

**Second Thoughts on The Third World Social Forum:**

# **Place, Space and the Reinvention of Social Emancipation on a Global Scale**

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## **Abstract**

If the First World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, 2001, was mostly marked by protest against the World Economic Forum taking place at the same time, and the Second, in 2002, by attempts to specify the meaning of ‘Another World is Possible!’, the Third, in January 2003, was marked by a questioning of the extent to which the Forum – now an increasingly globalized phenomenon – itself embodies what it is preaching to others. After a political/definitional Introduction, this paper considers WSF3 in terms of: 1) The danger of going forward to the past of social movements and internationalism; 2) The problematic relationship with the ‘old’ trade unions; 3) The uneven age, gender, ethnic, etc, composition of the Forum; 4) The uncertain future of a proposed global social movement network; 5) The necessity of a communications/media/cultural internationalism; 6) The possibility of an academy of global empowerment. The Conclusion is that the ‘secret of fire’ of radical-democratic and internationalist social movements is now a public one, thus offering some guarantee of a continuation and deepening of the forum process.

*'If we agree that the most important characteristic of the Forum is the 'open space' it offers for free exchange, then especially at the present juncture in history, the World Social Forum needs to make it its task to promote the idea of open space as a general political culture in civil and political work. Building open space – building an open political culture, and defending open space – needs to be seen as a project in itself, and those who believe in this idea need to come and work together on this... Given that the World Social Forum is meant to be an open plural process, embracing people of many different persuasions, we need to work to build an organisational process that is based on norms and principles that are openly and commonly defined, and not on gentlemanly or comradely behaviour between a few and that cannot be questioned by others'. (Jai Sen 2003)*

*'What we want is the full development of cyberspatial practices... We want social movements and social actors to build on this logic in order to create unheard of forms of collective intelligence – subaltern "intelligent communities" capable of re-imagining the world and inventing alternative process of world-making... The result could be a type of world-scale networking based on internationalist principles (a Fifth International? The Cyberspatial International)[...] What we want is the world's Left to take this model seriously in their organising, resistance and creative practices. The lessons for the Left are clear! In the long run, this amounts to reinventing the nature and dynamics of social emancipation.' (Arturo Escobar 2003)*

*'A transversal politics of location and connection demands explicit attention to concrete mechanisms that enable open dialogue, such as limiting speaking times, allowing each to speak in turn, and facilitating intensive one-to-one conversations. On a transnational level, it also requires efforts to take on board linguistic diversity. Possible measures here include communicating in more than one language, non-verbally and through translators. Furthermore, open dialogue also requires efforts to tackle the power relations between participants that structure access to dialogue and shape its outcomes. Applied to transnational politics, this necessitates that political actors make proactive efforts to redress the iniquitous geopolitical distribution of economic, social and technological resources. Thus the locations of meetings and organisations should be made accessible to...and funds targeted to enable the poorest to participate in agenda-setting [...] Finally, the movement praxis delineated here offers an alternative to both reformist complacency and the revolutionary model of change, one that aspires to transform social and political structures through complex processes of societal self-organization. (Eschle 2002:330-31)*

## **Introduction: Dis/Orientations**

In my particular corner of the Third World Social Forum (WSF3, Porto Alegre, Brazil, late-January, 2003) the expressed experiences were those of euphoria and disorientation, of simultaneous stimulation and frustration, of being both in a unique international meeting-place and in a commercial market-place (dual meanings of 'agora' in Greek), of an increasing scepticism of the intellect not always accompanied by a similar optimism of the will.

This area might be small, the angle of vision narrow, but they are also, I would like to think, not without significance. It is as difficult to place and name this space/approach as is the WSF itself. Both are novel and in process of rapid growth, spread and evolution: as it spreads from Porto Alegre, people are talking of the 'globalisation of the Forum'. I think my space is somewhere between the Centre of the event/process and one of its several Peripheries. Or possibly in one of its Suburbs? I have been playing with such names for this area/orientation as 'libertarian', 'emancipatory', 'post-capitalist' (to be distinguished from 'anti-capitalist'). It is significant because of its critical but committed angle on the Forum. It is significant, also, because it overlaps with the initiative-taking, decision-making Centre, and with the various Peripheries: Humourless Leninists; Pie-Throwing Anarchists; and Intellectuals Such as Myself who prefer the incalculable freedom of cyberspace to the measurable power(lessness?) of the political institution that the Forum has been increasingly becoming.

When I say that my position overlaps with others, I mean this quite literally. Before and during WSF3 I had physical access to Central events and processes, as well as exceptional information about such. Before and during WSF3 I had exchanges with those involved in libertarian places/spaces, as well as access to relevant websites and lists. During the Forum I moved, or was obliged by circumstances to move, from Central to Suburban/Peripheral events (one of the latter being with 20-30 people close to the age of my oldest grandchild, under a tree, as the Youth Camp was being disassembled and dispersed). But I also wish to invoke the notion of emancipation as having no privileged site within the Forum, of existing on an imaginary diagonal running across it. Whilst I may myself privilege (or prefer, or feel most comfortable at) a 'critical but committed edge', I am prepared to recognize the presence of emancipatory processes and people at the Centre. Let us hope that the meaning of this becomes clearer below.

The question must now be, briefly, considered of what is meant by 'emancipatory' and, in particular of the re-invention of such in the age of a globalized networked capitalism. In the introduction to an ambitious, multi-volume research work on the reinvention of social emancipation, Boaventura de Sousa Santos draws to our attention that such a new emancipatory project has to be a global one:

The paradigm of social emancipation developed by western modernity is undergoing a deep and final crisis. Social emancipation must, therefore, be reinvented. It must be understood as a form of counter-hegemonic globalization relying on local-global linkages and alliances among social groups around the world which go on resisting social exclusion, exploitation and oppression caused by hegemonic neoliberal globalization. Such struggles result in the development of alternatives to the exclusionary and monolithic logic of global capitalism, that is to say, spaces of

democratic participation, non-capitalistic production of goods and services, creation of emancipatory knowledges, post-colonial cultural exchanges, new international solidarities. (Reinventing Social Emancipation site: <http://www.ces.fe.uc.pt/emancipa/en/index.html>).

In a paper on WSF2 (Waterman 2002c). I argued that ‘left’, the generic term for the emancipatory movement during the stage of national-industrial-colonial capitalism, had become a prisoner of such (or, perhaps, imprisoned by elements of such). And that ‘emancipation’, whilst an even older term, is of more general application and therefore more appropriate for our complex, globalized, networked, informatized, financial and services capitalism. One good reason for this relevance would be precisely the undefined yet evocative character of ‘emancipation’. Another would be that we need to free ourselves from our own historical origins (and preferably without claiming to be the Newest Left, or the Leftiest Left of All). In my own contribution to the Sousa Santos project, I argued, somewhat provocatively perhaps, that this meant the ‘emancipation of labour internationalism’ from trade unionism, from socialism and from Marxism (Waterman 2002a). The serious purpose underlying the provocative formulation is, for me, that ‘we’ are not the privileged promoters of this new emancipatory movement, nor is the problem only that of ‘hegemonic neo-liberal globalization’. ‘We’ are also subjects of the process we are trying to project; we are in need of such emancipation; we need to emancipate new collective selves from old ones.

The original title of this paper was ‘Out of Control’. This seemed to me a nice name precisely because of its simultaneous negative and positive connotations. The ambiguity appealed to my more dialectical moments (as contrasted with those in which I slip back into Left-Manicheanism: Left/Right, Revolutionary/Reformist, Socialist/Capitalist; Utopian/Dystopian, Hetero/Homo, Wo/Man, Future/Past, Virtuous/Vicious). It seems to me that the Forum is out of control in various negative ways: too big; lacking in openness, transparency and accountability; reproductive of traditional Party and BINGO (big international non-governmental organisation) politics. But it is also out of control in various positive ways: the Centre can no longer control the process it itself invented and developed; the *idea* of social forums is now out of the bottle: this means an event and process that takes place in the sphere of the ‘social’, rather than the ‘political’, or the ‘economic’, or even the ‘political-economic’. The event/process is also, however, now increasingly subject to numerous and varied local or specific (feminist, indigenous, intellectual-elitist, libertarian, social-democratic, nationalist, Leninist) claims, forms and inflections. So, this ‘positive’ is not identical with ‘virtuous’. It is itself riven with contradictions, some suggested by the above-identified claims/forms. Perhaps one should rather use the word ‘new’, in so far as this is not necessarily associated with virtue (consider, for a moment, ‘new’ world order).

Speaking at WSF2, early-2002, with younger activists from Barcelona and Belgrade, I argued that what was about to call itself the ‘global justice and solidarity movement’ (GJ&SM) had at last discovered the secret of fire. This secret, I suggested was ‘keep moving’. In other words, any movement peak or plateau, any institutionalisation of the movement (both so far historically inevitable),<sup>2</sup> will be, or should be, or could be, immediately challenged. This is a necessity because of the ‘iron law of oligarchy’ (spelled out for contemporary unionism by Greene, Hogan and Grieco 2001) that for a century or more has afflicted social movement

institutions. The Keep Moving Emancipation Show is now made a possibility because of the internet, and because of the increasing shift of the site of power contestation, particularly at global level, from the political sphere to the cultural/communicational one, from the institutional to the cyberspatial. The GJ&SM is also the first such movement to immediately produce its own internal critics, or at least the first one in which such criticism can be immediately circulated to the interested public and beyond. It is now a matter of Around the World in 80 Seconds. In a movement that prides itself on opening the route from 'protest to proposition' (originally, I think, a Latin American feminist concept), the message goes out simultaneously *from* the movement and *to* the movement.

In the following, I will comment on: 1) the danger of going forward to the past of social movements and internationalism; 2) the promising but problematic relationship with the trade unions; 3) the uneven social and power composition of the Forum; 4) the uncertain future of the proposed social movement network; 5) the necessity of a communications/media/cultural internationalism, 6) The possibility of an academy of global empowerment. The Conclusion suggests that we should be concerned about the future of the Forum but not worried. Radical-democratic movements are learning the secret of fire. The traditional plateaux and collapses of emancipatory movements may be no longer inevitable: we should apply ourselves energetically to moving this movement from the old vicious circles to new virtuous spirals.

## 1. The Future of the Movements and Internationalism: Forward to the Past?

At the Centre of initiative and decision-making within the Forum has been the Brazilian national Organising Committee (OC) and the International Council it created (IC). These appear themselves ‘out of control’ in so far as they are not subject to the principles of participatory or even representative democracy. The OC members may or may not be accountable, in various political or financial ways, to their respective communities (mass organisations, NGOs, funding agencies) and the same is largely true of the IC, the role of which seems to have been to give international legitimacy to the OC, whilst having a quite ambiguous relationship to it. The historical justification for the existence of both has been the quite remarkable vessel they have launched - an international and internationalist encounter, outside the immediate spheres of capital and state, targeted against neo-liberalism and capitalist globalisation, increasingly concerned with proposing radical-democratic alternatives to such. And this all on the understanding that the place, space and form is the guarantee for the necessary democratic dialogue of countries and cultures, of ideologies, of political levels, collective subjects and movements/organisations. In so far as *re*-presentation is today as important, or even more important, than *representation* (a problematic quality within both liberal democracies and, for example, labour movements), the forms and contents of a new counter-hegemony have been at least sketched out by the committees of the Forum and on a global scale.<sup>3</sup>

This space has, however, never been a neutral or innocent one. (Like death and taxes, money and power are always with us, and the failure to confront these openly suggests either occupational blindness or bad faith). This space has, therefore, not been as far beyond the old politics and parties and parliaments as it might have liked to suggest (Appendix 1).<sup>4</sup>

The OC consists of a number of representatives of social-movement and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the latter of which might address social movements and civil society but be answerable only to themselves. (It consists of two Brazilian movement organisations, six NGOs, of seven men, and only one woman). These bodies have been oriented toward, or circulate around, the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT, Workers’ Party), and/or its recently-successful presidential candidate, Lula da Silva. Just as the Porto Alegre Forums have been places where this (and other Brazilian parties) could influence events and publicize themselves, so was the European Social Forum, Florence, November 2002, one in which the Rifondazione Comunista (and other Italian political parties) did.<sup>5</sup> Such parties, and far-less-sophisticated and interesting others, have often hidden their political lights behind NGO bushels.<sup>6</sup> The WSF has been a site to which various inter-state agencies, such as those of United Nations, have access or upon which they exercise influence. State-dependent funding agencies, national and international, and the massive private-capitalist US foundations, have supported the Forum itself, or various, selected, inter/national NGOs influential within it.

The IC was created top-down by invitation of the OC (of 90-100 members, mostly NGOs and inter/national unions, only 8-10 are women’s networks). This gargantuan assembly has no clear mandate or power, therefore acting for the OC largely as a sounding board and international legitimator. The nature and representativity of the members, and the extent to which they are answerable to any but themselves, remains obscure. Many of them do little other work in the IC than turning up and then fighting for their corner – such as the maximum number of representatives within the Central part of Forum programmes in the hands of the OC/IC (see

again Appendix 1). The IC does not operate behind closed doors, but its proceedings are barely reported by its members to even the interested public.<sup>7</sup> There has, recently, been formal discussion about the role and rules of the IC, consequent on an intended shift of weight from the Brazilian national to the international committee. But whilst part of this discussion (actually more like an interesting experiment in online *consultation*, see <http://www.delibera.info/fsm2003ci/GB/>) is posted on a publicly-accessible website, the existence of this is known to few. Moreover, only a tiny fraction of IC members have taken part in this consultation, again suggesting that their motivation for membership has more to do with a search for recognition and influence than with the advance of this – admittedly novel and complex - project as a whole. The Centre, however, is not a monolith. On the contrary, it is itself in movement, under its own momentum, as indicated by a first post-Forum web update (<http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/home.asp>). At the very least, however, it has signally failed to *communicate itself* to even an interested public. This is a matter to be returned to below.

The Forum is an agora in which there are a few large, well-publicised and well-placed circus tents, surrounded by a myriad of differently-sized others (now around 1,700, 3-400 events per day), proposed by social movements, international agencies, political organisations, academic institutions and even individuals (At WSF2 I had my own, free, personal seminar in a classroom, with 10-20 participants). The Suburban/Peripheral events compete for visibility, for sites, for translators/equipment, often overlap with or even *reproduce* each other, and – whilst certainly adding to the pluralism of the Forum – have an inevitably minor impact. This is revealed by Fisher and Ponniah (2002), a rich, extensive and insightful record of WSF2, which is based precisely on the Central themes, but which shows no *awareness* of the Marginal ones! Whilst, again, the decision that the Forum is not a policy-forming body allows for pluralism and creativity, the result is, inevitably, domination by the official programme – one which has been conceived without notable discussion beyond the governing committees. The concentration of power at the Centre is reinforced by the presence of our own celebs – who themselves may have to choose between appearance in a hall seating thousands, or in a classroom seating 25 (I am aware of celebrities intending to take the second option, but the compass here clearly swings to the North Pole). Indeed, it seems to me that even the major Central Themes (sets of panels on specific problem areas), were somewhat marginalized this year, either by being placed away from the central university site, or simply by the attention focused on the celebrity events, the rallies and demonstrations.

This formula is out of control in different ways.

FSM3, 2003, with maybe 70,000 Brazilian and 30,000 foreign participants, was too big for the hosts to handle: a number of experienced local organizers had apparently been lured away to Brasilia by the new government, and the original PT local-government sponsors had lost influence in both the city and the state. Unlike last year, the programme was never published completely in either English or Portuguese. A well-organized North American left, internationalist, and pro-feminist group, *invited* to run a five-day programme on ‘Life after Capitalism’, found itself without publicity, and then geographically marginalized in a country club unmarked on the Forum maps, unknown to the information booths, and a taxi-ride away from the main site ([www.zmag.org/lac.htm](http://www.zmag.org/lac.htm)). The Brazilian feminist tent, a major focus of attention at WSF2, had been moved to some anonymous site elsewhere in the city. Other radical

groups, which consider themselves initiators of the GJ&SM more generally, likewise complained of marginalization (check websites and lists in Resources below).

The Forum is also out of control in the sense that it is moving beyond the reach of the Centre, with regional, national, local and problem-specific forums mushrooming worldwide. Here the OC/IC can give guidance and blessing (and even hypothetically withhold such) but little more. The Forum may slip out of the hands of the original International NGO elite (I use this term loosely) as it is challenged by those who are demanding that its decision-making bodies consist of *regional/national* representatives (or elites?).

The Forum is in danger of losing its *social* profile, as major politicians and governments recognize the importance of this agora, and turn up invited (President Lula da Silva) or uninvited (President Hugo Chavez). There was no way that the Forum could fail to invite Lula, or even to wish him well on his way to Davos. But well-wishers might have been alarmed by such newspaper headlines as 'Lula is Applauded in Davos and Starts the Dialogue between Porto Alegre and Davos', and 'IMF Approves Financial Discipline of Lula Government' (*Zero Hora* 27.1.03, 29.1.03). This is not speak of Lula's conciliatory speech itself (Pagina 12 2003)!<sup>8</sup>

The Forum's place as a focus for what I would call the 'new global solidarity' is being put in question by those who seek to give it not only a national but a *nationalist* character. This is evidenced in the Indian case (critiqued briefly in Sen 2003a, at length in Sen 2003b). Here a declaration of Asian Social Forum, dominated by a major Indian Communist Party, attacked *imperialist* wars in Asia but had no word for the *nationalist* Indo-Pakistani conflict - in which nuclear threats are issued by two opposed chauvinist regimes (both states enjoying US imperialist military cooperation)! An informative report on the ASF, in India's left-leaning *Economic and Political Weekly* (Jain 2003), proposed that strong nation-states, and alliances of such, were the necessary answer to globalization, this traditional notion being reinforced by an editorial sub-head that turned the writer's proposal into an ASF-WSF *conclusion*! An impressively open WSF3 event on WSF4 in India suggested that certain party-aligned leaders of recent Forums in India have learned to 'talk the Forum talk', but scepticism is in order about whether they can also 'walk the Forum walk'.<sup>9</sup>

Given all these problems, there *is* a danger that the Forum will be overwhelmed by the past of social movements and internationalism. This was one in which, remember, such movements were dominated by the institutions they spawned, by political parties that instrumentalized them,<sup>10</sup> in which the movements were state-oriented and/or state-identified, and in which internationalism was literally that - a relationship between nations, nationals, nationalisms, nationalists. Proletarian solidarity turned into military aid to approved regimes. West-Rest solidarity came to be dominated by one-way state-funded 'development cooperation' (in areas, on problems, with funding, and to 'partners' determined by the North-Western one).<sup>11</sup> And in which Rest-Rest solidarity could be reduced, for example, to slogans of solidarity with the revolution in El Salvador, in a tribal village of India, where any sign of solidarity with other tribals, or tribals in a neighbouring Indian state, were absent.

## 2. The Union-Forum Relationship: Movable Objects and Resistible Forces

WSF3 saw a growth and deepening of the relationship between the traditional international union institutions (TIUIs) and the Forum.<sup>12</sup> (There are already about a dozen inter/national unions on the IC, most of which are anti-*neo-liberal* but not *anti-capitalist*, and many of which are, due to globalisation, in considerable crisis. There is no evidence that they have tried to act as a bloc. With one or two exceptions, they may have been primarily concerned with finding out what kind of exotic animal this is). The increasing interest of this major traditional movement in the Forum was demonstrated by the presence, for the first time, of the General Secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). But top officers of Global Union Federations (GUFs, formerly International Trade Secretariats) were also present, either prominently on platforms or quietly testing the water. Present, further, were inter/national union organisations/networks from beyond the ICFTU ‘family’ (now formalized as Global Unions). This year there were, in addition to the radical union networks from France or Italy, an independent left union confederation from the Philippines, two left mineworker activists from India, and, no doubt, hundreds of movement-oriented unionists from other countries. I noted also an increasing openness amongst even the most traditional of TIUIs. Whilst the first big union event was a formal panel with only gestures in the direction of discussion (here, admittedly, only reproducing a problematic Forum formula), another major panel saw the platform shared between the Global Unions, independent left unions and articulate leaders of social movements or NGOs identified with the Forum process.<sup>13</sup> The unions, moreover, seem increasingly prepared to recognize that they *are* institutions and that it is *they* that need to come to terms with a place and process that, whilst lacking in formal representativity and often inchoate, nevertheless has the appeal, dynamism, public reach and mobilizing capacity, that they themselves lack but need.

The question, however, remains of *what kind of* relationship is developing here. From the first big union event, patronized by the charismatic Director of the International Labour Organisation, veteran Chilean socialist, Juan Somavia, I got the strong impression that what was shaping up was some kind of understanding or alliance between 1) the Unions, 2) the Social Forum and 3) Progressive States/men. The latter were here evidently represented by the unconditionally-praised PT Government and President Lula. Somavia, who had just met Lula in Brasilia (though in their inter/state capacities), made explicit comparison between the ILO’s new programme/slogan of ‘Decent Work’ and Lula’s election slogan ‘For a Decent Brazil’. In so far as the TIUIs appear to have adopted ‘Decent Work’ – hook, line and two smoking barrels – what is here surely suggested is a global neo-keynesianism, in which the unions and their ILO/WSF friends would recreate the post-1945 Social Partnership model (or ideology), but now on a global scale – and with the aid of friendly governments! The model seems to me problematic in numerous ways. The main one, surely, is whether the role of the WSF, or the more general Global Justice and Solidarity Movement (GJ&SM) is going to be limited to supporting a project aimed at making capitalist globalisation ‘decent’, or whether the movement should not have a project for labour that might be simultaneously more utopian (post-capitalist) and, under present conditions, more *realistic* (making work-for-capital an ethical issue, treating ‘non-workers’ as equals of wage-earners, addressing the closely inter-related civil-social issues such as useful production, sustainable consumption). There surely needs to be a discussion about the political, theoretical and ethical bases of the two labour utopianisms, one within and the other beyond (Waterman 2003e) the parameters of capitalism.

When an old institution meets a new movement, something's gotta give. Thus has the trade-union movement been periodically transformed since 1800. Bearing in mind that decision-makers of both the TIUIs and the WSF could have quite instrumental reasons for relating to each other, one cannot be certain that the openness within the Forums will guarantee that the principles at stake will be continually and publicly raised. Which of the two international leaderships, for example, is going to even *mention* the extent to which the other is dependent on inter/state subsidies, direct or indirect?

### 3. Combined and Uneven Development: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and Age

I was somewhat alarmed, in the hotels, on the panels, at the receptions and in the news coverage, by the number of people who looked like me: White, Male, Middle-Aged (I am not yet 70) and, evidently, Middle-Class. I suspect the bias applies to the decision-making committees. This does not, of course, mean that women, Africans, Indians, indigenous peoples, workers or the under-30s are *excluded* from these. But the youth were under canvas in the Youth Camp or in private ‘solidarity accomodation’, the Argentinean *piqueteros* were in the streets (sleeping who knows where?), and, it seemed to me, the women were less visible than they had been at WSF2 (though this may have been an effect of the decentralisation and dispersal at WSF3, including that of myself!).

Amilcar Cabral, assassinated leader of anti-Portuguese struggle in colonial Africa, suggested that after independence there would (or should) occur the ‘suicide of the petty-bourgeoisie’. As the more-sceptical Frantz Fanon argued at the same time, however, the post-colonial elites were going to do everything they could to retain and increase their privileges. There are striking power/wealth differences between Forum participants, particularly visible, predictably, in the case of the South. In two or three Latin American cases known to me, the poorer participants travelled by bus – this sometimes meaning a 4-5 day journey, with entry obstacles at various border-crossings. There is no reason to assume that the existent Forum elites are suicidal (nor even that I was going to abandon a hotel with hot and cold running internet) without irresistible pressure from outside or below. In so far, on the other hand, as the WSF has declared certain principles relating to liberty, equality, solidarity and pluralism, it might be possible to confront them (us) with the necessity of re-balancing the power equation. The elites could then put their efforts, in their home states/constituencies, into facilitating rather than dominating or controlling the Forum process.

The experience of women and feminists within the Forum might point here in different directions. I have no figures for this year, but at both previous events, women were almost 50 percent of the participants. There are powerful feminists and feminist networks on the panels and in at least the IC, quite capable here of making the Forum a Feminist Issue. As, also, of making a feminist contribution to, and impact within and beyond, the Core programme.<sup>14</sup> There were regional and cross-regional meetings of feminists at Porto Alegre, an important one being concerned with planning for the next WSF. There were numerous panels on gender and sexuality in both the Central and more Marginal programmes.<sup>15</sup> Feminists and feminisms at the Forum are, however, confronted with devising a strategy that combines working within decision-making bodies, making their presence felt within the Forum itself, and addressing a feminist and general public beyond the Forums.<sup>16</sup> There remains, it seems to me, the problem of publicly confronting the decision-making bodies (the shortcomings of which, with respect to women’s representation, have been indicated above). Whereas leading figures might declare good intentions with respect to women and feminism within the Forum (Grzybowski 2002), the movement from talking to walking has still to occur here also.

It occurs to me that the power/presence imbalances within the Forum might be corrected by two measures. One would be quotas for under-represented categories. The other would be a Forum programme structured according to collective subjects as well as major problems. Thus one could have major panels/programmes on Labour, Women, Youth, Indigenous Peoples – even

the Aged (I hope to become such myself one day). At present, for example, Labour may be represented in a series of union-sponsored or union-approved events, some within and some beyond the Core programme. But this implies a dispersal of attention and impact where there should, surely, be concentration (Fisher and Ponniah 2002 has but two contributions on the union movement as such, and the single one on feminism does not address the international/global at all!). Alternatively, or additionally, imbalances can, could and should be corrected by autonomous forums, such as the proposed one of women – the origins of which may not lie with the WSF itself (Appendix 2). Or what about a re-invention, in the light of the WSF, of the World Youth Festivals, of Communist origin?

#### 4. A Social Movement Network: De/Centralized?

At two previous Forums there has been issued a 'Call of Social Movements'. The initiative for such has come from members of the OC and IC, some of these being recognisable social movement organisations, others being recognisable NGOs. Both Calls have been publicly presented and then signed by 50-100 other organisations and networks. This year, the notion of a 'Social Movements World Network' (SMWN) was widely circulated on the web and subject to a two-session public discussion within the Forum. This eventually produced a declaration, proposing a continuation of discussion about the nature of such a network, with further meetings to take place during major movement events this year (Social Movements World Network 2003).

The Call – like other Forum bodies and initiatives – is surrounded by a certain amount of mystery. Given overlapping memberships, are we to understand the Call as a device for going beyond the Forum's self-limitation on making specific political declarations, taking specific political action? How come the *Secretariat* of the Call, in Sao Paulo, only came to this interested observer's attention 11 months after its creation? Why did it take seven or eight months for the signators of Call 2 to be identified (at least in an obscure corner of a website), when those of Call 1 were published instantaneously? Doesn't discussion at specific events in specific continents automatically exclude from discussion those who can't afford to fly there? What, for the purposes of this new initiative, *is* a social movement (Can it be a state-funded NGO? Can it be a group of academics and, if so, how many? And: which trade unions qualify as social movements?) There is, here again, a serious lack of communication which implies a concentration of crucial information amongst a limited circle.

I am actually favourable to, even enthusiastic about, the creation of such a network. In part this is because there exists no such internationally.<sup>17</sup> In part because it is going to provide information and ideas on a continuing basis - and to those people/places otherwise excluded from the periodic Forums. In so far as this will have an existence in 'real virtuality' (Manuel Castells), it may go beyond a WSF that remains largely earth-bound and institutional. The very experiment is going to be important for progress in this area. Apart from the questions above, certain crucial others remain (about which I may only have yet other questions).<sup>18</sup>

Is the network going to be primarily political/institutional or primarily communicational? In the first case, communication is likely to be made functional to the political/institutional. In the second case, we may be into a different ballgame - or ballpark. In the first case, there is likely to operate a 'banking' model of communication, in which information is collected, sorted and classified, to be then dealt out to customers/clients in terms of power, influence or profit, as determined by the information-bank managers. In the second case, there can operate the principle of the potlatch, or gift economy, in which individual generosity is taken to benefit the community. The underlying ontological principle here is the common African saying: 'I am who I am because of other people'.

Even in the best of all possible cyberworlds, however, there remain questions of appropriate *modes* (information, ideas, dialogue), of *form* (printed word at one end, multimedia at the other) and *control* (handling cybernuts and our own homegrown fundamentalists). There do exist various relevant models of international social-movement, civil society, anti-globalisation networks – earth-bound or cyberspatial. Indy Media Centre (IMC) has got to be the most

important here, and needs to be publicly reflected upon both for what it does well and what it doesn't (dialogue?). Finally, any SMWN is going to have to go beyond network-babble and recognize that even networks do not exist on one, emancipatory, model. In discussing the issue, Arturo Escobar (2003) has said that

It is possible to distinguish between two general types: more or less rigid hierarchies, and flexible, non-hierarchical, decentralized and self-organising meshworks... Hierarchies entail a degree of centralized control, ranks, overt planning, homogenisation, and particular goals and rules of behaviour conducive to these goals. Meshworks...are based on decentralized decision making...self-organisation, and heterogeneity and diversity. Since they are non-hierarchical, they have no overt goals. It can be said they follow the dynamics of life, developing through their encounter with their environments.

In the end, however, it does not too much matter in which place/space, on which model the SMWN takes shape. The existence of the web, combining low cost of entry, wide reach and high speed, provides the assurance that such a network will be supplemented or challenged by others.

## 5. From Organization to Communication in the Global Justice and Solidarity Movement

I am here moving from cyberspace to communication, and from the FSM to the GJ&SM. Whereas the movement-in-general has shown, at its best, an almost instinctive feel for the logic of the computer (Klein 2001),<sup>19</sup> and has expressed itself in the most creative and provocative ways (in Quebec a man was arrested for threatening to catapult a - possibly largish - teddy bear over the globalized razor wire), this is not the case for the FSM in particular. The FSM *uses* the media, culture and cyberspace but it does not *think* of itself in primarily cultural/communicational terms, nor does it *live* fully within this increasingly central and infinitely expanding universe.<sup>20</sup>

The FSM website remains problematic – promoting year-old ideas (chosen by whom?) in its meagre library. Trying to reach a human being on this site, to whom one could pose a question, reminds one strongly of Gertrude Stein (or whoever) on Oakland, California: ‘There is no *there* there’. The site’s own claim, that it was visited during WSF3 by X million, cannot deal with visitors such as myself, repeatedly seeking for a there that wasn’t there. The website perked up in the Post-Forum period, providing more useful information than it had during the previous year ([http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic/eng\\_portoalegrefinal.asp](http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic/eng_portoalegrefinal.asp)), but it is difficult to have confidence that this improvement will continue.<sup>21</sup>

The only FSM daily is *Terra Viva*, an admirable effort by the customarily unaccountable NGO, but which this year seemed to me to add to its space-limitations, delays and superficialities a heavier bias toward the Forum establishment. The professional, substantial regional paper in Rio Grande do Sul, *Zero Hora*, gave wide coverage but, unsurprisingly, in Portuguese. For background information and orientation one was this year dependent on free handouts of *La Vie/Le Monde* (inspired by French social Catholicism), and *Ode*, a glossy, multi-lingual, New Age, magazine from Rotterdam, with impressively relevant coverage (which I have used in this paper). Other alternative, and non-Forum sites, provide better information and/or discussion than the Forum itself ([www.choike.org/links/about/index.html](http://www.choike.org/links/about/index.html), [www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/wsf/](http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/wsf/)).

The FSM seems to me something of a shrine to the written and spoken word. (In so far as I worship both deities, I am throwing this stone from my own glasshouse). At the core of the Forum is The Panel, in which 5-10 selected Panellists do their thing in front of an audience of anything from five to 5,000, the latter being thrown the bone of three to five minutes at a microphone. And these are the lucky ones!<sup>22</sup> At the other end of the Forum’s narrow spectrum of modes there is The Demonstration. Here euphoria is order of the day: how can it not be when surrounded by so many beautiful people, of all ages, genders and sexual options, of nationality and ethnicity, convinced that Another World is Possible? But here we must note the distinction made 30 years ago, between mobilisation and mobility, as related to the old organisation and the new media:

The open secret of the electronic media, the decisive political factor, which has been waiting, suppressed or crippled, for its moment to come, is their mobilising power. When I say *mobilize* I mean *mobilize*...namely to make [people] more

mobile than they are. As free as dancers, as aware as football players, as surprising as guerrillas. Anyone who thinks of the masses only as the object of politics, cannot mobilize them. He wants to push them around. A parcel is not mobile; it can only be pushed to and fro. Marches, columns, parades, immobilize people [...] The new media are egalitarian in structure. Anyone can take part in them by a simple switching process [...] The new media are orientated towards action, not contemplation; towards the present, not tradition [...] It is wrong to regard media equipment as mere means of consumption. It is always, in principle, also means of production [...] In the socialist movements the dialectic of discipline and spontaneity, centralism and decentralization, authoritarian leadership and anti-authoritarian disintegration has long ago reached deadlock. Networklike communication models built on the principle of reversibility of circuits might give indications of how to overcome this situation. (Hans Magnus Enzensberger 1976:21-53)

There is, of course, also The Rally – a panel built on the scale of the Titanic.

The paucity of cultural expression at WSF3 is surprising, bearing in mind we *are* in Brazil, the country that brought down the corrupt President Collor by cultural-political protest (Baierle 2002: 327, fn. 24). The WSF3 song, which has an attractive but complex lilt, is sung only in Portuguese, and did not seem to be available in written or CD form even in this language. It was, in fact, the WSF2 song. As in 2002 the tee-shirts are still not going to win any design prizes. And the most popular icon (no fault of the organizers) remains Che. (I suspect there might be a market for Subcomandante Marcos, for Rigoberta Menchú, for Chico Mendes, for La Naomi, for El Noam, for Arundhati, and even for Frida and Diego, or a Beatle Giving Peace a Chance, but I may be wrong).

Something of an exception to the general Forum rule was, in 2002, the campaign against fundamentalisms of the Articulación Feminista Marcosur. I had and have doubts about the interpretation offered by this campaign, but it was one which intimately combined the customary Forum modes with dramatic cultural expression of undeniable originality and impact: last year there were masks, an enormous hot-air balloon, hoarding-sized posters and more. This year activity was possibly less dramatic, but peaked with a packed-out book launch (Articulacion Feminista Marcosur 2002), at which was also projected a 10-minute CD production of considerable inventivity and power (Cotidiano Mujer/CFMEA 2002). Lucy Garrido, the Uruguayan designer, opted for visuals, music and minimal words, in successive English and Spanish). We could have had, we should have had, a discussion around this. Even a panel...?

## 6. An Academy of Global Empowerment

A review of the recent literature on globalisation reminds us of what happened in the US academy during the Vietnam War (Munck 2003). This proved to be a moment at which the academy, not only in the USA, divided between those either committed to or complicit with the existing power relations and those who challenged these. There were, no doubt, excesses on the left here (not yet free of the excesses of the right), but opposition to the war in Vietnam, to racism, to class-discrimination, to sexism, to corporatism in the university, gave rise to a wave of high-quality radicalism, some of it still alive – despite neo-liberalism – today. Consider only the US-based NACLA Report on the Americas (<http://www.nacla.org/>). What has happened in the intervening years is well summarized by Arturo Escobar (Forthcoming):

Social scientists in particular have been in retreat. If in the 1980s the social sciences were infusing the natural sciences with new idioms and ideas, today it seems to be the other way around. Metaphors of complexity, webs, networks, self-organization, etc. are now being more actively developed in the natural sciences, although of course there are attempts to bring it all back to the social sciences again. The reconversion of the Humanities towards the production of critical inter-subjective knowledge for social transformation – while important in some fields such as cultural and so-called post-colonial studies, and feminist and critical race theories – has floundered in the persistent Achilles' heel of their engagement with extra-academic worlds. In this context, non-academic knowledge producers seem to have taken the lead...

The last point here is possibly more significant than Escobar realizes. Amongst the seven or eight major characteristics of the newest wave of social movements in Latin America is, according to Raúl Zibechi (2003), the capacity of popular movements to train their own leaders, to develop their own educational principles, to develop their own intellectuals. He mentions the Intercultural University of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities, coming out of Ecuadorian struggles, the 1,500 schools of the MST (Landless Workers Movement) in Brazil...

But I wish to here concentrate on the growing alternative to such from within the academy. Much of this lies, as one might expect, in individual academic staff and students turning their attention to either the GJ&SM in general or to the Forum process in particular. (I had to actually *retire* in 1998, after 27 years of teaching about such, before this new wave began to approach shore).<sup>23</sup> Here I will mention just a couple of new academic centres and recent initiatives. They may give an impression of what must be taking place on a much wider and more varied scale and, hopefully, spilling out from the social sciences to the academy more generally.

Here we might consider, first, the Centre for Civil Society/Centre for Global Governance at the London School of Economics in the UK. And, second, the Observatorio Social de América Latina (Latin American Social Observatory) in Buenos Aires. If the first is oriented toward, well, a liberal/social-democratic notion of global civil society, and inspired by the LSE's tradition of social reformism and social engineering, the latter is concentrated on social movements, protest and the global movement processes themselves. These two projects should not (for political reasons) and cannot (for epistemological ones) be set up in binary-oppositional terms. They rather represent two cases of academic response to the development of global civil society and global social movements. They are both worthy of closer attention than I can give them here.

Global Civil Society 2002 (Glasius, Kaldor and Anheier 2002) is the second of two weighty annuals, of which the first gave considerable attention to not only the title area but also to various global social movements and their dynamics (Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor 2001, reviewed Waterman Forthcoming b). This project comes out of the presumably-globalized LSE, and with the blessings of its Blairite Director, Anthony Giddens. The current volume considers Concepts, Issues, Infrastructure, and then has some 150 pages of Records of GCS, in tables, charts, surveys and analyses. 'Concepts' considers the implications of September 11, 2001; Limits of GCS, Religion and GCS. 'Issues' include Corporate Responsibility, HIV/AIDS and the International Criminal Court. Under 'Infrastructure' comes a chapter on Organisational Forms (institutions, networks, etc). Under 'Records' comes Mario Pianta's useful update on his painstaking GCS 2001 chapter on Parallel Summits.

The Pianta update (GCS 2002:371-7), consisting primarily of 10 charts, is largely dependent on a questionnaire addressed to relevant organisations, media and websites. Whilst the author expresses the usual qualifications about his own methodology, he nonetheless feels capable of arguing that global civil society is maturing, that global movements are spreading, and that a development is taking place amongst them from protest to proposal. The Pianta contribution perhaps suggests the extent and limits of the project as a whole – at least so far. The limits may be suggested by his title – Parallel Summits – even if he actually goes beyond this, recognising the extent to which a dynamic is here developing that goes beyond paralleling something toward the invention of something else. But the extent of the GCS project is also revealed by Pianta's attempt to empirically chart a novel and inchoate process. The ambition is the thing because without empirical data, we live in a world of impression and speculation (a possible criticism of this very paper). An *excess* of such data – here one-third or more of the whole – can obscure interpretation and consequent decision on strategic action. But the GCS project, it seems to me, nonetheless sets a standard for such data collection and analysis that others are going to be challenged to surpass.

But there are other aspects of the GCS project that likewise set new standards. One is the *accessibility* of this work, both in the sense of its excellent printed and graphical layout, but also because it is available, free, for chapter by chapter download, from the GCS website, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/Yearbook/>. Finally, this: I got my free copy of GCS2002 by turning up to its 'book launch' at WSF3. This event turned out to be a young woman staff member of the project, standing by an empty box of books, in the burning sun, as people streamed out of a major event at the Gigantinho Stadium in Porto Alegre. Free caramels were available for latecomers, such as me, held up by the crowds (I begged her for one of her remaining sample copies). I have no idea what motivated this initiative but find it nonetheless significant (or perhaps touching) that GCS should consider the WSF an audience worth addressing, a clientele worth cultivating, and should do so from the most marginal possible site.

The Observatorio Social de América Latina (OSAL, the Latin American Social Observatory), within the Latin American Council of Social Sciences, in Buenos Aires (CLACSO) is clearly a fish of a different feather. Sited within one of Latin America's premier research institutes, this bland-sounding project actually represents what may be the most-ambitious monitoring of social movements (under globalisation) anywhere. Although its basic publication

form is that of a serial journal of the same name (nine since 2001), and although a large part of it is devoted to country-by-country reports, the current issue (OSAL 2003) also extends beyond Latin America, and it includes analysis and theoretical debates.<sup>24</sup> OSAL/CLACSO has also published a number of books about the current wave of protest. The OSAL website <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/Yearbook/> provides all this information and more. Indeed, it appears as if OSAL has high priority within CLACSO <http://www.clacso.org/wwwclacso/espanol/html/fprincipal.html>, to the extent that the extensive web and CD services offered by the latter clearly overlap in subject and orientation with the former. This orientation is clearly toward the new global social movements. Starting with a critique of the impact of neo-liberalism and globalization on the region, OSAL declares that

It aspires to stimulate analysis and reflection on the distinct forms assumed by social conflict in our societies and on the characteristics revealed by distinct social movement in the region. This task further assumes the desire to contribute to the renovation and revitalisation of Latin American social thought and, in particular, to studies on social movements. In relation to the cited theme the programme also aspires to construct a space of exchange between its own researchers and the social and political movements. (OSAL Website).

After years or decades in which social-movement studies, and commitment to social movements, were marginalized in Latin America, this is a dramatic declaration of commitment to movement-oriented research. Whilst the audio-visual offerings are from CLACSO rather than OSAL, these include numerous complete books and other resources (all, I think, in Spanish/Portuguese), the subjects and authors of which are often related to the OSAL project. Furthermore, CLACSO runs a computerised distance-education project, making its courses potentially available throughout the sub-continent.

CLACSO had a well-equipped stall with several staff at a major WSF3 site. Additionally, however, it is represented on the International Council of the Forum. CLACSO is an influential member of the IC. And OSAL was well represented in the Core programme of WSF3. It was also active at a previous Argentinean Forum, organized at short notice, and held with considerable success, in 2002. I have warned against setting up OSAL/CLACSO as a polar opposite to GCS/LSE, as some kind of model for a university of global emancipation. But it is a challenging experiment. Of particular interest might here be the extent to which the commitment of OSAL to the movement is reciprocated by the movements themselves – particularly those closest to it in its home base.

Mention of a university of global emancipation brings us to the pre-Forum proposal of Boaventura de Sousa Santos for a Popular University of Social Movements (Sousa Santos 2003). Launched with the blessing of IBASE, possibly the key Brazilian NGO behind the Forum, the proposal is for the mutual self-education of both scholars and activists, with a particular focus on the South, and with a specific rooting in the proposed locale. One of many individual, even personal, initiatives arising around the WSF, this one was proposed for discussion at WSF3 and on the internet. As one of the recipients of the relevant email (rather than a participant in any discussion that might have taken place at WSF3), my immediate reaction was one of some enthusiasm, combined with suggestions that the project be developed in network terms (an alliance of interested departments, courses, schools) and in terms of cyberspace (distance

education). The reasons may be self-evident: cost, reach, flexibility, the dialectic of difference. Moreover, this would be an inclusive and expansive project rather than one which was exclusive, limited and authoritative. The further development of this proposal should be worth following.

The last initiative is the most marginal in terms of recognition and power. This is less a specific project than the general orientation of a new feminist network, NextGENDERation (2003). NG is a Netherlands-based network of young feminists in academia, which appears to combine the enthusiasm of 1970s feminism with orientations and concerns of both post-modernism and, well, post-capitalism. What is of particular interest is its concentration on the transformation of the university itself:

The NextGENDERation network wants to stand for a type of feminist knowledge politics, deeply concerned with the democratisation of higher education. This concern relates to different, although interconnected, dimensions. The *access to higher education*, and the way in which power mechanisms such as gender, ethnicity and class structure this access on different levels (with horizontal segregation according to disciplines, and vertical segregation according to academic hierarchies), are of primary concern to us. The *production of knowledge* is a second dimension on which our attention is focused: the brands of critical and situated knowledges produced from feminist, anti-racist, post-colonial and anti-heterosexist points of view have already begun to transform the old curricula and canons. We are committed to continuing this transformation. Both of these dimensions are related to a vision of what the university, and higher education in general, stands for. From our feminist perspectives, we start from a critical distance towards the classic conception of the university as an ivory tower. At the same time, we don't buy into the current neo-liberal ideals of higher education as a training-place in function of the needs of the labour market. We are invested [sic] in a vision of the university as a place for the production of critical and socially relevant knowledge, and want to work towards that ideal in our specific historical time and space. *Another university is possible!*

In so far as many left intellectuals connected with the Forum consider *their* prime task to be telling others 1) what the other world is, and how to achieve it, 2) that they are the privileged persons or category to do so, it is refreshing to see these young feminists reminding us that changing the world begins in one's own backyard or workplace.

These rapid sketches may give some impression of an academic fermentation either caused or stimulated by the Forum. The conclusion here must be that, after serious reflection on the rise and fall of post-1968 academic radicalism, we need to think of sites and forms of research and education that could survive the next equivalent of the neo-liberal backlash.

## Conclusion: the Secret of Fire

I am concerned about the future of the Forum process but not worried. Pandora has opened her box, the genie is out of the lamp, the secret of fire is now an open one. Already in Florence, young libertarians were mumbling, 'Another Forum is Possible'. This possibility is not only a matter of information and communication technology (which, remember, has yet to produce a computerized English/Spanish translation programme with an appropriate vocabulary). It may be the combination, precisely, of this with youth, given that at least urban kids are growing up with cellular phones, playing arcade computer games, and therefore with an affinity for other computer technology and a healthy disregard for attempts to coral such. (I was moved to produce my first-ever PowerPoint production, on WSF2, by my 12-year-old granddaughter, Joelle, who remains puzzled about my resistance to the cell phone, text-messaging and computer chat).

For the rest, I am inspired by: energetic and innovative social protest, and original analyses of the local-national-global dialectic in Argentina; by the belated appearance in Peru of a network, Raiz (Root), which clearly has some feeling that the WSF is more than an NGO jamboree;<sup>25</sup> by the Kidz in the Kamp who were discussing under a tree, and with informal translation, how to ensure that the emancipatory and critical forces have more impact on the Forum process; by the struggle, against all odds, of the US Znet people to mount 'Life after Capitalism', an event of post-capitalist *propuesta* within the Forum; by the massive global anti-war demonstrations of February 15-16, 2003 – something that puzzled even radical specialists on the new social movements; by the increasing number of [compañer@s](#), of various ages, identities, movements and sexual orientations, who believe that, in the construction of a meaningfully civil global society, transparency is not only the best policy but the only one.

## **Appendix 1: How We Could Destroy Our Own Movement**

*This email, on [WSFitself@yahoogrupos.com.br](mailto:WSFitself@yahoogrupos.com.br), was received February 11, 2002. It is reproduced in its original form, with only changes of layout, and will be updated if and when a corrected version becomes available. PW.*

Dear Friends of the wsitself discussion list,

Excusing my bad English, I am sending you here some personal reflections, answering to the proposition received in this list from a workshop realized in the last WSF, that used an humoristic method to find the good issues for the WSF future: *as the capitalism, the imperialism, the G7, the big medias and the multinationals didn't succeed, in spite of their considerable means, to prevent the emergence of a civil and civic world society and the success of its yearly meetings - the FSM in Porto Alegre - what we could ourselves do to provoke the WSF process collapse?*

As an exercise to apply this method, I would begin analysing the character and role of the Organizing Committees of the Forums and the questions that could be related with it.

We say frequently that the WSF is not a movement, still less a 'movement of movements', as some journalists use to say, but a space. A movement has leaders or political forces, accepted by its members, directing it. A space has no leaders. It is only a place. Places can be neutral spaces - as public places - opened to all interested in using it. WSF space is open but it is not a neutral place. It was created with an specific objective: to allow all those who are fighting neo-liberalism to meet, hear each other, learn with the others struggles, discuss propositions of action, articulate themselves in new networks and new organisations and initiatives having in view to overcome the present globalisation process dominated by the big corporations. It is a space of incubation ('factory of ideas') of as much as possible new organizations and initiatives to build a new world.

As said in the WSF Charter of Principles, the WSF 'does not constitute a locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings' nor 'a body representing the world civil society'.

In this perspective, the Organising Committees of the WSF events do not control or direct the decisions taken during these events by its participants (on their own behalf, not on behalf of all or other WSF participants). The Organising Committees only create and offer a place where those who want to use it can take these decisions. They only render to the WSF participants the service of making possible interchanges, networking and articulated decision-making.

The Brazilian WSF Organizing Committee has already called this role as a role of 'facilitator of the WSF process', to emphasize that it is not the role of direction of the process. In fact this explains why this Committee remained united during three years and was able to decide

always by consensus, in spite of being composed by various and different types of organisations and social movements.

The same reasoning could perhaps be applied to the character and role of the WSF International Council, with its own functions in the process.

Thus, the Organizing Committees (as the WSF International Council) don't need to be representative of all movements and forces engaged in each country or region in the struggle against the present globalisation process. But they would have to:

- be composed by very different types of organisations and movements, to ensure a real respect of diversity while offering the free space of the social forums;

- ensure the openness of this spaces;

- merit the confidence of those who are invited to use this space, those invited needing to be sure that they will not be used for other purposes (the particular ones of those who offer this space), and that the inviters will not direct or interfere in their own decisions.

This last point explains the difficulties created by political parties wanting to participate of the organisation of the WSF events or to patronise them.

Combined with two other Principles of the WSF Charter - the WSF has not a final document; and the WSF participants can freely organize their own workshops on the subjects they freely decide - these characteristics of the WSF may explain the success of its three editions in Porto Alegre.

This orientation has been hidden when the Brazilian Organising Committee and the International Council paid very much attention (and used very much time) to prepare the part of the WSF they had to organize, treating this part as if it was the 'official' WSF program: the conferences and panels about themes they had chosen. This tends to transform not the event but its preparation in a process of disputing power, to impose political direction and to fight for space in the 'official' SF program. This tends, also, to push to a secondary place the workshops freely organized by the participants. In this same sense, this tends to make very important to dispute places in the Organizing Committees and in the International Council.

Another temptation has been experienced by various new organisations, initiatives, networks, organized struggles made possible by the WSF events - as specially the so called 'social movements call'. Naturally they can have and need to have political directions, strategies, mobilising campaigns, etc. The same have to do the political parties able to harvest new ideas, propositions, forces in the WSF events. But this new organisations, initiatives and networks may not try to absorb the WSF itself, nor even only its Organising Committees, to put the WSF under their shadow and to use the WSF as an instrument for their purposes - even if very legitimates. This will lead to the disappearance of the WSF as an open space. In this way they would work against themselves. It would be like asphyxiating or obstructing their own source of life - they were born in the WSF - and thus of renewing and expanding themselves.

Entering now in the logic proposed by the workshop (how to provoke the WSF collapse), we could say that this two last orientations (disputing power to prepare the ‘official’ program and absorbing the WSF) could already be very useful to arrive to this collapse...

But many other means could be used:

- deny the ‘facilitator’ role of the Organising Committees and of the International Council, giving them a clear role of political direction of the WSF events and process, and/or:

- open the space of the Organising Committees for disputes of power inside it, and/or:

- compose the Organising Committees with representatives of only one or two types of movements and organisations who fight the neo-liberalism, chosen among those who are in fact seeking to direct the WSF process, and/or:

- ensure the presence in the Organising Committees of absolutely all the movements and organisations engaged in the struggle against neo-liberalism, specially those who do not consider necessary to create new spaces of interchanges, networking and articulated decision-making, and do not consider necessary to ensure the real openness of these spaces, and/or:

- ensure the direct or even indirect presence of political parties in the Organising Committees, and/or;

- ensure the maximum possible of opacity for this presence, making confidence impossible;

- and so on...

Hoping this humoristic method will not create confusions, and will help us to solve the problems we have to face, my best wishes for all the wsfitself discussion list participants.

**Chico Whitaker**

## **Appendix 2**

### **From World Conferences on Women to a Women's Conference on the World**

*(This document has been abbreviated and edited for style. PW)*

**Feminist International Radio Endeavour/FIRE/october 02**

#### **Draft Criteria for a Proposed Women's Summit about the State of the World**

**by María Suárez Toro**

Dear All:

After returning to Costa Rica from the AWID Conference 'Reinventing Globalization' held in Guadalajara, México between the 3 – 6 of October, 2002, I have decided to put in writing the proposal I made orally in the workshop: 'The Big Debate: Have the UN Conferences Benefitted Women?'

The panel held on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October had as a background a personal statement made by Joanna Kerr in the opening session of the Conference, stating that she personally thought that there should not be a 5<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women in the year 2005. Her argument: the way in which in every recent UN Conference since 1995, women have had to place so much effort and resources just to defend the gains in previous UN Conferences, in a context of the rise of right wing governments that go to these conferences precisely to try to backtrack those gains by women...'

The statement sent a combination of applause and shockwaves throughout the room where the 1,200 participants in AWID were listening to her. My assessment of the reactions? Perhaps excitement about the fact that we were hearing a daring, challenging, critical and autonomous thought being launched openly from a young woman in a leadership role in a significant global women's organization. At least that was my reaction, mainly because it was – at last – provoking DEBATE. But the statement was only the beginning of a debate that hopefully takes us away from the all or nothing approach of past years in the preparations for the UN conferences.

But other reactions were less positive. Perhaps fear of losing even more ground in the UN if we become 'confrontational' about UN proposals in the Beijing Platform itself, or even fear of losing the place we have won in the UN process and as NGOs that have developed around and within the UN lobby. They have already placed efforts in the '+ 10' process. That 'place' needs to be evaluated but maybe the players felt there was an assessment without the debate or evaluation.

Concern might also have been based on another reaction. Some women felt that the proposal was questioning the value of the UN itself for women's advancement, and even beyond, challenging that there ever be a UN Conference on women again in history. FIRE interviewed Joanna Kerr just after she had made her statement. This idea had not even crossed her mind.

Instead she was speaking about postponement until better global conditions for women were in place. She meant governments, so much so, that she stated that the Vatican should be out of the UN decision-making process before another Women's Conference.

Another woman who asked to remain anonymous told me that she thought we should talk about women boycotting the UN, not so much because she really believed it, but because she felt that the stagnation of the global women's movement has in part to do with the fact that the movement cannot even think beyond a UN and its institutions, even though they are being eroded into a terrible unilateralism (or what I have called a multilateral unilateralism!) This woman wanted a shock treatment for the movement, so as to make us move beyond the present paralysis of analysis and change in the present context. What was sad about my conversation with her is that she wanted to remain anonymous because she felt no one in the movement would talk to her or invite her to events after such a statement and no funding agency would ever fund her again. Sad, sad, sad that the approach to politics of 'you are either with me or against me' has occupied a place in the subjectivity of some women leaders (and maybe in the dynamics of our movement.) We still have to revisit the way we have debated and have not debated within the movement, in order to challenge ourselves to face the new context. In that sense, the speech by Malika Dutt from India in the plenary session 'Human Rights for All...' challenged all of us to rethink the positions of privilege (and power) from which we debate and build movement. (Another round of applause followed...and even a standing ovation!)

The workshop on 'Power and Negotiations... organized by Just Associates raised the issue of stating, recognizing and making explicit the powers (and the pains inflicted by lack of negotiations that includes explicating power, fear and competition) among women.

### **Workshop: 'The Big Debate: Have the UN Conferences Benefited Women?'**

The five women who spoke in this workshop did a good job of assessing the gains that women have made in two of the UN Conferences—ICPD in Cairo and WCW in Beijing.

(Sound files will be posted on FIRE at [www.fire.or.cr](http://www.fire.or.cr) as of October 12, 2002)

However, their analyses seemed to have frozen in Beijing 7 years ago. None addressed what happened either at the UN World Conference against Racism or the recent Sustainable Development Summit. Without these two conferences, precisely the ones that took place in the new context, it is impossible to assess the status of our gains today.

Furthermore, a participant from the floor stated that the analysis had been too self complacent, and gave the following example. 'The paradigm shift about reproductive rights in the Cairo Conference on Population and Development in 1994...how can it be considered a gain now, when neoliberalism is dismantling state-provided basic health services? Where are women going to get those rights met?'

### **Preliminary criteria for the proposal of a Women's Conference about the State of the World**

First of all I must clarify that although I presented the proposal, the original idea is not mine. It was posed to FIRE in the last international broadcast during the 4<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Women when a woman said that ‘now that the UN and Member States have successfully organized a World Conference about Women, the global women’s movement should consider organizing a Women’s Conference about the State of the World.’

I remember commenting to my colleagues at FIRE that the day would come, sooner rather than later, when the conditions would be ripe for such a proposal to gain ground. That moment when it was first stated was not its time. Women were celebrating the results of the Beijing Platform for Action. Many of us felt we had to put much of our energy into keeping what we had gained rather than moving forward. But we were still *able to move the agenda forward on some issues*, so there was much to celebrate. But the changing ‘correlation of power’ among UN Member States and other actors was not as clear cut then, although the tendency was there. I remember the position paper that I presented at one of the main plenaries of the NGO Forum (see book, *Looking at the World Through Women’s Eyes* by NGO Forum conveners).

In it I took the audience through a guided political tour of each and every UN Conference from the 1992 Earth Summit to the 1995 Social Development Summit in 1995, showing that in each of them emerged what I called the ‘invisible powers’ that govern the world and the UN, but appear outside of the decision-making at the UN. These ‘invisible powers’ include transnational corporations, the ‘new’ military, the IMF and World Bank, the drug Mafia, Fundamentalist religions, etc.

Today, seven years later, most of those powers are actually very visible in the decision-making, have gained tremendous ground so as not to have to do things invisibly, and yet, we women, who finally have gained visibility in the global agenda of the UN, have, in those same seven years, become *transparent*: we are there, in the documents and the policies, but in the actions, the mandates of the ‘no longer invisible powers’ are able get most actors to go through women as if we are not even there.

In this context, we women urgently need a space to call home - ours, *la nuestra* - where we can (1) assess the huge changes that have taken place in the past years, (2) evaluate and take stock of what we have accomplished and have not accomplished in that context, (3) assess how we have done what we have done (strategies of action, negotiation, agenda setting and power building (personally, organizationally and socio-politically)), (5) look at the gains and the costs (personal and organizationally) of having done thing the way we did them, (6) develop proposals about the *changes* that we have to make as a movement in order to be more effective in the new context.

Back to the AWID workshop where I first made this proposal, I had one minute to present what I had written in 5 pages, so here it is:

First I wanted to outline what my *idea is not about*, so as to clear the air from the ‘all or nothing’ or the ‘with me or against me’ approach. (Therefore this is an open proposal for debate and enrichment.)

1. It will not be a Conference against the UN or its conferences. It will assess the current status of the UN today, to look for ways to contribute more effectively to affirm the principles, objectives and programs for which it stands and how to defend, promote, protect and implement what women have gained in it and the place in equal footing that women have to gain in its decision-making process and places. But it will address other issues and spaces beyond the United Nations.
2. It will not be an NGO Forum for Beijing + 10 exclusively. It will assess the gains of the IV World Conference on Women and the Platform for Action, but there are other issues, and the Platform itself will be assessed in the context of today, not of the past alone.

If it happens before, parallel or after a 10-year UN assessment about the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action is a discussion that is independent of the proposal of a Women's Summit about the State of the World. It seems to me that a debate about the 5 year assessment by member states is still pending. Finland is the only government that has said yes to it and we have not hear from other or form each other.

3. A Women's Summit about the State of the World will not even be a conference by women in NGOs or other types of civil society organizations. Convened and organized by the women's movement, it will invite women in governments, specialized agencies and States that want to take part in a women's space that will set the agenda and proceedings in women's own terms, regardless of the place they occupy professionally.
4. The women's conference will not be an event, but a whole process leading up to it, which includes preparation at the personal, local, national, regional and international levels in order to assess, but mainly to contribute, to re-build the empowerment and movement that is so dis-articulated at those levels also, and also name the paradigm shifts we need in the world.
5. I hope it will debate and construct new paradigms, be they based on the 'commons' or the 'gift economy' or whatever women call the paradigm of the planetary world we need to build as a reference point for the transformation we want and that humanity desperately needs.

I have learned during the past years that the big achievement of Neoliberal Globalization has been that it has convinced almost everyone today that the world as it dominantly moves today is the only world possible. Therefore when we all speak about the changes we want, but do not raise alternative paradigms, most people think we want them in the context of this model!!!! The World Social Forum has used the slogan: *another world is possible, but if as women we do not contribute to the definition of what that new world is for us, other actors will do it 'for' us and i doubt it will include women as main players with equal footing... we need to define that world, not only 'enjoy' it or we will suffer the consequences.*

6. It will not be a consultation process organized by the same global networks that we have had in the past or currently have. Their place in the organizing of the Summit should be redefined and other women's social organizations should also be at the table.
  - One of the first steps is to recover our dynamics and negotiations as a movement: how we want them to be and the collective that should convene it.

- A collectively drafted and agreed code of ethics about power sharing, accountability to others, and resource allocation in the process might be second step.
- A third step will be a recollection of ideas about the rest of the process at all levels.
- And a fourth step is how to fund it. Perhaps we have to re-think our strategies in this sense also. A combined effort such as the World Social Forum that combines three proportional parts: local contribution by the citizens and municipality or central government of the country in which it is to be held; individual contributions by all in terms of voluntary work in the preparations and process and also expressed in that those of us who make good NGO salaries or professional salaries will commit to save money to pay our air fares and will even help another woman without a salary to get to the Conference; and funding from the cooperation agencies and philanthropists who are committed to global movement building.
- The rest of the steps should be drafted in the process....  
These are just a few ideas that hopefully will be debated and improved, and stimulate us to think globally and autonomously in new ways and to recover our faith in ourselves collectively as political actors for our human rights and the human rights of all in the new grim context that threatens even the very existence of the human race in this planet and our humanity as such.

[...]

Regards,

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## Resources:

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*NB. This list extends considerably beyond text references*

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<sup>1</sup> i) Acknowledgements are due to Susana Checa and Jorge Carpio, who hosted me in Buenos Aires whilst I drafted the first version of this paper, and who provided me with information and documentation about a country devastated by neo-liberal globalisation, and the site of innovatory movements against such. ii) The current paper may assume a certain familiarity with the Forums that the reader does not possess. The puzzled-but-motivated can make reference to my reflections on the previous World Social Forum (Waterman 2002c). iii) This paper is updated and extended from the first version, which has been widely circulated on the internet. Particular appreciation, with respect to this rewrite, to my longtime *compañera*, Gina Vargas, who made justified objections to certain parts of the original paper, commented on others, and thus obliged me rethink it quite extensively. She cannot, of course, be held responsible for the outcome. For her own evaluation see Vargas (2003). Appreciation also to Teivo Tevainen for a read of the draft that was both fast and thorough.

<sup>2</sup> Which is why Alberto Melucci (1989) spoke of movement ‘latency’. The question in my mind is whether such moments of invisibility may not be offset by the low cost of continuity implied by the web.

<sup>3</sup> The take on these and related matters of Chico Whitaker (2003a,b,c) is significant for more than one reason. To start with, Chico is a member of the Brazilian Organizing Committee, and one of its prominent thinkers and spokespeople. Secondly, his position comes out of a WSF3 process/internet list, with which he has been intimately involved, WSFItself - this discussion being addressed specifically to problems of power and authority within the WSF. Finally, his analysis overlaps with mine in a number of ways. It also differs in a number of ways. Whilst I do not intend to discuss it here, I did think it worthwhile attaching his first shorter piece (Appendix 1).

<sup>4</sup> There has been some discussion, on the list of the Network Institute for Global Democratization, of principles that might apply to representation and democracy within the FSM. This has referred, critically, to notions of Cosmopolitan Democracy, and other principles for a reformed and even ‘emancipatory’ form of global governance (Patomäki Forthcoming). There may be lessons to be learned from such discussion. However, I am not convinced that this challenge can be met on the basis of either general philosophical principle or by ‘projecting downwards’ from the case of global governance. On the contrary, I would rather suggest that we need general principles based on an understanding of emancipatory social movements (which could then be ‘projected upwards’ toward global governance). Additionally, as suggested later in this paper, any propositions concerning the radical democratization of the Forum, and consequently of global governance, would have to take into serious account the epochal transformation implied by a networked and informatized capitalism, and the possibilities thus opened for what might be called ‘communicational democracy on a world scale’. The whole matter needs and, indeed, demands original analysis, consequent to and congruent with the innovation the Forum represents.

<sup>5</sup> For the position of Rifondazione, see Bertinoti 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Two examples from the UK. 1) The tiny but active Alliance for Workers Liberty disported itself as, or conflated itself with, a labour-solidarity NGO during the European Social Forum, Florence, November 2002; 2) The Socialist Workers Party has a front organization, Globalize Resistance, which has so far been the major coordinating instance of the global justice and solidarity movement in the UK. Its strategy, or at least its vision, is of the GJ&SM as a series of single-issue movements (simultaneous or successive), with itself as Hegemon of the Whole, the factor that articulates ‘short-term’ or ‘partial’ visions with the Necessary and Inevitable Revolution (Waterman 2003f),

<sup>7</sup> Either an interesting exception or a sign of the times would be the report on the IC meeting at Porto Alegre of Juan Moreno (2003a), the representative of the European Trade Union Confederation. Although not the official position of the ETUC, his report is significant for what it reveals about 1) the IC, 2) the ETUC. Its publication suggests that international unions may in the future address their positions on the Forum to not only themselves and each other but also to the most interested public. As such the paper also represents a contribution to the transparency of both the IC and the ITUIs, and to public dialogue on the future of the Forum. For a magazine-form version of his position, see Moreno (2003b).

<sup>8</sup> International Left euphoria about the PT and its achievements really needs tempering by analysis of both of these - even before Lula came to power. In Porto Alegre, birthplace of the almost universally-praised ‘participatory

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budgeting', the experiment is apparently reaching a point of crisis (Baierle 2002). And this 'workers' party' has a decreasing percentage of workers at its congresses. Indeed, whilst 41% of delegates came from the unions in 1997, only 29% did in 2001. The number of delegates earning 10-50 times the minimum salary was, in 2001, 71% of the total. The percentage of delegates having no relationship with social movements (including NGOs?) had increased from 23% to 31%. And whilst, in 1997, 73% already had university-level education, by 2001 this had increased to 83%! (Fundação Perseu Abramo 2002). Finally, we need to recognise the extent to which the Forum is actually a Brazilian *national* event (two-thirds of participants) and, therefore, a PT election mobilization exercise. Paradoxically, by identifying with the Forum, the PT could demonstrate to its national sympathizers that it was also part of and supported by an attractive and energetic international community.

<sup>9</sup> Within the Indian Committee, members of the radically nationalist Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CMP) are now as energetically engaged in the search for foreign funding as any other NGO officers. The irony in this case is that a leading figure of this party is Prakash Karat, originator, in the mid-1980s, of the theory of NGOs as agents of imperialism (Karat 1988).

<sup>10</sup> Chico Whitaker (Appendix 1) seems to see party, or political, domination of the WSF as the main danger. He thus expresses concern about the Call of Social Movements (for which see further below). I would see this problem as more one of the extent to which such parties, or political initiatives, are open and transparent. There is an overlap between membership of the OC/IC and the Call. The nature of their inter-relationship is obscure – and not further clarified by Whitaker. There is, further, another overlap, this one being between the Trotskyist Fourth International (associated with the name of Ernest Mandel) and both these initiatives. Unlike various other international Trotskyist factions (which are legion: [www.broadleft.org/inter.htm](http://www.broadleft.org/inter.htm)), the Fourth appears happy to list its members and their roles within the WSF (search for 'WSF' on <http://www.3bh.org.uk/IV/index.htm>). Moreover, these individuals have a sophisticated understanding of the nature of the new global justice and solidarity movement. However, they do not appear on those committees wearing these hats, but rather those of NGOs or social movements within which they have gained leading positions. I am wondering whether, in the interests of transparency, and to overcome accusations of 'entrism', it would not be best for people holding positions of power within the new movement to also list their party affiliations. A post-WSF3 seminar (Alternativas Socialistas 2003), appeared to be an initiative of the Fourth, and to be limited to panelists of the Fourth and Friends. It appeared, thus, to exclude both people of more libertarian tendencies and competing Trotskyist ones. In so far as the Fourth was nowhere mentioned on the pamphlet, speculation is bound to be provoked about the transparency with which even this more-open party operates.

<sup>11</sup> Here we must not forget the 20-year-old judgment on the NGO relationship, North-South, of Tilman Evers (1982: 120). He said that the principle underlying it was 'Give me opportunities to think I am using you and I will give you opportunities to think you are using me'. Admirable for its Machiavellianism, this judgement, and the reality on which it is based, hardly provides an appropriate ethic for the GS&JM.

<sup>12</sup> For the first time, the ICFTU gave extensive coverage to the WSF on its website, with special pages, news reports, declarations and photos <http://www.global-unions.org/wef-wsf.asp>. Whilst creating at least a visual equivalence between the WSF and the World Economic Forum, this presentation represents a major breakthrough. For the now-regular evaluation of the WSF by one of the ITUIs, see CES (2003). The CES (European Trade Union Confederation) is the TIUI most committed to the Forum, whilst at the same time being closely allied with the ICFTU and other such bodies.

<sup>13</sup> This panel came out of what its funder, the German social-democratic Friedrich Ebert Foundation, called 'the Bangkok Process'. In so far as the previous such events have had a problem with the public sphere (Waterman 2002b, Forthcoming a), this new emanation is to be welcomed.

<sup>14</sup> Consider, for example, the Forum activities of the World March of Women (2003a). Its programme was carried out in cooperation with REMTE, the Latin American Network of Women Transforming the Economy. This programme was set out on a widely-distributed poster/folder and included: Demonstrations and Public Events, Women on the March, Women's Mural, Walk against the Empire, Panel Discussions (i.e. in the Core), Seminars and Workshops (i.e. in the Suburbs), the Youth Camp (i.e. at the Margin, and including events on Feminist and the New Generation, Reinventing Utopias, the Liberation of Commercial Billboards), and three Cultural Activities. WMW's

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evaluation of the Forum included a democratic critique of the manner in which it has been run (World March of Women 2003b).

<sup>15</sup> For the experience/reflections of one young Dutch feminist, see <http://www.nextgeneration.let.uu.nl/wsf/index.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Whilst a closely preceding Latin American/Caribbean Feminist Encounter addressed itself centrally to globalisation (Facio 2002), it seems to have *not* identified itself with the Forum process as such. This is something of a paradox. I can myself only imagine that the now-historical *encuentros* represent what the feminists themselves have called a necessary moment of excision. In so far as this is so, there possibly still has to occur what I would consider the equally necessary and now possible moment of *re-insertion*. The moment of excision, if I correctly recall, was from the *Machista-Leninista* Left of the 1970s-80s. The re-insertion would evidently be into a general emancipatory movement of a very different nature. For a lengthier and more complex account of the Encuentros, see Alvarez et. al. (2002). There was, in 2002, a Latin-American 'Meeting of Women of the Americas Toward Porto Alegre 2003' (Encuentro de Mujeres 2003). But whilst this certainly provided information about the Forum and illustrated the concerns of the women's bodies involved, it did not seem to problematize the Forum itself. It was, moreover, a 'women's' rather than a 'feminist' event. Elsewhere, a leading Latin American lesbian feminist, Irene León (2003a, see further, Leon and Mtetwa 2003), has stated that a revolution was taking place at FSM3, with the institutionalization within it of the principles of the 'transversal axes of gender and diversity' (an enthusiasm later somewhat attenuated, León 2003b). I am not sure, however, whether, in the absence of a new power balance, such notable advances yet amount to a revolution within this revolution. At various feminist events in the Americas, questions are being raised about feminist over-commitment to or dependency on UN institutions and processes. One forthright statement, by Maria Suarez Toro (2002), not only suggests - at least to me - the influence of the GJ&SM, but also raises, with respect to the women's and feminist movement, the kind of concerns I am here expressing in relation to the Forum. Her note takes us beyond the WSF and into the broader GJ&SM, of which the women's and feminist movements are clearly a part. Because of the significant dialectic of movements here suggested, I attach the document as Appendix 2. Socialists in trade unions, please note!

<sup>17</sup> The Web Community of Social Movements/Comunidad Web de Movimientos Sociales (<http://movimientos.org/>) is a significant Latin American experiment in this area. It has given rise to a book (León, Burch and Tamayo 2001). Its limitations are not so much those of resources, regional specificity or funding but of attempting to build *from* social movement organization *to* social movement communication, rather than rethinking social movements in communication and cyberspace terms. More on this below.

<sup>18</sup> Others are challenging the WSMN more directly (Adamovsky 2003a,b). The author has connections with community *assembleas* in Buenos Aires, as well as being active in international libertarian networks. Any exclusion or peripheralization of such voices, within the proposed network, would be fatal.

<sup>19</sup> The communicational capacity and networking mode of the GS&JM as a whole was dramatically demonstrated with the unique international anti-war demonstrations of February 15-16, 2003. Laurence Cox (2003) responded to this with a series of relevant remarks and questions. He dealt with the manner in which communication is surpassing organization in such events only implicitly. Obviously the demonstrations had to be *organized*, and then in quite traditional ways. But the speed, size, spread and impact of this truly global protest event would have been impossible without 'our' internet and 'their' media. Today, increasingly, it is the means of communication that make emancipatory organization possible. This raises further interesting questions. In so far as communication becomes the *condition* for organization - and by this token *surpasses* organization - does it not possibly also surpass 'politics', as that which has previously mediated between mass protest and elite response? (Here 'politics' is understood as the alienation of 'power to' from people and its concentration in distant places and with professional specialists who convert it into 'power over'). Do we, in other words, have to still *depend on* political parties, elections and parliamentary debates to transform 'power over' into 'power to'? In so far as 'politics' is increasingly taking place in the media (is literally 'mediated'), does not counter-hegemonic power - particularly on the global scale - increasingly operate in the sphere of communication and culture?

<sup>20</sup> For more on this new and challenging area, see Cardon and Granjon (2003) and the Cyberspace panel within Life after Capitalism <http://www.zmag.org/lacsite.htm>. For a classical text on activist media strategies, see Ryan (1991).

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<sup>21</sup> A second visit to this latest WSF website update revealed that my own first reflections on WSF3 had been posted. Grateful that, after 5-10 previous efforts over two years, I had finally been given such recognition, I remain in ignorance about the selection principles or procedures involved. I live in hope that this current, less hasty, more balanced, account will eventually achieve similar recognition.

<sup>22</sup> At one panel, within the radical-democratic Life after Capitalism programme, a prominent Marxist panelist monopolized the proceedings by a populist appeal to the audience (which had not invited her, and whom she did not invite to take into account the consequent marginalization of her peers) turning the event into a lecture, and leaving the other panelists first tongue-tied and later literally dormant.

<sup>23</sup> I mention the latest such contribution to come to my attention, that of Stephanie Ross (2003). This is not simply because she is a young lecturer still completing her PhD. It is also because she addresses herself to the problematic nature of democracy as manifested within the events of protest rather than proposition, and more specifically to the anarchist or libertarian ideas and strategies revealed here. Her critique of such practices may balance off what might here seem to have been an anarchist critique of the Forum.

<sup>24</sup> For a Spanish annual that monitors movements in that state, see Grau and Ibarra (2001). In South Africa there is another national monitoring project (Weekes 2002). All of these, and the many others that do or will exist, could obviously benefit from publication in one space and from dialogue with each other.

<sup>25</sup> Since one reader of this piece did not understand the pejorative connotations of ‘jamboree’ (festival), let me spell them out. I am referring to those NGOs that give primary attention, within the WSF, to the bringing together of their own member organizations or affiliates. And only secondary attention, or none at all, to the WSF as an innovatory project that might have transformatory implications for NGOs themselves. A case in point would be a pro-union NGO network, close to the ICFTU and ETUC, and based, like them, in Brussels. From its WSF3 Report (Solidar 2003), it would appear that its prime interest in Porto Alegre was the opportunity it offered for a meeting of its network – one that could just as well have been held in Brussels, Washington or, for that matter, Ouagadougou or Ulan Bator. The report has, indeed, so little to say about the Forum, that one has to ask oneself whether this meeting was not so much its prime interest but its sole one. Another case might be that of the traditional Peruvian development NGOs attending. Before departure for Porto Alegre a preparatory meeting of such saw the convening network, CONADES, claim – on the basis of no visible activity, publicity effort, media campaign or web presence, – that it ‘represented’ the WSF in Peru. And then, at one report-back of such NGOs in Lima, the complaint was heard that the WSF was reproducing the radicalism of the 1960s-70s. The real problem here is not the assertion of a connection (which is undeniable, though requiring specification) but the inability to see the differences between the radicalism of that period and the radicalism of this one. And, of course, the simple dismissal of 1960s-70s radicalism by someone who doubtless considers him or herself a representative of civil society.