THE PORTO ALEGRE CONSENSUS:

EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION

OF THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM [1]

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1994

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
May, 2005

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

'One must speak for a struggle for a new culture, that is, for a new moral life that cannot but be intimately connected to a new intuition of life, until it becomes a new way of feeling and seeing reality.'

Antonia Gramsci, Selections from Cultural Writings (1985, p. 98)

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I.

INTRODUCTION

<u>Background</u>

Globalization describes what a number of people perceive as a fundamental

change in the conditions of human life. Just what has changed and how it has changed,

however, are matters of great contention—especially within the social movement

community. Current writing on globalization focuses on some specific trends that appear

to have pushed the sources and implications of social action beyond state borders.

Recent transformations in transportation and communication technologies have altered

our sense of distance, radically compressing time and space (Harvey, 1989, Giddens

1990, 1994). Thus, territorial nation-states have apparently lost some of their capacities

to establish order or mediate change within their borders (Sassen, 1996, Strange, 1996,

Gilpin, 2000). And, the number and power of intergovernmental institutions and

multinational corporations have grown remarkably (Smith et al., 1997; Keck and Sikkink

1998; Risse-Kappen 1995). The communications media, as well, are increasingly global

in both their reference and their reach, and the media also help provide resources in the

building of transnational epistemic communities and cultural diasporas among

immigrants, indigenous peoples and like minded activists (Appadurai, 1996, Castells,

1997, Singer, 2002)

From the vantage point of social movements, globalization offers contradictory possibilities. On the one hand, to the extent that globalization appears to reduce the ability of states to act within their own territories, social movements are dislocated from their usual position of petitioning states to redress grievances. The supposed weakness of states within the framework of globalization means that social movements must direct resources toward international institutional linkages, partnerships and coalitions that can diminish movement autonomy in the home country. On the other hand, globalization has provided social movements with new and significant opportunities and resources for influencing both state and non-state actors (Guidry et al., 2000). Globalization has in fact brought social movements together across borders in a 'transnational public sphere', a real as well as conceptual space in which movement actors interact, contest each other and their objectives, and learn from each other. Giddens (1994) describes this process as 'action at a distance', or the ability of actors in one place to influence events in other places through economic, political and media processes.

The World Social Forum (WSF), now in its fifth annual manifestation, represents such an opportunity for global, national and local movements to organize, network and struggle in solidarity under the banner 'another world is possible'. [2] The WSF first convened in January 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil at the same time as and in opposition to the world Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland. [3] The 'Forum movement' now encompasses many diverse thematic, regional and community gatherings throughout the Americas, Europe, Asia and Africa. The Forums have played an important role as I will attempt to explain in the following pages in reconstituting the way certain segments of

global civil society interact, engage and network with other organizations, cultures and individuals.

Problem, Purpose and Objective of Study

The purpose of the research is to analyze the emergence of the World Social Forum (WSF) held in Porto Alegre, Brazil within the framework of social movement, organizational and governance theories. I will also examine the function of the Forum as a counter-movement in response to the World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland, its emergence as a transnational mobilizing structure for globalized and localized environmental, social justice, trade union and economic reform organizations, and its' relative success/failure in its development for social movement activity. The main focus of the research will be to determine the role that organization formation (formal/informal, centralized/decentralized), leadership configurations, discursive frameworks, pre-existing protest traditions have played in the success of the WSF. I will break down the Forum process and base my analysis on primary data collected by semi-structured interviews and secondary data sources.

Although, the WSF has succeeded in mobilizing large groups of activists from across the globe under the potential of creating 'globalizations from below' (Global South rather than North) it has encountered difficulties in achieving organizational stability, media coverage, and political legitimacy/resonance. Thus, I will analyze the factors which have worked to create this transnational public sphere for social movement mobilization and examine the Forum's ability to address the adversity it has encountered as it has doubled in size each year. As Houtart (2001) states, the WSF may very well be

the birth of a new culture which could stand to pose a legitimate challenge to the economic domination imposed by the neo-liberal model. This 'new culture' would have implications for nation-state stabilization and security, international trade policy as well as global economic legitimacy. A central thesis of this research is that the WSF has been successful in creating a global mobilizing structure which in turn has formed a transnational public sphere from 'below' due in large part to its decentralized, informal networks and its use of human/social agency which draws from a long tradition of protest and transformative events.

Significance of the Study

In this study I collected data from individuals and organizations involved directly with its formation or who have attended the Forum as well as other stakeholder groups such as government agencies and industry. The data I collected from semi-structured interviews of individual attendees, organizers and local stakeholders will help me to better understand the efforts of organizers as well as the impact of the WSF on social movements in Brazil and transnationally. Through previous inquiry on the WSF I have collected valuable baseline information from secondary sources (Houtart and Polet, 2001, Fisher and Ponniah, 2003, WSF, 2005) regarding its organizational structure and organizations involved in its formation and emergence. This work will have important implications for the development of transnational social movement theory as well as provide insight into the organizational evolution of transnational public spheres and the reconstituting of global civil society. The findings will also enable WSF organizers to further address the adversity they face as the Forum grows larger and stronger networks.

<u>Assumptions, Scope, and Limitations</u>

Throughout this analysis I make some general assumptions about the state of globalized capitalism and global governance that I feel is sufficiently bracketed in the literature; though other researchers may differ on these points. First, I assume that globalized capitalism has through trade negotiations and treaties, financial and monetary policies created a tenuous situation for developing countries, which forfeit national autonomy to seek greater economic benefit. It has been well documented that these economic benefits generally benefit the wealthy elite in these countries with little benefit going to the less fortunate or marginalized populations. Thus, I assume the existence of a legitimacy crisis growing within the expansion of globalized capitalism and its inability to manage contagion effects such as the Asian financial crisis and ameliorate the social and economic malaise embedded in its own development.

I also admit that the WSF process is relatively new, five years old, and does not represent all of global civil society (GCS). While the numbers (See Appendix D) of organizations and individuals may seem large compared to other gatherings of GCS the numbers when compared with the multitude of organizations and individuals engaged with GCS at large is rather minute. Thus, the scope of many of my claims related to the reconstitution of civil society or the providing of alternative frameworks for mobilizing civil society is of a rather small scale and may only be beneficial to networks that are committed to the process in philosophy. In other words, the forum process may represent only one form of several different forms representing a shift in the way GCS organizes,

communicates and networks with its own constituents and those from private and public

sectors.

Definition of Terms and Anachronisms

GCS	Global Civil Society
MST	Movemento Sem Terra (Landless Workers Movement, Brazil)
ALCA	Area de Livre Comercio das Americas translates to FTAA or Free Trade Area of the Americas
FOE	Friends of the Earth
NGO	Non-governmental organization, non-profit organization
CED	Communities of activists within the Church
CUT	Centro Union Traballhos (Central Workers Union, Brazil)
WSF	World Social Forum
FSM	Forum Social Mundial, Portuguese for World Social Forum
ESF	European Social Forum
NLP	Neo-Liberal Project referred to here as globalized neo-liberal capitalism
PT	Worker's Party
UN	United Nations

II.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Global Civil Society and the Porto Alegre Process

The World Social Forum proved effective in bringing together all the different feelings and currents of thought that have come to comprise this rich and heterogeneous global justice movement now taking shape at the international level, and which has become highly visible since the mass protests against the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle (Smith, 2004). The period beginning after 1999 was a new epoch in which worker's struggles, 'new social movements' of the north, and a new group of young activists (anarchists, anti-sweatshop, anti-biotech, peace and human rights movements) have come together via an interrelated set of efforts. The Zapitista uprising in Chiapas in 1994, protests in Seattle against the WTO in 1999, subsequent demonstrations against the perceived agents of corporate globalization in Washington D.C., Melbourne, Prague, Gothenburgm Quebec City, and Genoa, and creation of the World Social Forum, coalesced to create a new diaspora of global contention (Fisher and Ponniah, 2003). Furthermore, the Forum movement has made clear its adversary all along to be the neoliberal capitalist model (WSF, 2005) also known as the 'Washington Consensus' (Williamson, 1990) promoted by what Sklair (2002) and Robinson (2004) refer to as the transnational capitalist class. Thus, the intention of Forum authors [4] from

the beginning was to create a method of open, informal and decentralized organizing which countered the formal, top-down, closed-door characteristics of globalized capitalism adeptly displayed at the World Economic Forum.

My intention in this analysis is to outline what I contend to be an emergent bottom-up model for reconstituting global civil society (GCS) that proves to be adaptive, decentralized and openly democratic. I also hope to continue the theoretical dialogue begun by many other authors in recent years.[5] This developing reflexive and mutually responsive process guiding the Forums' development through its many manifestations around the globe I describe here as the 'Porto Alegre Consensus'.[6] This consensus is not a list of policy issues or action plans but instead an agreed upon set of methods by those attending the Forums serving to guide the process by which this 'globalization from below' expands and is reconstituted to meet the threat posed by the global neo-liberal capitalism. Whereas the Washington Consensus guides economic policies such as deregulation, privatization, liberalization, fiscal discipline, tax reform and property rights to encourage rapid economic growth of the global economy (Williamson, 1990), the Porto Alegre Consensus serves to thicken linkages between GCS actors, liberate communicative action, and horizontally integrate the struggle for global social justice.

More importantly, solidarity at the Forums is achieved through discursive frameworks with earnest respect for gender, cultural identity and diversity. Communicative openness originates from the desire to create a true transnational public sphere where ideas, resources and strategies are openly exchanged along self-transforming networks, and authority and power is diffused across movements and organizations establishing participatory decision-making structures. This new recipe for

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GCS did not originate by chance but is the outcome of careful planning by the Forum's original authors through adoption of the WSF Charter of Principles in 2001 and the willingness to host the Forums in Porto Alegre until the methodology matured and gained popular acceptance.

For an increasing number of theorists, GCS represents nothing less than the outline of a future world political and global governance framework. Keane (2003) describes GCS as a dynamic non-governmental system of interconnected socio-economic institutions that straddle the whole earth, and that have complex effects that are felt in its four corners. It is an unfinished project that consists of sometimes thick, sometimes thinly stretched networks, pyramids and hub-and-spoke clusters of organizations and actors who organize themselves across borders, with the deliberate aim of drawing the world together in new ways. Richard Falk (1995, p. 101) suggests that GCS recasts our understanding of sovereignty as 'the modernist stress on territorial sovereignty as the exclusive basis for political community and identity is displaced both by more local and distinct groupings and by association with the reality of a GCS without boundaries'. Lipschutz and Mayer (1996, p. 391) sees transnational political networks put in place by actors in civil society as 'challenging, from below, the nation-state system', and 'the growth of GCS representing and ongoing project of civil society to reconstruct, re-imagine, and re-map world politics'. Martinelli (2004) describes a similar model of global civil society that includes three basic principles of authority, exchange and solidarity alongside pluralistic and diverse strategies and methods acting as mechanisms for social integration. Taken together, representations of GCS portray a dynamic network of non-governmental organizations from the global to the grassroots, employing a

diversity of methods and tactics, and that are in some cases intent on restructuring and in

others reforming the mechanisms of global governance.   In the following I hope to

expand on these three basic principles of exchange, authority, and solidarity in order to

provide a framework for theoretical discourse regarding the Forums' methodology,

development and popular engagement throughout the world.

<u>World Social Forum in Context</u>

The WSF's Charter of Principles states:

> The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking,
> democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of
> experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and
> movements of civil society that are opposed to neo-liberalism and to
> domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are
> committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful
> relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth (WSF,
> 2005).

Houtart (2001) states that the WSF marks a turning point in social movement

mobilization, a birth of a new political culture, in gestation for several years, manifesting

as a search for alternatives to globalized capitalism and the neo-liberal model, as

displayed at the World Economic Forum. The most recent 2005 WSF drew over 155,000

activists, NGO campaigners, academics, journalists and trade unionists from more than

135 countries (WSF, 2005a). The WSF Charter of Principles goes on to claim that:

> The World Social Forum is a process that encourages its participant
> organizations and movements to situate their actions, from the local level
> to the national level and seeking active participation in international
> contexts, as issues of planetary citizenship, and to introduce onto the
> global agenda the change-inducing practices that they are experimenting
> in building a new world in solidarity (WSF, 2005).

The Forum's Charter of Principles spells out a methodology or process for creating open gathering spaces for social movements from around the world to incubate projects and alternatives to economic globalization. Although many of the participants and activists refer to the Forum as if it were a new political agent, the authors go out of their way to acknowledge that it is not political agent.

> The World Social Forum is also characterized by plurality and diversity, is non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party. It proposes to facilitate decentralized coordination and networking among organizations engaged in concrete action towards building another world, at any level from the local to the international, but it does not intend to be a body representing world civil society. (WSF, 2005)

The authors of the WSF have discouraged any interpretation of it as a deliberative body or institution. They have instead focused on the Forum as a pedagogical space for activists and organizers to learn what alternatives are being proposed and enacted around the globe. Although, clearly the WSF has acted as a political space by giving activists an arena in which to network and develop common projects. The Forum was instrumental in organizing Brazilian social movements and NGOs to support and help elect Lula da Silva, a former radical union leader and member of Brazil's Workers Party, to that country's Presidency in October of 2002. During the third WSF organizers from European peace groups used the opportunity to double the number of countries participating in their scheduled February 15, 2003 (F15) global rally for peace against the threat of War in Iraqi (Frankel, 2003). Many WSF themes such as debt relief, socially responsible investment, and the idea of a more equitable globalization which have been discussed since the Forum's inception are now gaining legitimacy with global economic powers, and have been taken up at the most recent World Economic Forum.

Emergence

Public Spheres and Discursive Frameworks

This 'action at a distance', which Giddens refers to, does not actually occur from a distance. This action originates somewhere, proceeds through specific channels, does something, and has concrete effects in particular places (Guidry et al., 2000). That action is, however, mediated by discursive relationships that are forged through transnational public spheres. Transnational public spheres create the space for communicative action, tactical exchange, organizational networking, and resource conduits. Jurgen Habermas's ([1962], 1989) account of the bourgeois public sphere was meant to identify a new kind of space in which rational critical discussion by citizens, rather than sheer economic logic or the instrumentalities of state power, could assist in the formation of state policies and civil, political and social rights. Thirty years later, he still finds the public sphere very influential, noting that the bourgeois public sphere carried its own potential for self-transformation (Habermas 1992). He also recognizes its transnational potential invoking the 1989 demonstrations that brought down communism, although, he admits that the demonstrations achieved their objectives only by being broadcast on global television networks that are themselves guided by principles other than those defining the democratic potentials of the public sphere. Regardless of its correspondence to communicative rationality with which Habermas is concerned, this notion of a potentially transnational public sphere has nonetheless become a critical element in the constitution of globalization and the role of social movements in it.

The consequence of this transnational public sphere is not simply its own development, but like globalization, it involves 'actions at a distance' that must be

understood in terms of its consequences for real people and their struggles, all of whom occupy specific places and communities. That is, the transnational public sphere is realized in various localized applications and discourses, potentially quite distant from the original production of the discourse or practice in question. These transnational public spheres offer a place where forms of organizational networking and tactics for collective action can be transmitted across the globe. It is the medium through which various forms of collective action and social movement practices become 'modular' and transferable to distant locations and causes (Tarrow, 1994). It also provides the space where material resources can be developed and distributed across national boundaries in ways, which limit the nation-state's capacity to sanctify and demonize the practices with claims of patriotism and alien influence. Noteworthy examples of this process are provided by Ball (2000) and Keck and Sikkink (1998) regarding the spread of human rights ideologies and movements throughout the global conduit created by the transnational public sphere. Keck and Sikkink (1998) also illustrate the potential for transnational mobilizing structures with their discussion of the 'boomerang effect,' in which national and international human rights organizations bypass the target states and rely on international pressure from other states and the transnational human rights movement to help accomplish goals in a specific area. The WSF process provides a global mobilizing structure that serves to network organizations from the grassroots to the transnational providing an amplifying sphere to air grievances, gain access to power structures and resource pools.

The transnational public sphere has experienced rapid expansion due to the recent advances in technologies such as high-speed computers, information technologies, and

open-source software (Castells, 2000, Bohman, 2004). The Internet has proved to be the global conduit where movement strategies and tactics may be shared and observed, mobilization alerts travel in real-time, and resources can be collected and dispersed to any point in the world (evident from 2004 Asian tsunami relief efforts). The 2005 WSF focused thematic discussions on the use and distribution of open source software and recycled computer systems for civil society organizations. All of 1000 computers used at the 2005 WSF employed open source software developed in open source language. A good part of the 2005 budget was also dedicated to helping manufactures of open communication systems (Milan, 2005). The 2005 edition also offered a new free translation system, and more than 400 panels and workshops were transmitted live online, permitting virtual participation around the world. The promotion of open source software such as Linux operating systems, open communication systems, and organizations like Creative Commons, which provides a flexible copyright framework, reflects the Forum's search for functional alternatives and models for a better more open world. The idea of the transnational public sphere allows us to conceptualize these advances in terms of offering greater access to a global communication and mobilization framework that does not depend on corporations or developed countries for its future development and maintenance.

Conceiving globalization as producing new opportunity structures for social movements such as with the World Social Forums allow us to examine movements within important frameworks that are already highly developed in social movement theory. A 'political opportunity structure' is the way in which present allocations of resources and power privilege some alternatives for collective action while raising the

cost of others. The political opportunity model allows us to conceptualize both social

movements within globalization and visa versa, since we can conceptualize the latter

either as an independent or dependent variable in movement analysis (McAdam, 1996).

Thus, movements can both be affected by and transform political opportunity structures.

The flexibility afforded by such a perspective opens up the possibility for analysis of the

discursive, mutually transforming relationships between states and societies (Migdal et

al., 1994).   Both, the developing idea of the Forums as transnational public sphere as

well as a structure from greater political opportunity brings us to the analysis of the

Forums' organizational structure and democratic systems.

Representation and Structure

Debate between Forums serving as political agent versus open space for exchange

and movement building is one of the most contentious between more liberal interpreters

of the Forum's Charter of Principles and its stricter adherents. This tension came to a

head during the 2005 WSF when 19 'high-profile' intellectuals produced a 12-point

'Porto Alegre Manifesto'. The individuals (labeled the G-19) called on other participants

at the Forum to sign-on to the list of proposals even though they had no participation in

the creation of the document. The document outlined many of the main themes discussed

at the 2005 WSF including such items as debt cancellation, adoption of the Tobin tax on

international financial transfers, promotion of equitable forms of trade, anti-

discrimination policies for minorities and women, and democratization of international

organizations (Anthony and Silva, 2005).   For many at the Forum the list of policy

statements signaled an attempt to produce a political platform for a gathering whose

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founding Charter of Principles disallows. One of the original founders of the WSF

Candido Grzybowski commented that:

> What kills this proposal is the method with which it was created and presented. It goes against the very spirit of the Forum. Here, all proposals are equally important and not only that of a group of intellectuals, even when they are very significant persons (TerraViva, 2005, p. 1).

The strength of the Forums seems to lie in the process by which decentralized coordination and networking among organizations is carried out, and not the policies advocated in the name of the Forum. Even though specific actions or policies are endorsed at the Forums, they are proposed and promoted by organizations who are in attendance and not by individuals representing the Forums at large. This methodology produces a stabilizing framework where diverse organizations and issues may be discussed without the need to construct overarching policy platforms.

Among its organizers and participants there have been different approaches towards emphasizing the different WSF identities, space for movement and seeds of global governance, that are by no means incompatible (Teivainen, 2002). The formal decision-making power of the Forum process has been mainly in the hands of the Organizing Committee, consisting since its beginning of the Central Trade Union Confederation (Central Única dos Trabalhadores) (CUT), the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra) (MST) and six smaller Brazilian social movement organizations. In response to what many claimed was a lack of transparency and democracy, repetition of dialogue, and political disparities between large and small organizations [7] and feedback received from the Mumbai Organizing Committee, the 2005 WSF bought changes in its methodology and decision-making structures. Forum authors and organizers took the risk of allowing the Forums'

methodology to be self-managed by its participants by asking them how they wanted the Forums to progress and develop (WSF, 2005b, Caramel, 2005). Furthermore, the WSF has claimed all along to have no centralized leadership, no position of power. There is no hierarchy or reporting structure within the WSF. All participants, as long as they neither advocate nor use violence, can take part in discussions about finding alternatives to the capitalist model for globalization. The World Social Forums also do not make decisions on courses of action that are binding on those who attend its meetings (Fisher and Ponniah, 2003). The underlying assumption in this method is that the Forums do not represent a deliberative body or actor that would take political stands and thereby need rigorous decision-making procedures.

The media has tended to look at the WSF as a political actor in itself, though many of the organizers have wanted to downplay this role and argue that they simply provide a space for different groups to interact (Solomon, 2001). These different conceptions of the event have clashed, for example; when the media has asked for 'final declarations' and considered the lack of any such final document a proof of weakness in the organizational structure. The unwillingness to formulate political statements, beyond the Charter of Principles drafted in 2001, is occasionally questioned among some organizers and related actors who would like to see the WSF as an organization expressing opinions on certain issues, such as the War in Iraq, and political crisis in the Palestinian Territories, Haiti and Darfur. Forum organizers have also wrestled with the issue of funding the huge 10-12 day event understanding that to make the Forums sustainable and actionable they must risk partnering with strange bedfellows such as large international foundations and corporations. It is not always easy to see the differences

between 'alternative' globalization proposals with the idea of many business leaders being involved in the process, and the prospect of another, better world without their influence. This is an inherent difficulty that cosmopolitan theorists have faced in developing their mechanisms for civil society organizations and grassroots movements to influence policy and achieve agency within this hierarchy of transnational corporations and state institutions.

One of the most well known of civil society theorists, David Held (1995), indicates that GCS organizations provide the space for transnational public spheres which, taken together, operate as a basis for dispersed sovereignty in a system of global governance; generate critical resources directed towards the institutional power required by such governance and provide opportunities for voluntary association at the 'local' level. Nevertheless, civil society is by no means self-governing in Held's model, being constrained within a wider framework of cosmopolitan democratic law that 'delimits the form and scope of individual and collective action within the organizations of state and civil society. Certain standards are specified, which no political regime or civil association can legitimately violate' (Held, 1993, p. 43). Of course, for this cosmopolitan democratic law to have any authority, transnational sovereign institutions are required, though Held imagines these also being constrained by such a law, particularly by the principle of subsidiarity or the dispersal of sovereignty, but also through ensuring that these are representative global institutions. Held summarizes his model as involving the call for a double-sided process of democratization in both political and civil society. Thus although Held sees civil society as one of the agents of democratic global governance, it is as much acted upon as actor, object as well as subject of his

cosmopolitan democracy. This feature is mirrored in the theory of other cosmopolitan

democrats such as Archibugi (1998, p. 219), for instance, wants GCS to participate 'in

political decision making through new permanent institutions', but then states that such

institutions 'would supplement but not replace existing intergovernmental organizations.

Their function would be essentially advisory and not executive', which points to agency

as a crucial element missing from cosmopolitan democrats' theories of GCS.

Falk (1995) illustrates this hope in the agency of GCS with his call for

'globalization from below' through the activities of transnational social movements.

'Globalization from below' such as displayed at the Forums is seen as an alternative to

the hegemonic 'globalization from above' imposed by transnational capitalist elites

through a worldwide normative network premised not on human rights but on the rights

of capital flow, multinational corporations, and 'liberalized' markets. For Falk there can

be a democratic global normative framework or 'law of humanity'. Yet unlike Held, with

his weak notion of agency, Falk sees GCS as the only means to this humane law—'as the

hopeful source of political agency needed to free the minds of persons from an

acceptance of state/sovereign identity (Falk, 1995, p.101)'. Furthermore, such global

governance, contrary to Held who seeks to achieve it 'from above' from 'cosmopolitan

law', must be built 'from the ground up' and continue to be anchored in GCS itself

(Baker, 2002). This universality 'from below' is also sought by Paul Ghils, who wonders

whether the 'universality of action in association' makes 'civil society and its

transnational networks of associations the universal network which competing nations

have never succeeded in creating' (Ghils, 1992, p. 429). Thus, from this perspective, the

Forum movement could represent nothing less than the outline of a future world political

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and global governance framework. There is this continuing 'framework of rights' involved in instances where WSF process is invoked from the 'bottom-up' and the cosmopolitan perspective informs our understanding of these mechanisms, and indicates that this facet of the Forums process is essential to the future evolution of global democratic structures.

While the Forums have helped to link the old left, new social movements, and the new wave of radicalism into a global movement for justice and solidarity, some have viewed the shift away from traditional protests in the streets (Seattle style encounters) to Forum style, political talk shops as troubling:

> The actions of activists engaged in direction action and militants on the street have captured the headlines, and brought about concrete, but arguably short-lived results. Others, such as liberal reformists, NGOs, and authoritarian leftists enter into a dynamic push-and-shove to hash out a way forward in the form of the Social Forums. Unfortunately, this local leadership, which has the money and experience to organize, are moving the Forums away from the direction initiated by radicals, an into the self-destructive orbit of conventional politics. (Farrer, 2003)

But, still others view the process of the Forums in functionalist terms:

> I think that there is a trend to the movements to legitimize themselves and be inspected by the mainstream, but in this process the movements loose their radical nature. This is a trend that affects the roots of the movements—like NGOs in Brazil accept that they must work within the system, they simply accept it. And, the WSF is part of this political framework, political mainframe. (2003, Interview with Sociologist)

These conflicting views can be put into theoretical context by exploring the implications of Meyer's idea of a World Society. Among those studying globalization and social movements, Meyer et al (1997) explores the emergence of a rational-bureacratic 'world-society' and the contributions made by social movements to the construction of this society. This framework has given us a compelling picture of the proliferation of

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rational-legal structures that Max Weber identified as crucial to modernity. This imagery would also suggest a disproportionate transformation across the world, however, where globalization or world society refers to the 'modernization' of the non-Western world. Robertson (1992) and Appadurai (1996) also discuss the positive contributions that social movements bring to the development of globalized civil society, though these authors see a more discursive and pluralist process than Meyer and his colleagues find in their research.

Meyer et al. (1997) describe the development of 'world society' as an isomorphic process through which rational-legal institutions are increasingly embedded in sociopolitical structures and practices around the world. In other words, the nature of states, political institutions, contentious practices, and juridical norms around the world are coming more and more to operate by way of the rational, bureaucratic norms that may be found in the industrialized democracies. Meyer and his colleagues bring social movements into their work, placing movements as active agents in the deepening of world society and its norms. They write,

> Many of the international nongovernmental organization have a 'social movement' character. Active champions of central elements of world culture, they promote models of human rights, consumer rights, environmental regulation, social and economic development, and human equality and justice. They often cast themselves as oppositional grassroots movements, decrying gaps or failures in the implementation of world-cultural principles in particular locales and demanding corrective action by states and other actors. Agents of social problems, they generate further structuration and rationalized systems (Meyer et al., 1997)

This kind of liberal and emancipatory vision of the globalization of social movements presuppose that the principles governing social action in the liberal democracies of advanced capitalism can be extended into societies and cultures the world over. Another

explicit concern of this vision finds democracy and civility in public discourse highly

dependent upon an open and vibrant civil society/public sphere (Keane, 1996, Keck and

Sikkink, 1998, Sassen, 1996). Forum organizers recognize those rationalizations

associated with democratization and market capitalism, but they depend more directly

upon a transnational version of the public sphere, where movements can act and the

implications of those actions can be carried forth into a discussion of the rights of

subjects and the imperatives of states and organizations.

III.

METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology and Design

Through previous research on the WSF I have collected valuable baseline
information from secondary sources regarding its organizational structure and
organizations involved in its formation and emergence. These groups included
environmental, social justice, trade union and economic reform organizations as well as
individuals, which played an active role in the international and local planning and
organizing committees for the WSF. I conducted fieldwork throughout southern Brazil in
the sumer of 2003 where I collected additional data from 12 semi-structured interviews
with Forum activists and organizers (2 interviews were not used in this study due to
recording difficulties).

Through preliminary research on secondary sources and the Internet, I isolated
various stakeholder groups (groups that either directly or indirectly affect or are affected
by the World Social Forum) and potential representatives (Houtart and Polet, 2001,
Fisher and Ponniah, 2003, WSF, 2005). Only adults 18 years of age and older will be
included in this study. An interpreter accompanied me at all times to offer technical
assistance with language translation when applicable. For this research I contacted
various social movement organizations, government agencies, and business organizations

between the dates of June 13, 2003 and August 15, 2003 in southern Brazil. I explained that I am a graduate student in Environmental Sciences from Oklahoma State University. I then explained the nature of my research. Once initial interview contacts were established I used a snowball sampling technique to identify additional respondents. Snowball sampling is a standard technique used in qualitative research (Neuman, 1997, Babbie, 1998) where researchers solicit help from respondents in identifying the population under study. There are many NGO members, business and political representatives, and social movement activists throughout Brazil who have attended the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, and many of the original organizers of the Forum and members of the international organizing committee are located in Sao Paulo and Porto Alegre.

Selection of Subjects

The subjects of this study were selected from common stakeholder groups involved with the World Social Forum in Brazil. These groups included environmental, social justice, trade union and economic reform organizations as well as individuals, which have played an active role in the international and local planning and organizing committees for the WSF. Stakeholder groups also included government agencies and business representatives.

Questionnaire Content

Semi-structured interviews were conducted for this qualitative research project. Semi-structured interviews are a standard technique used in qualitative research (Babbie, 1998, Rubin and Rubin, 1995, Berg, 1995). The content of my interview schedule can be viewed in Appendix C. The content of the schedule was structured around the themes investigated (organizational, leadership frameworks, pre-existing traditions), general background information on participants, and open-ended follow-up questions investigating the emergent themes from the interviews. Data collection and interpretation occurred simultaneously and was filtered through my own interpretation of the subject's dialogues and themes they introduced throughout the interviews. Thus, I must acknowledge myself as a study instrument in deciphering the content and corresponding direction of the discussion as it occurred during the interviews (See Fontana and Frey 1998). This relationship of myself as researcher to the content and data of the interviews I interpreted can be a problematic one (Borland, 2002), and I hope to resolve some of these methodological conflicts in the future.

Data Collection Plan and Recording

Each of the semi-structured interviews lasted approximately one hour. There were no follow-up procedures. Although, participants in the study were emailed published work from the data gathered. There were no anticipated risks associated with participation in this study. Each subject participating in the interviews was given a pseudonym for audio recordings and written notes. Each participant was advised of the

transport and use procedures as required by IRB procedures during the verbal consent

(See Appendix C and D).

Cross Cultural and Language Considerations

I requested a waiver of written consent to further protect anonymity, and to be

sensitive to cultural differences. In the United States, written consent is normal and

expected from participants in research studies. This is not the case in Brazil. I feared

that my trust with potential respondents will be jeopardized if I explain complete

anonymity and then ask them to sign their name on an official consent form. Please see

Appendix C for the script that explained the research and asked for verbal consent. In the

script (see Appendix C), I explained the following information to potential volunteers:

The interviews will be audiotaped and written notes will be taken; These audiotapes and

written notes will remain in my possession and will be kept in a locked filing cabinet; I

will be the only one with access to the audiotapes and written notes; A pseudonym will

be used when reporting direct quotes.

There were several instances when word translation became an issue during the

interviews, and I worked to find a common intrepretation from Portuguesse to English to

the best of my and my translator's abilities. Some of these words included *articulacao,*

construcao, solidariedade. Articulacao used by the Forum authors and organizers I

interviewed translates to the way in which the Forum's process is interpreted and re-

interpreted through various manifestations and experiences by participants, organizations

and the Forum as a whole. *Construcao* are the specific methods which are implemented

such as concensus decision-making, labourous dialogues and construction of themes, and

open dialogue to flesh out emergent issues which are employed at the Forums as a means

of a*rticulacao. Solidaridade* I translated to mean various ways in which movements,

communities or organizations collaborate or coordinate their powers, projects, etc. in

order to produce an alternative network to globalized capitalism and its inlfuence on the

local.   There were several other instances when the exact translations were not apparent,

but myself and the translator choose a best fit word or phrase to represent the meaning

transferred from the participant.

Analysis of Data

Analysis of data including secondary sources, interviews and other first hand

observations will consist of qualitative content analysis to isolate emergent themes from

the content of the transcripts among the issues of organizational capacity, discursive

networks, and authority structures within the forum movement and its development.

These themes are introduced and discussed in the following section and correspond to the

content analysis of the interviews.

IV.

EMERGENT THEMES

<u>Landscape of Interviews</u>

The discussions and informal dialogue I captured in completion of this study weave a vibrant and informative tapestry that is the WSF process.   While most all of the people I interviewed had associations with the Forum either as participants or organizers, the associations varied widely from being an original author of the Charter of Principles after the first Forum to having attended only one Forum as a representative of an organization. All of the interviewees spoke favorably of the Forum and its process in general terms though some of them were quick to offer pointed critiques. All of them possessed their own ideas of what the Forum was, what it could be, and how to make it better.

I would like to think that the dialectical process of recording, analyzing and publishing their interviews aids in the reflexive nature of the Forum's methodology itself. This reflexive process between Forum articulations, the actual process and corresponding revisions of Forum methodology is an essential component of the Porto Alegre Consensus. I consider this exchange between theory and practice to be an important component in the reconstitution of global civil society and within the possibility that exists of constructing new alternative globalizations. Again I would like to revisit the

original doctrine I employed when constructing this study and that is to determine the reasons behind the success and effectiveness of the Forum, what people expect from the Forum process, and if the Forum delivers what it promises to its participants.

Pre-Existing Protest Traditions and Forum Solidarity

Although the World Social Forum at first may appear as an anomaly in the global arena the gathering represents the convergence of several transnational protest traditions and a continuity of transformative events contending the global economic and political order. Just where and when this timeline began is a matter of contention. Smith (2002) traces the origins through a web of transnational associations and movement networks that developed out of activist streams of the 1980's and 1990's. This web facilitated cooperation and exchange across national boundaries. These networks included transnational movements targeting human rights, labor, trade liberalization, anti-war and environmental issues. The earliest resistance to the global economic order began in the global south around the issues of International Monetary Fund (IMF)-imposed structural adjustment policies (Walton and Seddon, 1994). Organizations in Canada, Mexico and the U.S. started focusing on trade liberalization during negotiations around the North American Free Trade Agreement (Ayers, 2002). Environmental and human rights campaigners increasingly tried to curb World Bank lending regimes for projects that threatened people and ecosystems in the global south (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). As a result of these struggles, the annual World Bank/IMF meetings became sites of protest rallies in the late 1980's and continued throughout the 1990's (Scholte, 2000, Danaher and Burbach, 2000, Daly, 2001).

Other authors search for the genesis of the anti-globalization movement in the depths of the Chiapas jungles where many observers cite the First Intercontinental Encounter for Humanity Against Neo-liberalism, held in Chiapas, Mexico, in the summer of 1996 at the initiative of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), as the first step in building the international movement against neoliberal globalization (Seoane and Taddei, 2002). More than 3000 people from over 40 countries came together in the mountains of southwestern Mexico and issued the 'Second Declaration of Reality'. This international approach of the Zapatista movement had already been expressed in the date chosen for its public appearance, 'the day the third millennium began in Mexico' (Cecena, 2001) with the entry into force of the NAFTA free trade treaty. In early 1994, the Zapatista movement appeared as the first major social movement since the fall of the Berlin Wall to represent not only Mexican society, but all of the world's 'oppressed peoples' (Seoane and Taddei, 2002, Solomon, 2001).

A few months after the first Zapatista encounter in early 1997, the first drafts of the Multilateral Investment Agreement (MIA) began to circulate, especially at the initiative of the Global Trade Watch organization in the USA. This agreement had been under negotiation in secret at the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) since 1995. The MIA is an international treaty designed to protect foreign investment, to the detriment of the regulatory powers of states and peoples, and was immediately cited by its opponents as 'the new bible of global capitalism' and characterized as an 'International Investor Rights Treaty' and the 'Constitution of the New Order' of the total hegemony of transnational capital (Seoane and Taddei, 2002). This agreement served to mobilize not only organizations from the south but also groups

from the U.S. and Europe. These mobilizations lead up to the event that transformed the

anti-globalization movement. The "Battle for Seattle" occurred in November 1999 when

approximately 30,000 activists descended on the streets of Seattle to protest the meeting

of the World Trade Organization (Smith, 2002).   One Union leader and Forum organizer

linked the emergence of the anti-globalization movement, and the Seattle protest, to what

he called the 'crisis of legitimacy' created by globalized capitalism:

> Since the crisis of legitimacy began in the mid 90's we then see in
> November 1999, Seattle, a new kind of demonstration for us (CUT). First
> because we had 2-3 political generations in demonstration, and second we
> had many political cultures all together not only just the socialist, but also
> communists, leftists, unions, ecologists, feminists, etc. Third we had this
> demonstration without political agreement about what we defend but we
> have a political agreement about what we were against. And, the other
> thing with this was in the US, not in Mexico or Senegal but was in US, in
> the belly of the beast (2003, Interview with Union Leader)

These campaigns marked a turning point in economic globalization by demonstrating a

capacity for mass challenges to international trade agreements and high levels of concern

for global human rights, labor rights and environmental protection. The Seattle protests

challenged our understanding of state-social movement relations because they

demonstrated how global-level politics affect a wide range of local and national actors.

He goes on to describe the importance of this new space or what he referred to as a big

mirror for movement self-reflection, organizing and exchange:

> In the last 150 years always you had grassroots organization then
> representative organizations, international secretariats, and so forth—if
> you don't have a representative structure you don't have representation
> concerns, you have movements and organizations in their countries and
> you have a mirror here trying to reflect these movements. If in the middle
> of the mirror in this space you are successful all of these movements will
> want to go to this space named the WSF to discuss all together what to do
> what projects to construct together, but you always have to think about
> Seattle and how to organize these all of these diverse people—not by one

political agreement or political platform. (2003, Interview with Union Leader)

Other activists echoed this sentiment—the importance of having a self-organized agenda and self-reflexive event:

> The global movements were in need of a 'self' agenda, an agenda of the movements represented, not just by opposing other's agendas or holding these parallel events, but the need to construct our own agendas for the social justice movements, and this was the idea of the FSM. (2003, Interview with FOE activist)

Thus, there existed a desire to harness the diversity and power of these emerging movements while at the same time provide a platform for self-reflexive exchange of strategies and ideas for this 'other world'.

In response to the impact of those protests, the dream of a World Social Forum to be held at the same time as the World Economic Forum, which meets in Davos, Switzerland, began to take shape. For one activist and Forum organizer who worked with the Movemento Sem Terra the decision to hold the Forum was simple:

> If the international corporations have an economic forum why the social movements, NGOs don't have a social forum? We decide to try to do something to put together all of these movements and organizations that work against the neo-liberal globalization, and militarization and try to define who are we, and after that what is our ideas about a new different world. (2003, Interview with MST activist)

And, for one Forum participant and stakeholder the Forums seem absolutely essential in the struggle to temper global capitalism:

> Global capitalism must be socialized and this sort of socialism has to be democratized. This convergence at the Forums is essential. If this doesn't happen, you can do whatever you want, but it will not work (2003, Interview with Educator)

A collective of Brazilian social movements and organizations took up the challenge, with support from the French monthly publication *Le Monde diplomatique*, which had

promoted the creation of the ATTAC (Association for a Tobin Tax to Aid the Citizens) in

June 1998, and in the spring of 2000 plans began to take shape.

The city of Porto Alegre, Brazil was chosen for its 12-year experience of

democratic initiative expressed in the unprecedented participatory budget applied by the

left-wing municipal government led by the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT). One

Sociologist Professor and Forum organizer described the importance of choosing Porto

Alegre in the beginning:

> Porto Alegre is a kind of symbol, a symbol of a popular democratic
> administration for more than 15 years and has one unique experience of
> direct democracy that is combined with a representative democracy. In my
> opinion, it is a unique experience because it concerns participatory
> democracy. It reshaped the right of democracy, the participation in the
> economic life, the country's policy. It defines policy in cities; it defines
> what we can do to improve the life of the part of the population that is
> excluded. I think that this symbol, even small, is like a great example of
> what is possible. That's why the Forum came here first (2003, Interview
> with Professor)

Even though Porto Alegre proved to be a receptive host city for such an event, the

organizing and panning of the Forums is still a momentous task. The process by which

hundreds of thousands of activists, organizers and politicians from around the world

descend upon and find their way around this port city in Southern Brazil, self-manage

thousands of workshops, seminars and other cultural events, and promote their consensus

strategies and projects to the world is beyond the scope of this study. The intention,

though informal, of Forum organizers is to provide a self-reflective space that brings

together this new diaspora of global contention against the neo-liberal project creating

greater solidarity and movement effectiveness. At first, connecting with movement

organizers and activists from different cultures and countries, and encouraging them to

travel sometimes halfway around the world to attend a meeting seemed a daunting task

for Forum organizers. The experience of this feminist activist working with the

registration of participants at the first Forum tells of their apprehension.

> At first we had really no idea that it would be successful, that we could get
> so many people to attend a weeklong meeting to discuss strategy and
> projects. Then we started seeing all these registrations come in, and we
> were amazed—it was an amazing feeling; that it would really happen
> (2003 Interview with Feminist Activist).

She goes on to explain her experience working with other movements and organizations

from Europe and recruiting people to attend the Forum, to make the Forum, especially the

youth camp, more international:

> Working with my contacts and the people I knew from Genoa, and the
> other movements from Seattle, from other places, we encouraged activists
> to come to the youth camp, to talk to them start a dialogue, to introduce an
> international aspect. Youth here are used to activism from within political
> parties, and activists from Europe and North America have a completely
> different experience to share (2003 Interview with Feminist Activist).

Introducing this international aspect to the Forum and working towards a pluralistic,

horizontal form of association insured against cooptation from Brazilian or Latin

American NGO's and social movements. This process also encouraged greater 'political

education' from other political cultures and networking between movements that are

geographically separated.

The transnational networking of activists and organizations was adeptly displayed

at the 2003 Forum when the organizers and participants gathered under a decidedly anti-

war banner ('World Social', 2003). Along with the discussions of alternatives to the

global economic order the Forum also offered dialogue concerning the planned military

intervention by the U.S, and U.K. in Iraq. Organizers from European peace groups met

with the Forum organizers and participants about their scheduled February 15 (has come

to be known as F15) global rally for peace. A loosely composed coalition of European

and U.S. organizations such as the Socialist Workers Party, the Campaign for Nuclear

Disarmament, Globalized Resistance, Stop the War Coalition, and International

ANSWER found themselves going into the WSF with 30 countries on board to host F15

rallies. After attending the Forum and meeting with other organizations from around the

world the number of countries had increased to 75 (Frankel, 2003). The F15 rally ended

up being one of the largest global protest ever, and while it did not stop the U.S. and the

U.K. from invading Iraq, it did strengthen the resolve of the 'non-developed' countries on

the United Nations Security Council (such as Syria, Chile, Mexico, Angola, Guinea,

Cameron and Pakistan) to resist the threats of the U.S. and voice their opposition to the

proposed aggression. The U.S. eventually abandoned the U.N. framework knowing they

did not have the votes to authorize the use of force in Iraq. This action by the U.S. and

the events leading up to the war in Iraq may be judged in the future to be a turning point

in international foreign policy and a rallying point for further transnational mobilizations

to subvert American acquiescence and domination. Many such as Njoki Njehu, director

of 50 years is enough, credit the Forum for helping to integrated the anti-war movement

with the economic justice movement:

> The peace movement, as I would call it, come out of the fraternizing
> between these two movements. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, peace is not
> just the absence of war. We're talking about peace on many levels, in
> talking about social justice. These movements are not split—without the
> World Social Forum and the global movement, there would not have nee the
> massive anti-war demonstration of February 15. (Njehu, 2004)

In Brazil the World Social Forum has managed to rally together many of the country's

NGO's and social movements which has served integrate many of their social movement

issues into the everyday awareness of the Brazilian population.   This awareness may

have created the conditions for the landslide election of Lula da Silva, a former radical

union leader and member of Brazil's Workers Party, in October of 2002. Lula's election was seen as a rejection of the free-market policies of his predecessor Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Clendenning, 2003).

Brazil has always maintained a rich and active social movement sector even after the removal of the military ruled dictatorship in 1984 (Hochstetler, 2000, Foweraker, 2001). Many activists interviewed for this study, such as this Forum organizer from Sao Paulo, have linked this rich movement solidarity in Brazil to the relationship many movements such as labor, women's and environmental to the Catholic Church during the 20 years of military dictatorial rule:

> I think our civil society rested almost completely underground during the military dictatorship beginning in 1964, the coup, and suddenly civil society was secret, but simply underground still functioning, but they allowed the existence of informal movements like the environment and mainly movements linked to the Catholic Church so I think that we did not have the opportunity to fight into the traditional way so we developed a knowledge of organizing social movements in alternative ways. We have this kind of a knowledge or a know how to organize social movements informally within the context of heavy state control. (2003, Interview with Forum Organizer)

He goes on to describe this relationship with the Church as a type of incubator or safe haven for Brazil's civil society during the time of military dictatorial rule:

> The military left the Church almost completely free of vigilance. So these activists, to participate in a party or leftist organization, found in social movements of the Church this opportunity. Then we organize CED [Communities of activists within the Church], and incredibly our government avoided this experience so this was the beginning of our new civil society. Take for instance the feminist movement it was integrated into the Church movements. This is our history, Black and Indian movements were also closely tied to Catholic Church. Then we have re-democratization in 1984 and these movements separated from the Catholic Church and maintained an autonomous existence. (2003, Interview with Forum Organizer)

The organizer indicated that this relationship with the Church made Brazil's civil society much stronger and better integrated both horizontally between movements and vertically with the business and political sectors of Brazilian society.

Social movements further experienced a surge in activity up until and after the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development. Although, there exists clear separation between resource wealthy non-governmental organizations and resource needy grassroots social movements within the Global Civil Society (Assies 1999, Hochstetler, 2000, Power and Roberts, 2000), this is something the World Social Forum has worked to diminish by maintaining a plurality of participation and an all-inclusive sensibility. This Union organizers contrasts this fragmentation that exists in North America against the backdrop of protesting the War in Iraq:

> In the US you have the unions against the War on one side, you have the social movements on one side, and you have the movement against neo-liberal globalization on another side, then you have a problem to go all together constitutive, these are some of the challenges we have in this period that we have tried to solve with the Forums. I think we have a lot of outputs from the last three years, like the election of Lulu in Brazil. (2003, Interview with Union Leader)

The Forums are also a space were the smallest grassroots organizations can network, discuss and associate with some of the largest NGOs in Brazil and the World.

> World Social forum is one movement within the anti-globalization movement that helps all movements who participate articulate, organize, exchange experiences, and discuss global alternatives. It is a space for the movements and a place to build global solidarity (Interview with Youth Organizer, 2003)

This University Professor continues to describe the process by which the Forum operates to integrate movement experiences:

> The idea is to create one movement that would articulate many external issues that happen in various continents, regions and contexts. They

(Forum authors) noticed that there was one historical necessity to gather, to organize, to discuss, to create a balance concerning movement experiences around the world, and then establish projects related with those approved goals…. So, it is a movement that has been growing and more and more it has been organizing, defining strategies as well as its ability to act, articulate, and to face the globalization head-on (2003, Interview with Professor).

These descriptions of a new form of horizontal organizing around a historical necessity to gather and create global solidarity around common goals based on pre-existing protest traditions is unprecedented in the development of transnational social movement networks. This sense of solidarity created by informal and formal associations of open exchange across borders is at the heart of the Porto Alegre consensus.

Open and Diverse Exchange

'Most of our visions of participatory democracy come from fairly small-scale experiments--radical collectives, worker-run enterprises, the utopian communities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries--in which people could meet face to face and debate all night if they wanted. But as Marx said, there is a point where the "quantitative" becomes the "qualitative"- meaning that the very nature of the issue changes with scale. No one yet knows how to make collective decisions on a national or global scale, and to do it in a way that is both flexible and inclusive of the illiterate street vendors and laborers of the world.'
Barbara Ehrenreich, referring to the 2003 WSF in the Progressive (2003)

The World Social Forum is attempting to create this kind of discursive framework where collective decisions can be made inclusively alongside the heterogeneous concerns of various cultures and identities as well as local and national interests. At each Forum one can find a plethora of various workshops from participatory budget planning introduced by the Workers Party or the PT in Porto Alegre, to resistance of inequitable free trade agreements, and lectures on sustainable agriculture and genetically altered

crops. The five tracks for 2003 included: democratic and sustainable development;

human rights, diversity and equity; media and culture; political power and civil society;

and war, peace, and the world democratic order (Fisher and Ponniah, 2003). Most all

focused on producing feasible alternatives to top-down transnational development. But

the central debate could be boiled down to one question, to what degree should social

movements confront or withdraw from the global financial, trade and political structures,

and to what degree should they engage and try to reform them (Cooper, 2003)?

    While meetings at the World Economic Forum, UN, WTO and other institutions

are often closed and manipulative in nature, the WSF has a transparent way of organizing

its events. All conferences, seminars, round tables, panel discussions and testimonies

were listed and participants were free to attend whichever they wanted. There is no

separate entrance for different delegates, no excessive scrutiny as one enters a certain

venue. The UN, for instance, often has different doors for government and non-

government NGOs delegations.

> The other one [World Economic Forum] is very cold. Everybody is
> suspicious. It is the big groups' interests. Davos is interested in the big
> corporations. Porto Alegre is interested in the little people. The parade,
> the march, was much more emotional in Porto Alegre. It was the world in
> the march. You could see Jewish groups, Israelis groups, socialist groups,
> democratic groups, everybody participated—not like in Davos (2003,
> Interview with Educator)

Furthermore, the WSF does not have a draft agreement text to be negotiated. Instead

different groups can come up with different statements on different issues, thus

respecting diversity and pluralism. An enormous number of workshops and working

groups organized by the participating social movements and organizations are used as

opportunities for encounters and exchanges, to spread information on the different

national experiences of resistance to neo-liberal policies, and for coordination of efforts

and activities with an eye on the future. Chico Whitaker, one of the original founders of

the Forum describes this process:

> The Forum opens from time to time in different parts of the world—in the
> events where it takes place—with one specific objective: to allow as
> many individuals, organizations, and movements as possible that oppose
> neoliberalism to get together freely, listen to each other, learn from
> experiences and struggles of others, and discuss proposals for action; to
> become linked in new nets and organizations aiming at overcoming the
> present process of globalization dominated be large international
> corporations and their financial interests. (Whitaker, 2004)

This union organizer elaborated further on the Forum's process and its mission to

produce alternative strategies:

> The function is to put together so many people and these people discuss
> many different aspects of the new worlds and when you put this many
> ideas together you can build conceptions that will give you the possibility
> to make purpose, to build strategies. Before there was no place to do this,
> so now you have one place to do this. The process is just starting but now
> you have a place to make this reflection (2003, Interview with Union
> Organizer).

During a common day of sessions the schedule might include issues such as: the real

meaning of the Plan Colombia; the social conflicts in Latin America; the future of

biodiversity; the experiences of social property; the alternative artistic movements; the

problems of public education; the struggle of the international women's movement; the

experience of the 'Peasant Way'; and labor union action policies (Seoane and Taddei,

2002). The openness of the discourse during the sessions produces a framework that is

very inviting and non-threatening to individuals and organizations with different

backgrounds, tactics and cultures. One of the Forums' strongest characteristics is its

ability to 'give a voice' to those individuals, movements and organizations that have been

marginalized by the forces of globalization, but, as one activist describes, those voices are

not always complementary:

> There is this huge global movement, and the forum is a structure that was
> created to give a specific kind of expression to this movement. It is not
> the whole expression of the movement, it is not the movement itself, but it
> gives it a voice. A very important idea is that the forum is basically
> learning, learning from the diversity and the contradictions that exist in the
> movements themselves, or from the contradictions of the organizations
> and people who present their ideas at the forum. I remember thinking in
> the first forum that we should avoid conflict, but now I understand that we
> must embrace those differences (2003, Interview with Feminist Activist)

The open and non-threatening nature of the Forums' discursive networks work to create a

one of the most vibrant transnational public sphere, to my knowledge, in existence today.

> Other concerns also exist such as the implicit barriers between the various

cultures and languages of people in attendance:

> There is a real problem, the problem of diverse organizations and cultures,
> the problem of foreigners, and having a universal language. It was very
> interesting to observe some of the Muslim movements at the Forum, it was
> very difficult for them to integrate into the Forum process because of their
> language and cultural barriers. (Interview with Sociologist, 2003)

This author questions the strategy of framing dialogues in terms platitudes that may work

to further marginalize the movements engaged in the process:

> The Defense of the organizations that workers have created to fight
> against capitalist exploitation is contradictory with the politics of civil
> society, which dissolve the borders of social class. It is contrary
> moreover, with the politics of 'giving a human face to globalisation',
> which as we know, is not a phenomenon of nature, but rather the product
> of global capitalism. 'Globalisation' by definition necessitates the
> destruction of workplaces, our jobs and our rights. Capitalist globalization
> has destroyed nations, democracy, and the sovereignty of the poor. It
> cannot be 'humanised' (Sen, 2003)

Fisher and Ponniah's (2003) analysis of the documents from the 2002 WSF reveal these

differences among the various networks within the participants as well as areas of

convergence. They draw attention to five significant debates: Revolution vs. Reform?;

Environment vs. Economy?; Human Rights or Protectionism?; The Universality of

Values?; and the debate between the Local, National and Global issues and positions.

Despite the differences several areas of agreement including the perception of a common

adversity unify the movements. The perception is that corporate domination has been

organized across global space by the most powerful northern states in the world in

collaboration with economic and political elites from the southern states.

Simultaneously, this expansion is occurring in conjunction with the suppression of

political, economic, cultural, racial, gendered, sexual, ecological and epistemological

differences. The documents (WSF, 2003) acknowledge the striking aspect of the current

form of globalization is its capacity to reproduce, rearticulate, and compound

traditionally oppressive social hierarchies. Many of the participants and facilitators view

neoliberal globalization as not simply economic domination of the world but also the

imposition of monolithic thought constructs, that consolidates vertical forms of difference

and prohibit the public from imagining diversity in egalitarian, horizontal terms.

Capitalism, imperialism, mono-culturalism, patriarchy, white supremacy and the

domination of biodiversity have coalesced under the current form of globalization and

constitute the primary challenge of the movements represented in the WSF conference

documents. Though there exists strong solidarity among individuals and organizations at

the Forums as to who the adversary is there are still differences and separations that

manifest within the Forum dynamics between disparate groups:

> So you go to the issues that attract you—that is the point there is a
> direction from being among different movements. Black Afro-Brazilian
> movements were separated from women's, indigenous movements, but I
> could see that there were many movements, I could acknowledge that, and

see that they had the opportunity to be there also (2003, Interview with
Forum Organizer).

And, in at least one case as with the Feminist groups the separation is intentional in order

to foster greater visibility and identity:

> Feminist groups separate themselves to say we are the women of the
> forum to give us an identity. This space is called *Female Planet.* In 2003
> we brought our Women's march to different spaces other camps, but tried
> to control our message to give it a higher profile, to be recognized as
> feminists. We tried to have a presence everywhere—to present our
> organizations to other orgs, and to be present in the youth camp (2003,
> Interview with Feminist Activist).

Though separate, the *Female Planet's* ultimate goal was to raise awareness about

feminist causes and issues while also enabling intensive networking across issues and

interests. Thus, the discursive frameworks or public spheres created by the WSF

organizers have worked to allow participants to find commonality in their grievances as

well as discover differences in their epistemologies and tactics in order to ultimately

build larger networks of contention, which are culturally and conceptually diverse.

Probably the most well known Brazilian movement present at the Forum, which

also benefits greatly from their involvement, is the MST or Landless Workers Movement:

> At the international level of MST we see it as a space for about 2000
> activists to come together and participate in political education because in
> this process we have much political diversity. In this space we have
> people from Africa who may have an idea about water, the MST activists
> don't know what is going on in Africa about water, and if one participates
> in a workshop with the African activist our MST activists learn a lot about
> these ideas (2003, Interview with MST Activist).

Though the MST with its over 300,000 members in Brazil is very successful in their

campaigns for land reform, sustainable agriculture projects and solidarity economies [9]

their activists benefit greatly from the sharing of strategies and experiences with activists

from other countries. As the MST activists describes, they build a sense of global

solidarity knowing that other peoples in other countries share in their struggle:

> It's a space to create solidarity relations between our MST activists and
> other activists around the world. This creates a feeling of solidarity. If an
> activist from Bolivia comes and talks about how they are struggling to get
> land to settle, and then our activists here this and they think; oh, we are not
> the only people doing this, there are many peoples sharing in our struggles
> all over the world. Solidarity relations improve the movements for our
> activists here. It creates the space for a multiplication of experiences.
> They then go back to the communities and share these experiences with
> the other member (2003, Interview with MST Activist).

This 'multiplication of experiences' is very important to the landless movement. It is a

way of learning through a method of open exchange and dialectical communication with

other members as well as other activists and other movements. The MST not only uses

the Forum to educated their members and create solidarity between themselves and other

movements they also use it as a chance to 'fortify their network' or gain more political

power for campaigns and projects:

> With the MST we have to involve many people in our struggle, a mass
> struggle, that involves other organizations and political organizations,
> because if we do not we will be weak and easily marginalized. So the
> Forum helps us do this, to make many friends, and this makes us stronger.
> It fortifies our networks. Take for example the struggle against the ALCA
> (FTAA). It cannot just be the MST we have to involve other movements,
> the environment, labor unions, social justice groups—we cannot do this
> separately (2003, Interview with MST Activist).
> .

Taken together, the many experiences and testimonies of the Forums' openness to

communication and sharing of ideas is an important contribution itself, in creating this

'new world' by constructing transnational public spheres, which harness political strength

and at the same time foster a transformational learning environment.   Furthermore, the

methodology of the Forum itself, as experienced at the 2005 Forum, is renegotiated at

times to allow for greater autonomy in planning the thematic discussions, workshops and

seminars. The WSF process in large degree has become self-managed by the participant

organizations and individuals. Though, there still exists much contention within

movements as to the power structures and organizational processes that govern some of

the Forum logistics as discussed in the following section.

Decentralized Structure

Regarding global democratization and the building of a global civil society, the

World Social Forum can be looked at from two angles. On the one hand, it can be

analyzed as an example of an emerging institution that may embody seeds of global

democracy. From this perspective, it is particularly important to look at its organizational

design and the way its decision-making structure functions. From another angle, it

provides a space for actors who may construct democratic projects in different contexts,

both local and global and transfer those modular templates anywhere on the planet. This

union organizer believes the authors of the Forum process got the organizational recipe

right:

> The organizers of the Forum know the lessons of the past. You can't
> organize like a political party, one central committee, and they make the
> decisions for everything. The new form of organizing is to build these
> networks which are free to do to decide, but has one space to discuss these
> things about the world. Then these networks can contribute to the process
> of making another world possible (2003, Interview with Union Organizer).

Another organizer agrees, but thinks that popular participation can be improved:

> I think FSM did not have this top-down system or kind of leadership. I is
> more diffused and decentralized. I think there is no center power or core.
> So, in this sense it is very democratic and inclusive, but I think that it
> misses bigger popular participation because its form of organization has a
> generally degree of formality. (2003, Interview with Forum Organizer)

As for democratic representation it is impossible to claim that all of the underrepresented peoples of the world are represented, and there is a certain degree of formality involved in attending—one must travel to the Forum, which can be very expensive, to be involved in the discussions or workshops it helps to be a representative or delegate from a formal organization, and one must know the language, which in many cases is either English, Spanish or Portuguese, and protocols of the Forum process.

Even if it is not clear whether the WSF will become a more active political entity with more explicit internal will-formation mechanisms, it is obvious that until now the most important impact of the forum on democratic projects has consisted of the myriad encounters between different groups and activists within its confines (Teivainen, 2002). In the final calculus, the Forum's informal organizational frameworks and decentralized forms of leadership serve to make it one of the most promising civil society processes that may both contribute significantly to global democracy initiatives and work to constitute such an initiative in itself. One of the greatest strengths of the process as echoed by this union leader is its self-reflective nature, or mirroring effect on movements that participate:

> We don't want to become a political structure of the movement we want to become a good mirror of the movement, and if we build a good mirror of the movements then very broad movements and political organizations will want to discuss within this political space—this is the political project (2003, Interview with Union Leader).

He describes a process where the organizational aspects and structures, in this case the Forum's International Council, serve to build the space where the movements can reflect and self-manage their own experiences:

> The movements are not the mirror. The movements are outside of the mirror. The structure is that you have the movements, you have the WSF,

and then you have the IC. You have three levels: Civil Society, WSF
Event, and the IC. One level is not representative of the others, and to be
successful is to be a good mirror not an organization (2003, Interview with
Union Leader).

Although the levels he describes are not representative of the other they are responsive to

feedback from one another. The International Council has held open consultation

sessions, either directly or online, throughout the spring and summer each of the last two

years to receive feedback and recommendation for thematic structure and design of the

Forums' workshops, seminars and other events.

This dialectic movement... You go with this reality, you analyze this
reality, you summary this reality, and then, you come back with a different
reality to do this movement that makes it a virtuous circle, not a vicious
circle. In the socialist concept you look to the reality and practice, you
picture it. So, I think that the forum has this characteristic that wherever it
goes, it has people that make this synthesis, so, wherever it goes, it is the
same process (2003, Interview with Professor).

Yet, this dialectical space allows for participation of non-partial interests who may use

the Forum to put forth their own agenda at the expense of others without considering the

articulation and collaboration of alternative strategies and projects.

The enthusiasm it has generated around the world will also bring it various

dilemmas. Conceived as a civil society initiative, the WSF will probably have

international organizations, governments and even business organizations proposing

different forms of cooperation. Some organizers may emphasize the importance of

clinging to strictly defined civil society partners, others are likely to have more pragmatic

positions on obtaining material and political support.   These decisions will work to shape

the future of the Forum and may have significant effects on the organizational and

leadership structures.   On the other hand, many have questioned formal and

organizational problems they believe make it an undemocratic space:

> These problems include a lack of transparency in decision making, hierarchical organization, as well as special treatment of celebrities and the creation of elitist tiers that privilege the more well known and consolidated components of the movement over many of the smaller and more grassroots and perhaps more radical organizations (Osterweil, 2004).

The author goes on to describe the dissatisfaction participants feel regarding the influence of political parties and labor organizations such as the PT and CUT:

> A number of people have also criticized what they consider to be the privileging and co-optation of the forum by institutionalized political structures like political parties, trade unions, and mainstream NGOs that, in addition to being hierarchical organizations themselves, tend to be reformist or social democrat in their philosophy. This is seen as integrally related to the lack of transparency and democracy within the Forum Structure (Osterweil, 2004).

There has also been concern of sponsoring organizations at the Forum such as the Ford Foundation, and PetroBras, Brazil's state owned petroleum company.

> Could you imagine—we arrive at the last social Forum (2003), and we receive a program, and we see that PetroBras has a full-page advertisement on the back page. This is a company that we have campaigned against for years for destroying thousands of acres of Amazonian rainforest in order to pump their oil—it was amazing, and we had no decision in the matter, we had no idea that they were sponsoring the Forum. We then organized a march within the Forum to protest their support. (2003, Interview with Environmental Activist)

Many of the organizers understand that to make the Forum sustainable and actionable they must risk partnering with strange bedfellows, but is not always easy to see the differences between 'alternative' globalization proposals with the idea of many business leaders being involved in the process, and the prospect of another, better world without their influence. This is an inherent difficulty that cosmopolitan theorists have faced in developing their mechanisms for civil society organizations and grassroots movements to influence policy and achieve agency within this hierarchy of transnational corporations and state institutions.

One of the most contentious organizational decisions is to closely align the

Forum's funding and structure with the Worker's Party or PT, which up until 2002

governed the City and State governments of Porto Alegre. In 2002 control of the City

government was relinquished to a more conservative political party that withdrew

funding for the 2003 Forum. Consequently, the local police and local support for

services to the participants suffered, and had organizers scrambling to fill funding gaps

with corporations and international foundations. Although, the support from the

municipality and state in the beginning were absolutely essential, the move may have

come at a political price for local PT representatives.

> I can say that it would be impossible to have the World Social Forum
> without the support of the municipality without the support of the state.
> This helps significantly. So some of the people here that were against the
> WSF claimed that the public funds should not be used for this purpose to
> support these movements, but maybe in the future we can rely on more
> foundational support (2003, Interview with Environmental Activist).

This activist goes on to describe the relationship she believes the PT has with the Forum,

and how the party uses this visibility to gain credibility nationally and internationally:

> Environmental Activist (ACT3): And, with no judgment what I can say is
> that the WSF is not for Lula and his presidency it is also not for the
> Worker's Party, but the PT could make a good use to have more visibility
> and have more international support and have more national, international
> credibility (2003, Interview with Environmental Activist).

Though this credibility may be with civil society and not with Brazilian and global

economic elites. It is a delicate balance that the PT must maintain when engaging with

the Forum. The sentiment that rests with many activists, especially the more radical in

nature, is that politics and political parties should be absolutely separate from the Forum

process.

> I felt like when he [President Lula] spoke we were loosing months and
> years of work because we want to create a horizontal space for people to
> show how we all think and share strategies and actions. Then everyone
> concentrates on this one person and we loose the horizontal aspect because
> he is a hierarchical, political figure (2003, Interview with Feminist
> Activist).

Many of the activists and organizers that I talked to regarded the Forum as an almost

sacred space that the total of experiences are basically greater than the sum of their parts,

and the success truly rests on its ability to counter the 'neo-liberalism project' in

organizational structure, communicative action, and the relationships between people and

organizations in attendance. And, most agreed that to truly be a global process the Forum

had to be invoked through different cultures and different geographic conditions.

Thus, the future of the Forum will also depend on its ability to be successful in

other locations such was the move in 2004 to the Asia continent in India. Organizers

viewed this opportunity as a first step to make the Forums truly global.

> I think it should move to India so the Forum can socialize, can aggregate
> the Asiatic movements, and assume a larger potential. This will make sure
> that the focus on global issues is not week in some places, because the
> capital forces will take advantage of this weakness. We must strengthen
> the bases, the columns of this movement in all continents in order to have
> a truly global movement, organization. Here exists the possibility to face
> the totalitarian model since it already encompasses the whole globe (2003,
> Interview with Professor)

To become truly cosmopolitan in the organization and facilitation of the Forums they

must become more localized in their experiences and remain truly pluralistic in their

participation. This youth organizer envisions this being achieved through the

strengthening of more local and regional Forums:

> I believe in Regional forums. The European Forum is really nice, growing
> in consciousness about environmentalism and social justice. The Forums
> are very transformative and the more regional they are the more accessible

this experience is, this space to talk to be together to plan and spread a
local image of alternatives (2003, Interview with Youth Organizer)

Whatever form the Forum takes in the future it is apparent that the methodology that

ensures the events to be truly self-managed, pluralistic, and openly democratic, what I

call here the Porto Alegre consensus, will have lasting effects on the way segments of

civil society network and collaborate on a local, regional and global level. Because in the

end, the foundation of this other, new World rests on the ability to provide a legitimate

alternative to the organization of economic, social and political reality in the now.

IV.

CONCLUSIONS

Summary of Findings and Implications

The organizers, activists and stakeholders I interviewed for this study describe in rich detail a set of agreed upon methodologies serving to guide the process by which the World Social Forums and the Forum movement thickens the linkages between GCS actors, liberates communicative action, and horizontally integrates the struggle for global social justice. A process that I have labeled the Porto Alegre consensus because it stands in stark contrast to the Washington Consensus, or what many in this study have called the neo-liberal project or globalized capitalism. This consensus is not a list of policy demands or actions plans, but a self-adapting process partly laid out in the Forums' Charter of Principles, but, more importantly, interpreted and re-negotiated by the many participants engaged in the process and the many different manifestations of the Forum all over the world. The Forum process is also a learning process and the Forum movement is part of the process by which global civil society begins to educate the world about these issues.

> The idea is that if you want to change the world to realize our slogan 'another world is possible', you have to involve many people you have to call for the people in your region, state, or country. You must say 'wake up for this moment', if we have a war it is not our decision, it is a government decision, not our decision. You have to wake up the people for that—not just go to the streets and say no war. You have to work with

people and discuss why we are against war and the military conception, connections to neo-liberalism, and the alternatives that exist (2003, Interview with MST activist)

The discursive frameworks, communicative openness, and participatory decision-making structures established by the process not only allow organizations and activists to share strategies and projects, amplify political frames, and build solidarity, it also serves to stabilize the global social justice movements and GCS (Chesters, 2003). Chesters describes the Forum gatherings as 'Plateaus' or moments of intensive network stabilization where formulation and shaping of political projects, strategic and tactical reflection, construction of alternative means of communication and information exchange, and development of mechanisms for the expression of solidarity and mutual aid may be achieved. The Forums stabilizing process may help explain the Forums' success in drawing large audiences and the motivation behind its continuance, but can methodology actually drive a global movement? If so, then it will certainly influence the way in which we conceive of global transnational movements.

Though my theoretical dialogue covered the landscape of transnational public spheres, political opportunity structures and cosmopolitan democracies there are other theories that may inform activist and scholarly understanding of the Forum movement. More importantly there is the question of praxis. A quarter of the planets' population struggles daily in abject poverty earning less than a dollar a day. Will the Forums' panels, workshops, and cultural gatherings actually produce an alternative globalization that is better than the one we have now for the world's poor? If the Forums prove to be a powerful mechanism for struggle that works to improve the livelihood of oppressed peoples, and creates practical alternatives to global capitalism that begin to balance

geopolitical power relations then the process will be legitimated. Unfortunately, there is

no concrete framework for evaluating such questions. The Forums seem to operate on

more of a qualitative system of relationships and encounters rather than a procedure that

gives rise to clear empirical data points. Consequently, this questions the Forums' ability

to self-manage its own evolution without established reflexive systems built into the

process.

Although, the World Social Forum may be the most promising embodiment of

GCS to emerge in the modern world the challenges and tasks before it are daunting. [7]

The plethora of critiques leveled against the Forum process include: the lack of

transparency and democratic decision-making; the gatherings are too big and chaotic;

lack of direction or final declarations; too centralized and commodified (Sen, 2003). In

North America, home of the Washington Consensus, the Forum process has had a rather

tough go of it. The Boston Social Forum held in August, 2004 drew about 5000

participants, and although a success by the organizers standards was also perceived as

being a gathering of the usual white, affluent activists (Berkshire, 2004) poised to protest

the Democratic National Convention occurring the next week. The Northwest Forum

that was to be held in Seattle during the fall of 2004 felt apart due to a breakdown of the

planning process which left the Indigenous Programming Committee and Youth Planning

Committee pulling out at the last minute (NWSF, 2005). Though a setback, the

organizers of the Northwest Forum admit that their experience was an opportunity that

may ultimately bring the organizations together to work out their differences and commit

to greater coordination in the future. In the final calculus the Forum process requires

activists and organizations to be introspective and assess their own biases towards power

and control, movement strategies and tactics, and intra-movement networking and collaboration. This may be one of the most overlooked characteristics of the Forums, its ability to provide movements and organizations the opportunity to become more open, equitable, and democratic.

Many in attendance claim that the World Social Forum is about democracy. Not the democracy that comes from more money and therefore more choices of things to buy, but rather the democracy of participation in local, national and global economic, ecological and social decision-making processes. In this study I contend that the WSF can be conceptualized as an emerging transnational public sphere for social movement mobilization or 'action at a distance' in direct opposition to the Washington Consensus as imposed from above, and that theories I have discussed and interviews I have shared inform our understanding of the Forum process. I feel, as others I interviewed in this study do, that theory is important to this process and that it strengthens the Porto Alegre consensus.

> So, the theory is important to understand this movement and see how it
> can be used to change the world, to help to change and have one theory
> about this that can be practiced, and it allows the social movements be
> used to fight against the exclusion model, this model that concentrates
> power and wealth and excludes the powerless and poor at the same time
> (2003, Interview with Educator).

The WSF framework is designed to create 'globalizations from below' and provides a discursive network for transnational mediations on alternatives to this end. The success of the Forum is due in large part to its decentralized, informal networks and its use of human/social agency which in some respects stands in stark contrast to the rational, centralized, bureaucratic formula for global development of the 'World Society' put forth by Meyer and his adherents. A more elusive structure or space may evolve closer to

Habermas's model of the transnational public sphere where rational critical discussion by citizens, rather than sheer economic logic or the instrumentalities of state power, assist in the formation of state policies and civil, political and social rights.

> We have a lot of theory about how to organize individual movements, but we don't have theory about how to organize a Seattle. It is a movement without doctrine. You have to see that in 1999 became Seattle and before this you have the Zapitistas—you are within a political spirit without strong programmatic reference. We are in this moment where we don't try to organize this movement. The program does not exist for this sort of organizing. We cannot rely of the structures of the leftist movements that went before. We are in a new period for the left when we have a large sense of the opposite, of the status quo, an alternative to the neo-liberal project but without a political program—for this we need this kind of space for the WSF (2003, Interview with Union Organizer).

Theorizing the Forum movement also aids in our ability to put into perspective this historical moment, the pre-existing protest tradition that are part of the Forum evolution, and provide a reference for the development of future struggles.

The 2006 Forums will be 'spread out' across the globe, in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas, providing yet another concrete possibility to give the process a better geographical and cultural balance while integrating transnational networks of contention. This will also give scholars, organizers and activists an opportunity to refine their assessments and critiques of the Forums. The reflexive process between Forum incarnations and the participatory assessment and corresponding revisions of Forum methodology is an essential component of the Porto Alegre Consensus. This dance between theory and practice is crucial to the role that the Forums play in reconstituting global civil society and within the possibility that exists of constructing future alternative globalizations which are more just, equitable and sustainable.

In conclusion, I propose that closer examination of the origins of this Porto Alegre consensus and the effects on movement emergence, convergence, mobilization and success and/or failure locally and globally will provide valuable insight on the future of transnational social movement research. The facilitation of the WSF 2004 in Mumbai provided a concrete possibility to give the process a better geographical and cultural balance. Efforts to improve the democratic process within the WSF will hopefully continue as well as the efforts to include more students, researchers, non-Brazilians, women and indigenous people. An effort to decentralize the Forum process has already taken shape with thematic and regional forums popping up all over the world. Suggestions to emphasize the local forums as the foundation of the worldwide Forum process, diversify the decision making structure to make it more gender, racial and culturally sensitive, and to make the annual WSF a delegate event to reduce the organizational strain are gaining in strength.   It will be important for social movement researchers to follow the evolution of the Forum in the coming years and to also observe whether or not 'another world is possible' just yet…   Moreover, the Forum movement will hopefully inform our theoretical frameworks and in return these ideologies should be considered in the evolution of the Forum into a more integrated and global movement that proves to be more just, equitable and ecological sustainable.

<u>Notes</u>

1. Versions of this study were presented at the North America Global Studies
Association Conference, April 22, 2004 at Brandeis University, Waltham, MA, and will
also appear in the forthcoming special issue of Globalizations published by Routledge,
May 2005.

2. The World Social Forum 'slogan' from the first World Social Forum in 2001. I
interpret the phrase to represent the hope and possibility of building other more just and
equitable forms of globalization.

3. The World Economic Forum is generally accepted to be a meeting of global business,
industry, and governmental leaders whose aim is to define global economic strategies and
policies. From the World Economic Forum's website (www.weforum.org): The World
Economic Forum is an independent international organization committed to improving
the state of the world. The Forum provides a collaborative framework for the world's
leaders to address global issues, engaging particularly its corporate members in global
citizenship.

4. I use the term 'author' to refer to those activists responsible for 'authoring' the
Forum's original Charter of Principles. This term is separate from Forum organizer,
which I use to describe someone who interprets and facilitates the Forum process.

5. Literature on the Forums both popular and academic has grown exponentially in
recent years. The breadth of ideas and critiques represented in these pieces is well
beyond the scope of this article. I would at least like to recommend the online text
Challenging Empires located at: http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html,

and the special issue of the *International Social Science Journal* (Volume 56, Issue 182) on 'cultures of politics' and the Forums.

6. Bernard Cassen, one of the original founders of the Forum, first put forth the hope of a Porto Alegre Consensus challenging and if not eventually replacing the Washington Consensus.

7. I use 'Forums' to describe the many thematic and regional manifestations of the Forum movement since its inception from Europe to Africa and the community Forums in Italy. I use Forum to represent the annual World Social Forum or the original 2001 Forum held in Porto Alegre, Brazil.

8. Again, to summarize all of the critiques of the Forums with limited space would not do them justice. Please see texts from note 6 above as well as (Sen 2003) and (Smith 2004) below.

9. Solidarity economies as practiced by the MST are a system of specialized products and services exchanged or bartered with between MST communities.

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APENDIXES

APPENDIX A

SCRIPT TO BE USED TO OBTAIN VERBAL CONSENT

Thank you, (name of participant). You have been asked to participate in research conducted by Scott C. Byrd, a North American graduate student from Oklahoma State University. The purpose of this study is to analyze the emergence of the World Social Forum held in Porto Alegre, Brazil within the framework of social movement theory. As a participant in this research project, you will be asked a series of questions regarding your knowledge of, your experiences with, and your opinions about the World Social Forum. This research will allow me to analyze the structure and success of the World Social Forum. The research findings will be published in the United States.

(Portuguesse) Obligado, (name of particiapnt). Vos pedir alguem para fazer alguma coisa estudo por Scott C. Byrd, um norte Americano estudante graduado de Universitario de Oklahoma State. Para proposito de estudo ser analisar evolucao para do Forum Social Mundial conservar em Porto Alegre, Brasil dentro no quadro de teoria social movimento. Enquanto um participante de estudo, vos perguntao um serie para perguntas com referencia a vosso conhecimento, vosso experiencias, e vosso opiniaos sobre do Forum Social Mundial. Este estudo ejudeis me ser analisar o estrutura e sucesso do Forum Social Mundial. O resultados do estudo publicas no Estados Unidos.

This interview will be completely anonymous and confidential. Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw your participation at any time, and you are free not to answer any single question, or series of questions if you choose.

Este entrevista fores a anonimo e confidencial completamente. Vosso participacao sois voluntario. Vos es livre retirar vossa participacao em vossa discricao. Vos es livre reposta nao algum pergunto unico, ou serie para perguntas.

The interview will be audiotaped and I will take written notes on your responses. I will keep the tapes and written notes in my possession, or I will keep them in a locked file cabinet. I am the only person, along with my academic advisor, who will have access to the audiotapes and written notes. Your name will not be connected to any of the information you provide during the interview. I will use a pseudonym when referring to specific quotes made by participants.

O entrevista fores gravas en audio e eu tomar notas de vossa reaccao. Eu guardas gravacao e notas em meu posse, ou eu guardas eles em um fichario com chave. Sou o

pessao apenas, com meu conselheiro academico, que tiveres acesso para o gravacao e notas. Vos nome nos fores relacionado ao informacao vos providenciar o entrevista. Eu servirse de um pseudonimo referir a citacao especifico vos fazer.

I will also give you the name of a person to contact at a local University that will be familiar with my research and this consent process. This person will be able to advise you on any questions you may have about the research or about your rights.
Tambem eu der vos o nome de contacto em um Universitario qual fores familliarizado com meu estudo e este consentimento processo. Este contacto for avisar vos sobre todo perguntas acerca de o estudo e vossa direitos.

Do you have any questions about the researcher or the research being conducted?

Voce tem perguntas acerca de o investigador ou o estudo conduzers?

Do you consent to participate in this research project?

Voce consentas participar em este estudo projeto?

APPENDIX B

INTEVIEW GUIDE FOR SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATIONS

I.   INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

1.   What organization or agency are you involved in?

2.   How long have you been involved with that organization or agency?

II.   GENERAL SOCIAL PROBLEMS

1.   What kinds of social issues are you most concerned with? Discuss.

2.   Do you think social problems are serious in Brazil? Why/Why not?

3.   What social problems concern you most [locally and nationally]?

      Describe.

4.   What evidence do you see of social problems? Examples.

5.   Do you think there is a relationship between environmental problems and

      social problems? Explain.

6.   Do you think that external factors (e.g., International Monetary Fund,

      International Trade, World Trade Organization, International Aid, United

      Nations) affect social problems here is Brazil? Describe.

7.   Are you for or against globalization? Explain

III. SOCIAL MOVEMENT PARTICIPATION

1.   When did you get involved with social movement activism?

2.   Why did you get involved?

3.   Were your parents social movement activists?

4.   What are the primary objectives of your organization?

5.   How many members does your organization currently have?

6.   What activities is your organization currently involved in? Past

        Activities? Please describe. (e.g., lobbying, public education)

7.   In your opinion, has your organization been successful? Explain.

8.   Do you see the issues your organization targets getting better or worse in

        the next ten years? Explain.

II.   WORLD SOCIAL FORUM PARTICIPATION

1.   What years did you attend the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre?

        [2001, 2002, 2003]

2.   Describe the nature of your involvement with the World Social Forum.

3.   Do you think the World Social Forum was beneficial for Brazil [the

        world]? Explain.

4.   What evidence do you have that the World Social Forum has helped or

        hurt social problems in Brazil? Examples.

5.   Briefly describe your experience at each World Social Forum you

        attended.

6.   Describe the panels, workshops and discussions you attended during the

        last World Social Forum in which you were present.

7.   Would you describe communication during the discussions and workshops

        as open or closed? Explain.

9.   How has the World Social Forum aided or detracted from your

organizations ability to achieve your goals? Explain.

IV.   EMERGENCE OF THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

1.   What connections do you see between the World Social Forum and protest

traditions that have emerged during the last 50 years? Describe.

2.   What connections do you see between the World Social Forum and large

scale protest events within the last 50 years? Describe.

3.   Why did the World Social Forum emerge in Brazil? Explain.

4.   What factors would you attribute to the growth of the World Social

Forum? Describe.

5.   What are some possible changes the World Social Forum may experience

during its move to Mumbai, India? Explain.

6.   Describe what the World Social Forum might look like in ten years.

7.   Do you see the World Social Forum gaining international political

influence in the next ten years? Why/Why not?

V.   WORLD SOCIAL FORUM ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

1.   Briefly describe the organizational structure of the World Social Forum.

2.   Would you describe the leadership of the World Social Forum and

organizing committees as centralized or decentralized? Explain.

3.   Compare and contrast the organizational structure of the World Social

Forum with that of the World Economic Forum held in Davos,

Switzerland.

4. What problems do you see, if any, with the World Social Forum's organizational structure? Describe the changes you would make.

VI. GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Age

2. Sex

3. Race

4. Level of Education

5. Marital Status

INTEVIEW GUIDE FOR INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEES

I. INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

3. What organization or agency are you involved in?

4. How long have you been involved with that organization or agency?

II. GENERAL SOCIAL PROBLEMS

8. What kinds of social issues are you most concerned with? Discuss.

9. Do you think social problems are serious in Brazil? Why/Why not?

10. What social problems concern you most [locally and nationally]? Describe.

11. What evidence do you see of social problems? Examples.

12. Do you think there is a relationship between environmental problems and social problems? Explain.

13. Do you think that external factors (e.g., International Monetary Fund, International Trade, World Trade Organization, International Aid, United Nations) affect social problems here is Brazil? Describe.

14. Are you for or against globalization? Explain

II. WORLD SOCIAL FORUM PARTICIPATION

8. How long have you been involved with organizing the World Social Forum?

9. Describe your role with organizing for the World Social Forum.

10. Do you think the World Social Forum was beneficial for Brazil [the world]? Explain.

11. What evidence do you have that the World Social Forum has helped or hurt social problems in Brazil? Examples.

12. Briefly describe your experience at each World Social Forum.

13. Describe the panels, workshops and discussions you attended during the last World Social Forum in which you were present.

14. Would you describe communication during the discussions and workshops as open or closed? Explain.

15. Has the World Social Forum adhered to it Charter of Principles? Why/Why not?

IV. EMERGENCE OF THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

8. What connections do you see between the World Social Forum and protest traditions that have emerged during the last 50 years? Describe.

9. What connections do you see between the World Social Forum and large scale protest events within the last 50 years? Describe.

10. Why did the World Social Forum emerge in Brazil? Explain.

11. What factors would you attribute to the growth of the World Social Forum? Describe.

12. What are some possible changes the World Social Forum may experience during its move to Mumbai, India? Explain.

13. Describe what the World Social Forum might look like in ten years.

14. Do you see the World Social Forum gaining international political influence in the next ten years? Why/Why not?

V. WORLD SOCIAL FORUM ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

5. Briefly describe the organizational structure of the World Social Forum.

6. Would you describe the leadership of the World Social Forum and organizing committees as centralized or decentralized? Explain.

7. Compare and contrast the organizational structure of the World Social Forum with that of the World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland.

8. What problems do you see, if any, with the World Social Forum's organizational structure? Describe the changes you would make.

VI. GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6. Age

7. Sex

8. Race

9.   Level of Education

10.   Marital Status

INTEVIEW GUIDE FOR OTHER STAKEHOLDER GROUPS AND AGENCIES

I.   INTRODUCTORY INFORMATION

5.   What organization or agency are you involved in?

6.   How long have you been involved with that organization or agency?

II.   GENERAL SOCIAL PROBLEMS

15.   What kinds of social issues are you most concerned with? Discuss.

16.   Do you think social problems are serious in Brazil? Why/Why not?

17.   What social problems concern you most [locally and nationally]?
    Describe.

18.   What evidence do you see of social problems? Examples.

19.   Do you think there is a relationship between environmental problems and
    social problems? Explain.

20.   Do you think that external factors (e.g., International Monetary Fund,
    International Trade, World Trade Organization, International Aid, United
    Nations) affect social problems here is Brazil? Describe.

21.   Are you for or against globalization? Explain

II.   WORLD SOCIAL FORUM PARTICIPATION

16.   Have you attended the World Social Forum held in Porto Alegre?

17.   What years did you attend? 2001, 2002, 2003

18.   Describe the nature of your involvement with the World Social Forum.

19. Do you think the World Social Forum was beneficial for Brazil [the world]? Explain.

20. What evidence do you have that the World Social Forum has helped or hurt social problems in Brazil? Examples.

21. Briefly describe your experience at each World Social Forum you attended.

22. Describe the panels, workshops and discussions you attended during the last World Social Forum in which you were present.

23. Would you describe communication during the discussions and workshops as open or closed? Explain.

IV. EMERGENCE OF THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

15. What connections do you see between the World Social Forum and protest traditions that have emerged during the last 50 years? Describe.

16. What connections do you see between the World Social Forum and large scale protest events within the last 50 years? Describe.

17. Why did the World Social Forum emerge in Brazil? Explain.

18. What factors would you attribute to the growth of the World Social Forum? Describe.

19. What are some possible changes the World Social Forum may experience during its move to Mumbai, India? Explain.

20. Describe what the World Social Forum might look like in ten years.

21. Do you see the World Social Forum gaining international political influence in the next ten years? Why/Why not?

V. WORLD SOCIAL FORUM ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

9. Briefly describe the organizational structure of the World Social Forum.

10. Would you describe the leadership of the World Social Forum and organizing committees as centralized or decentralized? Explain.

11. Compare and contrast the organizational structure of the World Social Forum with that of the World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland.

12. What problems do you see, if any, with the World Social Forum's organizational structure? Describe the changes you would make.

VI. GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

11. Age

12. Sex

13. Race

14. Level of Education

15. Marital Status

APPENDIX C

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM NUMBERS AND LINKS

1. WSF2001

Delegates - 4.700
2.566 (national) 55%
1.504 (international) 45%
630 (without registering)
** 117 present countries

Biggest delegations
1. Brazil
2. Argentina
3. France
4. Uruguay
5. Italy

Activities
Conferences: 16
Workshops, seminars and other kinds of activities organized by participants: 420
Testimonies: 22

Panelists – 103
28 (national)
75 (international)

Youth Camp – 2.000 participants (27 % of total number)

Indigenous Camp – 700 participants

Press - 1.870 registered
1.484 (national) 79%
386 (international) 21 %

Mass communication media: 764
442 (national)
322 (international)

Organization/support
Logistic – 860 people
Communication/ Procergs/ press – 113 people
Translators – 51 people
Security – 50 people

2. WSF2002

Delegates: 12.274
6.847 national 56%
5.427 foreigners 44%
123 countries were represented by delegates

Biggest delegations:
1. Brazil
2. Argentina
3. Italy
4. France
5. Uruguay

Activities

Conferences: 27
Seminars: 96
Workshops and other kinds of activities organized by participants: 622

Spectators registered by Gaucho Committee (at one event): 35.000

Press:
Registered journalists: 3.356, from which 1.866 were Brazilian (including free-lancers)
Free-lancers journalists: 697
Total of mass communication media: 1.066

Countries with more numerous mass communication media in WSF:
1. Brazil: 553
2. Italy: 102
3. Argentina: 85
4. France: 77
5. United States: 26
6. Uruguay: 26

3. WSF2003

Delegates: 20.763 (130 countries)
13.046 national 63%

7.717 foreigners 37%
130 countries were represented

Biggest delegations:
1. Brazil
2. USA
3. France
4. Italy
5. Argentina
6. Uruguay

Activities
Conferences: 10
Workshops, seminars and other kinds of activities organized by participants: 1.286
Panels: 36
Testimonies: 22
Roundtables of dialogue and controversy: 04
Exhibitors in activities organized by the Organizing Committee: 292

Volunteers: 650

Youth Camp: 25.000 people 55%

Press
Registered journalists: 4.094, from which 2.131 were Brazilian.
Free-lancers Journalists: 832
Total of mass communication media: 1.423 (51 countries)

Countries with more numerous mass communication media/journalists in WSF:
1. Brazil: 808
2. Italy: 83
3. France: 74
4. Argentina: 73
5. United States: 53
6. Uruguay: 42

WSF 2004 Numbers (Accessed on WSF India website: www.wsfindia.org)

Around 74.126 people represented by 1653 organizations from 117 countries have participated in the World Social Forum's fourth edition, which has taken place in Mumbai, India, between January 16 and 21, 2004. Around 2.723 people have participated in the Intercontinental Youth Camp.

Volunteers and interpreters
Over 800 volunteers from 20 countries have taken part in the WSF 2004. There were 180 interpreters and translators altogether, from Argentina, Brazil, India, USA, France, Spain,

United Kingdom, Belgian, Switzerland, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan, Korea and Palestine. Babels, an international network, provided interpretation and translation for free during the Forum. Four or five translators were professional ones while the rest were students.

There were 13 official languages at the WSF - Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, Telugu, Bengali, Malayalam, Spanish, English, French, Korean, Bahasa Indonesia, Thai and Japanese.

Press
About 3.200 journalists from 644 press organs, from 45 countries, covered the WSF. The International Media Centre had 100 workstations with Linux Operational System (free software).

Programme
The activities programme under India Organiser Committee accountability presented 13 events in different formats: panels, round tables, conferences and public meetings. A new WSF process methodology was included in the programme: large self-organised activities by registered organisations from WSF, such as panels, conferences and round tables. In the sum total 35 events were organised with this size. Smaller self-organised activities such as seminars, workshops, meetings etc, had a noteworthy presence in WSF: 1.203 events.

Cultural Events
During the six days of WSF, more than 1.500 artists, poets, playwrights, writers and film directors took an active part with their cultural works. There were 150 street theatre plays and also a film festival with more than 85 titles about the mainly WSF themes.

Helpful Links

WSF India's Evaluation Essays: http://www.wsfindia.org/eval2004.php

The World Social Forum: Challenging Empires (online collection of essays by Jai Sen): http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html

The World Social Forum official site: www.forumsocialmundial.org

The World Social Forum India official site: www.wsfindia.org

Boston Social Forum: www.bostonsocialforum.org

**Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board**

Protocol Expires: 5/5/2004

Date: Tuesday, May 06, 2003   IRB Application No   AS0380

Proposal Title: EMERGENCE OF THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM: ANALYSIS OF FACTORS
INVOLVED IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF A TRANSNATIONAL MOBILIZING
STRUCTURE

Principal
Investigator(s):

Scott Byrd   Charles Abramson
1625 w. University   401 N Murray
Stillwater, OK 74074   Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

Dear PI :

Your IRB application referenced above has been approved for one calendar year. Please make note of
the expiration date indicated above. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of
individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be
conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol
   must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar
   year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are
   unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB. If you have questions about the
IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Sharon Bacher, the Executive
Secretary to the IRB, in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, sbacher@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Carol Olson, Chair
Institutional Review Board

VITA

Scott Christopher Byrd

Candidate for the Degree of

Masters of Science

Thesis: THE PORTO ALEGRE CONSENSUS: EMERGENCE AND
            EVOLUTION OF THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

Major Field: Environmental Sciences

Biographical:

  Personal Data: Born in Ardmore, Oklahoma on July 10, 1971, the son of Richard
      Bruce and Jean Lee Byrd.

  Education: Attended Oklahoma State University from the Fall of 1989 till
      December 1993 and was awarded a Bachelors of Science degree in
      Psychology. Attended Oklahoma State University from the Spring of
      2002 till May 2005 and have completed the Requirements for the Masters
      of Science degree in Environmental Sciences at Oklahoma State
      University in May, 2005.

  Experience: Traveled throughout Latin America researching issues of
      globalization, collective action, the environment and development. Have
      published as well as spoken and lectured on such subjects at seminars,
      workshops and conferences.

  Professional Memberships: American Sociological Association, Global Studies
      Association-North America, Sociologists without Borders

Name: Scott C. Byrd   Date of Degree: May, 2005

Institution: Oklahoma State University   Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE PORTO ALEGRE CONSENSUS: EMERGENCE AND
                       EVOLUTION OF THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM

Pages in Study: 85   Candidate for the Degree of Master of Sciences

Major Field: Environmental Sciences

The World Social Forums and corresponding Forum movement marks a shift in transnational social movement methodology and solidarity. The Forums work to thicken linkages between global civil society actors, liberate communicative action, and horizontally integrate the struggle for global social justice. This study outlines a theoretical dialogue linking the concepts of transnational public spheres, political opportunity structures and cosmopolitan democracies to the Forums' process. The study also discusses the idea of a Porto Alegre Consensus evolving to challenge the economic logic of the Washington Consensus. This Consensus coalesces around agreed upon methodologies guiding the Forums development partly laid out in its Charter of Principles, but, more importantly, interpreted and re-negotiated by participants engaged in the Forums' many diverse manifestations. I contend that this reflexive process between Forum incarnations and the participatory assessment and corresponding revisions of Forum methodology is at the heart of the movement's success. I conducted fieldwork throughout southern Brazil in the sumer of 2003 where I collected additional data from 12 semi-structured interviews with Forum activists and organizers. I have attempted to utilize various sources and methods of inquiry in order to triangulate an authentic account of the Forum and the mechanisms which have created a global 'Forum' movement. This process in and of itself attempts to resemble the informal and open methodlogies and approaches which the World Social Forum advocates.

Advisor's Approval _____   Charles Abramson_____