemies are not only the visibly entrenched bourgeoisie and the state apparatus but also an outlook which finds its support among liberals, social democrats…[and] the 'revolutionary' parties of the past, and…the worker dominated by the factory hierarchy, by the industrial routine, and by the work ethic. The point is that the divisions now cut across virtually all the traditional class lines and they raise a spectrum of problems that none of the Marxists, leaning on analogies with scarcity societies, could foresee.

Bookchin's critique resonates throughout contemporary debates over anarchist political strategy. Most anarchist theories of political organization reject the positioning of the working class as a privileged subject of emancipation as well as Leninist notions of a vanguard party (see chapter five). GJM activists "do not see the working class as the leading force for social change;" rather, many of them combine "Marxism's protest

against class exploitation and liberalism's outrage at violations of individual rights" (Epstein, 2001). Noam Chomsky points to the link between anarchism's anti-authoritarianism and its anti-capitalism: "Anarchism is necessarily anticapitalist in that it 'opposes the exploitation of man by man.' But anarchism also opposes 'the domination of man over man.' It insists that '*socialism will be free or it will not be at all.*'…From this point of view, anarchism may be regarded as the libertarian wing of socialism" (Chomsky, 2005). In the tradition of Bakunin, Chomsky asserts that unlike right-wing libertarians, anarchists are opposed to both private property and state socialism – what Bakunin called "stateless socialism" – and instead argue for a direct re-appropriation of property by people and not through the state or any other mediations. According to Chomsky, "Anarchists of this tradition have always held that democratic control over one's productive life is at the core of any serious human liberation, or, for that matter, of any significant democratic practice" (Ibid.).

Bookchin's argument against the privileging of the working class is a critique of the assumption of scarcity underlying Marx's theory of revolution. For Bookchin, anarchist political organization is increasingly enabled by technological advancement, the proliferation of liberal ideology and the cooptation of the working class. Chomsky agrees with Bookchin's claim for anarchism as a more viable, post-scarcity form of political organization. While critics associate anarchism with tribalism and primitivism or assert that decentralized, participatory modes of decision-making are inadequate to deal with highly complex, technological societies, Chomsky and Bookchin both argue that complexity and technological advancement not only allow for more time for participation, but create favorable economic and social conditions for flexible,

decentralized political structures and self-management. Aronowitz and DiFazio (1994:358) make a similar point in *The Jobless Future*:

> Our argument in this book is that there are for the first time in human history the material preconditions for the emergence of the individual and, potentially, for a popular politics. The core material precondition is that labor need no longer occupy a central place in our collective lives, nor in our imagination. We do not advocate the emancipation from labor as a purely negative freedom. Its positive content is that, unlike the regime of work without end, it stages the objective possibility of citizenship.

In addition to his opposition to Marxism's revolutionary strategy, Bookchin points a sharp finger at liberals and social democrats. The conflict between anarchist-autonomists and liberals and social democrats is pervasive in the context of the WSF as well. Anticapitalist, antistatist groups locate political power and the potential for social transformation from within autonomous social movements and make use of direct action and the development of countercultural communities as a way of confronting social problems. Progressive NGOs and social democratic groups, on the other hand, seek to bolster (nationally or internationally-sponsored) social programs and political influence within legal structures and the electoral sphere and see themselves as checks on market actors rather than agents of fundamental social change. A 2002 debate between Susan George (an original founder of the WSF) and Ezequiel Adamovsky demonstrates this chasm. George is a co-founder of ATTAC; recalling chapter one, ATTAC's principal aim is to implement a Tobin tax on international financial transactions. Adamovsky, on the other hand, was a protagonist in the Assemblies movement in Buenos Aires and is a member of the anarchist-inspired PGA network. In the debate, Adamovsky (2003) describes the fundamental difference among political orientations within the Forum:

> To put it simply, on the one hand, there's the approach of most non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that want to reinforce the role of civil society as a check on

> the power of corporations. The NGOs want to restore the balance that society has lost, and make capitalism more humane. On the other hand there is a more radical approach, shared by some social movements and radical collectives, which wants to strengthen the antagonistic movement against capitalism, to fight this society and build a new one.

Adamovsky identifies civil society with reform-oriented NGOs whose visions of social change and political action radically differ from his own (and that of other anarchists). The conflict is both practical and ideological; NGOs and social democratic organizations tend to advocate for improved transparency and democratic practice among states and corporations, but rarely apply those principles to their own organizations, which directly counters anarchists' emphasis on prefigurative politics. Moreover, anarchists reject these groups because of they are interested in anti-state (anti-social democratic) and anti-capitalist (anti-NGO) politics. For Bookchin, such moderate groups are as much an "enemy" to freedom as the bourgeoisie was to the proletariat in the 19th century. This is echoed in Mueller (2003):

> From Seattle to Genoa, and now the 'war on terror,' anarchists have found themselves at the receiving end of rapidly escalating state repression without having any effective mechanisms to defend themselves…Linked to this policy of repression is the challenge of cooptation of more moderate groups…leaving anarchists isolated on the radical fringes.

(3) Prefigurative Politics - Anarchism's critique of authority is manifest in practices and principles that constitute a mode of political organization radically distinct from that of political parties, NGOs and hierarchically structured social movements. One of the most important principles in anarchist theories of political organization is the belief that a movement's organizational means are as important as its social and political ends: "one cannot create freedom through authoritarian means…as much as possible, one must

embody the society one wishes to create" (Grubacic, 2003). According to Bookchin (1969):

> what different anarchist organizations have in common is that they are developed organically from below, not engineered into existence from above. They are social movements, combining a creative revolutionary life-style with a creative revolutionary theory, not political parties, whose mode of life is indistinguishable from the surrounding bourgeois environment…They try to reflect as much as is humanly possible the liberated society they seek to achieve, not slavishly duplicate the prevailing system of hierarchy, class and authority.

Anarchists seek to create institutions and deliberative processes and engage in other forms of collective activity in the spirit of free association, mutual aid and non-hierarchical decision-making. In the WSF, anarchist and autonomist social movement actors tend to be highly critical of political parties, NGOs and the Forum's organizers for the disconnection between their visions of social change and the methods by which they seek to implement them. According to Graeber and Grubacic (2004),

> only by making one's form of organization in the present at least a rough approximation of how a free society would actually operate, how everyone, someday, should be able to live, can one guarantee that we will not cascade back into disaster. Grim joyless revolutionaries who sacrifice all pleasure to the cause can only produce grim, joyless societies.

Chomsky (2005: 234) shares this view, pointing out that "the main strains of anarchism have been very concerned with means. They have often tended to try to follow the idea that Bakunin expressed, that you should build the seeds of the future society within the existing one." Chomsky further explains (like Hardt and Negri) that anarchism is not something to be realized – it does not predict a revolutionary moment – rather, freedom is understood as a process that exists beneath layers of authority in each society: "an anarchist society, a society that organizes itself without authority, is in existence."

Anarchists argue for *and construct* organizational forms that involve decentralized, autonomous units interconnected via networks or federal arrangements. In "Anarchism as a Theory of Organization," Colin Ward (1965) suggests that anarchist organizations are first and foremost, voluntary, but also functional, temporary and local. According to Ward (1965), "They should be functional and temporary precisely because permanence is one of those factors which harden the arteries of an organization, giving it a vested interest in its own survival, in serving the interests of office-holders rather than its function." In addition, he suggests that such organization operate on a local scale in order to prevent hierarchies from forming, which in his estimation are largely unavoidable. Echoing Ward, Chomsky demonstrates how scale is inextricably linked to anarchism's anti-authoritarian organizational dynamics: "the idea of anarchism is that delegation of authority is rather minimal;" representatives at any level of social organization should be directly accountable and responsive to their respective communities. Reflecting on the work of Bakunin and Kropotkin, he notes:

> They had in mind a highly organized form of society, but a society that was organized on the basis of organic units, organic communities. And generally they meant by that the workplace and the neighborhood, and from those two basic units there could derive through federal arrangements a highly integrated kind of social organization, which might be national or even international in scope. And the decisions could be made over a substantial range, but by delegates who are always part of the organic community from which they come, to which they return and in which, in fact, they live.

Contemporary ("social") anarchism is primarily concerned with creating processes and structures that reflect a strong tendency toward "prefigurative" politics. Grubacic (2005b) discusses this preoccupation as corresponding to two temporalities, which characterize what he terms the "new anarchism:" (1) a kind of impatience that serves as an impetus for anarchism's prefigurative political orientation; the desire among

anarchist activists to create a "life despite capitalism," with corresponding coalitions and meeting spaces that epitomize the world toward which they aspire. (2) the visionary element of anarchism – the "life after capitalism" – that envisions the development of new institutions and norms of association, toward a radically democratic political terrain and against the domination of capital. In a different essay coauthored with Michael Albert, Grubacic identifies these same groups and activists as part of a "new radicalism" – constituted by the "attempt to distance oneself from the practices of the Old Left; to move away from the area of conventional politics and to devise a new political space, a 'politics from below' " (Grubacic and Albert, 2003). This new anarchism/radicalism has, in some circles, replaced the 19th and early 20th century language of federalism with a late 20th/21st century discourse on networks:

> New anarchism expresses itself in all sorts of forms of organization – most notably networks – which focus not on bringing consciousness to the masses, but, instead, on forms of organization which emphasize horizontality in place of verticality, direct democracy in place of democratic centralism, openness in place of sectarianism. It means thinking about organization in its most basic sense: the elaboration of cooperation among people in the struggle, and internal organization by any self-defined group of people in struggle.

The concept and operation of networks as modes of political organization is also explicated by Hardt and Negri (2004:217) in *Multitude*:

> The global cycle of struggles develops in the form of a distributed network. Each local struggle functions as a node that communicates with all the other nodes without any hub or center of intelligence. Each struggle remains singular and tied to its local conditions but at the same time is immersed in the common web. This form of organization is the most fully realized political example we have of the concept of the multitude. The global extension of the common does not negate the singularity of each of those who participates in the network. The new global cycle of struggles organizes and mobilizes the multitude.

In the context of the Global Justice Movement, such networks operate on a variety of scales: the Zapatistas in Chiapas and the Assemblies movement in Argentina consisted of local and neighborhood assemblies; the Direct Action Network (DAN) operated on a continental scale in North America and the People's Global Action network continues to traverse the globe.

Case: The Direct Action Network (DAN) of North America

The Direct Action Network (DAN) was initially founded to coordinate the demonstrations against the WTO in Seattle in November 1999. It was a national and later continental network of affinity and other kinds of groups that organized direct actions and other events. DAN operated according to anarchist principles in a variety of ways: (1) it made use of consensus decision-making processes to prevent any one group from controlling the network and as an experiment in implementing democratic, "horizontal" norms of participation; and (2) its structure consisted of "autonomous" affinity groups that acted as nodes in the larger, organized network or federation.

Despite Bookchin's (1969) warnings against the "manipulation of consensus by a minority," consensus was the primary decision-making process used to organize GJM events. According to Graeber and Grubacic (2004), the process emerged from the feminist movement in the 1970s in response to the hierarchical leadership style of the 1960s New Left (although Epstein locates its origins in the anti-nukes movement of the same period). In the context of DAN, consensus encouraged each member of the group to participate in discussions and decision-making on a relatively equal basis with others in the meeting. Embedded in consensus process is an ethical assumption that decision-

making processes are not about converting other people to one's way of thinking – rather, "decision-making structures are ways of managing diversity, and therefore, that one should concentrate instead on maintaining egalitarian process and considering immediate questions of action in the present" (Graeber, 2003). Contrary to voting procedures and academic discourse and debate, which are both largely informed by an ethics of competition, consensus process "is built on a principle of compromise and creativity where one is constantly changing proposals around until one can come up with something everyone can at least live with; therefore, the incentive is always to put the best possible construction on others' arguments" (Graeber, 2003).

While Bookchin points out that consensus does not enable disagreement or leave room for the possibility of "dissensus," the process utilized by DAN and other GJM groups included various built-in mechanisms for participants to disagree and make new proposals. Even when consensus was established, there was always space for participants to withdraw from the group or block decisions if done in good faith. DAN's consensus process caught on to such a degree that large-scale workshops were being held around the country to train facilitators and participants, although in Europe, the process sometimes debased into "a form of 'consensus-imperialism' " (Grubacic and Albert, 2003).

DAN was made up of decentralized autonomous units, called affinity groups, internally connected by way of voluntary association and affect among their members. Affinity group praxis dates back to the Spanish Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI), anarcho-syndicalists who formed affinity groups inside the Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) trade union. In North America in the late 1990s and early 21st century, DAN served as a non-hierarchical hub for various affinity groups around the U.S. and

Canada, much like the FAI in Bookchin's (1971) formulation: "They provide initiation and consciousness, not a 'general staff' and a 'source of command.'" DAN largely avoided coercive and discriminatory practices and there were no leaders with long-standing assignments. In actuality, every participant was a leader: meetings were run by facilitators who rotated every meeting so that each person in the local network had the opportunity to lead the group at one time or another.

Activists in hierarchical organizations (like political parties and NGOs) participated in DAN, but no single entity in the network was subordinate to another. Groups entered into DAN to fill a basic need (e.g. defend a squat house) or plan an event (e.g. teach-ins, civil disobedience), but DAN was never seen as a means nor a step toward a defined political end. Its *modus operandi* was less about an enforced movement toward some ideal state of affairs than about linking heterogeneous groups with unique histories and producing stable interactions among them. This amalgamation of relationships that constituted DAN formed a kind of complex in which its components still retained their respective identities, but acted in association as integral parts of a network. Participants stayed in contact and came together at certain times, but there were no restrictions on them. There were interlockings and negotiations, but never any overarching subordination. While some of its constituent groups might have been uneasy if not outright opposed to the anarchist label, DAN abided by many anarchist principles: non-coercive, non-hierarchical, decentralized and maximizing the autonomy of affinity groups.

In the broader context of the GJM, spokescouncils were used to organize large-scale direct actions and protests. Spokescouncils made use of consensus process and

operated as temporary structures made up of representatives from autonomous groups and organizations. Recalling chapter two, they were structured like a wheel with spokes; each participant group maintained the freedom to plan its own actions and political events, but the spokescouncil was a common deliberative body. Spokescouncil meetings were often held the night before major protest events and each night after until the close of the event. Activists reported on the day's activities in the meetings and planned new actions, remaining flexible to new developments, such as mass arrests and the need for "jail solidarity" or new proposals for protest actions.

Case: People's Global Action (PGA) – International

The Peoples Global Action (PGA) was born at an international meeting – or "encuentro" (encounter) - called by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) in 1996 to discuss common issues and tactics among various anti-neoliberal social movements. The meeting took place in Chiapas and attracted some 6,000 participants from over forty countries. Many of the same groups met again in Spain in 1997, where they drafted a set of organizational principles and objectives for developing an international network of social movements. These organizational principles or "hallmarks" defined the network's opposition to capitalism and its commitment to using confrontational (rather than reform-oriented) tactics and a decentralized, autonomous mode of organization (PGA Website, 2006). According to Grubacic (2005a), PGA's founding was

> a curious meeting of Northern activists with peasants struggling in the Global South…Among the participants who endorsed its 'manifesto' were the Canadian Postal Workers, Earth First !, European and Korean activists, Maori, U'wa and Ogoni people, and even a few people from 'the forgotten empire of Ruritania' (East and Central Europe). The idea was simple, itself inspired by the Zapatista reinvention of anarcho/ autonomous/ libertarian tradition: defining a political

> space outside and against parliamentary, vanguardist and representational politics, based on horizontalism and direct action.

The initial function of the PGA was to coordinate decentralized Global Days of Action, the first of which took place in 1998 during the WTO Ministerial in Geneva, Switzerland. Tens of thousands of protestors participated in more than sixty demonstrations on five continents. Subsequent PGA-inspired protests included the anti-WTO event in Seattle in 1999, the anti-G8 in Genoa in 2001 and the various other major events associated with the Global Justice Movement (PGA website, 2006). An active member of the PGA, Grubacic (2005a) points out that "PGA-inspired demonstrations…provided a context within which we redeveloped creative forms of direct action, like street parties, blockages, occupations, anti-capitalist carnivals and so on. The idea of decentralization led to the establishment of other networks such as Indymedia" and later, the No Border Network in Europe.

The PGA understands itself as an "instrument for coordination, not an organization" (PGA website, 2006). It attempts to minimize central structures and consists of locally organized activist groups and movements. It is not a membership organization and "no organization or person represents the PGA, nor does the PGA represent any organization or person." The network does, however, organize conferences and has issued a lengthy manifesto. Conferences/meetings are carefully organized to ensure regional and gender representation and the responsibilities are clearly defined (Ibid.). Unlike many other anarchist groups or movements, PGA participants have been active in the World Social Forum, mostly through their involvement in developing autonomous spaces within the Forum's limits.

Anarchists and Autonomists in the World Social Forum

According to Grubacic, the GJM is constituted by two parallel processes: (1) the "new radicalism" mentioned earlier, which began with the Zapatistas and has continued through the work of the PGA and similar social movement networks; and (2) "traditional" processes, like the World Social Forum and regional forums, which involve social democrats, NGOs and some anti-capitalist political parties. Grubacic asserts that "The traditionalists have understood…that there is something really new in the new movement. The evidence is the very idea of organizing 'Social Forums' – their institution that is 'new' although organized in the 'old' way – as well as the striving of political parties to transform themselves into networks such as the French ATTAC" (Grubacic and Albert, 2003). The network model, as conceived by anarchists and autonomists is counterpoised to the "organization;" it functions as mode of coordination without hierarchy or central authority.In his work on the European Social Forum, Jeff Juris (2005) points out how conflicts between Grubacic's traditionalists and new radicals reflects a disjuncture between "networking logics," which involve "the forging of horizontal connections among diverse, autonomous elements…collaboration through decentralized coordination and consensus-based decision-making," and "command logics," characteristic of political parties and trade unions, "based on recruiting new members, developing unified strategies, political representation, and the struggle for hegemony." He identifies "horizontalism" and networking logics as part of a new political culture that involves

> the creation of broad umbrella spaces, where diverse movements and collectives converge around a few 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.

Juris warns, however, that horizontal networking logics also contain contradictions, and networks vary in terms of the amount of organizational hierarchy they include and require. “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” (Juris, 2004). DAN meetings, for example, were run in a “horizontal” fashion, but some meeting organization was conducted behind the scenes by a core group, usually composed of more experienced activists. DAN had its cliques, and while organizers made every effort to train a large number of facilitators and democratize the process, the same people continually took on that role, not necessarily because of a desire to control, but simply because they had facilitation experience. The WSF provides another example: as chapter six details, the open space of the Forum was designed as a noncoercive, nonpartisan, “horizontal” space for networking, yet hierarchies persist among participants and through the organization of the event. Unlike the WSF, which employs a formal hierarchy (a leadership, a Secretariat), the presence of informal hierarchies in DAN and other anarchist networks is in part due to the inadequacy of consensus process itself. Anarchists dismiss representative democracy and argue “that only decisions that [are] consensual are legitimate,” but consensus process is also infused with power relations, despite the egalitarian sentiments of its advocates. As Mueller (2003) points out, consensus runs the risk of being dominated by more experienced activists and those with more time and dedication. In reference to Max Weber, he asserts: “to replace majority voting with consensus is not to abolish authority – merely to replace the ‘legal-rational’, that is, the

codified and structured authority of the majority with the 'charismatic' authority (popularity) of some individuals."

According to Juris (2004), "Horizontalism does not ignore informal hierarchies, but rather seeks mechanisms to control them, without reinscribing vertical structures into our formal organizational architectures." While DAN operated on a local scale, in which decisions could be made in a familiar environment, large convergence spaces like the social forums are difficult to horizontalize completely because they contain radically diverse sets of actors and political orientations. In such settings, political and ideological difference, "often coded as conflict over organizational process and form," becomes difficult to comprehend because participants operate according to different sets of assumptions and beliefs. In the worst instances, communication processes break down due to the lack of affinity and good will among participants needed to work through and appreciate their differences (Ibid.). In an effort to combat this trend, Michael Albert has argued for a radical decentralization of the WSF, a process begun in 2002 with the significant growth of local and regional social forums around the world. In Albert's formulation, local and regional social forums, connected by way of the WSF, could serve as a starting point for the establishment of a federal system, much like what he proposes in *Parecon*, his model of an alternative, participatory economics. Anarchists in the WSF have argued and worked for the further development of such a project, citing local forums' ability to operate according to democratic norms of participation and transparency and allow for a degree of intimacy untenable at the larger events:

> Local forums have a manageable scale. Arrangements, fees, setting up panels and getting people to them, all occur relatively smoothly. Local agendas tend to include many interactive sessions so that everyone involved participates more or

> less equally. People can access one another. Presenters and audience aren't sharply divided (Albert, 2003).

The local forum process has not proven to be as functional as Albert hoped it would be: local forums lack infrastructure and resources and the central WSF has not created a viable mechanism to coordinate them. The decentralization of the WSF – the establishment of local and regional forums as well as the Polycentric events – made the event more accessible to a larger number of people, but without any effort to connect them, the move seems to have reinforced the fragmentation of its constituent struggles.

In addition to the problem of centralization and hierarchy, anarchists have repeatedly clashed with organizers and participants over the WSF's relationship to political parties and heads of state. While the Charter of Principles bans political parties and state officials from direct participation, they have played an integral role in its development – as headline speakers, financial supports and organizers. In keeping with their critique of the state, anarchists in the Forum reject political party actors (and their front groups) and in some cases have staged direct actions against them. They refer to these actors as "verticals" to distinguish their own "horizontal" forms of organization and essentially see these groups as authoritarian. Recalling chapter two, anarchist participants pied the leader of the PT at the 2003 WSF and at the 2004 ESF in London protested the involvement of the GLA and SWP.

Anarchist and autonomous social movement activists have also criticized the WSF Organizing Committee and International Council for failing to operate a truly open space. The open space structure of the WSF was largely influenced by anarchist principles, including its noncoercive, non-partisan character, but anarchists criticize the

presence of non-representative standing committees and their "behind closed doors" decision-making processes. They connect organizers' elitism with a "reformist' orientation toward the state and capital:

> Many people from various geographical and political backgrounds have criticized the Forum for a series of formal or organizational problems that they believe make it an undemocratic space. These problems include a lack of transparency in decision-making, hierarchical organization, as well as special treatment of celebrities and the creation of elitist tiers that privilege the more well known and consolidated components the movement...A number of people have also criticized what they consider to be the privileging and cooptation of the Forum by institutionalized political structures like political parties, trade unions, and mainstream NGOs that, in addition to being hierarchical organizations themselves, tend to be reformist or social democratic in their outlook (Osterweil, 2003).

According to Juris (2004), "horizontal networking logics are inscribed into the organizational structures of the forums themselves, perhaps most clearly expressed in the concept of 'open space'…[however] the organizing processes surrounding them, are highly uneven, contradictory, and contested terrains." While the Forum's Charter mandates that its open space be nondeliberative, its standing committees deliberate on key political issues: how to relate to heads of state like Lula or Chávez? Which kinds of groups (militant, anarchist, armed) will be included/excluded? Which sessions will be placed center stage and supplied with translation; i.e., what are the most pressing political issues of our time? And perhaps most importantly, who will fund the WSF and what is the (informal) cost of obtaining funds from those sources?

The general mistrust of the Forum's organizers among "horizontals" is epitomized in Ezekiel Adamovsky's response to a 2003 call for the development of a Social Movement World Network (SMWN). For Adamovsky, aside from the fact that the PGA was ignored as a viable social movement network already in operation, he felt that the

language of anarchist-autonomist organization was being disingenuously appropriated:

> The proposal for the SMWN is written in the same non-hierarchical language. Networks, after all, are decentralized and horizontal by definition, right? But one gets little suspicious when new *funky* language seems to be there only to conceal the old political forms and practices. Networks are made of loose, informal and voluntary links between different groups. That is why no organization and institution can claim to *represent* a network. A certain number of groups can indeed form a *coalition*, but it would never encompass a whole network. And networks definitely don't have Secretariats; that's the very essence of a network (Adamovsky, 2003).

In the tradition of Jo Freeman's "The Tyranny of Structurelessness" (1972), which demonstrates how structurelessness (at meetings and other forms of assembly) can obscure important power differentials, Adamovsky proposes that a more (horizontally) structured open space with rules and procedures might prevent such exclusions and allow for a more equitable distribution of the WSF space and its resources.

In the context of the European Social Forum (ESF), the conflict between "horizontals" and participants and organizers from political parties reached its apex in 2004 in London, which by most accounts was a complete disaster. According to grassroots social movements and autonomists, the organization of the 2004 ESF was brutally dominated by the Social Workers Party (SWP) and London Greater Authority (GLA). It was not the first time political parties would operated behind the scenes of the ESF: in 2001 (its first year), Rifondazione Comunista (RC) played a major role in organizing the event. While anarchist and autonomist activists were critical of RC's involvement, "the UK organising process…suffered from a serious lack of trust, sectarianism, entrenched positions (on both sides) and an unwillingness to make compromises. Above all, it…suffered from a severe lack of democracy" (Reyes, 2004).

At the 2004 ESF, conflicts between the SWP/GLA and "horizontals" manifested

in two ways: (1) Activists staged a direct action against the organizers of the Forum at a plenary session where Mayor Ken Livingston was scheduled to speak. During the action, ESF organizers were denounced for the way in which they planned the forum in a top-down, exclusionary manner: "Perhaps our most important principles is that of self-organization…However, many opportunities of experimentation and innovation have been missed…resulting in the exclusion of many people, organizations, networks, groups, and even countries" (in Juris, 2005). To make matters worse, several activists were beaten by police and arrested after the protest, which only increased the general animosity toward the organizers.

(2) Prior to the Forum, many activist groups organized "autonomous spaces"[20] – these were positioned as a protest against the ESF administration, but also as a productive means through which to "contaminate" the Forum itself. This strategy of contamination (as opposed to abandonment) was conceptualized in 2002 by Linden Farrer, whose discussion of the ESF reflects the deep ideological division (and outright animosity) between anarchists and other participants in the Forum on questions of political organization:

> While the actions of activists engaged in direct action and militants on the street have captured the headlines and brought about concrete—but arguably short lived—results, others such as liberal-reformists (who want to reform capitalism), NGOs (who want money to carry out their activities and are often happy to enter into negotiations with big-business and government), and authoritarian leftists (who want to enter government to affect reform or build a mass party for revolution) enter into a dynamic push-and-shove to hash out a way forward in the form of the Social Forums. Unfortunately this vocal leadership which has the money and experience to organise are moving the forums away from the direction initiated by radicals, and into the self-destructive orbit of conventional politics.

[20] The seven main autonomous spaces at the 2004 ESF include: Beyond ESF; Radical Theory Forum; Indymedia Center; The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination; Mobile Carnival Forum; Solidarity Village; and Women's Open Day (Juris, 2005).

In the essay, Farrer theorizes how anarchist and autonomist groups can use autonomous spaces to challenge existing power relations within the ESF:

> At this year's ESF meeting they organised an autonomous space, 'not in competition' and 'not anti ESF' to facilitate networking between groups and individuals and to 'contaminate by association the ESF with non-hierarchical practices'; they noted that the ESF had many young activists and held potential to develop existing anti-capitalist networks. This is the best way of working with the ESF; 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 through voting and lobbying. 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 to change society from below, not of lobbying those above.

Farrer's instrumental perspective of autonomous spaces in the Forum(s) is supplemented by Juris' (2004) analysis, which characterizes them as "separate but connected:"

> …straddling the porous boundaries separating official and alternative events…By creating autonomous spaces at the margins of the forum, radicals generate their own horizontal practices, while staying connected to mainstream currents and pressuring official spaces to live up to their expressed ideals...[these efforts] reflect a broader networking logic, and demonstrate how contemporary ideological struggles are increasingly waged through battles over organizational process and form.

While autonomous spaces were most prevalent at the London ESF in 2004, they had been established at previous WSFs and ESFs. The WSF International Youth Camp (IYC), for example, emerged as a response to a housing shortage at the 2001 WSF and was primarily organized by Brazilian youth organizations, some of which were associated with political parties. By the second WSF, however, anarchist-autonomist activists became closely involved in the organization of the IYC and established it as an autonomous space with its own programming and cultural events. Inside the Youth Camp, "horizontals" organized the first Intergalactika Laboratory of Global Resistance in 2002. According to Nunes et al. (2005), "the name signals the conspicuous absence from

the WSF of the EZLN (or Zapatistas);" it was derived from a (characteristically clever) Zapatista statement that described the expansive scope of the resistance against neoliberalism as "intergalactic." As described in chapter two, Intergalactika was a large tent space inside the IYC that served as a participatory forum for grassroots social movements and activists. It was one of the only places in the WSF where direct action tactics were discussed, including actions against the central WSF itself. In 2002, for example, activists met in Intergalactika and planned an action against the installation of a WSF VIP room. They ended up disrupting the space, declaring "We are all VIPs!" After that, the VIP room was abolished.

Intergalactika served as a model for subsequent autonomous spaces within the WSF and ESF, although the autonomous spaces in the first ESF in Florence predate it. In Florence, autonomous spaces were established in distinction to the central ESF but also from each other: the Cobas Thematic Squares, the Italian Disobedienti's "No Work, No Shop" space and the Eur@ction Hub project occupied separate venues because they disagreed on the purpose and function of the spaces. Other autonomous activities/spaces in the WSF and ESF include *Z Magazine*'s "Life After Capitalism" conference series in 2003, Mumbai Resistance and the Peoples Movements Encounter II (agricultural workers and small farmers' unions) at the 2004 WSF in India, and the Metallo lab and GLAD (Space Towards the Globalization of Disobedient Struggles and Actions) at the 2003 ESF in Paris.

The presence of autonomous spaces and years of consistent and mounting criticism regarding the Forum's non-democratic organization had a significant impact on the larger Forum process, as evinced by the decision to decentralize the WSF in 2005. All

activities, panels and workshops were self-organized, and while some complained that the space had become further fragmented, others saw it as a positive development that gave the Forum "a more popular, grassroots feel" (Juris, 2006). In addition, in 2005 the Youth Camp was expanded to include seven "Action Centers,"[21] including Intergalactika. These spaces were entirely self-managed and democratically organized, and served as "a model for reconceptualizing the social forums altogether. Rather than view the Forum as a singular open space…[activists began] to understand it as a complex pattern of interlocking networked spaces." In addition to loosening the reins on the structure and content of the event, members of the WSF International Council and Organizing Committee participated in an "open mic" event in the Intergalactika space, which provided activists with a unique opportunity to feedback to the organizers (Nunes et al., 2005).

Conclusion

In the context of the WSF, anarchism has a dual disposition: on the one hand, anarchists have engaged in genuine and productive efforts to democratize the Forum and use the open space to exchange information and ideas and establish activist networks. Constructive criticisms of state actors and political parties in the WSF and ESF reflect anarchists' desires to tilt the power dynamics among participants in a more equitable direction as part of their prefigurative, democratic orientation. And most importantly,

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[21] According to Juris (2006), the seven Action Centers included "the *Caracol Intergalactika* (global struggles, new forms of activism, and direct action), *Espaço Che* (culture and health), *Laboratório de Conhecimentos Livres* (free knowledge and communication), *Lôgun Édé* (human rights and sexual diversity), *Terrau* (anti-capitalist social movements), *Raizes* (cultures of resistance), and *Tupiguara* (environmental culture). Moreover, there were also numerous *axônios*, or smaller spaces, scattered throughout the camp, housing activities related to feminism, health, clowning, hip hop, solidarity economies, student movements, and religion."

they have created models of deliberative structures that prefigure (or at least point to the possibility of) a radically democratic political arrangement. On the other side of the coin, however, some anarchists tend toward what Epstein (2001) called “a moral purity” that sometimes prevents communication and the building of alliances. Moreover, some anarchists in the WSF have applied an anti-authoritarian logic to intellectuals and movement leaders simply on the basis of their charismatic appeal or positions as representatives or spokespersons, which sometimes debases their critique of authority into a witch hunt, further enabling state repression. Chomsky’s definition of anarchism’s anti-authoritarianism as a kind of skepticism is an important corrective to the sectarian tendencies of some anarchist groups.

While anarchists have made a valuable contribution to the GJM and WSF by politicizing culture and reinforcing the idea that egalitarian ethics must infuse all levels of organization (lest it reproduce the very power relations it is seeking to contest), they lack a conception of how a collective ethics can be constructed in cooperation with social and political actors that operate outside their political culture. While DAN was exceptional in that it was able to operate as a truly open network, other anarchist groups remain somewhat isolated, in part because of their strict ethical standards and organizational culture, which sometimes devolves into extreme dogmatism. While affinity group praxis opens up spaces for the development of tight-knit, yet autonomous activist communities, it can also over-personalize political organizing, create informal hierarchies and be exclusionary.

While anarchist political organization runs these risks, it has begun the process of developing an *ethics* of political organization, which is severely lacking in other political

circles. As Epstein pointed out, this element of anarchist organization intersects with Christian left activism, which also stresses the ethical content of organizing and the importance of prefigurative and utopian dimensions of radical politics. Christians have always emphasized the importance of egalitarian action (deeds) and the realization of "heaven on earth," just as anarchists search for (and create) prefigurative spaces of freedom and affinity. These are often marginal spaces, similar to those in the WSF, but no less important to the anarchist project to produce the conditions for (and experience) freedom, even if its scale is limited.

In addition to being the unacknowledged architects of the open space of the WSF—which significantly veers from their conception of openness--anarchists have also made significant contributions to both the GJM and WSF by reinvigorating "horizontal" organizational practices, such as consensus process, networking and the creation of autonomous spaces as a contamination strategy. As we saw in the case of DAN and other anarchist networks, however, networks and consensus decision-making have limits. And autonomous spaces may serve as protest against hierarchical organizational practices, but they may also function as mechanisms through which activists reinforce their militant identities at the expense of others. Like community life, consensus process involves and relies heavily upon a common ethics and norms of sociality that carry the potential to run counter to its anti-authoritarian intent. It also produces the appearance of agreement, when there simply may not be any, and periodically toes the line between serving as a productive mechanism for the development of new actions, ideas and democratic practice, and degrading into an anti-democratic fetish for procedure. Despite attempts to preclude charismatic leadership, in some cases consensus actually produces it; and while

networks cannot be understood as devoid of power relations and inequality, for similar reasons it remains unclear whether consensus is really a viable method for decision-making beyond planning direct actions.

Anarchists have self-criticized along these same lines: Grubacic (2003) has pointed out

> the goal of anti-authoritarians is not to be small and isolated, and to disengage ourselves from others by dismissing their life choices. Sometimes, in this side of the movement too, this behavior comes from not understanding and relating positively to working class and poor people's situations. Our goal should be movement building, not 'summit-hopping'; we should try to connect out local work and out networking, instead of getting lost in 'network of networks' and the 'process of the processes.' We should also try to be more careful with overcoming our extremes of anti-intellectualism and life-stylism.

Mueller (2003) points to a similar set of challenges for anarchists and left libertarians: (1) to overcome their isolation from broader political circles, which requires more "extensive organizing;" and (2) to deepen institutional structures that would render an "anarchist' lifestyle more tenable, which requires more "intensive" organizing. Arguing for the WSF as a "decentralized International," Jason Adams (2002) remarked that such a program would require "social democrats…to give into the more radical perspective of the growing numbers of anti-capitalist tendencies. But it also means that 'purist' anti-capitalists will have to find ways to make space in their ranks for short-term demands of those who want their bread and butter right now."

The question and availability of "bread and butter" cannot be separated from the issue of the state. In the context of South American politics and the almost contagious shift to the left at the state level, outright dismissals of the state by anarchists--most notably, in John Holloway's work--must be further interrogated. The institution of

participatory budgeting in Brazil, the workers' cooperatives in Venezuela and the nationalization of the natural gas industry in Bolivia all suggest that the question of the state might best be approached from a perspective similar to that put forth by Poulantzas and before him, Gramsci: that the left should not "quarantine" the state or believe that it can somehow operate "outside" of it, rather it should be asking itself how to transform it (Harney, 2002).

In the context of the WSF, participants are split on the question of the state's role in enacting social change and establishing egalitarian societies. On one extreme are anarchists who reject the state as inherently despotic (with the exception of Chomsky and others, who put forth a more nuanced position) and on the other are those who dismiss anarchist anti-statism as "idealistic." In a 2004 interview Tariq Ali, for example, Ali criticized the Hollowayan edict that "We can change the world without taking power," countering that

> the slogan doesn't threaten anyone; it's a moral slogan. The Zapatistas…when they marched from Chiapas to Mexico City, what did they think was going to happen? Nothing happened. It was a moral symbol, it was not even a moral victory because nothing happened. So I think that phase was understandable in Latin American politics…But I think, from that point of view, the Venezuelan example is the most interesting one. It says: 'in order to change the world you have to take power, and you have to begin to implement change—in small doses if necessary—but you have to do it. Without it nothing will change' (Jardim and Ginden, 2004).

Just months after the interview, Ali joined a group of other well-known activist-intellectuals in drafting the Porto Alegre Consensus, widely regarded as an elitist exercise that gained little support from the mass of WSF participants. In the passage above, he puts forth a view of the state as a viable site of an emancipatory politics, but in a cavalier fashion, fails to acknowledge the importance of grassroots struggles. Interpreting

Poulantzas, Harney (2004:90) points out that "some forms of political freedoms [require] a deepening of the institutions of representative democracy, but…this [can] only be achieved in articulation with other kinds of freedoms best pursued through direct and council forms." Thus while anarchists like Grubacic counter Ali by asserting that the Hollowayan refusal of the state is merely a "refusal to accept the disastrous idea…of the separation of means and ends, which always leads to a divorce between the 'vanguard' and 'another world'," they may be failing to consider how the diffusion of state power can act democratically. For example, where does the line between means and ends fall within the context of the nationalization of Venezuela's oil industry, which has involved the institution of worker control over the running of factories? What to make of Alam's (2005) interpretation of the Chávez government, which for him "would neither be in power nor have the political strength to carry out any of its policies even while in power had there not been an intense, dialectical process of engagement with the people who comprise the backbone of the revolution?" Alam cites the activism of large segments of the population "who have felt that it is their government under attack" when the U.S. and "embittered sections of the middles classes [aimed] to unseat the revolution."

In addressing the issue of the state and anarchist politics, Michael Menser (2005) theorizes two types of democracy: maximal Democracy (maxD), which may employ a variety of tactics –from state relations and bureaucratic organization to direct action; and the minimal Democracy (minD) characteristic of neo-liberalism. For Menser, the WSF "is a transformative site for the production of at least some of the conditions required for maxD, and local and global radical Left movements in general." In turn, he points to some basic constitutive elements of minD, including a view of democracy that

understands “self-rule as representation: the right of the citizenry to have its wishes and interests effectively registered by those wielding the executive, legislative, juridical and administrative powers.” Electoral politics and voting are means by which minD self-rule is achieved, as well as juridical systems that allow for dissent: “The key concepts of this minD conception are authority, representation, and accountability, and they are all linked to the idea of democracy as a popular process of legitimation” (Menser, 2005). Menser points out that in the context of “the commodification of everyday life, militarism and religious authoritarianism” the minD conception of democracy is actually a barrier to authentic self-rule. MaxD, on the other hand, is

> about the production of a set of collective capacities. Self-governance, then, requires individual and collective self-development. This, in turn, entails a high degree of political equality: all are to be educated in those relevant capacities *and* have avenues for participation *and* mechanisms to protect the citizenry from forces that would corrupt those avenues or threaten the self-development of the populace.

Such capacity-building necessarily involves a radical transformation of the political economic conditions according to which most societies currently operate. As the case of Brazil’s participatory budget process demonstrates, it is possible to implement such transformation incrementally (through mechanisms like the WSF) and in collusion with states. Menser analyzes the PoA participatory budget process (see chapter one for a more detailed discussion), which not only involves radical social movements, but a successful left political party that holds state power—what Menser calls “an unpredictable mix.” He points out that through the participatory budget process, the Brazilian Worker’s Party both seized state power and diffused it. While Menser criticizes the left for refusing to “think democracy without the strong state,” he does not dismiss the state entirely. Rather, he suggests radical social movements relate to the state “in order to both deliver material

goods to those worst off and to simultaneously strengthen organizations in so-called civil society in ways that are recognized even by anti-statist groups." Echoing Chomsky, he asserts that "On this view, certain sectors of the state *are means* to the end of self-rule, rather than the ends to be seized as such."

If the state is assumed by anarchists and some contemporary Marxists to be relatively autonomous from the economic sphere, then it should be understood as one among several institutions that could be (and need to be) transformed. In addition, as Beverley (1997) argues, "by distributing political energies along a line of proliferation of difference [as anarchists do] rather than antagonism in an era of declining real income and downward social mobility and increasing proletarianization, the social movements, in effect, do the work of capitalism but ask the Left to pay the price for the tensions and contradictions that accumulate." Bookchin's assumption of post-scarcity must be taken to task in light of contemporary developments; as Graeber (2002) pointed out

> The 'short twentieth century' was…probably the most violent in human history, almost entirely preoccupied with either waging world wars or preparing for them. Hardly surprising, then, that anarchism quickly came to seem unrealistic, if the ultimate measure of political effectiveness became the ability to maintain huge mechanized killing machines.

The question thus becomes not one of how to spread anarchist "horizontal" methods and "contaminate" existing projects, but whether such methods of political organization are relevant to the historical moment and political geographic settings in which they are deployed. Anarchist practice provides a framework through which debates and discussions can be had and political counter-cultures be built, but whether they are adequate to the task of moving "from movement to society" is another question. While states, especially that of Chávez and other leftist leaders, indeed operate vis-à-vis

coercion, they provide much needed services and institutional coherence for masses of people and through the institution of participatory procedures, industrial and educational cooperatives, reduce their reliance on coercion and force as means of maintaining economic and political security.

Thus far, the World Social Forum has successfully straddled the divide between anti-statists and those who see the state as a potential site for social transformation: while the WSF bans state officials and parties from direct participation, it invites left-wing state officials to participate in other ways. The flexibility among anarchists, such as Chomsky and others, on the question of the state opens up new terrain in which the state as well as grassroots movements and organizations can be figured into larger questions regarding political organization, rather than operating as an either/or enterprise. What the WSF has not done, however, is attempt to test the mettle of anarchist political organization—which it is uniquely suited to do. Instead, it has adopted a rhetoric of openness and anti-authoritarianism ("noncoercive"), without adhering to the ethical and political principles proposed and practiced by its anarchist/autonomist participants that hold the potential for radical social change.

Chapter Five: Political Parties, Political Organization and the World Social Forum

The ambivalent role of political parties in the World Social Forum (WSF) is, and has been, a source of controversy: while parties are explicitly banned from participation, a significant number of social forum attendees are drawn from their ranks and at both the regional and global levels, they have served as key financial and organizational supporters of the process. Debates over the involvement of political parties have focused primarily on the problem of centralization, which preoccupied revolutionaries in the early part of the 20th century when communist and social democratic party intellectuals theorized the transition from capitalism to communism in a period of intense social change. The problem of how to organize "the masses" and foment radical social change remains a serious question on the left despite the non-revolutionary character of contemporary social movement activity in the 21st century.

The WSF's ban on political parties corresponds to its identity as composed "by groups and movements of civil society." The impetus for the ban can be traced to a variety of factors: (1) WSF participants and founders sought to create a unique social space for movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to build activist networks and bolster their political projects without becoming subsumed in electoral politics or electorally-based definitions of democratic practice; (2) participants and organizers wanted to ensure that the domestic politics of any one locale did not take over the Forum or supplant its global character; (3) the ban was a response to the failures of left political parties to make good on their promise to work toward an egalitarian, democratic society. Party politics are viewed by many WSF and Global Justice Movement activists as authoritarian, sectarian, vanguardist and ultimately, antagonistic to

the radical democratic politics for which they are fighting; (4) the ban was a response to new social movements' practice of building non-hierarchical "spaces" and networks as part of their prefigurative, democratic practice. The assumption underlying the nonpartisan character of the WSF is that the sphere of civil society, comprised of social movements, NGOs, church groups and other institutions, operates according to sets of interests and norms that are distinct from those of state (and market) actors.

Early on, political parties played a tangential role in the WSF, largely because they were explicitly excluded from formal participation. The Brazilian Worker's Party (PT) was a glaring exception because it was directly involved in the founding of the WSF in Porto Alegre. As detailed in chapter one, the PT differs from traditional left parties in that it understands itself as a "reflex" of civil society groups and social movements rather than the vanguard of an imminent revolution. It also differs from typical electoral parties in that it sees participatory structures and social movements as central to democracy and focuses on broad social issues – not only public works, but also racial and gender equality. While recent activity in Brazil suggests that the relationship between social movements and the PT administration may be more tenuous than prior to and initially following Lula's ascendancy to power, the Party's participatory structures remain institutionalized in various locales throughout Brazil, including Porto Alegre, even in districts where the PT no longer runs the local government.

Since Porto Alegre, political parties have played a more prominent role in the WSF. In 2004, for example, when the WSF moved to India, the ban was hotly debated since political parties played a major role in the organization of the event, especially members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), or CPI(M). In fact, for the 2004

Forum, the India Organizing Committee decided to lift the ban, citing the importance of political parties to the Indian context. WSF organizers were criticized for allowing the Charter of Principles to be altered. Their critics argued that the Charter operates as a kind of standard that brings coherence to the social forum process, which includes hundreds of local and regional social forums around the world. As such, they asserted, the Charter's mandates should remain standard, regardless of changes in venue and locale, as a protection to the WSF's open space. Nonetheless, the overwhelming response to the India WSF was positive due to the broadening of substantive issues to include fundamentalism, caste and women's concerns, the expansion of the WSF population to include *dalits* and other disenfranchised groups and the spread, or globalization, of the process beyond the western hemisphere, to another major region in the world.

In addition to their increasing influence over the WSF process, political parties have played a significant part in the development of local and regional social forums, especially the Asian and European Social Forums. As mentioned, the CPI(M) played a prominent role in the organization of the 2004 WSF in India, but also, in the regional Asian Social Forum that led up to it. Each year, the European Social Forum (ESF) has been organized and supported primarily by parties and local governments with varying degrees of success. As detailed in chapter two, the skepticism of political party involvement that marked the first ESF in Florence exploded into a real stand-off in 2005, when the ESF was organized and funded by the Socialist Worker's Party (SWP) and the Greater London Authority (the municipal government, headed by London's mayor, Ken Livingston). Local and national forums have also been funded and organized by parties: the Austrian Social Forum, for example, which attracted roughly 2,000 participants in

2002 and 2003, was funded by the Green Party and municipal governments. And while the national German Social Forum was initiated and funded by the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, the national foundation affiliated with the German Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the Berlin Social Forum remained independent of political party influence.

In terms of the political character of the parties associated with the Forum, like NGOs, they are a mixed bag: while the Socialist Worker's Party in Britain follows a hard, anti-capitalist line that privileges the industrial working class as a key political subject, others like Rifondazione Comunista and especially the Green Party in Italy advocate for participatory programs and more lateral relationships with social movements and autonomous groups (which have not always come to fruition). The WSF's popularity in South America and the emergence of several left-leaning governments in the region has pushed the question of political parties' involvement to the forefront. In 2006, for example, the Caracas WSF was dominated by slogans of the "bolivarian revolution," the political platform of the Chávez government and his party, the Fifth Republic Movement (MVR), and the election of Evo Morales to the presidency of Bolivia was widely and eagerly celebrated.

Despite their organizational and financial support, however, political parties' involvement remains a sore spot between WSF participants and organizers. As mentioned in chapter four, protesters numbering in the hundreds interrupted a panel at the 2005 ESF where Ken Livingston was slated to speak. It was not the first time anarchists protested party involvement: at the 2003 WSF they pied the leader of the PT, and each year, more and more groups criticize the organizers of the Forum for their collaboration with

political parties by creating “autonomous spaces” within and outside social forum territory.

Following the previous chapters on NGOs and anarchism, this chapter focuses specifically on left political parties in the WSF, most of which identify as socialist or communist, although members of the Green Party participate as well. It begins with a brief history of the classic debates over political organization within the Marxist tradition leading up to contemporary debates among left intellectuals and activists over centralism, hierarchical organization, vanguardism and class. The chapter then proceeds with a discussion of these debates within the context of the WSF. It looks at the controversies surrounding parties’ participation and concludes with an analysis of the WSF’s role in serving the need for a radical, global political organization.

Political Parties and Political Organization

Classical Marxist Theories of Political Organization

One of the most important debates in the history of left political organization is that between Vladimir Ilych Lenin (leader of the Bolshevik party and first premier of the Soviet Union) and Rosa Luxemburg (a revolutionary theorist of the Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and later, Germany) leading up to the proletarian revolution in Russia (and the failed revolution in Germany). While the role of the party in catalyzing the revolution was a general, theoretical question within (and outside) Marxist circles (the revolution was conceived, after all, as a world revolution), theories of political organization produced by Marxist revolutionaries were significantly influenced by the state of class relations within their particular locales. Lenin and Luxemburg’s

respective theories of political organization were rooted in the historical-geographic conditions in which they lived and organized, and thus, while both theorists were concerned with how to precipitate the revolution and the transition from capitalist to communist society, they differed, sometimes significantly, on how it was to be accomplished.

Because of the significance of their differences, the common denominators between Lenin and Luxemburg's work are often overlooked. Both theorists agreed that a proletarian dictatorship was a necessary moment in the development of a communist society, as opposed to social democrats like Karl Kautsky, Eduard Bernstein and other "revisionists," who rejected the idea of a violent revolution followed by a transitional, proletarian state. For both Lenin and Luxemburg, as well as German Communist Party founder (and its main theoretician) August Thalheimer, revisionism "tore the revolutionary centre from the Marxist conception of the proletarian revolution, by dispelling the proletarian dictatorship and *limiting* the revolutionary struggle to the democratic-parliamentary-trade union struggle" (Thalheimer, 1930). In the context of the struggle for German social democracy from 1870 to 1914, Kautsky and his ilk put forth the idea that a violent proletarian revolution should be replaced by reform-oriented parliamentary and trade union struggle, which Thalheimer describes as a "fragment" of Marxism (Ibid.). In addition to their common opposition to the revisionists, both Lenin and Luxemburg agreed on the need for a centralized political apparatus or party, and that the party should serve as an organ of the worker's movement. They also agreed that the party should precipitate and nurture the revolution by acting as a mechanism through which various sectors of the movement could be united in a common program. Both

theorists saw the party as a vanguard of the revolution insofar as it could grasp intellectually the whole of the movement's parts. Finally, they both agreed that the party should be constituted by intellectuals and revolutionary workers (Aronowitz, 2006).

The key differences between Lenin and Luxemburg concern the relationship between the party and the workers, and in particular, the question of how revolutionary consciousness would be achieved among the latter. As Mike Jones points out in the Introduction to Thalheimer's essay on Lenin and Luxemburg, Luxemburg's opposition to centralism was historically situated: in the throes of the German experience, she opposed the centralism of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and its tendency toward class collaboration. Thalheimer (1930) sets the context: Luxemburg's formulations arose from her experience "in a country where the working class did not constitute a small minority of the population as in Russia, but the majority. Where the anti-feudal agrarian revolution had already been completed. Where capitalism had attained its highest level of development. Where the working class had for decades been used to broad mass organizations…" In light of the accomplishments of the German workers, Luxemburg argued that the party should be structured in such a way as to be responsive to the "creative deeds of the revolutionary workers, to integrate into its arsenal their new conceptions, and to theorise such novel creations" (Thalheimer, 1930). For her, a centralized party would be too far removed from its constituency; it could not conceive of the movement, understand its progression nor gain from its productive, creative character from such a distance. Moreover, Luxemburg asserted against Lenin that the party should not be understood as a mechanism through which a revolutionary consciousness would be brought to the working class from outside its ranks. Rather, the workers themselves

would “become conscious” through the process of struggle, which in turn, would feedback or inform broader conceptions and theories of the movement formulated by the party. For Luxemburg, revolutionary theory and practice should operate in a reciprocal manner. In her estimation, the work of the party was to understand and theorize the existing consciousness of the working class, and not to school it on already formulated strategy: as Jones put it, “For Luxemburg, as for Marx, the emergence of the party does not result from the will of the intellectuals but from the conscious decision of the working class, out of a stage in its development, and out of the class struggle itself. Everything else is sect-building” (Ibid.).

In contrast to Luxemburg, Lenin argued for the development of a vanguard party to lead the working class to revolutionary consciousness. Luxemburg’s faith in the working class was matched by Lenin’s severe lack of it. While Luxemburg was concerned with processes of struggle, Lenin was focused on ends; for her, the working class was the catalyst for revolution, but for him, the catalyst was the party. According to Jones:

> Writing in the *Czerwony Sztanddar* in July 1912, following the split in the RSDLP [the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party], Luxemburg sees Lenin’s conception of organisation thus: ‘the Central Committee is everything whereas the real party is only its appendage, a mindless mass which moves mechanically on the orders of the leader like the army exercising on the parade ground and like a choir performing under the baton of the conductor’.

Before passing judgment on Lenin’s inescapable elitism, one must consider the historical context in which his ideas were formed. According to Trotsky (1940), Lenin’s leadership was absolutely essential to the success of the October Revolution as he “personified the revolutionary traditions of the working class.” Moreover, as Thalheimer

pointed out, Lenin operated in an environment that was simply not comparable to that of Luxemburg: while Luxemburg's workers were well organized and versed, Lenin's constituted a minority, inexperienced in the ways of mass organization. Perhaps more importantly, revolutionary activity among Lenin's workers was difficult to engender and gauge because much of it was forced underground within the repressive atmosphere of tsarist Russia, when unions and social democratic parties were illegal. According to Thalheimer (1930):

> The 'professional revolutionary' is a necessary product and tool of the leadership of the revolutionary organisation *that is illegal and is not yet a mass organisation.* In the *legal* Communist *mass* organisation there is no place for the 'professional revolutionary' *in this sense.* Here, as the movement grows, the 'professional revolutionary' too easily changes into the characterless, politically and materially corrupt careerist bureaucrat, for whom the revolutionary movement is a source of a living, of a career, of parliamentary and other posts.

Following Lenin and Luxemburg's debates at the turn and early part of the 21st century, Marxist intellectuals continued to theorize political organization in the period following the Bolshevik revolution. Aronowitz (2006a) explains that "The Russian revolution aside, by 1919-20 popular uprisings…especially in Italy and the United States were spent. The 1920s were years of retreat for the workers' movement…In Eastern and Southern Europe, fascist and proto-fascist military regimes took power." Within this context, the work of Georg Lukacs and Antonio Gramsci emerged as a rethinking of the role of the party in a non-revolutionary period. For example, Lukacs wrote *History and Class Consciousness* in 1923 during his tenure as a leader of the illegal Hungarian Communist Party (Ibid). In a chapter entitled "Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Political Organization," he theorizes political organization (the party) as the mediation between the subjective elements of a class formation and the objective historical

conditions in which it exists; the process through which a movement or class comprehends itself within larger historical processes. For Lukacs, the party was the means through which the theoretical underpinnings of a movement intermix with its practice, and through which social movements come to understand their power in relation to the general landscape of power relations they seek to infiltrate and contest:

> In the last analysis this question is the same as that of the dialectical relation between 'final goal' and 'movement,' i.e. between theory and practice…For a problem always makes its appearance first as an abstract possibility and only afterwards is it realized in concrete terms…Organisation is the mediation between theory and practice. And, as in every dialectical relationship, the terms of the relation only acquire concreteness and reality in and by virtue of this mediation (Lukacs, 1972: 296).

In his article "Is It Time for a Radical Party?" Stanley Aronowitz (2006b) situates Lukacs' concept of political organization within the broader context of his philosophical and political work. He points to Lukacs' renowned discussion of the reification of the consciousness of the Proletariat: reflecting on Marx's concept of the commodity fetish, Lukacs asserts that under capitalism, relations between people take on the appearance of relations among things. Aronowitz adds "at the core of the argument is his claim that under the domination of capital, the workers see themselves as fragmented objects rather than subjects of the historical process" (Ibid). For both Lukacs and Aronowitz, political organization means political party, but not the strictly electoral model that characterizes contemporary political parties. For them, the party is the mechanism through which the fragmentation of social movement struggles and generalized lack of realization of a movement's historical agency – its power - can be resolved. It is the potential link among disparate struggles, some of which may not presently comprehend themselves within the

broader context of global capitalism or even as social movements. For Aronowitz (2006b):

> Every struggle is necessarily partial: workers employed by a single capitalist or in a single industry fight for higher wages…or for better working conditions; tenants oppose landlord demands for more rent; communities fight developers seeking to gentrify their neighborhoods…and other minorities fight for civil rights and women for sexual and gender equality. The party is the mediation between these struggles and the fight against capital.

In *Left Turn: Forging a New Political Future*, Aronowitz (2006a) outlines three important aspects of Lukacs's methodology for a more contemporary application of his work on political organization: first, that the party is the mediation between and articulation of struggles operating on various fronts and the larger fight against capitalism; second, that the party "indicates the principles for a better life that are inherent in these struggles and why this aspiration is frustrated by the priorities of employer, landlord, developer, government officials, and (white) men;" and third, that the party should serve as the means through which the role of the state in various contexts should be interrogated, including questions regarding legal strategy versus direct action.

A contemporary of Lukacs, Antonio Gramsci also emphasized the role of the party in the development of a revolutionary praxis, following his leading role in the Italian Communist Party and subsequent incarceration by Mussolini's fascist regime, where he wrote the famous *Prison Notebooks*. Recalling chapter three, Gramsci asserted that although direct confrontation of state power (*a war of maneuver*) was untenable in non-totalitarian societies with highly developed civil societies, a *war of position* could be waged within the sphere of civil society to counter the bourgeois common sense. For Gramsci, civil society was constituted by a set of institutions that represented itself

autonomously from both the state and market (but in actually, overlapped): “Between the economic structure and the state with its legislation and coercion stands civil society.” (Gramsci, 1971). Here, civil society includes institutions that cross into the economic sphere, such as trade unions and employers’ associations, but mainly refers to sites of cultural production occupied by churches, parties, civic and professional associations (as opposed to corporations and firms whose functional capacity was to organize production).

Gramsci’s revolutionary project involved contests over popular culture, communication and belief systems as part of a larger objective to upset the bourgeois common sense and constitute a counter-hegemony (a war of position) against the ideological domination of the ruling class. Civil society was, after all, the primary dimension of social life in which consent and the legitimacy of the state was manufactured. To that end, Gramsci stressed the political role of intellectuals and the development of the subordinate classes’ own “organic” intellectuals—such as civil servants and teachers – who would develop intellectual and political consciousness organically, within a particular class formation and be trained to perform particular functions for it. Education plays a central role for Gramsci, who said, “Knowing is never a passive reflection of the given but an act of creating the mediations necessary to direct life” (Gramsci, 1971).

Gramsci theorized the role of the party in terms of its educative functions and role in building a new common sense. He moved beyond questions of strategy with regard to property relations and focused on the development of individual capacities and cultural forms (Aronowitz, 2006). In the modern world, class domination involved more than the

fulfillment of the interests of a particular class; it required intellectual and moral hegemony, which necessarily involved class compromises. The role of the party was to cultivate a counter-hegemony through the development of working class ideology, institutions and cultural forms.

Needless to say, no country or region in the world is currently challenging neoliberal hegemony with the threat of a proletarian revolution as in the days of Lenin and Luxemburg. With the benefit of hindsight, the ideas and practices of Marxist intellectuals (perhaps with the exception of Gramsci) regarding the constitution of a revolutionary political organization have lost traction among a large portion of today's activists, not only because of their incompatibility with the non-revolutionary period of the 21st century, but also owing in larger part to the disaster of Stalinism and the overt sectarianism and legislative ineffectiveness that plague contemporary communist and socialist parties. Nonetheless, the debates between Lenin and Luxemburg raise an important set of issues that remain largely unresolved among today's social movements and left political theorists. The problem of centralization (or centralism) and what Michels (1962) identified as the "iron law of oligarchy" still beleaguers activists, albeit with different stakes and circumstances, and controversies over the role of radical political parties and movement leadership in the WSF and GJM protests fall squarely into this problematic. In addition, the dearth of organic intellectuals and educational outlets in contemporary movements is reinforced by tensions between left theorists and grassroots activists: one side accuses the other of being elitist and "out of touch," while the other blindly charges them of "anti-intellectualism." The relationship between social movements and left-wing state officials (and their political parties), in various contexts,

remains suspended in a cloud of ambiguity, especially over questions of the viability, desirability and methodology of seizing state power.

Contemporary Theories of Political Organization: Hardt and Negri, Callinicos and Aronowitz

The issue of political organization has been taken up by contemporary theorists concerned with questions of centralization, class and the galvanization of a counter-hegemonic movement. Hardt and Negri's *Empire* (1999) and later, *Multitude* (2004), for example, are direct attempts to theorize the new historical circumstances and power arrangements (and relations of sovereignty) that characterize 21st century globalization and connect these to contemporary resistance movements, both actual and potential. Hardt and Negri's work is firmly rooted in the autonomist Marxist tradition discussed in the previous chapter, which opposed the Italian Communist Party in the 1970s and its tendency to centralization and rigid organizational hierarchy as well as its narrow definition of class struggle. In *Empire*, the authors identify political party and workerist trade union politics as potential impediments to social change rather than agents of it: "Against the common wisdom that the U.S. proletariat is weak because of its low party and union representation with respect to Europe and elsewhere, perhaps we should see it as strong for precisely those reasons" (Hardt and Negri, 1999:269).

In *Multitude*, Hardt and Negri further explicate their concept of political organization, which involves two different temporalities: (1) the multitude "from the standpoint of eternity" ("the ontological multitude"): "throughout history humans have refused authority and command, expressed the irreducible difference of singularity, and sought freedom in innumerable revolts and revolutions" (Hardt and Negri, 2004:221);

and (2) the historical multitude: "the not-yet multitude." For Hardt and Negri, "this second multitude is *political*, and it will require a political project to bring it into being on the basis of these emerging conditions" (Ibid.). Hardt and Negri also describe the multitude in terms of what it is not. It is not constituted by a "central point of command or intelligence nor is [it] the result of a spontaneous harmony among individuals;" rather, "the multitude is created in collaborative social interactions." It operates through communicative and relational networks that act in common, but not as a unity of forces; i.e., the formation does not diminish the singularity of any of its constituents, but acts in and simultaneously produces "the common" (Ibid., 2004:223). At the close of the text, the authors assert that although efforts to reform specific elements of social and political structures continue to develop,

> the extraordinary accumulations of grievances and reform proposals must at some point be transformed by a strong event, a radical insurrectional demand. We can already recognize that today time is split between a present that is already dead and a future that is already living – and the yawning abyss between them is becoming enormous. In time, an event will thrust us like an arrow into that living future (Ibid., 2004:358).

In these complementary texts, Hardt and Negri reconceptualize Marxism's assumptions regarding the nature of work, including the role of the industrial working class in enacting radical social change. In the context of new, flexible relations of work and the increasing prevalence of what they term "immaterial labor" – i.e., labor that produces value that is no longer necessarily directly tied to formal production processes and thus, no longer calculable in those terms--Hardt and Negri theorize an exploitation that cuts across traditional class boundaries:

> We consider all the workers in the whole of society to be exploited, men, women, people who work in services, people who work in nursing, people who work in

> linguistic relations, people who work in the cultural field, in all of the social relations, and in so far as they are exploited we consider them part of the multitude, inasmuch as they are singularities (Negri, 2004).

In an open-air debate at the 2003 European Social Forum in Paris (which I attended), Negri discussed the concept of the multitude in terms of his and Hardt's project to alter the problematic underlying traditional Marxist theories of political organization. For them, the question was not whether or how to create class coalitions or privilege the industrial working class as a specific class formation, but rather, "the problem is to refer to the unique root of value, the unique quality of labour. It is the dignity of labour that allows us to propose alternative paths for life and society" (Ibid.). Negri explains that labor – not only that which occurs in the factory or workplace – is the activity through which relationships are formed and the world is made. The multitude marks his and Hardt's effort to move beyond understandings of the working class as a mass concept and toward an appreciation for the particularities of labor and value production in the late 20th and early 21st century, namely the emergence of a different kind of working class—the "social worker"--that occupies the entire span of production and reproduction, corresponding to the expansive nature of (capitalism's) control over society. As such, the multitude is a rejection of the identification of the working class as a privileged agent of production and social transformation that reflects a different understanding of the expansive and ubiquitous nature of exploitation and control in contemporary societies.

Within the context of the World Social Forum (and outside), the concept of multitude has been discussed extensively. At nearly every meeting of the WSF and ESF, including the 2003 ESF mentioned above, a debate over political strategy and organization entitled "Working Class versus Multitude" has been staged between Hardt

or Negri and SWP leaders Chris Harmon or Alex Callinicos. The debate follows the distinctive split between orthodox and autonomist Marxists, but also reflects a generational divide between the former and Global Justice Movement activists who, almost unanimously, tend to support Hardt and Negri's characterization of their movement and its possibilities. Callinicos and the SWP, on the other hand, have been largely spurned by Global Justice Movement activists, who accuse them of attempting to co-opt the movement. Perhaps one of the greatest shows of their disaffection took place in Bristol in 2001, when activists from the Biotic Baking Brigade – who in the past targeted the likes of Bill Gates and Enron's Ken Skilling in previous "actions" – threw an egg in Callinicos' face and issued the following communiqué:

> Despite their best efforts, the SWP is not the friend of the anti-capitalist movement. We won't be seeing Mr. Callinicos and chums on the streets when the shit hits the fan. Instead, they'll retreat to a safe distance to their books and petitions, behind the banner of respectable leftism and help stifle any real change.
>
> The strength of the anti-capitalist movement is diversity and imagination; i.e., not thinking the same or doing the same dull, boring, routine demos. Decentralised action with no leaders is something the SWP cannot handle. They want to be in control. Over and over again we've seen what their real agenda is about. There's more to real change than slogans, paper selling and following the party line with trendy buzzwords (Biotic Baking Brigade, 2001).

In the 2003 debate between Negri and Callinicos at the ESF, Callinicos represented a view of class and social agency that reflected his Trotskyite background. Contemporary Trotskyists in general tend to privilege the working class as a primary agent of social change, but unlike some of his comrades, Callinicos acknowledged the need to develop coalitions with non-Marxist organizations and social movements (such as ATTAC), anti-war groups and trade unions, but he has oftentimes admonished more radical anti-authoritarian groups, anarchists and autonomists. Despite the latter's

contention that the SWP is attempting to "control" the movement, Callinicos has gone against the grain of Marxist hardliners by participating in coalitions with social forum and Global Justice Movement groups. In a 2002 paper entitled "Regroupment, Realignment, and the Revolutionary Left," for example, he makes an argument for traditional Marxists to join forces with the "anti-capitalist" movement:

> Some on the Marxist left tend to be dismissive of these coalitions because many of the activists in them do not describe themselves as socialists (this is even more true of the North American networks). This apparent contradictory state of affairs – activists fighting global capitalism but denying that socialism is the alternative – is a consequence of the fact that resistance to the system revived in an ideological climate in which not merely revolutionary Marxism but other socialist traditions had been marginalised. To exclude this layer of activists--numerically probably the largest grouping on an international scale--from the broader anti-capitalist left would be a disastrous sectarian error.

During the debate at the ESF, Callinicos appeared to have misinterpreted Negri's view on the contemporary working class and peasantry. He and fellow SWP members in the audience accused Negri of excluding the working class from their conception of the multitude; he then emphasized the need to develop a tight-knit, mass movement. For Callinicos, the failures of the Italian *tute bianche* ("white overalls") and the police repression at the anti-G8 protests in Genoa reflect Hardt and Negri's grave strategic miscalculations associated with their autonomist disposition:

> Genoa starkly exposed a truth of classical Marxism that the *Tute Bianche* had so vaingloriously dismissed--only the mass mobilisation of the organised working class can counter the concentrated power of the capitalist state. In romanticising their own confrontations with this state, the autonomists have evaded the real task of revolutionary politics--the political conquest of the majority of the working class (Callinicos, 2001).

In the context of the debate, Callinicos explained that the working class "creates the profits that global capital depends on" and as such, they have "the capacity to change,

through…collective action, the existing social relations." He bolstered his point by citing the uprising in Bolivia against its ultra-neoliberal president, Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada**,** which included different social classes, but was ultimately led and developed by the Bolivian tin miners.

Callinicos understands that many activists, especially those in the WSF and GJM, "have a more or less hostile attitude towards political parties," which in his estimation is based on a variety of factors, including "the influence of autonomism," the historical failures of social democratic, communist and green parties in the electoral sphere and the impotence of far left parties that operate outside of it. He explains the WSF's decision to ban political parties by pointing to these trends, yet reminds that the ban has been difficult to maintain given the centrality of party politics in various parts of the world. Callinicos refers to the Brazilian PT's pivotal role in the founding of the WSF and its participatory budget programs. He also points to the work of groups like ATTAC and the Italian autonomists, and argues that despite their claims against partisan politics, they too tend to "operate like parties, organizing on the basis of what amount to distinct political programmes" (Callinicos, 2002).

In addition to his critique of Hardt and Negri's failure to acknowledge the importance of working class struggle, Callinicos disparages their reliance on spontaneity (as opposed to formal organization) as a key moment in capitalism's defeat; Callinicos characterizes this element of *Multitude* as "a denial of politics:"

> Challenging the influence of reformism within the anti-capitalist movement cannot be left to the objective logic of 'network movements.' It requires the development of a coherent, organised revolutionary pole within the movement….An anti-capitalist party will be unable to negotiate the twists and turns of the class struggle – a class struggle from which reformism cannot be

> magically banished – without a clearly articulated revolutionary Marxist analysis that informs its tactical initiatives and practical activities (Ibid.).

Citing the efficient response of the SWP in developing an expansive anti-war initiative immediately following September 11th, Callinicos lauds the "practical advantages" of the "relative ideological homogeneity of a revolutionary Marxist party," which, he asserts, "gives it a greater capacity for rapid and decisive action than a looser, more programmatically ambiguous formations." Herein lies the most important distinction between Hardt and Negri and Callinicos: while the former argue for a kind of political formation that first and foremost ensures the autonomy and creative capacity of each of its constituents, Callinicos argues that autonomy may be a small price to pay for the ability of a movement to engage in resistance efforts efficiently and effectively. While Callinicos is not arguing for a completely authoritarian party apparatus--he emphasizes the importance of discussion, and openness to new historical developments – he does view communication and open discussion as means through which a party can act more effectively and not as ends in themselves. In short, he understands centralism and organization as "democratic imperatives" that facilitate concrete action and prevent the tendency for activist collectives to devolve into mere discussion groups. In sum, Callinicos and the SWP identify the working class as a privileged actor in anti-capitalist politics, yet in alliance with other kinds of social movements; they stress the importance of mass organization and efficiency over the maintenance of individual autonomy; and see the (radical socialist) party as a potential mediator between "the masses" and the burgeoning anti-capitalist resistance.

A third view on the question of political organization was put forth by Stanley Aronowitz in *Left Turn* (2006a). Aronowitz begins the book with a broad analysis of the contemporary political landscape of the United States; reminiscent of Lukacs, he disparages contemporary left social movement activists for their tendency to focus on single issues (their fragmentation), and in the case of anarchists, elevate protest to the status of a political program. This fragmentation, he asserts, is a function of contemporary activists' failure to relate their struggles to the totality – to larger, systemic forces; as such, he optimistically characterizes them as "not yet hegemonic." With a careful review of Gramsci's work, Aronowitz cites the importance of intellectual work within the movements and sees the party (and a radical left press) as the mechanism through which counter-hegemonic articulations can be made. He uses the term "leadership" to discuss the mediating function of the party and its constituents, but stresses its role as coordinator, rather than director. Following Gramsci, he asserts that contemporary movements must focus on developing their own ideas and practical alternatives (their own "common sense"), rather than remain merely reactive to the increasing authoritarianism of the ruling class and its practices, the effects of which he describes and analyzes in detail – from ecological disaster to unemployment, housing crises and so on. Like Gramsci, he understands education as key to the development of a counter-hegemonic project on the left, but unlike Callinicos and his ilk, does not privilege Marxism as a primary school of resistance. Rather, he proposes that the categories of class and social change – the transition from capitalist society – be rethought in the contemporary context. Like Hardt and Negri, Aronowitz's political disposition and writings reflect an understanding of knowledge production and dissemination as

fundamentally collective processes (among autonomous actors), but he asserts that the important task of movement building will require more organization than what is proposed in *Multitude*:

> It will take an organization, or at least an organizing committee, to undertake these tasks. We cannot wait until people are 'ready' to make a start. It may be argued they may never be ready without the provocation provided by a proposal to act differently. This is the chief meaning of the term 'leadership.' It does not override self-activity, but neither does it take the position that we are fated to remain in a state of suspended animation until a rhizomatic rebellion occurs.

Unlike most anarchists and other anti-statists, John Holloway in particular, Aronowitz does not easily dispense with the state and the "field of conventional politics." He asserts the importance of waging resistance efforts against and within existing institutions, but cautions that state power should not be overestimated, as is the case with social democratic and other limited projects of reform. He looks at the historical failures of socialist projects in which "transitional" states became totalitarian regimes, but also at more recent developments reflected in the work of Louis Althusser, who identified the coercive nature of the democratic state, deeply embedded in the variety of institutions that comprise and organize contemporary social life. Aronowitz concludes that the left "must defend society against the state" and "transform our collective understanding of democracy by expanding the scope of popular decision-making to the workplace, the neighborhood and every corner of social space." He advocates for a "shift from the discourse of rights to the practices of horizontal power, to contest the content as well as the form of knowledge, especially education, as well as propose new modes of social rule."

> The main question is how can a new series of social arrangements transform the state from an institution of hierarchical repression and control into a series of

> agencies of coordination of a series of self-managed cooperative enterprises that organize the production and distribution of material goods and the dissemination of knowledge and information. In which case the state is no longer the state but something else.

Against the orthodox Marxists, he asserts:

> Instead we could entertain the notion that horizontal forms of institutional life can be initiated within the framework of capitalism and capitalist state as *dual powers* where grassroots organizations at the local level and at the workplace undertake initiatives to challenge and sometimes replace established authorities…towards the prefiguration of a society we would like to create.

While the similarities with contemporary anarchist politics must be apparent at this point, especially the invocation of the concept of dual power[22]--Aronowitz veers not only from the tendency among anarchists like Holloway to abandon the state entirely, but also, from their rejection of centralization. Like many "new anarchists," however, Aronowitz understands centralization as a process of coordination: for the initiation and administration of a left press, the development of direct actions, and for interlinking local units engaged in struggles over everyday issues, like land use, health care, education and other parts of social life:

> It is not a question of having central organizations of power which dictate to the intermediate and lower levels of organization what their strategy should be. But it does require the accumulation of human, financial and physical resources of organization which, in complex societies, effective interventions are next to impossible to make.

Against Michels' (1962) argument that oligarchic tendencies are intrinsic to centralization, Aronowitz states that "centralism can connote either the administrative and coordinating apparatuses or bureaucratic centralism and institutions of command" –

[22] *Dual power*, popular in anarchist discourse, points to the strategy of directly challenging institutions of power while simultaneously building institutions that prefigure the social life toward which they aspire.

much like the distinction between command logics and networking logics discussed in the previous chapter. In closing, Aronowitz calls for a hybrid form of organization that takes from various traditions of revolutionary thought: Marxism's "deep respect for theoretical and strategic thinking" as well as utopian thought, which seriously considers the "not yet," and anarchist traditions that buck authority in all its forms and emphasize autonomy.

Political Party Organization and the World Social Forum

As mentioned previously, the WSF Charter of Principles explicitly bans political parties from participating in the Forum:

> The World Social Forum is a plural, diversified, non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party context that, in a decentralized fashion, interrelates organizations and movements engaged in concrete action at levels from the local to the international to build another world (WSF Charter of Principles, see appendix two for full text).

The Forum allows individual members of political parties to attend, but it does not permit them to participate as representatives of their party (Gupta, 2003). The rationale behind the ban was to secure the open character of the forum and facilitate a process for the development of alternatives in which all members of the Forum could enter and participate as equals, without submission to any one political tendency, organization or leadership. The objective was to construct a new social formation not governed from above, one that could prefigure the radically democratic "other world" the Forum's constituents were seeking to create.

Despite the overwhelming popularity of the open space paradigm, the ban on political parties remains an extremely contentious issue. One camp – mostly autonomists

and anti-authoritarians who seek to defend the open space--contends that organizers of the WSF have not adequately enforced the ban and in some cases, have openly defied it to serve their political interests. The other camp, comprised of political party advocates and associates, sees parties as potential collaborators in the construction of the "other world," rather than threats. For them, the trend toward autonomist activism and "horizontalism" does not negate the fact that parties still play a major role in the development of left politics in many parts of the world.

Although Forum organizers deny adherence to any one political tendency, the choice to ban political parties does reflect a particular strategic orientation, away from the project of seizing state power. Rahman argues that "a political party by definition exists for the purpose of gaining state power. The exclusion therefore of political parties is simultaneously the exclusion of the quest for state power, including the quest of the oppressed for state power" (Rahman, 2006). For Rahman, the exclusion of political parties "is an extremely serious issue;" he disparages the WSF for putting forth the idea that "Another World is Possible," while assuming that the "other world" would not include parties or that it could be built without them. Not surprisingly, SWP leader Chris Nineham (2002) agrees. Reflecting on the successes of the first ESF in Florence, the inclusive nature of its organization and way in which the anti-war message of the Forum was brought to the larger Italian public (culminating in a march of one million people), he commented

> In this situation it is an illusion to believe we can build a non-ideological movement. We need to be radical, and we need to work to stay unite. But to do that we need to have a movement that openly and seriously discusses its own political strategy. That is one reason why it is essential to let the radical parties take their place inside the forum movement.

Just as 20th century theories of "the party" were geographically and historically situated, the role and significance of political parties in the WSF varies according to geographic locale. The WSF, for example, was housed in Porto Alegre (PoA) in 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2005, largely because the PT supported the event, but also because of the symbolic value of the Party's participatory programs and PoA's location in the Global South. Despite the PT's support of the event, however, participants criticized organizers for failing to secure the Forum's open space against the influence of local politics. They point to the 2003 debacle--when the Forum suffered from a loss of funding because the PT lost the state elections--as a case and point. In the eyes of many participants, the WSF should not have been so dependent on the support of the local electoral apparatus.

While organizers contend that the PT has never played a direct role in coordinating the event or participated as delegates, participants tell a different story: "In 2003, the opening [ceremony] was akin to a victory celebration for the then recently installed Lula government in Brazil. Posters of Lula and flags of the PT…dominated the march in 2003 and vied for attention with the sea of Che Guevara posters and green Palestinian scarves" (Gupta, 2003). WSF India organizer Amit Sen Gupta (2005) describes how skepticism over the Lula administration was more apparent in 2005; nonetheless, the "PT was there in force with t-shirts that had '100% Lula' stamped on them, declaiming their support for the government. The PCDoB (the Brazilian Communist Party) had a huge contingent that marched behind a massive truck from where slogans were raised that underlined their critical support for the Lula government."

Gupta's charge is echoed by various commentaries and annual post-WSF analyses, especially following the 2002 and 2003 WSFs. After the 2002 WSF in Porto

Alegre, for example, Michael Hardt (2002) commented in the *New Left Review* that the WSF constituency was divided into two major factions: the first, included political parties and groups like ATTAC that operated as "the voice of national sovereignty;" the second was comprised of grassroots activists seeking non-national alternatives to capitalist globalization:

> either one can work to reinforce the sovereignty of nation-states as a defensive barrier against the control of foreign and global capital, or one can strive towards a non-national alternative to the present for of globalization that is equally global. The first poses neoliberalism as the primary analytical category, viewing the enemy as unrestricted global capitalist activity with weak state controls; the second is more clearly posed against capital itself, whether state-regulated or not.

Hardt contends that the first of these positions – the anti-globalization position – was more prominent at the 2002 WSF in part because many of its constituent groups were key organizers of the event. Due to the bureaucratic nature of their organizations, these groups tend to have sophisticated financial, human and political resources, which in turn allows them to exert considerable influence over the WSF organization. Hardt further explains that the fundamental difference between these two camps is not political-geographic – i.e., it does not necessarily follow the contours of the North-South divide. Rather, "the conflict corresponds to two different forms of political organization:" on the one side, are political parties and "centralized campaigns" and on the other, "new movements organized in horizontal networks." As we saw in chapter four, in the context of the WSF, the network model of political organization is counterpoised to the "vertical" or hierarchical form of organization utilized by political parties and NGOs. NGOs also make use of networks, but internally they are often structured hierarchically. In addition, NGOs may tend to be involved in reducing the social welfare functions of the state and may challenge states' sovereignty, especially in developing countries with poor human

rights records, but they do not necessarily operate against the enlargement of state power. In fact, the mode of organization by which they operate and their association with market actors and ideology sharply differentiate them from anarchist and political party activists in the WSF. Hardt asserts that "Like the Forum itself, the multitude in the movements is always overflowing, excessive and unknowable." As such, while the anti-globalization activists in the WSF may have been the most visible, in Hardt's assessment, they "may have lost the struggle…eventually they too will be swept up in the multitude, which is capable of transforming all fixed and centralized elements into so many more nodes in its indefinitely expansive network."

Hardt's view is echoed by America Vera-Zavala, a co-founder of ATTAC (Sweden) and member of the youth organization of the Swedish Left Party. Vera-Zavala explains that as a member of both a social movement (i.e., for her, ATTAC is a social movement) and political party, she has become a strong advocate for cooperation and solidarity-building between them. In a reflection on the role of political parties at the WSF 2003, she describes a highly strained relationship between parties and social movements, which she blames in part on the presence of state officials like Lula and Chávez, who occupied center-stage at the 2003 Forum: "I have seen this forum transformed into a war zone between a dogmatic old left that thinks that social movements cannot transform society; that can only be done by political parties" and radical social movements, focused on augmenting and deepening the work of the Global Justice Movement and fighting for a more egalitarian society. Vera-Zavala argues that the conflict at WSF 2003 was less about hierarchical versus nonhierarchical organization (although structure certainly played a part) nor the dichotomy of Party versus Social

Movement; rather, it was “about ideological differences like avantguardism [versus] truly believing in giving power to the people” (Vera-Zavala, 2003).

Echoing Hardt, Vera-Zavala states that the difference between the two camps corresponds to competing views of national sovereignty versus popular sovereignty as well as the cultural divide over “manners for how the struggle outside and within the movement will be conducted,” including how the social forums relate to the media:

> The presence of political parties disguised under movement names, party leaders, ministers, big leaders of movements acting as if they were party leaders and presidents in pluralis was massive compared to other years. They all, as added together they created a different political context, and took over the space of the World Social Forum. They also stole the possibility to get out messages from the social movements to the media” (Ibid).

Vera-Zavala points out that the mainstream media focused on Lula and Chávez to the detriment of publicizing the critical issues being raised by the WSF’s constituents. Moreover, she recounts how Chávez used the WSF to mitigate political problems he was facing at the time in Venezuela: at the 2003 Forum, she reports, ATTAC and the Chávez administration organized a hearing on the Venezuelan media. With several big name intellectuals and activists in attendance, Chávez criticized the Venezuelan media, described them as “criminal” and threatened to shut down anti-Chávez TV stations. In the essay, Vera-Zavala expresses her concern that ATTAC and the high-profile intellectuals at the meeting were being used to legitimize Chávez’s political maneuvering, including his threat to foreclose dissent by the press. She recommends that the autonomists in ATTAC and the larger WSF wage a war against this kind of takeover.

Following Vera-Zavala, Naomi Klein criticized the WSF for allowing Lula and Chávez to attend, also pointing out how their presence supplanted the work of less high-

profile social movement activists in the media (Klein, 2003). Klein focuses her critique on Lula in particular. Citing the first WSF in which Lula was celebrated for the work of his party and its participatory programs--"An innovator whose party was at the forefront of developing tools for impoverished people to meet their own needs"--she explains that participatory democracy and the empowerment of disenfranchised people were not a thematic focus of his presidential campaign:

> He told a retold a personal story about how voters could trust him because he came from poverty and knew their pain. But standing up to the demands of the financial community isn't about whether an individual is trustworthy, it's about the fact that, as Lula is already proving, no person or party is strong enough on its own (Ibid.).

Klein suggests that the Forum be reappropriated by the grassroots and that activists in the GJM and WSF be wary of "political strongmen" like Chávez and Lula, who should not be permitted to occupy such a central role in the Forum.

Mark Engler (2005), a NYC-based commentator for Global Policy in Focus, also criticized the involvement of political parties and statesmen in the WSF, yet he identified the conflict as a struggle over how to relate to the state, rather than simply dismissing the presence of "political strongmen" altogether:

> the globalization movement…has always had an awkward relationship to the state. On the one hand, some arguing against the power of unaccountable financial institutions have uncritically upheld the principle of state sovereignty, contending that elected governments should be able to decide for themselves what economic policies to pursue. This stance proves problematic for those campaigning in countries ruled by right-wing elites. On the other hand, the anarchist suspicion of any engagement with the state precludes some real alternatives to neoliberalism – accomplishments like Venezuela's redistributionist social programs and Argentina's decision to defy the IMF and freeze most of its debt payments.

As demonstrated in chapter four, autonomist and anarchist political organization not only eschews the state, electoral politics and juridical solutions to social problems ("rights"), it

also rejects the imposition of national boundaries and other "authoritarian" spatial arrangements that deny the autonomy of local communities and fix social relations around artificial boundaries. Anarchists understand such boundaries to be "artificial" in the sense that they do not conform to the more organic ways in which communities emerge and reproduce--especially in the context of globalization in which freer flow of goods and services are matched by highly regulated and policed immigration systems. Instead, anarchists argue for a different geographic configuration: a social ecology comprised of self-organized and –managed communities and local units—that allow for free flows of people around the globe--in lieu of the boundaries imposed by states. They tend to propose affinity and consensus procedure (and not law and authority) as organizing principles for ordering social life, which is simply not viable at the scale of the modern nation-state nor within mass-based party apparatuses. Anarchists' call for a new social geographic order in excess of national boundaries may be part of the reason why they have embraced Hardt and Negri's *Empire* paradigm so enthusiastically. In *Empire*, the authors identify a potential for radical democracy with the increasing porosity of nation-states (a radical shift in how sovereignty is understood and constituted) and laud the new social movements' departure away from mass parties and nationalist liberation mythologies and toward a discussion (and practice) of global democracy of which the WSF is a part.

According to Immanuel Wallerstein (2004), anarchist and autonomist's disdain for parties, and other forms of conventional and institutional (hierarchical) organization, dates back to "the world revolution of 1968" when New Left activists addressed the failures of Old Left political organization:

> You promised social transformation when you came to power; you have not delivered on your promise. The world, they said, remains deeply inegalitarian…our political systems are not really democratic; there exists a privileged caste…within our regimes. Far less has changed than you said would change.

Wallerstein further explains the New Left's critique of the Old along three major axes: (1) the New Left sought to prioritize issues that the Old Left promised would be dealt with after they ascended to power, such as the rights of women, young people and oppressed nationalities; (2) they were against the centralism of the Old Left and the subsumption of identity issues under a single party line; and (3) some were against the Old Left's strategy to assume state power, although the anti-statist standpoint was by no means unanimously accepted.

The conflict between horizontals and verticals detailed in the ESF and WSF reflects how the New Left's critique of hierarchical political organization – and parties in particular – has carried over into the contemporary context. As laid out in chapter four, the argument from the "horizontal" camp – similar to Luxemburg's critique of Lenin – is that "norms must not be imposed by a blind mechanism (or by an alien planning agency), but emerge out of processes of horizontal cooperation and democratic decision-making by the producers themselves" (De Angelis, 2004). Similar to the New Left criticisms outlined by Wallerstein, De Angelis (2004) criticizes traditional political parties within the Forum for the kinds of discourses they promote, but also inhibit; for De Angelis, the party "discourse is entirely directed towards the future of 'after revolution' in which these complexities will be dealt with – or so we are told – while in the present it is eager to subordinate this or that struggle, this or that relational demand for openness, democracy,

and participation, to the goals it sets for itself." De Angelis cites Sen's analysis of the WSF process in India, as involving a kind of sectarianism

> that does not reveal itself in traditional ways (actively keeping people out). There is another type of sectarianism, which we might call discursive sectarianism, namely 'the insistence on the superiority of a *particular* discourse – more commonly, the use of language, the choice of terms, the approach to analysis – also plays it role in alienating others, and even those who may feel sympathetic to left opinion and positions but do not feel themselves as *being* of the left and do not want to have to fit within orthodox Left discourse.'

De Angelis not only criticizes political parties' notion of political organization, but he problematizes their vanguardism vis-à-vis the exclusive nature of their discursive practices. He charges that the discourse of political parties is not sufficiently "porous;" i.e., that they are closed to revision and contestation, both from outside as well as inside their ranks. Following Wallerstein, he characterizes the conflict outlined by Hardt, Vera-Zavala and Klein as one between movement cultures and the underlying ethics according to which each camp operates. These conflicts manifest not only in theoretical and strategic disagreement, but also traverse the terrain of identity, interpersonal relations and lifestyle.

Autonomists, anarchists and other anti-authoritarians seek to identify and produce many alternatives, but according to De Angelis, NGOs and political parties adhere to the dictum that there are no alternatives (TINA): "the orthodox left sectarian discourse is also a TINA discourse in the sense that there is no alternative to the mode of articulation it represents and manifests, and there is no alternative to the way it prefigures social transformation." He characterizes traditional political parties as "managerial, event-focused [as opposed to process-oriented] culturally closed to democratic participation, [and] to experimentation of practices of grassroots democracy that are

necessary in the process of constitution of a new world in the here and now." Following his critique of the verticalism of the orthodox left, De Angelis proceeds through the essay with a Marxian analysis of the capitalism's effects on social relations (vis-à-vis the commodity fetish) that is quite similar to Lukacs' discussion of the reification of the consciousness of the proletariat. In closing, he returns to his initial critique, suggesting "that we coordinate social action in a different way, one in which the norms of interaction among cooperators in social production are defined directly by them, and not by a blind and abstract mechanism that pits livelihoods against each other."

The mistrust of political parties in the WSF is further demonstrated by Peter Waterman's assertion that parties have used the Forum as a means of publicity and procuring votes (Callinicos has also made this point), but "have often hidden their political lights behind NGO bushels" (Waterman, 2003a). Citing the CPI(M) and other political parties at the Asian Social Forum in India, Waterman bolsters Hardt's point about how parties in the Forum tend toward an anti-globalist stance by imposing a nationalist discourse on panels and in the press. Against the contention that political parties have used the Forum for their own political ends, some participants argue that without the PT, the WSF would not have been possible: "The electoral victory [of the PT] enabled them to undertake a wider programme of reforms…Bear in mind that we are talking of reforms, as that is what they are, but these reforms created a cultural climate that made possible the celebration of the World Social Forum…" (Fiejoo and Orono, 2002). This assertion was echoed by WSF activist, Jason Adams (2002): "While it has been demonstrated that the PT and the inner circle of the WSF need to cede a great deal

of space to the grassroots, the grassroots need also to recognize that it is largely due to the fact that the party is in power that the WSF has been able to happen at all."

Peter Evans (2005) has argued that just because the PT is hierarchically organized and mass-based, does not mean that it is attempting to co-opt or control the WSF: "PT members are…clearly in a majority among Brazilian NGOs, social movements, and unions at the Forum. But this does not mean that the PT 'controls' any of them, just as it does not mean that the PT sought to control the WSF in being its host." Both Evans and Gianpaolo Baiocchi (2004) suggest that from the perspective of the PT, the WSF may simply be an extension of the Party's efforts to advance participatory programs, widen the scope of its initially workerist agenda and essentially change the way typical left parties operate both in Brazil and beyond. Moreover, they point out that the PT's participatory programs have served as an important inspiration for the WSF and its participants—including anarchists--despite the failures of the Lula administration to challenge the international financial elite and remain responsive to its popular and social movement base.

Addressing Michael Hardt's analysis of the multitude versus political parties and anti-globalization organizations like ATTAC, Evans (2005) defends the PT's involvement in the WSF:

> the relationship between party and social movement here is not predicated on opposing logics. Social movements and the multitude would not have a space to appropriate in the WSF were it not for the institutional resources and projects of the party, and most in the multitude also realize that until a very different framework for globalization emerges, social justice struggles will have to go through an institutional moment when the regulatory power of states will be called upon, and when 'traditional' actors like parties will need to act. Re-imagining the way that this relationship can look like, even while considering that it is full of contradictions is an urgent task in the current moment for those involved in demanding social justice.

Baiocchi (2004) echoes Evans' point: given the participatory nature of the PT's activities and the way it has related to social movements and civil society groups over the years (see chapter one), he contends that "the distance between the party and the multitude may be a lot smaller than appears at first sight."

The 2006 "Polycentric" WSF in Caracas, Venezuela

Not surprisingly, the controversy over the involvement of political parties and state officials in the WSF intensified during the 2006 Polycentric WSF, which many suspect was located in Caracas as a show of support for the newly reinstated president, Hugo Chávez. According to Lula's former chief of staff Jose Direu, "the forum was held [in Caracas] because of the process of change that Venezuela is undergoing, which is 'based on real participation by the people'" (Márquez, 2006b). As mentioned in previous chapters, the polycentric forum in Caracas was dominated by talk of Chávez and the Bolivarian Revolution. Large assemblies took on an almost nationalist character (more often, pan-Latin American) and U.S. imperialism was a major theme across panels. In an interview with the BBC, Brazilian, Argentine and Chilean participants commented that

> the Forum 'had all the hallmarks of Mr. Chávez stamped on it,' with a third of the seminars and workshops taken up with talk of revolutionary change in Venezuela. 'There was too much Venezuelan-style socialism and too much Chávez' said…a women's right's activist campaigner from Uruguay, 'The International Council from the Social Forum has to sit down now and ask itself whether they should have let Chávez hijack this Forum' (Morsbach, 2006).

Prior to the 2006 WSF, organizers met with Chávez to discuss the nonpartisan character of the event. Chávez agreed to respect the Charter and during the Forum made a public address outside the official venue. Nonetheless, as Edgardo Lander of the Latin American

Social Sciences Council (and co-organizer of the WSF) admitted, "when the thematic axes of the 6th Forum were decided, most of the activities involved political debate." Moreover, even though Chávez spoke outside the Forum, he did not hesitate to comment on its political future. During his speech, he encouraged participants and organizers to make the Forum more than just a "folkloric" or "tourist" gathering. Suggesting that the WSF adopt a more political orientation, he asserted: "In the face of the challenges from the empire, there is no time to waste" (Márquez, 2006c).

Despite his critics in the Forum, some WSF participants expressed their support of the Venezuelan president, especially his anti-Bush and anti-WTO/IMF policies and rhetoric, in contrast to Lula's capitulations to the IMF and other international financial institutions. Chávez supporters point to the ways in which the Venezuelan government has been responsive to the demands of social movements: "a process of transformation…has incorporated some of the policies of mass movements…agrarian reform, redistributing government and large private estates…mass literacy and adult education programmes…and [the setting up of] basic health centres across the country…Outlets for subsidised food have also been put in place nationwide" (Márquez, 2006a). In its own rhetoric, the Chávez administration understands itself as an ongoing mass social movement engaged in struggles for (1) Venezuelan economic and political sovereignty; (2) participatory democracy through popular votes and referenda (3) economic self-sufficiency (food, consumer items, energy) and (4) equitable distribution of the country's resources.

Chávez's conception of what constitutes a social movement, however, appears to differ significantly from that of other groups in the WSF, even those with a similar

relationship to the state. A panel organized by a group of Bolivians at the 2006 WSF bore this out: during the session, a Venezuelan panelist made reference to the Movimento al Soclialismo (MAS) ("Movement towards Socialism") as "Evo's Party," but Bolivian participants made it clear that the MAS is a social movement, and not a political party. Unlike Venezuelan political culture, in which the Moviemento Quinta Republica (MVR) ("Fifth Republic Movement") is known as "Chávez's party," the Bolivians felt a strong sense of collective ownership of the MAS (Fernandes, 2006). At another panel, this time organized by members of the Zapatistas, Venezuelan participants suggested that the Zapatistas wage a political campaign to seize state power in Mexico, as in the case of Venezuela. The Zapatista group responded that given the diversity of indigenous cultures within the Mexican context, they decided that the best strategy would be to support the development of autonomous communities and an expansive power base from below. Nonetheless, the Zapatistas expressed interest in the Venezuelan experience of building broad-based alliances.

Editor of *Left Hook*, Junaid Alam, points to the Chávez administration's popular base of support, which, he asserts, debunks some anarchists' (and Marxists') idea of the state as an inherent executor of the interests of the ruling class: "Chávez did not 'reconcile' himself to capitalism, he used state power to help break capitalist political control…he was not crushed by 'the global movement of capital,' but snatched it by the throat, prevented oil privatization, and pumped $3.7 billion dollars derived from state-controlled oil revenues into social investment in just one year" (Alam, 2005) Alam interprets the relationship between the Venezuelan government and the country's social movements as one that has persisted

> through a constant process of support, feedback, initiative, pressure, frustration, criticism, and, most importantly, mass demonstrations, it has been the masses who have propelled the revolution forward, strengthening and consolidating it every step of the way…Through all this, the government, which certainly did not start out by declaring itself socialist, was forced to either start meeting the expectations of the people or risk findings its basis of support disappear (Ibid).

For Alam (and similar to Menser), the Venezuelan experience demonstrates the merits of contesting the state, which for him, can serve as "a vehicle for change" because "it constitutes an active, positive initiative in which concrete, visible gains can be made, defended and referenced." The Chávez administration model of political organization understands the state as the ultimate guarantor of rights and freedoms in communication with social movements and progressive organizations, yet while Chávez has emphasized international alliances and opposition to transnational financial institutions, there is an underlying anti-globalist (nationalist) character to the current Venezuelan Left.

The European Social Forum

Perhaps the most heated contests over the involvement of political parties have taken place at the European Social Forum, a context in which grassroots social movements and left political parties are increasingly marginalized, yet less so than their counterparts in the United States. Since the Forum's inception, the organization of the ESF has been severely criticized, not only because of the widespread participation of state officials and political parties, but because these political actors have dominated the planning and organization of the Forum in blatant disregard for the WSF Charter of Principles. For example, while the 2003 ESF in Paris involved French political parties to a limited degree, the organization of the 2005 ESF in London was, as discussed in previous chapters, dominated by political parties and governmental bodies. Given the intensity of

the conflicts between the organizers and the activists that constructed the various autonomous spaces within the Forum, many wondered if the ESF would survive the London experience.

These trends date back to the first ESF in Florence in 2002, which was almost entirely sponsored by political parties and government officials. Paul Treaner (2002), a Dutch anti-authoritarian, reports that the ESF initiative was begun by ATTAC, which has close ties to the French Parti Socialiste, a social democratic party that is "socialist" only in name. He characterizes ATTAC's programs as "neo-corporatist:" the group advocates for a Europe controlled by businesses, local governments and NGOs, many of which are potential beneficiaries of the Tobin Tax. According to Treanor (2002):

> …the organizers want to establish themselves as 'the leaders of the European social movements.' They want to become a negotiating partner of the European Union/European Commission. They probably hope for some official recognition of this status – and perhaps subsidy from the European Commission.

He reports that the idea to hold the 2002 ESF in Florence was initiated Claudio Martini, President of the Regional Administration and member of the Democratic Left Party, who attended the first WSF in Porto Alegre. Intimately tied to the local political apparatus in the region, the ESF was funded in part by the Region of Toscane, which also provided translation, housing for 5,000 people and a fairly elaborate venue. Treanor asserts that "the choice of Florence aligned the European Social Forum with the 'Democratic Left' party, and made it part of Italian domestic politics" (Ibid.). He adds that in addition to the Democratic Left, the Communist Refoundation Party (Partido della Rifondazione Comunista) was also involved in the organization and financing of the Forum; both parties are descendents of the old Italian Communist Party. In addition to the influence of local political parties, the event became a controversial political issue on the national

level. Berlusconi publicly denounced it, and drawing from the experience of the anti-G8 protests in Genoa, waged (and ultimately lost) a media crusade that depicted the ESF as a potentially violent event.

In disregard for the Forum's ban on political parties, Treanor reports that Vittorio Agnoletto, a representative of the Italian Social Forums, assured Martini that "the meeting should include a dialogue with 'the institutions' and insisted on a special role for the social organizations in the Region – many traditionally associated with his own party." Treanor goes on to describe how the organization of the ESF was conducted by a small group, half of which were members or associates of Italian political parties. He reports that despite the leftist rhetoric of these organizations and their members, "they believe in a liberal market democracy, a pluralistic parliamentary form of government, the rule of law, and property rights. They reject egalitarianism and the forced redistribution of wealth. They reject the use of force against democratically elected governments, no matter how racist or unjust they are." Linden Farrer (2002) adds that "In addition to the leadership's ability to define the ESF's agenda, their choice of speakers led too much of the initiative and organization coming from NGOs who rely on lobbying politicians and parliament to achieve change – quite the opposite of putting grassroots resistance to action." Farrer reveals how the work of the Italian political parties involved in the organization of the ESF was complemented by that of other European parties, including the SWP in Britain under the front group "Globalise Resistance" (some activists call them "Monopolise Resistance"). He asserts: "Although these organizations are involved either as a source of funding or in an attempt to grasp hegemonic control over the disparate anti-capitalist movement, the fact that these hierarchical and

authoritarian organizations are involved at all should ring alarm bells for activists" (Ibid.).

Following Hardt's criticism of political parties and bureaucratic organizations in the WSF, Farrer analyzes their effects on the substantive content of the ESF; i.e., the issues and topics around which panel discussions were formed. He points out, for example, that at the 2002 ESF, questions regarding the legitimacy of the War on Terror, the viability of the nation-state as an organizing principle for democracy and the value of parliamentary forms of democracy were not part of the official program. He suggests that posing a challenge to the legitimacy of parliamentary democracy (or at least talking about it) is an essential part of the Forum's open space project, which bans political parties precisely because of the desire among its constituents to move beyond electoral politics. Farrer reveals how a substantial number of ESF organizers and speakers "have relationships with government organizations, such as the Norwegian Foreign Ministry and Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or are involved in the 'old guard' of political parties." He charges that the 2002 ESF operated more like a political rally instead of a place in which radical politics could be discussed.

Hilary Wainright (2004a) has written extensively on the ESF, with a markedly more flexible view of the role of political parties in its context. For Wainright, rather than see parties as threats to the ESF (and WSF), she asserts that activists from the social democratic and Leninist traditions should be lauded for their involvement because they are the "most challenged by the theory and practice of social forums." For Wainright, the social forum process is "about building up the power of social and trade union movements," rather than being against political parties in general. The social forums are a

space in which a diverse array of organizations can network, develop projects and discuss issues related to the resistance against neoliberalism, without having to conform to a party line, engage in electoral politics or be part of a centralized organization:

> In this way social forms put into practice the assertion of the women's and ethnic minorities' movements of the 1970s, that movements of the oppressed and marginalised need autonomy to develop and identify their own needs, identities and sources of power. Political parties do not have a monopoly of the power to achieve change; indeed, generally they have flunked the task of reform (2004a).

Wainright points to the experience of political parties, such as the Italian Rifondazione Comunista and Brazilian PT, which in her opinion have attempted "to open themselves up to the influence and activity of the social movements" rather than try to co-opt them (a view that is not shared by some radical social movements). As mentioned, even the more hard-line SWP in Britain distanced itself from other orthodox Marxist groups, like the International Socialist Organization (ISO), when they did not support the Global Justice Movement (Callinicos, 2001). Wainright asserts that the social forums do not render the work of political parties superfluous; rather, they constitute "a distinctive contribution to the wider process of struggle carried out by a plurality of actors: the role of linking extra-parliamentary campaigning with the very different timetables and tactical necessities of electoral politics." She looks at political parties as potential allies or "amplifiers" of movements, rather than "mufflers" of them, but asserts that this function requires that parties become more open to the practices and contributions of non-party actors. She cites a commentary by Fausto Bertinotti of Rifondazione Comunista:

> Every way of reforming party policy has to start from an experimental approach…Practice has to come before theory. The collective intellect is the movement, and the party is helping to contribute to that, but it cannot in itself be that collective intellect' (Wainright, 2004a).

Wainright suggests that the project of making political parties more receptive to the influence of social movements and the social forum process requires a change in how they understand the value of the knowledge being produced by grassroots actors. Among Old Left parties and organizations, "rank and file" activists were largely perceived as passive receptacles of knowledge rather than producers of it. Moreover, Wainright asserts, parties need to adopt a "belief in diverse sources of power." Similar to Aronowitz's conception of a new, radical political party, she identifies the WSF as a potential mediator between social movements and parties, but also between particular, issue-based struggles and more totalized structures and historical tendencies:

> In this way, the social forums, whether internationally or locally, are experimenting…with new ways of integrating the particular – i.e., demands and campaigns on 'single' issues – with the universal – the wider effort to being about a radical transformation of the whole of society. Historically, this was exclusively the function of the political party (Wainright, 2004a).

According to Wainright, "The presumption has been that the state apparatus of capitalist society provides an adequate instrument of social – even socialist--change when captured by a party or parties of the left. This in turn has meant that party organization assumed that party members and supporters, including mass organizations such as the trade unions, were *means to get into office, sources of funds and votes."* Like Luxemburg, she says this view not only alienates grassroots social movements, but ignores them as a creative force and the base from which parties tend to originate.

In an essay written eight months later, Wainright revisits the conflict between political parties and autonomous groups; her concern is not to refute the autonomist critique of party hierarchies, but to understand "why left parties have almost invariably given in to these pressures, and often repress those who try to stand up for the party's

original radical commitments" (Wainright, 2004b). She looks to the "political mentalities" of parties for answers and identifies the desire among party activists to develop an organization capable of providing security—one that functions as a kind of "family" and mass support base from which to engage in collective action. This idea is echoed by Indian author-activist Nikhil Anand (2003):

> Coming out of strong Marxist traditions, a labour organizer from India saw new social movements as having neither 'strong political ideology' nor being able to 'adequately problematise the issues.' In an attempt to use strong crisis narratives to erase difference and distinction, he said 'it is all well to talk of autonomy but we must come together politically for the enemy is strong.'

In the essay, Anand points to a similar example from members of the Brazilian MST (who play a major role on the organizing committee of the WSF), who expressed the need for "centrality, discipline and unity of action" among today's social movements (Anand, 2003). Anand identifies these divergent tendencies as a "double bind" of conflicting identities, reflected in the diversity of political organizational forms being debated in the Forum.

In addition to her criticism of political parties, Wainright vilifies anarchists and other grassroots activists in the WSF and ESF for not being sufficiently forward-thinking; she asks "What kinds of political organization – maybe leave aside the term 'party' for the time being – could best strengthen the ability of these movements and struggles to influence the decisions and very nature of government, <u>at every level</u>? [my emphasis]" At the same time, she sympathizes with autonomist groups' anti-statism. Drawing upon her experience in the women's movement in the 1970s in the UK, she describes the frustration associated with trying to reform social democratic parties, which in her experience, unnecessarily usurped energy from the valuable work of the grassroots.

Citing the failures of German and Dutch Green Parties to maintain ties to their social movement bases, she warns against the establishment of an independent left party that could be seen as attempting to "represent" the movements. Similar to Aronowitz, she suggests that a political organization of the left should concern itself with forging relationships among a variety of political actors, including movements, labor, unorganized citizens and voters, as well as governments and existing political parties. She does not promote the idea that such organizations require a leadership of intellectuals to serve the organization's educative functions. Rather, she wants to identify various sources of knowledge from within the grassroots and advance an organization that understands knowledge production as something that occurs horizontally – in her words, "less one of teacher and taught." Citing the practical, grassroots work of local activists in variety of venues, she argues:

> the left needs forms of political organization which can support and understand these practical alternatives and help bring about the wider political conditions in which these alternatives can thrive. Again this means political parties and organizations giving up their monopoly over change and instead working out their role in spreading these social changes from below, including into the state itself (Ibid.).

Conclusion

In association with the WSF, the Network Institute for Global Democratization (NIGD) undertook an initiative to study and theorize the development a global political party. As of June 2006, the project entitled "Elements for a Dialogue on Global Political Party Formations," involved four meetings (called "dialogues") that were convened alongside the polycentric meetings of the WSF. The primary focus of the dialogues was to discuss the relationship between political parties, democracy and globalization and to look at

current efforts to internationalize existing party formations, including the Global Greens, the Socialist International, the International Democratic Union and Liberal International.

According to a draft report entitled “Democratic Politics Globally,” issued from the NIGD group in April 2006 (the authors of the document ask that it not be quoted), the dialogues were a reaction to various trends: (1) the failures of representative democratic structures in various parts of the world; (2) the exclusion of political parties from events like the WSF and other networking venues usually populated by social movement and NGO actors (e.g., NGO Forums, GJM protests and conferences); (3) the increasing interest among European political actors to develop a pan-European political party, corresponding to the development of the European Union and its legislative bodies; and (4) new alliances among South American governments and the potential development of a pan-Latin American party. While the 150+ page document reflected a variety of opinions regarding the viability and desirability of developing a global political party, a common theme among them was the desire to move beyond existing electoral and legislative structures. In some cases, the authors argued that the World Social Forum could serve as the basis from which such a project could be initiated.

The WSF continues to maintain a non-partisan, non-deliberative stance, despite pressures from various groups to increase its level of political engagement and projects like the NIGD’s that identify the need for some kind of political formation – perhaps a global political party – to address the failures of existing electoral systems. In the context of the Forum’s ambivalent relationship to both political parties and the state, debates over its political future and the integrity of its open space have emerged from essentially three standpoints: (1) that of political parties that have limited, if any electoral involvement –

such as the SWP in Britain and other European and Indian and Latin American socialist and communist parties. These groups tend to see political parties as playing a vital role in the development of an anti-capitalist movement by providing tight-knit organization and a theoretical basis for understanding class struggle and the historical transition from capitalism to socialism. In some cases, they are able to mobilize large numbers of people for demonstrations and are generally adept at organizing at the grassroots level. They have clashed, however, with anarchist and anti-authoritarian groups because of their hierarchical structure, the legacy of socialist and communist parties in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the desire of many contemporary social movement actors to create a new movement culture free of Marxist orthodoxy. Nonetheless, these parties play an important role in the WSF and the global left: the British SWP has been extremely active in the development of the anti-war movement; the Green Party in Northern Italy holds seats in the municipal government in Venice and to some extent has protected social movements in the region from severe police repression (and thereby enabled the seizure of the large number of squat houses in the region) and gain (limited) government resources; and the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation has funded the German, European and World Social Forums and supports research on their development (including this dissertation). Many of these parties have been active in supporting local and regional social forums, such as the case in Austria, France, Italy, Greece and India as well as countries in South America. While some have exercised significant control over the organizing process, inside the Forum, these political party members participate on the same level as other delegates so long as they do not act as representatives of their respective parties.

(2) Distinct from the first group are state officials and political parties with broad electoral appeal, who occupy central roles in state apparatuses (and in the WSF), such as in Brazil and Venezuela, and as such, wield a high degree of political power. Social democrats in the Forum (including ATTAC) and governmental institutions like the Greater London Authority should also be included in this group because of their direct ties to states and electoral parties in power. Participants in the Forum, not just anarchists, have been critical of these groups' involvement, but for the most part appear ambivalent. On the one hand, activists at the WSF tend to view states as non-representative and corrupt, and even left governments are accused of co-opting movements for political ends. On the other hand, WSF participants recognize the value not only of their support for the social forums, but of the broad variety of progressive policies and programs instituted in their respective countries that run counter to prevailing neoliberal social and economic models (which the WSF opposes). The Brazilian PT, for example, enabled the development of participatory programs that would otherwise be unthinkable in other countries.

Political theorists like Peter Evans and Gianpaolo Baiocchi point out that such parties and states can play a vital role in the spread of the social forums and more participatory forms of democracy. Even in places where participatory models are not politically tenable, they provide activists with concrete examples of viable democratic socialist reforms. In keeping with the WSF's anti-neoliberal stance, Venezuela and Bolivia's redistributive policies and the nationalization of major industries mark the beginning of what could amount to a major offensive against the IMF and WTO. Such developments have given anti-statist GJM and WSF actors pause, especially because they

have been such key players in movements against international financial agreements like the FTAA, as evinced in 2005 at the fifth Summit of the Americas in Argentina. Given the recent emergence of left parties and officials in Latin America, the WSF and its constituents must seriously consider the question posed by Wainright -- which form of political organization can best achieve the goals of the movements at every level? – and assess the opportunities posed by these new developments in the South rather than dismiss the state as an agent of emancipation altogether.

(3) The third group consists of those who call for a radical rethinking of the concept of the party and political organization itself, such as Wainright, Hardt and Negri, Aronowitz and various others in the WSF. These theorists and Forum participants do not dismiss the state and the electoral sphere, but they strongly encourage social movements and grassroots groups to build their own political and cultural institutions. Supporters of this standpoint call for the development of a form of organization that is directly responsive to NGOs and social movements as well as states and electoral institutions. Some see the World Social Forum as potentially serving this role and as such, have attempted to bolster its political involvements by issuing manifestos, such as the Porto Alegre Consensus and Bamako Appeal, against the dictates of the Charter of Principles, which positions the Forum as a nondeliberative, nonrepresentational body.

Like their predecessors in the late 19th and early 20th century, theorists of political organization—both within and outside the WSF--are concerned with the question of how to organize a meaningful opposition to neoliberalism while protecting the autonomy of its constituent groups. Despite its lack of political engagement, the WSF open space—inspired by the GJM form of organizing--was created as a solution to the problem of

centralization. By many accounts, the open space structure has enabled the WSF to attract a diverse array of actors. As Gupta (2003) points out, “In today’s world it would have been inconceivable for such a large and wide ranging mobilization to be possible if the WSF was seen as an alliance of political parties. By keeping the WSF space distinct from alliances of political parties, it has been possible to bring together groups and individuals who would not otherwise come together on a platform as political parties.”

Six years into its trajectory, however, the WSF remains little more than a tremendous conference. The problem of fragmentation of left social movements, parties, NGOs and other groups remains legion and as previous chapters demonstrate, nowhere is it more palpable than at the WSF. Despite the GJM’s successes in linking such groups for goal-oriented action, proponents of the open space argue that the ideological diversity of its constituency precludes the possibility for it to undertake deliberative and action-oriented functions without becoming coercive in some way. It is as if WSF organizers and participants became petrified by a fear of cooptation and coercion that they chose impotence as the lesser of two evils; or worse, perhaps the resistance to political engagement—including the development of a counterculture--serves a particular function or interest?

Santos (2003) argues that the fragmentation of autonomists, NGOs, political parties and other groups could be mitigated if they adopted the same basic organizational principles discussed in Milstein earlier in this text and repeated by various activists and theorists since: “In my mind, the issue is not whether relations with parties should exist or not, but rather to define the exact terms of these. If the relations are <u>transparent</u>, <u>horizontal</u>, and <u>mutually respectful,</u> [my emphasis] they may well be, in some contexts,

an important lever for the consolidation of the WSF." While the Charter of Principles provides some guidelines regarding who participates and the overall objectives of the Forum, it is not open to revision nor does it outline the necessary structures and organizational principles to enable disparate groups to engage in a substantive cross-fertilization of ideas, let alone forms of collective engagement that could challenge existing power structures.

Chapter Six: Theories of the Open Space

The previous chapters of this text have involved a sort of "taking apart" of the World Social Forum (WSF) in order to delve more deeply into the substantive debates performed by its participants and their divergent views on political organization. As mentioned in the introduction to this text, NGOs, political parties and anarchists/autonomists constitute three major political strands in the WSF and they are by no means the only kinds of organizations, groups or political identities that participate in it nor can their views be understood as absolutely distinct. In his work on the WSF, International Council member Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2003) explains that the WSF is "not structured according to any of the models of modern political organization, be they democratic centralism, representative democracy, or participatory democracy. In other words, the 'movement of movements' is not one more movement. It is a *different* kind of movement." For Santos, the novelty of the WSF lay not so much based in its ability to convene, on a global scale, the disparate groups and movements discussed here, but rather its "political newness…resides in the way in which these confrontations have been handled, avoided and negotiated" through the mechanism of the open space.

Despite Santos' optimism, the "taking apart" of the WSF was not done out of sheer convenience. While countless commentaries on the WSF point to the "unity through diversity" it promotes or the festival-like atmosphere participants immerse themselves in each year, others express dissatisfaction at the chaotic, fragmentary nature of the event and the ways in which its open space – in its current form—actually precludes the forging of connections and networks that the WSF claims to facilitate. Moreover, some of the Forum's strongest supporters--Arundhati Roy for example—now

view the Forum's "openness" as a retreat from politics and a denial of its initial promise to create a new political culture and develop alternatives to neoliberal globalization.

In his work on democracy and the WSF, Michael Menser (2005) designates the WSF slogan--Another World is Possible (AWIP)–as a "problematic." He points out that as a guiding principle for the social forums, AWIP lays out the real stakes of the social forum process:

> How are we to create a politics that is capable of confronting neo-liberalism—and various other forms of domination—on many fronts, while creating institutions, organizations, relationships, cultural practices and so forth which are shaped by desires for democratic participation, human rights and social justice but do not exclude other possible practices that also aim to cultivate these norms and goals?

With the AWIP problematic in mind, this chapter begins with a comparison of Karl Popper's concept of the open society and the WSF's open space as defined by its co-founder, Chico Whitaker and the WSF Charter of Principles. Despite its claim to oppose neoliberalism, the WSF's open space reflects a view of openness that is remarkably similar to that of Popper, a devout liberal. Both are primarily concerned with facilitating the expression of a plurality of views and the development and protection of individual liberty "at all costs," including the rejection of holistic theories, which they deem to be inherently authoritarian. In addition, both concepts of openness obscure systems of power and inequality and favor a view of social change that reinforces the fragmentation of left politics into issue-based projects and piecemeal reform.

Despite his rejection of grand narratives, Popper's open society reflects a relatively coherent liberal democratic political viewpoint and social vision with a strong normative dimension: the open society is the method ("open" participation and deliberation) as well as the *telos* (the open society=maximal freedom=the "good life").

Whitaker's conception of the open space, on the other hand, lacks coherence and is at times contradictory. While he claims that the open space is "a powerful instrument of struggle" against neoliberalism, he denies the WSF's potential to mediate between the multitude of disparate struggles in its stead and larger social forces. As this chapter demonstrates, this denial is embedded in Whitaker and the Charter's conception of openness, which in some respects impedes the development of activist networks and the interlinking of struggles by foreclosing efforts to use the WSF's collective (human) resources to build new counter-hegemonic institutions and participatory democratic structures.

Drawing from Lefebvre, the chapter looks at the ways in which openness is produced in the space of the Forum and how that production and production process is being contested. It pays specific attention to power struggles over the open space and competing conceptions of it within the WSF. As we have seen in previous chapters (and the above passage from Menser), the concept of the WSF's open space reflected in the Charter is not shared by all of its participants. Chapters two and four, for example, demonstrate how the "horizontalism" of the Global Justice Movement (GJM) reflects a mode of political organization that opposes neoliberalism by rejecting all forms of hierarchy and authoritarianism, including Old Left modes of organization as well as social and liberal democratic models. The WSF appropriated the GJM's horizontal mode of organization but did so without adopting its *telos*; in fact, its current understanding of "openness" involves rejecting political organization altogether and leaves "neoliberalism" conveniently undefined (i.e., it leaves open the possibility of a very narrow definition of it). This chapter argues that some of the conflicts over political organization discussed in

the previous chapters, and the contradictions with which the WSF continues to grapple, are linked to this limited definition of openness, which ultimately reflects a limited view of freedom. It looks at alternative concepts of openness being developed and applied in the context of the WSF and argues that its current conception of the open space as "just a space" is depoliticizing the anti-neoliberal project begun by the GJM.

The Open Society and the Open Space

Published in 1945, Karl Popper wrote *The Open Society and Its Enemies* during the second World War and the consolidation of the Stalinist regime. The book was a defense of liberal democracy and an attack on (Marxist) historicism, which he identified as the theoretical justification for authoritarianism. For Popper, human history was indeterminate and unknowable and efforts at prediction and the theorizing of historical laws were acts of oppression. His politics were rooted in his view of human knowledge as an engine of social development and his conclusion that such development was not predictable. An open society was one in which no single person held a monopoly on truth. Rather, open societies enable debate and the expression of a plurality of views; the production and interrelation of these views and interests must be protected at all costs and social institutions put in place to serve that purpose. The rule of law, a democratically elected government and a vibrant civil society were the stuff of an open society, as was respect for difference and multiculturalism. Alvarez (2002) describes Popper's open society as "a prescription for pragmatic and continuous social reform." Between closed societies (authoritarian regimes like the Soviet Union) and "transactional" models of

regulation (laissez faire market regimes) was the open society, constituted by a plurality of rational thinkers and "dedicated to trial and error" (Ibid., 2002: 264).

Michael Lessnoff (1980) further explicates Popper's political philosophy, beginning with *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach*, which provides the philosophical basis for *The Open Society and Its Enemies*. Popper bases his "ontological pluralism" on a distinction of three separate, but overlapping worlds: the physical, the mental and the intelligible (ideas). For Popper, the world of ideas may be a product of the human mind (the second world), but once ideas are produced, they become autonomous – that is, for Popper, ideas can be abstracted from the historical conditions of their production. A second presupposition in Popper is the idea that there are certain objective truths about the physical world that are not directly observable or knowable; i.e., they are not locatable in a particular class experience or historical moment. He puts forth an evolutionary view of the world that understands knowledge production as involving processes of trial and error and experimentation. For Popper, a closed society is one in which the evolution of ideas is thwarted by dogmatism (which he associates with Marxism). An open society, on the other hand, evolves away from dogma and toward "rational criticism" of existing theories (by any and all of society's members); the "fittest" ideas—focused on solving social problems--survive. An open society is one that creates the conditions (the freedom) to criticize established theories and propose alternatives.

According to Lessnoff, Popper's theory of knowledge marked the beginning of "a political theory in the normative sense, an argument for the 'open' society, one of whose characteristics is freedom to criticize, for this freedom is seen as a condition for the

growth of rational social knowledge" (Ibid., 1980: 105). Underlying his evolutionary approach was the idea that history was not governed by universal laws, which Popper reduces to mere prophecy. Despite the fact that Marx, in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*, openly states "men make their own history" (under circumstances handed down from history), Popper asserted that Marxism's identification of historical tendencies operated against freedom because it cut off the possibility for rational engagement. Moreover, Popper rejected Marxism's anti-capitalism by pointing to capitalist societies' ability to forge compromises between previously antagonistic social classes. For Popper, the overthrow of capitalism was not a necessary condition for emancipation and equality because he believed that capitalism had solved its own contradictions.

Against Utopianism, which for Popper threatens the open society because he sees it as too deterministic (aimed at social design), he advocates "piecemeal social engineering" – "social forms evolve, to a large extent in undesigned ways, but we can significantly influence this evolution; what we cannot do…is to realize once and for all a total design" (Ibid. 1980:111). Popper was a proponent of individualist thinking – a true liberal. For him, societies and their institutions are amalgamations of individuals; a society is nothing more than the sum of its parts. In an open society, individual freedom and rationality are the utmost values.

In sum, Popper's conception of the open society assumes the following: (1) that rational discussion of ideas and the construction of "free" social institutions will result in a free, open society; (2) in a liberal, capitalist democracy, social class is not predetermined and individuals are free to choose their place in society; and (3) the open

society is “humanitarian” insofar as it focuses on the maintenance of individual freedom as the greatest value (Lessnoff, 1980: 116-117). These elements of the open society are enabled by a state that values reason and supports individual freedom above all else (which may limit some freedom to mediate extreme power differentials), one whose power is limited and that can be abolished without bloodshed.

The WSF conception of the open space shares some of the same assumptions that inform Popper’s open society. To review, the WSF Charter of Principles (see appendix two) 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, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth.

As discussed in chapter two, the designation of the WSF as an “open meeting place” and site of the “free exchange of experiences” speak to its goal to create a non-coercive, non-hierarchical space in which “civil society” movements and groups can socialize and network. The Charter defines the open space as one in which participants can enter without having to adopt a single political line, risk being misrepresented by the larger body and (in Whitaker’s estimation) bear responsibility for the organization of the WSF or its outcomes: “They [participants] know they will not be given orders nor will they have to follow commands, nor have to report back on what they have done and not done, nor will they have to give proof of loyalty and discipline, nor will they be expelled if they don’t do this.” As pointed out in chapter three, the Charter assumes a sphere of civil society that is distinct from that of the state, despite the work of Althusser, Foucault and many others who have more than adequately demonstrated how state power operates

(coercively) at the level of the everyday. Like Popper, the Charter sees a democratic potential in the sphere of civil society as opposed to political parties and militant social movements, which the WSF founders view(ed) as potentially coercive and authoritarian.

Chico Whitaker--co-founder of the WSF and Brazilian Justice and Peace Commission--is one of the most outspoken proponents of the WSF open space. He holds seats on each of the steering committees of the WSF, which make crucial decisions regarding thematic content, location, structure and who participates (including who serves on the steering committees). He is also one of the most visible spokespersons of the Forums, despite his denial that WSF spokespersons even exist. In a widely debated essay entitled "The WSF as Open Space," Whitaker responds to arguments that the Forum should issue political statements and criticisms regarding its lack of political agency by clarifying and defending the open space concept. He begins with the WSF Charter (he helped write it), which, he explains, "emphatically" defines the WSF as an open space and nothing more – in his words, it is "only a space" that is not meant to mobilize the global left for street action or act as a deliberative body.

In laying out the stakes of the open space paradigm, Whitaker assumes that participants' desires for more political involvement mean that they want to transform the WSF into a social movement: "would transforming the WSF into a movement, now or later, as the process advances – be a good strategy to achieve the objective of the overcoming of neoliberalism and the construction of 'another possible world'?" (Whitaker, 2003) According to Whitaker,

> A movement *congregates* people – its activists, as the activists of a party –decide to organize themselves to collectively accomplish certain objectives. Its formation and existence entails the definition of strategies to reach these objectives, the

> *formulation* of action programmes, and the *distribution* of responsibilities among its members – including those regarding the direction of the movement.

He goes on to say that the above tasks require leadership (democratic or authoritarian), responsibility and commitment by members of a movement, and that movements necessarily operate through pyramid structures and according to specific objectives. According to Whitaker, in contrast to the stability of the open space, the dogmatism of movements thwarts the production of new ideas and often leads to splits. He argues that the development of the WSF into a movement would impair the potentials inherent in maintaining it as an open space because for him—as for Popper—openness and freedom reside in individual autonomy, a notion of autonomy that is distinct from the cooperative autonomy "of the common" (Negri) discussed in chapter three.

An important part of Whitaker's notion of openness relates to the nondeliberative character of the WSF. For him, movements make decisions, engage in power struggles and require that their members adopt a political line or adhere to a homogenous political orientation. By contrast, every person in the open space of the WSF has an equal right of expression (despite their not having an equal chance of it). There are no final documents and no one is authorized to make declarations on behalf of the Forum. Individual groups and networks are encouraged to make their own declarations, but may not to make them on behalf of the Forum.

Like Popper's open society, the WSF upholds diversity as it highest value. Protecting its diversity and creating the conditions for individual groups to develop their respective projects requires a degree of openness that would, in Whitaker's view, be destroyed if the WSF deliberated on and issued political statements as a collective. Despite the WSF's objective to oppose neoliberalism—a radical posture--according to

Whitaker, individual groups in the Forum have the freedom to be as "political" as they choose:

> The Forum allows each participant to maintain his/her freedom to choose the sector or the level in which to act. This action can be either very wide and comprehensive or rather restricted; it might intend to address either the deeper causes of the problems the world faces or the superficial effects of those problems. The vast range of themes discussed during the Forum and the objectives sought in it can thus be very wide, such is the range of changes required for the construction of a new world.

Similar to Popper, Whitaker conceives of the WSF as the sum of its parts and not as a collective with a truly common objective.

In complete contradiction to his claims regarding the hierarchical, coercive nature of (seemingly all) social movements, Whitaker characterizes the WSF open space as a "horizontal social articulation" that was largely influenced by the GJM and its organizing principles. He also says that the WSF is a "powerful instrument of struggle," but later states that "the Forum is not meant to be a space for disputing power."

> It is only a place, basically a horizontal space, just like the earth's surface, even if it has some ups and downs. It is like a square without an owner. If the square has an owner other than the collectivity, it fails to be a square, and becomes private territory. Squares are generally open spaces that can be visited by all those who find any kind of interest in using it.

He adds that the sole purpose of the space is to be a space and nothing more – "their sole purpose is to be square" – a receptacle for "as many individuals, organizations, and movements as possible that oppose neoliberalism to get together freely, listen to each other, learn from experiences and struggles of others, and discuss proposals of action…" Moreover, for Whitaker, the WSF is a factory or incubator of ideas and initiatives that does not require specific organizational principles to achieve its "horizontality" because it is self-regulating:

> Even when a square contains trees and hills, it is always a socially horizontal space. Those who climb the trees or hills cannot control from above the actions of those inside the square. Being considered ridiculous by the others in the square is least any such climbers would expect. Should they become insistent or inconvenient, they will end up talking to themselves, for those who are in the square will leave it. Or they may even come back with 'public authorities' who will make them leave or stop preaching from above to restore the peace and tranquility typical of public squares.

The curious metaphors Whitaker uses above point to his notion of the open space as self-disciplining, but also, as a space unencumbered by power inequalities (aside from the occasional tree climber) and a concept of openness that implies structurelessness and lack of regulation.

The Production of the WSF Open Space

> The production of space is, *ipso facto*, the main thing we will have to do differently in a post-capitalist world (Neil Smith, 2001).

Henri Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* was first published in the early 1970s, when French Marxism was entering its heyday, just six years after the May 1968 student uprising, with which Lefebvre--once a member of the quasi-anarchist Situationists--strongly identified. Contra Popper's anti-historicism, Lefebvre theorized space as not merely a receptacle of social relations, but as a product and producer of them, imbued with a history. For him, theorizing space involved not just understanding it as an object, but as a mode of production. The production of space occurs through the interrelation of (1) perceived space and the spatial practices of everyday life; (2) conceived space, planned space and ordering; and (3) lived space, which is the space of symbols, images and other forms of representation. Lefebvre urges his readers to study the history and production of spaces (power relations, often masked as given) and contest them.

Within Lefebvre's problematic, contests over the WSF open space and its meaning for the development of democratic and egalitarian social and political structures, focus on a variety of issues concerning spatial deployments of power under neoliberalism and how they might be resisted. Following Smith (quoted above), does the WSF open space constitute a move toward a different way of doing the production of space? How does the WSF contest neoliberalism and the prevailing spatial order through its "open space" practices? What is the relationship between perceived and experienced space inside the Forum and what forms of sociality are being produced there? How are the open spaces themselves (and representations of them) being contested; i.e., what power relations inform the space(s)? And finally, what are the characteristics and meaning of the WSF space's "openness"?

Following the 2005 WSF, sociologist Tuomas Ylä-Anttila, a member of the NIGD (see chapter five) commented that "If the open space methodology has been the strength of the WSF, it can, in certain respects, be considered also its weakness." While the WSF open space has attracted a broad array of social and political actors, it is not yet a methodology. In order to become a method, the WSF would need to adopt organizing principles, similar to those utilized by the Global Justice Movement--first, to bring coherence to the event itself; and second, so that activists could build a base level of affinity, from which to express their common claims, beyond the borders of the WSF.

By contrast, the prevailing conception of the open space, reflected in Whitaker (2003) and the WSF Charter of Principles, remains incoherent and sometimes downright contradictory, in part because it ignores ongoing power struggles over and within the WSF space and misunderstands the meaning and significance of the GJM's concepts of

horizontalism and openness. For example, Whitaker's depiction of the WSF space as a "free space" that requires little commitment on the part of participants does not take into account the overwhelming presence of professional activists, mostly NGO representatives, who are paid to attend the WSF and go there to develop advocacy networks (see chapter three). But more importantly, he misses the real desire of participants to make such a commitment—to labor over the building of the WSF and "another world." Whitaker also claims that participants are not required to express loyalty to the Forum; they are, however, expected to abide by the Charter (and not contest it). At the 2004 ESF, for example, participants were required to (literally) sign on to the Charter as a condition of registration.

A second set of inaccuracies in Whitaker's representation of the WSF open space regards his discussion of the International Council and Organizing Committee (he is a member of both). As previous chapters demonstrate, participants have made serious claims against these committees, alleging that they "control" the WSF (i.e., the space is organized to suit their interests), lack ideological and geographic diversity, and are not adequately representative of the Forum's constituency. Organizers have attempted to address these criticisms by expanding the committees; in the essay cited above, however, Whitaker defends the lack of diversity on the grounds that the committees are not meant to represent the Forum as a whole (despite his claim that diversity is a source of power and should be seen as an end in itself). He explains that since the Forum is not a deliberative body, representativeness is unnecessary, especially since the steering committees only act as "facilitators" and do not control the process (Whitaker, 2003).

Whitaker's characterization of the WSF steering committees radically departs from that of many participants and former committee members. Former International Council member, Michael Albert wrote a scathing critique of the elitism and closed door decision-making processes of the International Council—one that has been echoed by several others. According to Geoffrey Pleyers (2004) of the Belgian National Fund for Scientific Research, "far from being open and democratic, [the International Council] meetings bring together around 120 leaders of 'international networks' and are held behind closed doors." Whitaker asserts that these committees "perform the task of organizing the use of the square without interfering in what is discussed in it." As we saw in chapter two, however, the space itself is largely stratified according to the size and influence of participant organizations and their level of notoriety.

A third set of inaccuracies (and contradictions) regards Whitaker's analysis of social movements. The most glaring contradiction is that he assumes movements to be necessarily hierarchically organized, while crediting the open space concept to the Global Justice Movement. He also lauds the open space as a "powerful instrument of struggle," but later in the essay claims that the objective of the Forum is not to contest power. Whitaker views social movements as homogenous entities and cannot conceive of a kind of openness that would allow groups with various political orientations and goals to act collectively without members sacrificing their individual autonomy. He assumes that deliberative processes inevitably lead movements to splinter off into sub-movements; the openness of the WSF open space, he asserts, is specifically designed to circumvent this tendency. The split between verticals and horizontals both at the WSF and ESF--a radical

split that has only exacerbated over time—demonstrates the serious inaccuracy of his assessment.

As demonstrated in chapter two, the WSF space is differentiated according to the size, accessibility and popularity of a given activity (conference, panel, etc.). With the exception of the 2005 event, WSF-organized panels and conferences typically have been held in the most central venues, while self-organized and autonomous spaces (including the Youth Camp) are staged in the least accessible and equipped places. As Pleyers describes, "most participants are at events where well-known figures address huge, passive crowds, to the detriment of smaller workshops and development of new alternatives. In 2003, 15,000 people came to hear Noam Chomsky and Arundhati Roy speak and more than 60,000 listen to Brazilian president Lula." Moreover, many participants describe how the sheer number of sessions and their dispersion can have a disorienting and alienating effect: "The Forum provides participants with a unique opportunity to be heard and to hear what others have to say, but quite often it more closely resembles an agora for *juxtaposing* testimonies, declarations of positions, and appeals made by individuals and movements from highly diverse cultural, social and economic backgrounds" (Féron, 2003). Others observe that the social forums "often serve to reiterate well-oiled discourses opposed to neo-liberalism rather than to reflect on and transmit the content of possible alternatives...Because of this great internal diversity, the Forum gives the impression of being split up into many small, disconnected forums" (Ibid., 2003). According to Pleyers, "the majority of attendee activists participate only passively in the open space. Most workshops are populated by academics, a few politicians and NGO advisors."

WSF organizers responded to criticisms regarding the stratification of the space and activities within it by mandating that all events would be self-organized in 2005 to further "horizontal-ize" the process. According to participants, this did not alleviate and in some cases exacerbated the experience of the space as fragmented and incoherent. Josh Lerner, a NYC social forum and participatory budget activist, provided a sketch of the WSF landscape in an article he wrote after attending the 2005 WSF. In the essay, Lerner acknowledges that the Forum convened a broad variety of movements and organizations, but while some were able to share experiences and actively network, "people often came together without talking, and exchanged ideas without listening." The communication failures he observed were in part due to the lack of translation facilities. The problem of translation has re-emerged at each WSF and has severely alienated participants without the capacity to speak multiple languages. Lerner points out, for example, that the only session dedicated to the future of the WSF in 2005 was conducted entirely in Portuguese. Other logistical decisions that affected how people participated in the 2005 WSF were decided by a small number of people on the Organizing Committee; i.e., the workshops were not truly self-managed.

Moreover, Lerner reports, many sessions were cancelled at the last minute because workshop organizers or speakers simply did not show up; others were sparsely attended because of poor location or lack of interest. He explains, "as the number of these self-organized activities tend to be big, only some can take place in the central areas of the event….the rest are distributed in the best possible way in all available spaces—sometimes in different parts of the cities, and even in areas that are difficult to reach."

The diffusion of the events in 2005 (but at other WSFs as well) was exacerbated by a lack of coordination that made it difficult for workshop organizers to cross-fertilize with other activists. Some efforts were made to connect workshop organizers online prior to the event, but as Callinicos pointed out, "If you were interested in a particular subject…you could easily spend the entire four days in one relatively small area without coming into contact with people interested in different subjects." My experience of the Social Forums – the 2003 and 2006 WSFs, the 2002 and 2003 ESFs bears this out: while the central conferences and panels at these Forums were well-attended, the smaller, self-organized workshops suffered from a severe lack of coordination.

As mentioned in chapter two, the lack of coordination in 2005 extended into 2006 with the decentralization of the WSF to three polycentric events. While several proposals were made to facilitate a thematic coherence among the three polycentric forums, Whitaker and other organizing committee members opposed them, asserting that the themes for each of the polycentric forums were decided from the bottom up and no organizing body was authorized to interfere with local processes. Whitaker's (2006) argument was that "The registration process [via the Internet] enables [participants] to find out about the proposals from others, with common themes and convergences appearing quite naturally." But in Caracas what "naturally" happened was that the Chávez government dominated the Forum and self-organized workshops and the Youth Camp played second fiddle to massive anti-imperialism panels featuring speakers from large-scale NGOs, social movements and trade unions.

Against the notion that the open space of the WSF is devoid of power dynamics, UK social forum activist Oscar Reyes discusses the spatial dimensions of the ideological

conflicts over the organization of the 2004 ESF in London in an article on "The Politics of the ESF Space." He points out that "The Thatcher legacy, continued by Tony Blair, has left very few public spaces to host the Forum or accommodate people." Within this context, the organization of the 2004 ESF involved a dramatic contest between "vertical" (hierarchically organized) groups and "horizontals." Reyes explains that the vertical camp secured a venue – the Alexandra Palace in north London – that consisted only of large exhibition halls (that could not accommodate the smaller workshops). Moreover, the venue was not centrally located; i.e., it would not project the Forum into the greater London landscape or make an impression on the city in the same way that the ESFs in 2002 and 2003 had transformed Florence and Paris. Horizontals, on the other hand, occupied a space that was more central and could accommodate smaller events--in Bloomsbury, in the center of London, where many colleges and universities are located.

Reyes ruminates on the significance of the conflict between the two groups, asserting that

> horizontality presents itself as a 'regulative ideal,' a dream of non-hierarchical organization in which the Forum matches up to its promise and creates an 'open space.' Such an idea must necessarily fail [however]…because the very definition of a space requires…both an act of creation (or naming) and the definition of a boundary, without which that space could not exist. These are both necessarily acts of power, with power viewed as a productive force whose existence lies in the relations between things.

From that premise, he argues that the notion of the open space is itself incoherent because it fails to acknowledge power relations inherent in the production of space, even "horizontal spaces." He also asserts that the exercise of power (for him, a lack of openness) within such contexts is sometimes necessary and may even be desirable and productive. For Whitaker, on the other hand, openness requires the obscurity of power

relations altogether—a space of "civil society" magically unencumbered by class inequality and coercion. In Whitaker's open space, a plurality of ideas and political orientations co-exist independently of each other. Without coordinating mechanisms to enable the development of relationships beyond the random encounter, and to (at least somewhat) level the playing field, the plurality of WSF and ESF participants talk past each other, remain fragmented, and when pressed for space and other resources, end up competing for them. Whitaker's concept of the open space assumes that an invisible hand (and not planning and organization) will create linkages among activists and organizations; it assumes that power relations do not "really" exist; and that self-discipline by "civil society" actors is somehow less authoritarian than a collectively determined, principled organizational structure.

Anil Netto (2006) points to the problem of fragmentation at the WSF in an interview he conducted with a "veteran activist" (quoted above) at the Forum:

> 'Too much is made of the freedom to do your own thing, and that is understandable as there is some fear that the event could be manipulated by certain groups'…he warned that the glorification of individualism could undermine the WSF. 'What is the value (of the WSF in the end)? It becomes too loose a network, and its annual events turn into a jamboree, a celebration of diversity. It's no use to me (in the long run).'

Another activist asserted: " 'if you have too many things going on, you are going to lose focus and people will lose the sense of the WSF being a specific apex gathering of all social movements in the world'" (Netto, 2006). Pointing to Jo Freeman's essay discussed in chapter four, "The Tyranny of Structurelessness," Ylä-Anttila (2005) asserts that "the denial to agree upon formal rules for the sake of being less hierarchical and less

structured, can lead to less democracy, rather than more of it." Lerner (2006) echoes this assessment, likening the logic of the WSF open space to that of neoliberalism:

> The Forum's emphasis on unregulated open space…contributed to…inequitable participation, unproductive activities, and undemocratic decision-making. These problems are similar to those of neoliberalism, and they can be traced to three false assumptions: regulation inherently limits free interaction, activities are more productive when left to individual discretion, and the guiding hands are neutral and benevolent.

He points out that the lack of regulation

> enables existing power hierarchies to decide economic and social interactions. For neoliberalism, reducing trade quotas, tariffs and regulations creates a more open, but not level, playing field on which more developed corporations of the North can more easily exploit less developed economies of the South. In Porto Alegre, unregulated workshop discussions and decision-making often enabled the most powerful participants to dominate – panelists, NGO experts, men, loud or confident voices, and (when the social forum is in Brazil) Portuguese speakers.

Lerner concludes that both the WSF and neoliberalism "claim to create unregulated 'open space' – non-hierarchical physical and social space that permits free interaction…[but] could the social forums be more powerful forces for social change if we focused less on protecting them as unregulated open spaces, and more on planning than as equitable, educative, and democratic spaces?"

Teivo Teivainen (2004) explains the problem identified by Lerner in terms of *politicization*: "politicization is a key aspect of democratic struggles. It means showing the political nature of such relations of power that are presented as neutral." Against Whitaker, Teivainen points to the depoliticizing effects of "pretending that there are no relations of power" and claiming that the WSF is not an organization and "therefore questions of power and organizational democracy are not relevant." He also points to the depoliticizing effects of claiming that the "WSF is not a movement or a political actor but

simply a space, an arena" and how the false dichotomy of "social movement versus open space" prevents understanding how the Forum could facilitate political action.

In an interview with a group of social forum activists reported in the BBC, a 27-year old peace campaigner from Bosnia commented that "the social forum had been very useful for networking and making new contacts but that she had serious concerns about the lack of direction. 'There was no plan of action to end this forum,' she said, 'So now the question for all of us is what exactly are we supposed to do for the next twelve months until the next time we get together?'" (Morbasch, 2006). Echoing the Bosnian activist, the *Indian Express* remarked, "Trouble is, gatherings like the WSF, with their rhetoric often floating away from fact and nuance, often appear in danger of slipping into another world altogether, into a commune mentality, as it were"—which the article describes as "the WSF bubble" (*Indian Express*, 2004). Other activists have expressed similar concerns: one pointed out that "'…when you don't have anything to unify the groups, it becomes difficult to mobilize people constantly and regularly.'" Another asserted: " 'There should be more debates on issues and some level of calls or statements that people can sign on after such forums,' she said, adding that there could be a need for some kind of structure'" (Netto, 2006).

Against the widely held belief that now, more than ever, left social movements and organizations remain dangerously fragmented and must start to address overlapping forms of oppression, the WSF (as currently conceived by its organizers) is reinforcing the development of issue-based politics (and liberal democracy) rather than attacking systemic problems and their root causes. The crux of the problem lies in the very serious

lack of understanding of (and openness to) the alternative ways in which the openness of the WSF is being conceived and practiced at its margins.

Rethinking the WSF Open Space

Openness and Potentiality

Drawing from Heidegger's work on the relationship between "simply living beings" (animals) and *Dasein*, "Being in the world" (specific to humans), Agamben develops his concept of the *The Open*. As Agamben explains, Heidegger rejected the idea (put forth by biologists and philosophers alike) that human beings' ability for reason and rational thought was what distinguished them from animals. Heidegger sought to restore ontological status to animals by explicating the distinction between animal and human (in comparison to inanimate objects, like stones) in terms of their *openness*. Agamben vis-à-vis Heidegger begins this project with three beings: the stone, the animal and the human. The stone is quickly subtracted from the analysis because for Heidegger, it does not have openness to the world – it is without the ability to relate; it is without "a world." Animals, on the other hand, have a specific way of relating to their environment: "the stone is worldless, the animal is poor in the world; man is world-forming" (Agamben, 2004: 51). The animal is "poor in the world" because it is without *world*; i.e., animals are driven by instincts and "captivated" (held captive) by them and while they relate to the world, they cannot move beyond their immediate environment (and the immediate quality of their relation to it): "They live in such intense and incessant proximity to their environment and its stimuli they do not see the existential forest for the environmental trees" (de la Durantaye, 2005). Heidegger recounts a story of a bee that is given a large mound of honey: In the course of consuming the honey, the bee's gut is sliced open, but (as honey

pours out of its gut) it continues to consume the honey, captivated by it. For Heidegger, captivation is a form of openness, but it is qualitatively different from that of human beings. Agamben (2004: 55) further explains:

> The ontological status of the animal environment can at this point be defined: it is open, but not openable. For the animal, beings are open but not accessible; that is to say, they are open in an inaccessibility and an opacity—that is, in some way, a nonrelation. This *openness without disconcealment* distinguishes the animal's poverty in world from the world-forming that characterizes man. The animal is not simply without world, for insofar as it is open to captivation, it must—unlike the stone which is worldless – do without world, lack it; it can, that is, be defined in its being by a poverty and a lack.

For Heidegger, the open "is the space revealed to us in the moment when the world we live in, which because of our many tasks and travails we tend to take no distance from (like animals with their stimuli), opens out onto something larger. This moment of distancing ourselves from our everyday concern with means and ends, with stimuli and response, is what gives us not just an environment, but a 'world.'" (Durantaye, 2005). This experience of the open is what separates us from animals and makes us human (it is also what makes philosophy itself possible). Agamben points to Heidegger's lectures in 1942 in Freiburg, in which he focuses on the translation of Parmenides' term *aletheia* ("truth"). He translates the term as such: "The open and the free in the clearing of being." As Durantaye (Ibid.) points out, here "the open" refers to an <u>open space</u>: "the clearing, or the stepping away from the forest and the trees into an open space where a 'world' becomes more perceptible: In his woodland terminology, *Lichtung*, a clearing (as in a forest), is etymologically a 'light-ing,' an opening and an illumination. The 'open' then corresponds to an originary truth: it is the open space in which truth in its original (Greek) meaning took place."

The title of Agamben's book – *The Open* – refers to an unconditioned openness and an undefinable space (an open space) which for Heidegger, distinguishes man not only from animals, but also from man's own nature ("beyond the tasks and travails") (Ibid.). Agamben seeks to undo this separation in Heidegger; rather than focus on the distinction between the two beings, he wants to understand the zone of indistinction between them: "the point at which the animal's unhindered openness, or receptivity, to stimuli in its environment and man's openness to the world in all its ungraspable immensity converge." His critique of Heidegger's version of the open is that it places man's ability to conceive of "a world" (in the case of the WSF, "another world") as involving a separation from elements of what constitutes his/her own humanity. For Agamben, this separation (and hierarchical classification of being) has – as part of a larger progression of western thought -- enabled the development of a (bio)politics in which bare, biological ("animal") life can be separated from one's form of life and hierarchies of life can be decided; i.e., they become the subject of politics. He points to the Third Reich and the political tactic of de-humanization, which facilitated the outrageous violence against the Jews (deemed "vermin" or subhuman). Throughout history, scientific-technical knowledge--matched with a Darwinian logic of competition– has been used to justify the domination (and extreme brutalization) of human over animal as well as human over human.

In *The Open*, Agamben traces the intellectual history of man's project to master (his own) nature through processes of classification and hierarchy between man and animal – which he terms "the anthropological machine." But he takes the project to its logical end: the utter control over, then the utter destruction of humanity itself ("the end

of history"). A dramatic conclusion, which becomes imaginable in light of genetic technologies that reflect the dialectic between desires to protect and prolong life and tendencies to control it, i.e., the politicization of life, which involves deciding over which kinds of life are worth living (genetic testing and human cloning).

Reading Agamben one cannot help but be reminded of Bookchin's definition of *social ecology*, in which he points out how human domination over nature is inextricably linked to domination within society (Bookchin, 1990). Like Bookchin, Agamben seeks to render inoperative – or leaving idling – the "anthropological machine…which threatens to close that which is productively and promisingly open in contemporary politics. The openness in question is the open vocation of man, the freedom to refuse to accept [to render inoperative] the demands of a state which Agamben sees as ever seeking to identify, to isolate, and to control" (Durantaye, 2005). This "open vocation" involves the contemplation of a world and its potentialities ("another world is possible") against a politics that seeks "the good life" through the degradation of life itself.

Santos (2003) discusses the project of the WSF and its potential in terms similar to those of Agamben as well as Menser. The WSF, from the perspective of the AWIP problematic, focuses on "the open" to which Agamben refers: its openness is the condition that enables the conception and development of "another world" against neoliberalism's tendency to "disqualify forms of existence." Santos begins with a critique of the way in which contemporary societies tend to discredit the act of contemplating alternative worlds. While Popper rejected utopian thought as deterministic, today utopia

is rejected "precisely for being utopian, idealistic and unrealistic" (Ibid.). The exception are "conservative utopias," which

> identify themselves with present-day reality and discover their utopian dimension in the radicalization or complete fulfillment of the present. Moreover, if there is unemployment and social exclusion, if there is starvation and death in the periphery of the world system, that is not the consequence of the deficiencies or limits of the laws of the market; it results rather from the fact that such laws have not yet been fully applied. The horizon of conservative utopias is a closed horizon, and end to history.

Santos identifies the WSF as a *critical utopia*: "a radical critique of present-day reality and the aspiration to a better society" – the realm of possibility that neo-liberalism disallows and disables. For Santos, "The utopian dimension of the WSF consists in affirming the possibility of a counter-hegemonic globalization...The other possible world is a utopian aspiration that comprises several possible worlds. It may be many things, but never a world with no alternatives."

According to Santos, the social forums' project of establishing emancipatory, "open" spaces itself poses a radical critique of neoliberalism, even if it does not involve dismantling neoliberal institutions or smashing the state. He describes neo-liberalism as a system "presided over by techno-scientific knowledge"--a particular logic and logistics of rationality that disparages all other forms of knowledge and ways of knowing: all beings–natural, artificial, cultural, technological–are understood as resources to be managed in order to facilitate capital accumulation and advance concentrations of power. The monocultural logic of capital manipulates living beings for profit (and patents), annihilates ways of life that cannot or will not be "converted," and renders illegitimate any resistant body of knowledge. The function of neo-liberal politics is to secure the body

politic for conversion into the planetary work machine: hence the WTO, NAFTA, corporate welfare, and forced workfare. Accordingly, the body politic is configured as an aggregate of "autonomous" citizen-consumers who, as rational agents, above all else want efficiency and protection–hence the push toward privatization and liberal democracy (Doane et al., 2000).

The WSF, on the other hand, engages in an "epistemological denunciation" of neoliberal epistemology and by warrant of the diversity of the discourses it facilitates, demonstrates how "the concepts of rationality and efficiency presiding over hegemonic techno-scientific knowledge are too restrictive. They cannot capture the richness and diversity of the social experience of the world." Recalling Agamben's "anthropological machine," Santos discusses how hegemonic techno-scientific systems of knowledge "classify and marginalize practices of resistance, different forms of life (including animal life) and people." The WSF counters this discrimination through the development of a *sociology of absences* and *sociology of emergences*, which in his formulation, break new ontological ground: "Through these sociologies, social experience that resists destruction is unconcealed, and the space-time capable of identifying and rendering credible new counter-hegemonic social experiences is opened up."

Santos' sociology of absences "consists of an inquiry that aims to explain that what does not exist is, in fact, actively produced as non-existent, that is, as a non-credible alternative to what exists" – a negation of a negation. The revelation of processes of the production of non-existence – of public spaces, alternative politics, of different forms of life and sociality – involves a re-opening of the realm of possibility on a variety of levels. Santos identifies five "logics" through which contestation and subsequent processes of

discovery and social production (can and do) take place at the Forum: (1) “monocultures of knowledge” – while modern science and high culture degrade or de-legitimize other forms of knowing and cultural production, the WSF identifies “other knowledges and criteria of rigour that operate credibly in social practices;” (2) “monocultures of linear time” produce non-existence through identifying certain parts of the world as pre-modern and “backword;” the WSF attempts to recover different experiences of time—“the activity of the African or Asian peasant becomes contemporaneous of the activity of the high tech farmer in the USA”—and not, “precivilized.” (3) the “monoculture of classification:” of specific concern to Agamben, this tendency involves “the naturalization of differences. It consists of distributing populations according to categories that naturalize (racial and sexual) hierarchies.” By contrast, the WSF “looks for a new articulation between the principles of equality and difference, thus allowing for the possibility of equal differences” with mutual recognition; (4) the “monoculture of the universal and global:” while “globalization privileges entities of realities that widen their scope to the whole globe,” its logic renders competing entities nonexistent by way of identifying them as particular or local. The WSF attempting to undo this tendency by operating at multiple scales and not overvaluing any of them, but also by rearticulating local struggles as counter-hegemonic; (5) the “monoculture of capitalist productivity and efficiency:” in the capitalist economy, non-productiveness translates to non-existence, manifest the classification of workers (and the unemployed) as unskilled, lazy and so on. The WSF attempts to link alternative forms of production –“popular economic organizations, workers’ cooperatives, self-managed enterprises, solidarity economy, etc.”—to counter these tendencies.

While the *sociology of absences* refers to the WSF's contestation against neoliberalism's tendency to render alternatives nonexistent, Santos' *sociology of emergences* names the WSF's effort to look further into and expand the field of the possible. Taking from Ernst Bloch, Santos terms the sociology of absences, the "Not Yet;" using Agamben's language, he defines the Not Yet as the way in which "the future is inscribed in the present:"

> Objectively, the Not Yet is, on the one hand, capacity (potency) and, on the other, possibility (potentiality)[23]….The sociology of emergences is the inquiry into the alternatives that are contained in the horizon of concrete possibilities.

Santos likens the Not Yet to Mills' concept of the sociological imagination and identifies two goals for the Forum: (1) to "imagine" or identify concrete possibilities; and (2) to define principles according to which they can be realized. Similar to Lukacs and Aronowitz's concept of political organization, Santos' "sociologies" reflect his view of the WSF as a potential mediator between the possible and the Not Yet.

In keeping with Agamben and Santos' emphasis on the Not Yet, Massimo DeAngelis (2004) discusses the open space of the WSF as part of the "horizon in front of us in the journey for the constitution of another world, one that contains many worlds." Similar to Menser's identification of the AWIP problematic, De Angelis points to three elements or "coordinates" for mapping this horizon. The first is constituted by an understanding of the WSF open space as a space of "There are Many Alternatives" or TAMA, which he defines as an "openness [my emphasis] to alternative ways of doing

[23]Santos' terms –potency and potentiality—are likely drawn from Spinoza or perhaps more recently from Toni Negri, who has theorized potentiality as a constituent power: a power that is not determined and therefore, a power of freedom (as opposed to state and other forms of consolidated power). For more on the relationship between power and potentiality see Negri, Antonio. (1999) *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press or Agamben, Giorgio. (1998) *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford, CA; Stanford University Press.

and articulating social cooperation, at whatever scale of social action" against capitalism's (and, as he points out, the orthodox Left's) logic of "There Is No Alternative" (TINA). DeAngelis focuses on the ways in which the WSF contests and upsets capitalist norms (associated with commodity fetishism) and undertakes the construction of a new common sense. He views the WSF as a mechanism for the articulation of "many yeses [an openness], the many alternatives we believe exist beyond the logic of profit of disciplinary markets." With a network model in mind, he locates the nexus of this discovery in "interactive 'nodes' themselves" in communication, negotiation and the building of relationships (central to Hardt and Negri), which give birth to new forms of life (new norms, new values), against processes of assimilation in which forms of life are imposed from without (Ibid.):

> From this perspective, the attention to the qualitative features of the relational process of articulation and the emphasis on horizontality, inclusiveness, openness, democracy. These are broad values that in themselves do not determine the specific character of the outcome…rather, they shape the *context* in which subjects themselves design…the operational closure of the mode of articulation of their collective doing.

The second element in DeAngelis' analysis of the WSF includes a definition of the open space as geared toward "de-fetishization, empowerment and norm creation…that recognizes dignity as a core value." Drawing from the Zapatistas, DeAngelis points to the importance of a common practice of dignity to the development of non-commodified social relations and "a relational horizontality that articulates diversity." He points to the success of the WSF in bringing together people from a broad variety of nations, ethnicities and ideological backgrounds as part of the process of "producing another world." He asserts, however, that the next step in the process is that the WSF "become a self-aware and self-declared space for the *constitution* (rather than mere promotion) of

alternative modes of articulation across the social body." Part of this project, he asserts, is the development of a normative dimension, produced from the bottom up, in which an ethic of participation replaces that of hierarchy and exclusion.

The third element in DeAngelis' triad is his conception of the "open space as a space for commons." He understands the social forums in general as a project focused on producing a new, noncommodified space, capable of facilitating connections among people and developing "alternative ways to exchange resources and reinforce networks of mutual aid." Like Aronowitz, he emphasizes the importance of linking struggles--against the privatization of water, land, intellectual property and so on—which necessarily involves understanding water, land and knowledge as common resources: "Commons are forms of *direct* access to social wealth, access that is not mediated by competitive market relations." He sees the social forums as capable of facilitating different kinds of economies (and economic relations), run by self-coordinating communities that decided their own social norms and values. As De Angelis points out, "horizontality, inclusiveness, openness, democracy" do not predetermine what is produced inside the Forum, but they "shape the *context* in which subjects themselves design." In other words, the WSF is not just a "space" to be filled; according to DeAngelis (and Santos), it provides an ontological field on which new experiences (and noncommodified social relations) could occur.

Linked to the idea of openness explicated in Agamben and Santos is the concept of diversity, one of the most talked about characteristics of the WSF, and for some, an important source of its power. Pleyers emphasizes the Forum's "respect for diversity" as a central value and understands the open space as "an ideal model of convergence" in

which the "fundamental value" of diversity "is used to combat its neoliberal adversaries as well as proponents of identity-based communitarianism." De Angelis points to Charles Tilly's work, *The Contentious French*, which reflects a view of diversity as

> an early stage in [a social movement's] formation, during which it is most important to 'draw one unified challenge from disparate and changing coalitions'…it will soon be overtaken either by a higher level of conformity that will diminish diversity as the movement matures or by the division and dispersion of the various components of the alternative globalisation movement.

Pleyers rejects this idea. Like De Angelis, he connects diversity with openness and stresses the vital role of diversity in the development of the GJM and social forums, which reflect the emergence of "a new model of convergence in which diversity is an intrinsic feature of the movement rather than an early stage of its formation." The organizational form to which he points is the network—the intersection of movements and organizations that balance desires for autonomy with cooperation and coordination.

Openness, Culture and Deliberation

The AWIP problematic is taken up in Michal Osterweil's work on the WSF, which not only focuses on the Forum's project to create a new political culture, but sees it as a more profound move to rethink what constitutes the political. Like Agamben, she seeks to "reinvent the political," but focuses specifically on the development of a "cultural-political approach" coming out of the social forum process itself. Osterweil points to various accounts – by Hilary Wainright, Chico Whitaker, Jai Sen and various others – that describe the WSF in cultural terms. These accounts do not treat the cultural aspects of the Forum as something added on to more serious, "political" goals; rather, "these authors see these *cultural, formal and micro-political* aspects as some of *the most*

important reasons why the Social Forum has proven such a powerful instrument for struggle against neo-liberal globalization."

Whether the WSF is really a "powerful instrument for struggle" is debatable; nonetheless, Osterweil's work raises the fundamental question of "*why* it is claimed that the most powerful instrument of struggle is derived from the power of open, free, and horizontal structures," i.e., why do participants and organizations view the open space as a power resource? Following Gramsci (yet without explicit reference to him), she points out that within the context of the WSF (and beyond), struggles over culture *are* political, even though many participants deny the importance of "elements such as diversity, internal democracy, epistemology, narratives, etc. [which] are conceived of as desirable, but not nearly as important as the 'real' political issues at stake." According to Osterweil, the WSF is "itself a reconceptualization of what social and political change look like" – a site at which "the struggle to assert the centrality of culture and politics is itself being played out."

A serious lack in Osterweil's essay should be noted here: the cultural-political approach she advocates is not radically different from that of social movement theorists in the "new social movements" school such as Touraine, Castells, Jaspers and various others who study the intersection of identity politics and culture (micropolitics and narratives). Gramsci and subsequent theorists of ideology and hegemony also politicize culture, but are less interested in the micropolitical aspects of struggle than addressing how culture performs (de)legitimizing functions within (and against) the totality of capitalist relations. Though she fails to mention these works, her essay should be understood less as a contribution to these literatures than as an address to WSF

participants seeking to make sense of the open space in terms of the potential of the WSF to exercise political agency.

Osterweil clarifies her understanding of culture, not as an homogenous characteristic imposed by a charter of principles or set of ideas, but as constituted by the social relations of a given space and the experiences, norms and values that shape it. Following the wide chasm between the concept of the open space articulated by Whitaker and the experience of activists like Lerner, Osterweil points to "the discrepancy between the culture of horizontality, openness, multiplicity, and democratic participation *stated* in the Charter of Principles, and the way it is actually *experienced*." She asserts that horizontals have attempted to mitigate this discrepancy, but are often marginalized by more powerful currents in the WSF who see them as part of a different "political culture." She criticizes the prevailing trend in the WSF to locate politics in advocacy projects and pressuring governments through issue-based campaigns that fail to address the "systemic, cultural or micropolitical aspects" of the policies these groups seek to contest. They do not challenge the prevailing political models nor recognize how struggles over culture are just as critical (if not more fundamental) to the realization of "another world" as are those over resources or the state. Rather, they focus on making modest reforms and reinforce the idea that power only resides in large-scale (mainstream) political and social institutions and organizations. Osterweil reminds that the WSF was not only founded as a way to construct alternatives to neoliberalism, but its open space was supposed to be a new political methodology—a critique of electoral politics. In this vein, she emphasizes the importance of the festival-like atmosphere of the social forums, which she asserts exceed (and are protests against) the limits of existing political structures.

Following Pleyer's critique of Tilly, Osterweil points out that many of the dominant political paradigms in the WSF "retain the belief of 'the political' as necessarily acting towards a future to come, rather than as something that can be effectively changed in the present." She wants to situate democratic practice itself – regardless of scale - as a political act. For Osterweil, while the Forum may operate in undemocratic ways and favor a reformist platform, "the very act of providing the space for the official event creates possibilities for diverse encounters that far exceed the limited views of the organizers." She attributes the productive excesses of the WSF space to the diversity of its participants, which she believes creates the conditions for the emergence of new social subjects: "spaces that are truly open and plural are not…simply technical necessities to accommodate difference, but [are] the basis for creating new subjects that are already part of the 'other worlds' the 'movement of movements' is trying to build."

Similar to Osterweil, Michael Menser (2005) has argued that the WSF's "innovative contribution is not that it is capable of solving the problem of creating a democracy on a global scale, but that it connects the agents and practices necessary for this construction, and it enables them to modify or transform themselves in order to build the *demos* (or *demoi*) necessary for global democracy" (Menser, 2005). Based on his experience as a lead organizer of the New York City Social Forum, Menser suggests that a more "goal-driven structure" may be needed to give form and momentum to the WSF project. While the WSF is already a site in which proposals are made, he asserts, they

> must be more than open spaces for random encounters. And, to some extent, they are. But there has not been enough organizational innovation in the structure of the Forums to further intensify and expand local and global left movements,

> especially in those locales that face harsh neo-liberal attacks but lack meaningful Left parties.

Menser presents two requirements for such a shift to occur: (1) "mechanisms must be created that enable movements to consolidate their collective power through the deepening and regularizing of relationships" and (2) the forum must create techniques to enable popular participation, which could be modeled after the participatory budget process in PoA. In particular, Menser advocates for the construction of decision-making mechanisms within the context of the WSF annual event and the development of a capacity-building enterprise to enable meaningful participation among participants.

Jai Sen (2005) also stresses the importance of making the WSF open space a more principled space. Like Osterweil, he stresses the importance of the "political culture" of the WSF:

> the real 'success' of the Forum is that it is permitting a scale of talking across boundaries – of cross-fertilization – that has rarely been dreamt of before, and there it thereby powerfully contributing to building a culture of open debate across conventional walls and boundaries….Literally a free space, for free thought – or to use Marx's term, 'a space for human self-development.'

For Sen, the open space is not just a governing tool or regulatory mechanism, it is a project that should be understood "as a general political culture in civil and political work." Like Menser, he asserts that while the WSF "is meant to be an open plural process, embracing people of many different persuasions, we need to work to build an organizational process that is based on norms and principles that are openly and commonly defined…" (Jai Sen 2003)

Immanuel Wallerstein (2004) agrees. He questions "whether and how the World Social Forum can develop the means to yoke together an open space and real, concrete

political activity." Part of the answer, he asserts, is to ensure that the WSF create "institutional space for *multiple* political alliances and activities" and that "the open space…be a space not only for the interchange of views and analyses by its participants but for an exchange concerning the fruitfulness of alternative modes of political action in the world system."

Conclusion

As this and previous chapters demonstrate, the WSF was founded as a mechanism for the GJM to move beyond protest and toward constructing alternatives to neoliberal globalization. Just one year after the founding of the WSF, a self-organized committee decided that it would assign the WSF the status of an open space, designed after the horizontal organizational practices of the Global Justice Movement. The open space idea was also inspired by WSF constituents' desire to construct non-electoral (autonomous) political structures and establish a venue for the continued meeting and cross-fertilization of the various organizations and movements that comprised the GJM.

While the WSF Charter of Principles was constructed to provide basic guidelines for keeping the space as open as possible, the following set of political assumptions can be detected in the authors' conception of openness: (1) when organizations and groups deliberate, their autonomy is necessarily compromised in the process; (2) political parties (and militant groups that advocate violent resistant) are coercive, hierarchical organizations; and (3) openness is about protecting individual liberty and one's right to participate (rather than facilitating participants' ability to participate or understanding how collectives are formed and nurtured). The Charter assumes that power differentials

and class inequalities are not operative in the "open" space of the WSF because there are no requirements for participation.

This text looks at three of the major groups/political orientations active in the WSF with different (yet sometimes overlapping) views of the WSF open space, including: (1) NGOs, that tend to see the WSF in Whitaker's terms—as a space in which distinct groups can network with each other, while not posing any real challenge to the existing (neoliberal) order. For them, the autonomy of their organizations within the context of the WSF must be protected because their funding and political relationships depend on it. As advocates and service providers, they reinforce the status quo arrangement of power and in some cases, facilitate the privatization of public services; (2) Social democrats in the Forum, as well as political parties that advocate for the proliferation of participatory practices in government, mirror a notion of the open space similar to that proposed by Habermas; i.e., they seek to develop the WSF as a deliberative sphere—or least a space for organizing—separate from the state (but with the potential to influence it). NGO advocates see the development of civil society in these terms—(they reject class as a category of struggle), but they fall short of Habermas' conception because their organizations constitute a "third sector," which operate according to tenets of instrumental reason to which he was deeply opposed; (3) Anarchists and autonomist movements, who seek to establish horizontal organizational forms, but stress the importance of building community as a means to challenge neoliberal (commodified) social relations—an anti-capitalist politics. They also stress the importance of culture as a site of contestation. Anarchists and autonomists believe that (radically democratic) deliberative practice is part of what constitutes openness. These actors are concerned with

the construction of normative structures to manage diversity. For them, deliberation can give birth to street action as well as a variety of other kinds of political activity—institution building and community activism (cooperatives), electoral political engagement and so on. Autonomists have pointed to three important aspects missing from current conceptions of the WSF open space that might enable it to better serve its goal to neoliberalism: (1) *Structure*: while the WSF has been successful at attracting varieties of activists and organizations, participants are essentially left to their own devices to weed through the massive space full of workshops and conferences and make connections with other activists working on similar issues. According to Josh Lerner (2005), "without formal rules and structures, open space is only truly open for those with the power to decide the unwritten rules and control of the informal structures." He and several other participants suggest that the WSF scale down and decentralize its activities to enable more meaningful interaction; for the WSF to become a more "democratic" space rather than an "open" one. Like Menser, Lerner draws inspiration from the participatory budget process in Porto Alegre and suggests that "participants of local forums could elect delegates to an international forum council, to help decision-making filter from the local to the global." As previous chapters assert, Michael Albert has also outlined an alternative, decentralized structure for the WSF similar to that of Lerner. Geoffrey Pleyers echoes their proposals: "One way to address some of the structural weaknesses of the model–in terms of numbers of participants, legitimacy, representativity, and links with grassroots movements–might be to improve coordination between forums at each level and to base each level on the level below."

(2) *Principles*: As countless participants have pointed out, the WSF Organizing Committee and its International Council and its current and potential structures should operate according to the principles of transparency, accountability and respect for different (diversity) at the core of the GJM's claims against neoliberalism and electoral politics. Moreover, if structures such as those identified by Lerner and Albert were put in place—if the WSF operated as a confederation—these principles would be necessary to maintaining the radically democratic openness of the Forum.

(3) *Capacity*: While many WSF participants point to the value of equality, the issue of capacity is by for more important to the functioning of the WSF and its potential to move beyond its current status as "just a space." Michael Menser points to the importance of capacity building in his work on the WSF. He points out that activism in the WSF (and in general) is contingent upon one's capacity to participate—from the ability to speak multiple languages to "public speaking skills, social capital or the ability to participate in all of the meetings, which is essential to understanding certain issues." Menser's stress on capacity challenges the current conception of openness in the WSF. Is the WSF open space capable of being affected by its participants as well as by those outside of it--is it really open? How does the space enable participants or increase their capacity to be affected by each other? In the case of the participatory budget, organizational principles, a discourse ethics and capacity building where key elements of the program and critical to its success (see chapter one)—Menser suggests that the WSF adopt this model.

Conclusion

Between Protest and Political Organization

The World Social Forum (WSF) was founded to perform two primary, overlapping functions: (1) to serve as a "social," more popular counterpart to and protest against the World Economic Forum in Davos and (2) as a mechanism through which the Global Justice Movement (GJM) could augment its protest activities, often staged at the meetings of global financial institutions such as the World Bank and IMF, by working collectively toward the development of alternative, non-neoliberal political institutions and models of economic development. The WSF is a product of a new generation of activists, including NGOs, autonomist/anarchist social movements and left political parties, who seek to avoid the pitfalls of previous waves of left-wing activism by attempting to reinvent Old and New Left visions of and practices toward fundamental social change and its agents, with specific attention to the almost century-old problems of centralization, coherence and strategy.

The WSF is also a product of the proliferation of international NGOs following the founding of the United Nations in 1945 and their challenge to the Westphalian order of state sovereignty, primarily through advocacy campaigns (e.g., human rights, environmental) and the provision of social services. The spread of international NGOs and transnational advocacy networks and their mounting influence has served as the impetus for an overabundance of debates regarding the resurgence of "civil society," and moreover the birth of a "global civil society," as a political protagonist on par with states and market actors (i.e., supranational financial institutions) that is oftentimes uncritically identified as an agent of purely democratic norms and values. The increasing relevance of

civil society (NGOs, in particular) and GJM activism on the world scene, as well as in specific locales, correlates historically with moves by left political parties, especially those in South America and Europe, to institute participatory structures in governance and build relationships with grassroots social movements and community groups, in some cases through the mechanism of the WSF and its local and regional offshoots.

The WSF continues to serve as a space for the development of advocacy and protest networks that theoretically operate against the neoliberal paradigm of development now pervasive in many parts of the world. While concrete proposals for more equitable models of development are often presented within its context—usually through issue-based projects---the WSF has really become a premier site in which issues and models of left political organization are being debated, implemented and tested. Many groups and organizations involved in the GJM and other progressive advocacy campaigns participate in the WSF because of their desire to join efforts with other activists, discuss broader issues of strategy and political process, and deal with the problem of how to structure their resistance efforts and the alternatives they envision on a more massive scale, while respecting the specificity of local milieux.

Recalling chapter five, this dissertation understands *political organization* as a site in which visions of and desires for social change meet, and are decided in terms of, questions of practice and agency. The concept of political organization utilized in this text was first theorized by classical Marxists in the early 20th century as an articulation of a broad-based opposition to capitalism, a solution to the problem of the fragmentation of the working class (i.e., the reification of the consciousness of the proletariat) and a theory of the transition between capitalism and a classless society. In Georg Lukacs'

"Methodology of the Problem of Organisation," political organization is the relationship between a class formation's (or social movement's) objective and the concrete steps toward its realization; it is the mediation between the subjective desires of people and the objective conditions in which they live and the ways in which they, as collectives, comprehend themselves within larger historical processes. It is the means through which movements come to understand their power in relation to the general landscape of power relations they seek to infiltrate and contest. In this regard, political organization extends questions of identity and subjectivity to broader issues regarding historical agency and social change.

Within the context of the WSF, participants engage in key debates over a broad array of substantive issues, all of which are directly related to political organization: Is capitalism and its institutional agents (e.g., the WTO, IMF, WEF and so on) reformable? What are the mechanisms through which supranational financial institutions and states can be democratized and made more accountable to the people whose lives they affect? If the IMF and World Bank were dissolved, what institutions and models of development would replace them? How can politically and socially disparate groups in the WSF–NGOs, grassroots social movements and party actors–work together to create more participatory democratic institutions? In the process of forging alternatives, how will the WSF and its constituents relate to political parties and militant groups and how does it conceive of its own power in relation to state power and violence? What are the key social and political characteristics of the contemporary world order and what strategies are available for radical social change?

The approach of this study involved looking at distinct sets of ideas and practices with regard to political organization and social change in the context of the WSF in terms of they inform, facilitate or hinder its project to create alternatives to neoliberal globalization. Given the WSF's role as the premier event for organizing and building international solidarity among left activists, this work should be understood as a case study of debates over political organization and competing views of social change and its catalysts on the contemporary left. To that end, the study siphoned the most salient debates over political organization within the WSF by looking closely at the political objectives and histories of the Forum's three most prominent participant groups: NGOs, anarchist and autonomous social movement actors and left political parties. It asked: What kinds of movements, groups and organizations participate in the WSF? What are their political orientations, to which political traditions are they connected and what are their perceived and potential power resources? What is their vision of social change and how do they see that intervention taking place in concrete terms? What is the relationship between the WSF and existing power structures: does it signify a retreat from politics or does it mark a transitional point or sphere, between protest and other forms of political agency?

As discussed in previous chapters, the disparate groups in the WSF mentioned above continue to clash over issues of political organization, harkening back to Lukacs' observations regarding its profound significance.

> On the level of pure theory the most disparate views and tendencies are able to co-exist peacefully, antagonisms are only expressed in the form of discussion which can be contained within the framework of one and the same organization without disrupting it. But no sooner are these same questions given organizational form than they turn out to be sharply opposed and even incompatible (Lukacs, 1972: 296-299).

The main fault-lines between NGO activists, anarchists/autonomists and left political party members have tended play out on three overlapping levels: (1) the internal organization of participant groups and the ways in which structure prefigures or epitomizes their political standpoints; (2) their political strategy: the kinds of activities they undertake and the nature of their relationships (or lack thereof) to other political actors; and (3) their organizational culture, linked to questions of internal structure, and the norms, values and principles according to which they operate. As this dissertation demonstrates, such cultural, structural and ideological issues point to a tension between organizational imperatives to unify struggles by centralizing and structuring them and desires to protect individual autonomy that, as Michael Hardt (2002) has asserted, are ultimately and inextricably tied to questions of sovereignty and democratic praxis. Debates over how the WSF should relate to states, for example, the viability, structure and function of militant social movement activity and violent resistance, and how seemingly fragmented, issue-based struggles could wage an effective resistance against neoliberalism, all reflect how different groups in the WSF distinctively theorize and in some cases prefigure the egalitarian society to which they aspire in terms of sovereignty and corresponding degrees of self-determination and social welfare. That is, their organizational and strategic decisions are imbued with political, and in particular, democratic theory.

Against the devoutly prefigurative orientation of anarchists, autonomists and other anti-capitalist actors in the WSF who seek to implement an anti-authoritarian and radically democratic, participatory culture/politics, NGOs in the WSF tend to be

organized hierarchically and work closely with states and corporate institutions to provide social services and advocate for disenfranchised groups. For left political party members, NGOs' tendency toward liberal democracy runs counter to their goal to unseat capitalist market hegemony and replace it with democratic socialist structures, focused on facilitating popular involvement and a strong, state-run (nationalized) social welfare system. By contrast, anarchists seek to dissolve states entirely, bolster individual sovereignty and community self-determination, and institute more participatory economic systems, rather than reinforce authority and inequality structures, which in their view, created the need for a welfare state in the first place. While radical parties and anarchists tend to share a common anti-capitalist, or at least quasi-socialist political orientation, they nevertheless differ on questions of political organization, including how to transition from a capitalist, state-centered order to a society without centralized authority structures, exploitation and competition.

In order to mitigate the extreme political differences among its constituents and the left in general, the founders of the WSF adopted the "open space" paradigm of organization, initially conceptualized and practiced by GJM activists. For anarchists and other GJM participants, autonomous spaces solve the janus-faced problem of fragmentation and autonomy by operating as non-hierarchical structures that bring people together and facilitate communication and networking through the development of common political organizational principles, but do not require their constituents to adopt a unified program or party line. These activists coined the term "horizontalism" to describe the methods by which such networks of autonomous individuals, organizations and groups form and operate according to principles of transparency, self-determination,

accountability, respect for difference and mutual aid. “Horizontals” reject authority in all its forms and seek to establish more participatory democratic forms of organizing and decision-making in their respective organizations and movements as part of their overall project to prefigure a more egalitarian society. In the context of the GJM, these activists developed deliberative procedures that facilitated and enabled direct participation by all members of a given collective—and viewed their own openness as a political value, which has actually gained institutional traction in some, more mainstream political climates (e.g., the participatory budget process in Brazil). By contrast, the founders of the WSF conceptualized the openness of the open space as a means to respect diversity, achieve maximal inclusiveness and protect the “civil society” nature of the event by excluding militant groups and political parties. Recalling Whitaker in chapter six, this conception of the open space as an unregulated space ran counter to anarchists’ practice of establishing common sets of principles according to which decision making processes could be undertaken by claiming that acts of deliberation would necessarily involve some level of coercion given the WSF’s size and the organizational imperatives of ensuring mass participation. As chapter six argues, the individualist conception of the open space put forth by Whitaker and reinforced in the WSF Chapter of Principles veers dangerously toward democratic liberalism and by way of its rejection of the Forum’s potential to exercise collective agency is having a severely depoliticizing effect on the event itself and its constituents.

The Future of the World Social Forum: Criticisms and Recommendations

While many of the WSF’s participants support the idea of an open space, others criticize its failure to live up to its own mandate: (1) Contrary to claims of horizontality, the WSF

has tended to favor big name intellectuals and large-scale NGOs and social movements over unaffiliated individuals and anarchists; (2) The Forum is inaccessible to organizations and individuals without adequate funding or those from certain geographic locales; (3) While claiming transparency, the WSF's Organizing Committee and International Council have made, behind closed doors, series of critical decisions regarding the direction of the WSF. Not only are their decision-making processes at odds with the open space ethic of the Forum, but in some cases carry political and social implications that contradict the political orientations and strategies of its constituents, not to mention its own Charter; (4) Despite its Charter, which identifies the WSF as nonpartisan, the WSF has strong affiliations with political party and state officials. It has allowed for high profile state and party figures to speak within the WSF venue and political parties have provided significant financial and other kinds of support (e.g., venue, housing, volunteers, and so on); (5) The WSF unfairly privileges certain geographic locales (namely, South America) and certain kinds of organizations and social movements (i.e., the Charter prohibits armed resistance groups from participating); and (6) The WSF lacks focus, coherence, direction, political strategy and impact. As Michael Menser (2005) put it:

> The undeniable attractiveness of the WSF is largely the result of its continued commitment to plurality and openness, especially for those aiming to connect across the gaps; and it is among these intervals that the SF [social forum] movement continues to grow as a truly rhizomatic insurgency, <u>but toward what end</u>? [my emphasis]

In an attempt to address these criticisms, the WSF Organizing Committee made the following changes: (1) The WSF was held in other countries of the world (India, Pakistan, Mali, Venezuela, and in Kenya scheduled for 2007) to allow for more

geographically diverse participation; (2) Organizers attempted to cultivate local, regional and thematic forums around the world, although no sustained effort has been made to link them to each other or to the more centralized WSF; (3) In 2005, organizers altered the format of the WSF to consist of self-organized assemblies, rather than sponsor big name speakers in large venues. In 2006, however, it returned to the initial, multi-tiered structure; and (4) The Organizing Committee expanded the International Council to include a more diverse array of social movement and NGO actors and allowed for the development of local organizing committees when the WSF was held outside of Brazil. Despite these efforts, however, the WSF has failed to address the most challenging of its criticisms: the question of political strategy and impact. In a 2005 essay, Hilary Wainright wrote:

> The global justice movement and the anti-war movement have both effectively won the moral arguments. But they have not had a commensurate impact on the exercise of political and economic power…How could the strength of the moral arguments be turned into effective sources of transformative power?

Countless advocates of the WSF point to the plurality of its participants, accompanying cultural expressions and its overall success in cultivating a genuinely counter-hegemonic and utopian political paradigm: “Another World is Possible.” While some dismiss the WSF as merely an annual meeting or “talk shop,” its educational aspects and cultural cross-fertilizations foster the development and proliferation of organic intellectuals and have aided in the development of important anti-privatization, anti-free trade and anti-war campaigns around the world, especially in the Global South. In addition, the development of local and regional forums around the world offers the possibility of building new cultural, educational and political institutions that correspond to the needs of local communities, while capturing the totalizing imaginary of the WSF as a counter-

hegemonic force composed of groups and movements of civil society, untainted by state and market interests.

The common thread among theories of civil society is the concern, not only with the rights, procedures and institutions that support democracy, but with the underlying social relations that constitute them. For its founders, the WSF was established as a space in which the social relations that enable democratic practice may be cultivated; recalling Menser (2005) in chapter six, the WSF has the potential to serve as a mechanism through which the capacities necessary for "maximum democracy (maxD)" may be developed and tested. Caught in the uneasy process of weighing organizational needs against desires to create an open space free of hierarchy, the WSF has been remarkably successful as a venue for people from diverse political and social backgrounds to discuss the pitfalls of neoliberal globalization and begin to consider alternatives to it. While early on, the diversity, spontaneity and good nature of the WSF tended to trump the structural and exclusionary practices of its seemingly well-intentioned Organizing Committee, in recent years tensions have mounted over the lack of transparency and accountability in organizing the process and the overall depoliticized character of the Forum. Autonomous projects have operated in good faith by "contaminating" WSFs and ESFs and creating separate, self-directed spaces within its territory, thereby showing support while maintaining their fundamental critiques. Many of these groups—squatter communities in Europe, anti-privatization campaigns in South African townships, worker-run factories in South America--have made significant progress constructing alternative models of social life and demonstrating that another world can be imagined and produced on a local scale,

but unlike the social forums, they have adopted coherent, in some cases, anti-capitalist, political strategies.

Despite the many inroads the WSF has made in terms of bringing together disparate groups and serving as a springboard for the development of advocacy networks, the WSF Charter of Principles and the "Chico Whitaker" version of the open space will require serious revision if the WSF is to survive. First, while the Charter defines the WSF as a nondeliberative, noncoercive, nonpartisan open space (and process), it does little to explicate actual principles according to which participants, and especially organizers, should operate. Principles such as accountability, transparency and mutual aid that guided the activities of the GJM and its constituent movements and organizations are not present in the Charter, yet they remain important, unarticulated values of many WSF participants. The lack of principles has to some degree fallen into the "Tyranny of Structurelessness" trap: the current conception of the open space as an unregulated space has in some cases exacerbated existing inequalities among participant groups, and the lack of accountability and transparency from organizers and International Council members has resulted in a notable degree of bad faith. In addition to the dearth of organizational and operational principles, the WSF Charter of Principles identifies neoliberalism as a common enemy without providing an adequate definition of the term. The lack of precision and fanatical push toward inclusiveness has aggravated deep divisions among WSF participants, especially over the question of NGOs' involvement and funding from organizations like political parties and the Ford Foundation, which is often identified as an agent of neoliberalism by the radical left.

A potential solution to the lack of accountability and transparency and the problem of the open space, as articulated in more detail in chapter six, would be to transform the Charter of Principles into a dynamic, contestable document. While advocates of the current conception of the open space understand the Charter as a protection against coercion and co-optation by political parties, market and state actors and argue that organizational imperatives preclude having an open (i.e., democratically decided) set of principles to guide the process, others see the current Charter as reflecting the particular interests of the initial, mostly social democratic, cadre of WSF organizers and not those of the WSF enterprise as a whole. Thus, while proponents of the current conception of the open space argue that the ideological diversity of its constituency precludes the possibility for it to undertake deliberative and action-oriented functions without becoming coercive in some way, others see the very preclusion of contestation over the Charter as a coercive act.

The institution of deliberative structures and processes for establishing a dynamic Charter of Principles, shared and owned by the entire social forum community, could open doors for WSF involvement in more mainstream political venues. The WSF might utilize its collective force (participation in the WSF and its local offshoots amounts to roughly half a million people) to take public stands against problems like the Iraq war, abuses of prisoners of war and the various treaties that WSF constituents almost unanimously oppose, such as the NAFTA, FTAA and so on. As the GJM demonstrated through its unique decision-making techniques, such deliberative processes may also serve as a means through which political differences, including unresolved issues over

political organization and the fragmentation of the left into issue-based struggles, can be negotiated and better understood.

As both Menser (2005) and Lerner (2005) point out in their work on the WSF, the participatory budget process in Brazil provides a viable model for the development and augmentation of participatory procedures that could help the WSF negotiate its transformation from a meeting space for the reinforcement of individual activist identities toward the development of a large-scale, decentralized left political organization. For example, the participatory budget model in Brazil has involved large numbers of people in local governance processes (thereby establishing processes of self-governance), while engaging in capacity building and public education. In this way, the participatory budget operates on the level of "dual power," discussed in the anarchist literature as well as in Aronowitz (2006): it involves negotiations and reform at the level of the state as well as the development of new social and cultural institutions at the grassroots.

In addition to adopting a more deliberative, participatory character, the question of how the WSF understands its own constitution as "composed of groups and movements of civil society" must be further interrogated and redefined. The viability of a non-coercive, interest-free sphere within the current context of capitalist globalization must be questioned, as should the value of such a space that does not aim to challenge or diffuse state power. As mentioned previously, the "civil society" identity of the WSF reflects the aim of its organizers to be as inclusive as possible of the multiplicity of contemporary issue-based, activist projects, but it ignores how the concept has been used in popular discourse to obscure class inequalities, and create an illusion of democratic participation in the midst of a highly fragmented and incoherent left. For example, many

of the NGOs involved in the WSF are, perhaps unwittingly, involved in social service and foreign aid projects that unseat local trade unionism, act against struggles for state-sponsored services and the dissolution of social safety nets, and continue to lend a humanitarian face to contemporary wars and violent interventions.

The WSF's uneasy relationship to states and political parties is related to the problem of its identity as an organ of "civil society." The impetus for the WSF ban on parties can be traced to a variety of factors: (1) WSF participants and founders sought to create a unique social space for movements and NGOs to build activist networks and bolster their political projects without becoming subsumed in electoral politics or electorally-based definitions of democratic practice; (2) participants and organizers wanted to ensure that the domestic politics of any one locale did not take over the Forum or supplant its global character; (3) the ban was a response to the failures of left political parties to make good on their promise to work toward an egalitarian, democratic society (i.e., contemporary activists tend to view parties as authoritarian, sectarian and vanguardist); (4) the ban was a response to new social movements' practice of building non-hierarchical "spaces" and networks as part of their prefigurative, democratic practice.

The assumption underlying the nonpartisan character of the WSF is that the sphere of civil society--comprised of social movements, NGOs, church groups and other institutions--operates according to sets of interests and norms that are distinct from those of state actors. The participatory programs of the Brazilian Worker's Party (PT) and other Latin American parties and governments, in Bolivia, Argentina, Venezuela and so on, counter this assumption: as detailed in chapter one, left (democratic socialist) parties in the South increasingly understand themselves as reflexes of social movements rather than

workerist, party vanguards; and they differ significantly from typical electoral parties in that they understand participation as central to democracy.

The dual project of rethinking its identity as a forum of civil society and its relationship to the state will require further discussion and deliberation regarding how the WSF and its constituents can fight for reform within the scope of national governments, while calling for and attempting to engage a more radically democratic politics. What kinds of institutions can the WSF help to build and how can it involve a broader range of people while focusing on issues related to the everyday? How can the WSF help to help mitigate the failures of electoral institutions and provide opportunities for meaningful participation in local, regional and global (self-)governance? In order to adequately address these and other pressing issues, the WSF must shed its current identity as an open space, comprised of individual actors, and begin to see itself as a collective, political organizational unit with the potential for the radical transformation of existing social and political institutions and the constitution of “another world” from below.

Appendix One: Research Methodology

The Challenges of Studying the World Social Forum

There are currently five books on the World Social Forum: (1) William F. Fisher and Thomas Ponniah's *Another World is Possible: Popular Alternatives to Globalization at the World Social Forum (*2003), a compilation of documents from the WSF in 2002 and papers from key speakers and participant organizations on alternatives to neoliberal globalization; (2) *The World Social Forum: Challenging Empires,* edited by Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar and Peter Waterman (available online), is a collection of essays on the theory and practice of the WSF—this collection is referenced heavily in this dissertation; (3) Jose Correa Leite's (member of the Brazilian WSF Organizing Committee) *The World Social Forum: Strategies of Resistance*, which lays out the origins, development and challenges of the WSF– a primer on the WSF, the Global Justice Movement and the institutions they oppose; (4) International Committee Member Boaventura de Sousa Santos' *World Social Forum: A User's Manual* (2004), a philosophical primer on the WSF; and (5) Chico Whitaker's book on the World Social Forum open space, which is not yet available in English.

In addition to the commentary and analysis contained in the above books and the wealth of written materials available on the Internet, the WSF provides basic attendance statistics on the its website, broken down by registration category and country of origin. In collaboration with the WSF organizers, the Brazilian research institute, Instituto Brasiliero de Analises Socias e Econômicas (IBASE), published a report entitled, *World Social Forum: An X-Ray of Participation in the 2005 Forum, Elements for Debate* (2005), which provides more detailed statistics on WSF participants. The demographics

contained in the report are delineated by participants' organizational involvements, which were not useful to this study because the authors lumped "NGOs, political parties and trade unions" together in a single category and "students" in another, which did not elucidate the *political* organizational perspectives of these participants. IBASE did do a study of the political perspectives of a sample on WSF participants, which is cited in this text.

Despite the abundance of material on the WSF, researchers and participants almost unanimously agree on the methodological challenges it poses for social research. Social Forum students, participants and organizers have commented on the difficulties and nuances of studying the WSF in a systematic way. For example, Indian author Nikhail Anand (2003) asserted that "Those studying diverse social networks and spaces like the WSF are at once confronted with methodological difficulties. While attempting to make coherent the actions of actors that frame different discourses at different times, distilling or avoiding contradictions gives rise to apocryphal simplications." He pointed out, however, that such contradictions are important for understanding the nature of the WSF process, but in general, accounts of the process are likely to be reductive. Anand points out that spaces like the WSF "defy 'thick description' and 'cut across regions of academic inquiry, at once tracing the commonalities and creating a form that none can recognize or analyze in its totality'." He suggests that the chaotic nature of the WSF is deliberate – that it defies institutionalization and that "as people move about the WSF in unpredictable…ways, it becomes difficult to map the WSF as a single coherent event. It also makes it that much more difficult to appropriate."

Michal Osterweil (2004) criticizes the perspective, prevalent among analyses of the WSF, in which the "cultural-political" elements of the Forum "such as diversity, internal democracy, epistemology, narratives, etc. are conceived of as desirable, but not nearly as important as the 'real' political issues at stake." This limited view of what constitutes the political is "one of the main reasons why it has been so hard for existing social scientific and political vocabularies to make sense of, or evaluate, the political 'effectiveness' of the social forums" and the GJM movement. Osterweil outlines a "cultural-political" method to studying the WSF and the debates within its context that is distinct from studies of the "political culture" of the Forums: while the WSF is a site for the production of new political cultures – (e.g. the WSF Charter of Principles promotes a new kind of assembly—the open space), this approach reduces "what counts as political" and fails to address the ways culture can function politically. Rather than looking at norms dictated from above through the Charter and definition of the open space such as that of Chico Whitaker (see chapter six), she is more interested in "the culture of politics embodied in the practices, relations and processes that define a given space and event." For Osterweil, these practices are political acts: "cultural and social elements are themselves imbued with and constituted by relations of power that are themselves political."

Another WSF participant and theorist, Michael Menser (2005), contends that "any attempt to distill the forum's significance or contemplate its potential must be theoretically located and agenda-driven." He outlines two sets of difficulties in evaluating the WSF: the first difficulty pertains to the newness and size of the WSF. Echoing Anand, he asserts that

> the WSF's newness combined with its size and scope—and the incredible linguistic diversity among its participants—makes it difficult to track all the various actors before, during and after the Forum. Imagine evaluating the labor movement or the African National Congress's role in the anti-apartheid struggle just after five years. This is not to say that such an evaluation is too early; self-criticism in this early stage is essential to charting possible directions for the Forum…But grandiose proclamations, especially negative ones, are of dubious worth (Ibid. 2005).

The second difficulty is related to the fundamental methodological question of posing evaluation criteria to assess the WSF given its structure, objectives and short lifespan. Menser asks: "what criteria should be used to critically assess a movement that claims to be novel…and to beckon us towards a political horizon that is supposed to remain open?...if the WSF is an opening onto a new politics…then the criteria to be applied must be different from those used to evaluate pre-WSF political movements."

The Approach of this Study

This study acknowledges the difficulties outlined above. As Menser points out, it is nearly impossible to draw any firm conclusions or make predictions regarding the future of the WSF or make generalizeable claims regarding the effectiveness of any one political organizational approach to social change being debated within its context. Part of the reason for this uncertainly is due to the fact that the WSF is a grassroots assembly in the midst of a struggle to develop new, democratic organizational forms (in rejection to previous generations of left activists) and new methods of enacting social change. As a result, the WSF is consistently contested—in just six years, it has undergone significant changes in venue and structure, and its fundamental objectives questioned and revised. This study aims to contribute to the existing literature on the social forums by documenting the ideological products being forged within its context. Despite Anand's

insights regarding the chaotic and unmappable nature of the event, this study demonstrates that there are indeed coherent sets of ideas being produced within the WSF, especially with regard to the development of alternatives to neoliberalism and the methods by which they can be realized. This study seeks to elucidate and analyze them within the broader context of the left's contemporary anti-neoliberal program and the sometimes competing political traditions from which it arose. In this light, it has sought to answer questions such as: What are the political orientations of the groups and movements that participate in the WSF and what are their perceived and potential power resources? What is their vision of social change and how do they see that intervention taking place in concrete terms? What is the open space and what model of civil society is operative in its definition? And, how is it being contested? What is the relationship between the open space and existing power structures – is the WSF open space a power resource, does it signify a retreat from politics?

Research Methods

This study used qualitative research methods, including open-ended interviews, participant observation and content analysis of websites and written materials to answer the above questions on the WSF. These methods were chosen first, because qualitative methods are best suited to understanding phenomena in context-specific settings where the "phenomenon of interest unfold naturally" (Patton, 2001, p. 39). Moreover, while quantitative researchers seek to establish causality and predict or generalize their findings, qualitative research attempts to gain understanding and apply findings to similar problems and circumstance (Hoepfl, 1997).

Published dissertations on the subject have also made use of qualitative research methods, including theory-driven participant observation and semi-structured interviews (Ponniah, Reitan, 2006; Juris, 2005). Reitan's (2006) dissertation on the role of the World Social Forum in the development of transnational activism includes a lengthy reflection on the methods used for her research. In the discussion, she explains her use of the Participant-Action Research (PAR) approach, seated most prominently in the work of Kemmis and McTaggart (cited in Reitan, 2006). Reitan explains that while PAR includes a variety of methods, "participatory research" is most relevant to her study and other studies of activist groups and networks. According to Reitan, "Scholar-activists working in this tradition are committed to participatory methods and are responsive to the ideas and needs of local people…doing research in concrete setting geared toward social, economic and political development, or in 'consciousness-raising' activities which lead to 'unmasking' power and dominating structures, and thereby fomenting political awareness and collective action" (Reitan, 2006).

Reitan discusses her direct involvement in the transnational activist networks in her study and explains how PAR allowed her to assume the roles of both insider and outsider. She admits that while PAR methods often do not adhere to the methodological criteria of mainstream social science, they are nonetheless methodologically robust: "Whatever methods are chosen, they entail a special concern for protecting those who participate and a greater awareness of the work's potential repercussions in specific contexts" (Ibid. 2006:52). Moreover, she points out that they tend to be more flexible to new developments that may alter the general categories of analysis (i.e., the relationship

between theoretical and empirical findings is reflexive) as PAR involves a high degree of ongoing self-criticism and interrogation into one's own biases.

Given my activism in the GJM and WSF, this study has necessarily made use of data obtained by way of PAR methods. I have attended hundreds of protest events and strategy meetings (many of which are discussed in this work) as an active participant in the Global Justice Movement and social forums. I attended weekly meetings of the Direct Action Network (DAN) between early 2001 and late 2002 and have been closely involved in teach-ins and counter-summits as both participant and organizer. In short, I have extensive involvement and contacts among the activist groups and networks in the Global Justice and Anti-war movements (especially in Europe and the United States). As in Reiman, these involvements have been crucial to informing my work on the WSF.

In addition to the informal involvements that influence this work, the following formal protocols were planned and implemented specifically for this study.

Open-Ended Interviews and Preliminary Survey

This study involved a limited number of open-ended, in-depth interviews (n=10) with key informants; i.e., participants of the World and European Social Forums who played a significant role in the organization of the events (as organizers or funders) or wrote key essays or books on the subject. These interviews served only as a starting point to frame the study and identify the major debates and political organizational categories operative in the context of the Forum. Much of the information gleaned from the interviews were confirmed through other methods, including observation and analysis of written materials.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was used as a method of data collection for this research primarily as a means of assessing the culture of the WSF, its physical structure and the "experience" of the event. Observations were conducted at the following social forum events: The 2003 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil; the 2006 "Polycentric" World Social Forum in Caracas, Venezuela; the 2003 European Social Forum in Paris, France; and the New York City Social Forum in early January, 2003. In addition to these annual events, I attended several planning meetings of the New York City Social Forum (municipal), Berlin Social Forum (municipal), the Austrian Social Forum (national) and the German Social Forum (national).

Within each forum context, observation was conducted in each type of venue: (1) the Youth Camp and other autonomous spaces; (2) WSF-sponsored events in large venues; (2) addresses by public officials outside the WSF territory (Lula's address to the WSF in 2003, Chavez in 2003 and 2006); (3) self-organized workshops in various venues; (4) common spaces on the grounds of the Forum, including the open market and "tents" dedicated to social movements, such as the Zapatistas and Via Campesina; and (5) the opening and closing ceremonies and marches, which in come cases became protest sites. Permission was gained prior to observing social forum planning meetings, and interviews (in Germany and Austria) were conducted afterwards.

Content Analysis

In addition to interviews and observation, which were invaluable to understanding the background and "feel' of the event, published or publicly available written materials were a primary resource for this study. While direct observation yielded important information about the culture of the WSF and some of the events and debates that took place within its boundaries, the forums themselves were far too expansive for me to access all the panels and events that took place. Moreover, much of the discussion and debates about the forums occur on websites and online journals and not in the context of the Forum per se. Although some meta-discussion regarding the forums is staged at the annual events, panels are predominantly issue-based. Since this dissertation research is focused on ideas about the WSF and the political organizational views of its constituents, written debates regarding the future of the WSFs and ESFs were a major resource and there is no shortage of material. This research is based on a review of over one thousand articles on the forums from various websites, newspapers, magazines and journals, which were grouped according to topic. These sources are quoted in the body of this text as (1) qualitative accounts of the WSF process and representations of the perspectives of its participants; and (2) as experts on the subject.

Sources used in this study are cited in the bibliography of this text, and were obtained through a careful review of websites, listervs and print materials. The main sources for information on the WSF include: *Z Magazine* and its online adjunct *Znet*, Planet Porto Alegre.net (www.portpalegre2003.net, available in six languages), the nadir project (www.nadir.org), Choike.org (a project of the Third World Institute), openDemocracy.net (published by the openDemocracy Foundation for the Advancement of Global Education) and the online magazine *Red Pepper*. Print sources include the BBC

News, *The Guardian* (which covers the ESF and WSF each year), *The New Left Review* and *The Nation*, among others. The WSF's own webpage, available in five languages, contains background information on the WSF process, "evaluations" (commentary by leading activists and intellectuals) and archives of other relevant materials. In addition, WSF organizers and participants host a website dedicated specifically issues regarding the WSF open space – the Open Space Forum – sponsored by the India Institute for Critical Action: www.openspaceforum.net. It should be noted here that the sources were, unfortunately, limited to those written in or translated into English. Most articles appear in or are translated in English, but country-specific blogs and Indymedia sites are not and for this reason, they did not serve as a data source for this study.

Appendix Two: The WSF Charter of Principles
(available on the official World Social Forum website www.forumsocialmundial.org.br and published in Sen, Jai, Escobar; Anand, Anita; Escobar, Arturo; and Waterman, Peter (eds.) *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires*. New Delhi: Viveka Foundation.

The committee of Brazilian organizations that conceived of, and organized, the first World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre from January 25th to 30th, 2001, after evaluating the results of that Forum and the expectations it raised, consider it necessary and legitimate to draw up a Charter of Principles to guide the continued pursuit of that initiative. While the principles contained in this Charter - to be respected by all those who wish to take part in the process and to organize new editions of the World Social Forum - are a consolidation of the decisions that presided over the holding of the Porto Alegre Forum and ensured its success, they extend the reach of those decisions and define orientations that flow from their logic.

1. The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth.

2. The World Social Forum at Porto Alegre was an event localized 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.

3. The World Social Forum is a world process. All the meetings that are held as part of this process have an international dimension.

4. The alternatives proposed at the World Social Forum stand in opposition to a process of globalization commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions at the service of those corporations interests, with the complicity of national governments. They are designed to ensure that globalization in solidarity will prevail as a new stage in world history. This will respect universal human rights, and those of all citizens - men and women - of all nations and the environment and will rest on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples.

5. The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks only organizations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world, but intends neither to be a body representing world civil society.

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 authorized, 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 organizations and movements that participate in it.

7. Nonetheless, organizations or groups of organizations 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, hierarchizing, censuring or restricting them, but as deliberations of the organizations or groups of organizations that made the decisions.

8. The World Social Forum is a plural, diversified, non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party context that, in a decentralized fashion, interrelates organizations and movements engaged in concrete action at levels from the local to the international to build another world.

9. The World Social Forum will always be a forum open to pluralism and to the diversity of activities and ways of engaging of the organizations and movements that decide to participate in it, as well as the diversity of genders, ethnicities, cultures, generations and physical capacities, providing they abide by this Charter of Principles. Neither party representations nor military organizations shall participate in the Forum. Government leaders and members of legislatures who accept the commitments of this Charter may be invited to participate in a personal capacity.

10. The World Social Forum is opposed to all totalitarian and reductionist views of economy, development and history and to the use of violence as a means of social control by the State. It upholds respect for Human Rights, the practices of real democracy, participatory democracy, peaceful relations, in equality and solidarity, among people, ethnicities, genders and peoples, and condemns all forms of domination and all subjection of one person by another.

11. As a forum for debate, the World Social Forum is a movement of ideas that prompts reflection, and the transparent circulation of the results of that reflection, on the mechanisms and instruments of domination by capital, on means and actions to resist and overcome that domination, and on the alternatives proposed to solve the problems of exclusion and social inequality that the process of capitalist globalization with its racist, sexist and environmentally destructive dimensions is creating internationally and within countries.

12. As a framework for the exchange of experiences, the World Social Forum encourages understanding and mutual recognition among its participant organizations and movements, and places special value on the exchange among them, particularly on all that society is building to centre economic activity and political action on meeting the

needs of people and respecting nature, in the present and for future generations.

13. As a context for interrelations, the World Social Forum seeks to strengthen and create new national and international links among organizations and movements of society, that - in both public and private life - will increase the capacity for non-violent social resistance to the process of dehumanization the world is undergoing and to the violence used by the State, and reinforce the humanizing measures being taken by the action of these movements and organizations.

14. The World Social Forum is a process that encourages its participant organizations and movements to situate their actions, from the local level to the national level and seeking active participation in international contexts, as issues of planetary citizenship, and to introduce onto the global agenda the change-inducing practices that they are experimenting in building a new world in solidarity.

Approved and adopted in São Paulo, on April 9, 2001, by the organizations that make up the World Social Forum Organizing Committee, approved with modifications by the World Social Forum International Council on June 10, 2001.

Appendix Three: World Social Forum Themes, 2006

For 2006, the thematic themes were different at each site.

Caracas, Venezuela

1. Power, politics and struggles for social emancipation
2. Imperial strategies and peoples' resistance
3. Resources for and rights to life: alternatives to the predatory model of civilization
4. Diversities, identities and worldviews in movement
5. Work, exploitation and reproduction of life
6. Communication, culture and education: alternative and democratizing dynamics.

Traversals: Gender and Diversities

Bamako, Mail

1. War, safety and peace
2. Globalized liberalism: apartheid in worldwide scale and impoverishment
3. Marginalization of the continent and its peoples, migrations, violation of economic, social and cultural rights
4. Aggression against rural societies
5. Alliance between patriarchalism and neoliberalism and marginalization of women's struggles
6. Culture, media and communication: critical thinking and reconstruction, symbolic violences and exclusions; 7. Destruction of ecosystems, biological diversities and control of resources
8. International order: United Nations, international institutions, international rights/law, reconstruction of the South front
9. International trade, debt and social and economic policies
10. Alternatives that will allow advances in democracy, social progress and respect for peoples' sovereignty and international

Karachi, Pakistan

1. Imperialism, militarization and armed conflicts in the region and peace movements
2. Natural resources Rights, peoples' control & privatization, and Trans-boundary disputes
3. Trade Development and globalization
4. Social Justice Human Rights and Governance
5. State and religion, pluralism and fundamentalism
6. Nation, nationalities and ethnic and cultural identifies
7. Development strategies, poverty unemployment and displacement
8. Peoples' movements and alternative strategies
9. Women, patriarchy and social change; and 10. Environment, ecology and livelihoods

Traversals: Imperialist globalization, patriarchy, caste and racism, religious sectarianism, identity politics, fundamentalism and militarism and peace

Appendix Four: Platform of the International Movement ATTAC (take directly from ATTAC International website: www.attacorg.

International movement for democratic control of financial markets and their institutions
Adopted at the international meeting of December 11-12, 1998.

Financial globalization increases economic insecurity and social inequalities. It bypasses and undermines popular decision-making, democratic institutions, and sovereign states responsible for the general interest. In their place, it substitutes a purely speculative logic that expresses nothing more than the interests of multinational corporations and financial markets.

In the name of a transformation of the world depicted as a natural law, citizens and their representatives find their decision-making power contested. Such a humiliating proof of impotence encourages the growth of anti-democratic parties. It is urgent to block this process by creating new instruments of regulation and control, at the national, European, and international levels. Experience clearly shows that governments will not do so without encouragement. Taking up the double challenge of social implosion and political desperation thus requires a dramatic increase in civic activism.

The total freedom of capital circulation, the existence of tax havens, and the explosion of the volume of speculative transactions have forced governments into a frantic race to win the favor of big investors. Every day, one hundred billion dollars pass through the currency markets in search of instant profits, with no relation to the state of production or to trade in goods and services. The consequences of this state of affairs are the permanent increase of income on capital at the expense of labor, a pervasive economic insecurity, and the growth of poverty.

The social consequences of these developments are even more severe for dependent countries that are directly affected by the financial crisis and are subjected to the dictates of the IMF’s adjustment plans. Debt service requires governments to lower social service budgets to a minimum and condemn societies to underdevelopment. Interest rates much higher than in the countries of the North contribute to the destruction of national producers; uncontrolled privatization and denationalization develop in the search for the resources demanded by investors.

Everywhere social rights are called into question. Where there are public retirement systems, workers are asked to replace them by a pension fund mechanism that subjects their own employers to the sole imperatives of immediate profitability, extends the sphere of influence of finance, and persuades citizens of the obsolescence of institutions of solidarity between nations, peoples, and generations. Deregulation affects the labor market as a whole, and the results include degradation of working conditions, the growth of workplace insecurity and unemployment, and the dismantling of systems of social protection.

Using economic development and job creation as a pretext, the major powers have not given up plans for a Multilateral Agreement on Investments (MAI) which would give the investors all the rights and leave national governments with all the responsibilities. Under the pressure of public opinion and mobilization of activists, they had to abandon plans to negotiate this agreement in the framework of the OECD, but discussions will resume in the framework of the World Trade Organization. At the same time the USA as well as the European Commission continue their free trade crusade, pushing for the creation of new zones of deregulation at the continental or intercontinental level (the PET project between Europe and North America, the extension of NAFTA into Latin America, etc.)

There is still time to put the brakes on most of these machines for creating inequalities between North and South as well as in the heart of the developed countries themselves. Too often, the argument of inevitability is reinforced by censorship of information about alternatives. Thus international financial institutions and the major media (whose owners are often beneficiaries of globalization) have been silent about the proposal of the American economist and Nobel Laureate James Tobin, to tax speculative transactions on currency markets. Even at the particularly low rate of 0.1%, the Tobin Tax would bring in close to $100 billion every year. Collected for the most part by industrialized countries, where the principal financial markets are located, this money could be used to help struggle against inequalities, to promote education and public health in poor countries, and for food security and sustainable development. Such a measure fits with a clearly antispeculative perspective. It would sustain a logic of resistance, restore maneuvering room to citizens and national governments, and, most of all, would mean that political, rather than financial considerations are returning to the fore.

To this end, signatories propose to participate or to cooperate with the international movement ATTAC to debate, produce and disseminate information, and act together, in their respective countries as well as on the continental and international levels. This joint actions have the following goals:

- to hamper international speculation;
- to tax income on capital;
- to penalize tax havens;
- to prevent the generalization of pension funds;
- to promote transparency in investments in dependant countries;
- to establish a legal framework for banking and financial operations, in order not to penalize further consumers and citizens; the employees of banking institutions can play an important role in overseeing these operations;
- to support the demand for the general annulment of the public debt of dependent countries, and the use of the resources thus freed in behalf of populations and sustainable development, which many call paying off the "social and ecological debt.

More generally, the goals are:

- to reconquer space lost by democracy to the sphere of finance,
- to oppose any new abandonment of national sovereignty on the pretext of the “rights” of

investors and merchants,
- to create a democratic space at the global level.

It is simply a question of taking back, together, the future of our world.

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