

South American Exceptionalism?

Assessing the Importance of Location for World Social Forum Events

by

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**Supervisory Committee**

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## **Abstract**

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World Social Forum annual events attract hundreds of thousands of global activists and members of Global Civil Society. WSF events coalesce a diverse group of social movements, NGOs, and global activists. Its open space politics is an inclusionary force that is outlined by the principles of the WSF charter. Each event occurs in a location whose contextual and environmental conditions greatly impact the outcomes of the events. Assessing the success of these individual events is multidimensional and is largely determined by their adherence to WSF charter principles. Under investigation are three case studies of events that are held in Porto Alegre, Mumbai, and Nairobi. Success for each event is largely dependent on local factors. The local variables of the state, funding, trade unions, and local civil society all impact outcomes in myriad ways. Porto Alegre is an ideal setting for WSF events but is not the only attractive venue.

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## Introduction

The conception of the World Social Forum (WSF) grew from a group of global activists attempting to construct a new conduit for resistance to neoliberal led globalization. The WSF has become one of the pillars of the global movement critical of global economic practices and ideologies, and also a fountainhead for democratic alternatives. The nascent vision that would become the WSF was scheduled to commence in a city symbolic for democratic alternatives. In 2001, Porto Alegre became the birthplace of the WSF. Four out of the first five meetings of the Forum took place in this city as it grew into the massive gathering that it inspires today. Organised as a reaction to the World Economic Forum (WEF) that occurred every year in Davos Switzerland, this counter forum attracted activists, trade unionists, women's groups, community organisers, young people, academics, and many other social movements in the thousands to Porto Alegre, Brazil. These early meetings transfused the vitality of the local civil society onto the world stage and brought together resistance movements from all over the world at some of the largest gatherings of global civil society in human history.

This congregation of individuals, groups, and networks coalesce every year to propose alternatives to corporate led globalization and improve the lives of those negatively affected by neoliberal globalisation. Through workshops, guest speakers, panels, debates, demonstrations, dances and other cultural events, local and global activists from every part of the world work to validate and invent alternative globalizations. Each WSF event organises activities, whether self-organised by participants or directed by committees within the WSF process, surrounding areas of global interest either into 'thematic terrains', 'objectives for action', or another guiding

principle. These themes could be water, housing, education, human rights, etc., and their organisation will give support to the critical discourse and proposal of alternatives that the individual activities produce (WSFOC 2007, 75). Thematic areas are influenced by regional and global factors and the alternatives produced range from institutional reform to radical anarchist utopias and many other large and small scale acts of resistance. Rallying with the slogan 'Another World is Possible' participants at the World Social Forum create an arena for new models of participatory democracy and new courses for political action. The Forum is not only a counter movement to corporate led neoliberalism, but as a provenance of alternative models of globalization, it is perhaps the most significant and dynamic political event in the world.

In its infancy, the potential of this political experiment became apparent through its attraction of a large number of participants and the development of the Forum as an alter-globalization began to be felt. The WSF alternatives do not rely on traditional or ideological Truths and is "opposed to all totalitarian and reductionist views of economy, development, and history" (WSF 2001, Principle 10). This alter-globalization is a 'globalization from below' in part due to the mass appeal of the Forum to activists all over the world, including many areas of the Global South, as well as its horizontal structure as outlined below (Grzybowski 2006, 10; Santos 2006a, 57). Originally formulated in opposition to neoliberalism and a corporate led globalization, the WSF's methods of resistance have developed into something much more important. As an open space for global activists, its minimal political program offers a novel approach to connecting global and local movements and individuals in an inclusive and diverse setting.

The WSF relies on a series of principles that are laid out in its charter and were adopted early in the Forum process. The WSF charter is a succinct, laconic document and serves as a general outline for expected behaviour. Its brevity serves to accentuate its openness and inclusivity of diverse participants as opposed to an exhaustive regulatory document. The inclusiveness promoted by the charter and the diversity of participant involvement is unique relative to the forms traditionally available to the Left (Santos 2006a, 169). The ability of the WSF to “maximise what unites and minimize what divides” (Ibid, 12) has led to an expansion of the Forum events and of its message. The charter’s inclusiveness has led to WSF events attracting a diverse array of activists and is the only official document of the WSF principles. The charter was drawn up and adopted in 2001 following the success of the initial gathering by many of the original Brazilian organisers and social movements and it continues to set broad parameters on the actions of those involved in the WSF process (WSF 2001). It defines the WSF as an open meeting place for social movements, networks, NGO’s and other civil society organisations to be involved in its permanent world process, seeking and building alternatives to neo-liberal policies. The WSF offered a chance for “non-confessional, non-governmental, and non-party” voices to:

stand in opposition to a process of globalization commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions at the service of those corporations interests, with the complicity of national governments. WSF 2001, Principle 4.

The WSF charter states its opposition to certain global inequalities that are a result of globalization. The charter does not explicitly oppose the large scale trends that have led to increased interconnectivity and the worldwide extension of most aspects of modern life.

Indeed, the WSF is not resistant to globalization, but instead, to the policies of wealthy states and other large global actors that promote globalization as marketization (WSF 2001). These policies are often derisively identified as the 'Washington Consensus' by activists but are still being advanced by multi-national corporations, international financial institutions, and other free-marketers today (Wolf 2004, 56-57). Although there is much variation for adherents of neoliberal ideology, the resistance to it centers around the 'laissez faire' principles of privatization, deregulation, and market liberalization most often espoused with the past and current policies of the Bretton Woods Institutions and G-8 that critics believe to have led to massive inequalities between the rich and poor (Held 2004, 34-37; Stiglitz 2002). Transnational global activists do not necessarily advocate resistance to the globalizing trends of contemporary society but are critics of a specific globalization paradigm that has led to global inequality:

Although some liberalizations, deregulations, privatizations and fiscal disciplines have enhanced efficiencies in the contemporary globalizing economy, the magnitude of these gains has fallen far short of what is needed to ensure prosperity for all. On the contrary, as at other times in history, 'free markets' have generally directed disproportionate benefits to the already privileged and increased the marginalization of the disadvantaged. Scholte 2005, 40.

A politically neutral definition of neoliberalism as: a heightened integration in the global political economy, is promoted by free-marketers without adequate responses to those left behind by current trends in globalization. The promotion of market forces over political, social, and cultural forces leaves many states and social movements unable to handle the growing number of the world's poor (Mittelman 2000, 74).

Somewhere amongst the opposition to neoliberal globalization at the WSF and elsewhere, new ideas began to be promoted regarding alternatives to existing global policies.



The resistance stopped focusing solely on reactions to neoliberal ideology and began to practice resistance differently. Alternative globalization models that privileged more than market forces such as gender equality, worker's rights, and human dignity were promoted, spread and implemented (Cassen 2006, 72). The WSF itself was still a locus for opposition to neoliberalism, but it also began to hear the overlooked ideas emanating from the Global South and the traditionally voiceless: the poor, minorities, the elderly, women, youth movements. These voices calling sometimes for reform and sometimes for replacement of social institutions were forming a new and dynamic resistance in global politics, one that challenged the accepted norms of corporate led globalization.

The World Social Forum is the first serious attempt to organize the political forces of global civil society into a unified space of positive agenda-formation and planning of collective transformative actions. Patomaki & Teivainen 2004a, 116

Groups of peasant farmers organised by Via Campesina gathered with indigenous rights activists alongside intercontinental youth movements as well as large and small NGOs, social movements and an enormous diversity of social and political actors (Leite 2005. 83). The unexpected number of participants and groups that immediately became involved in the WSF process is an indicator that global civil society and the anti-globalization movement was awaiting such an undertaking.

The resistance to neoliberal globalisation is diverse and dynamic and after the large scale protests against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle in 1999 and various G-8 meetings around the world the phenomenon has garnered much attention. Usually this results in somewhat incoherent and ambiguous definitions of global civil society (GCS) in order to describe the locations and participants involved in this transnational global activity (Chandler

2004, 313). Attempts to depict GCS usually contain descriptive elements: outlining the non-state actors involved that are growing in importance for global issues and that operate transnationally or outside the regular confines of intra-state politics and economics (Ibid, 316). Additionally, GCS portrayals usually encompass normative elements about global norms and values and ideas surrounding social justice (Bartelson 2006, 386; Keane 2003, 175-204). GCS, for the purpose of this research, will be described as the combined actions of global and local actors beyond the confines of national societies and economies with ethical elements consistent with the WSF charter:

However contested the normative foundations of global civil society appear to be, the ethically unifying element in global civil society seems to be all the good causes propagated by those organizations and their members. Bartelson 2006, 387.

[r]ather than asking what the concept of global civil society might mean and what kind of institutions and practices it might refer to, we should ask what is done by means of it – what kind of world is constituted, and what kind of beliefs, institutions and practices can be justified, through the usage of this concept? Bartelson 2006: 372.

The good causes of GCS actors are constitutive of GCS as are the actions of the WSF. The charter of the WSF is a non-binding, non-teleological document that promotes the emergence of a planetary citizenship to transform the existing global order and guide the actions of GCS actors (Gryzbowski 2006, 8). The charter sets out a loose normative framework and attempts a level of inclusion that will best aid the organisation of GCS forces. This fuzzy characterization of a particular global consciousness ignores certain elements and actors in some definitions of GCS:

It is necessary to distinguish between liberal global civil society, which feeds on neo-liberal globalization, and emancipatory global civil society, which promotes counter-hegemonic globalization, the globalization of solidarity of which the WSF is an eloquent expression. Santos 2006a, 42-3.

This narrows the actors we can talk about within global civil society, but the importance is placed on actions and a “brand new democratic thinking” (Keane 2003, 126). Conceiving of GCS in this manner can work as an exclusionary force within the WSF by groups sharing these normative commitments. Organisations or movements advocating or practicing violence (terrorists, militia groups), racism, or sexism are excluded as are groups like think tanks that promote neoliberal ideology and religious institutions with millenarian rigidity ( WSF 2001, Principles 4, 9, 10, 11, 13). The WSF’s relevance to GCS is in its attempt to coalesce like-minded groups and actors in a unified space. It is up to these actors to promote good causes and direct their action to another possible world.

After ten years on the world stage, the WSF has grown into an important historic phenomenon with lasting impact for social movements. In many ways it has involved itself in altering the dominant discourse of neoliberalism towards a people centered approach to global politics. The most cited example of WSF influence was the world wide day of protest to the Iraq war on February 15, 2003 when the WSF was instrumental in facilitating the coordinated effort. The large amounts of literature available on the subject, the media attention in many parts of the world, and the explosion of local and regional Forums modeled on the WSF also indicate its impact on GCS (Glasius & Timms 2006; Sen 2009, xxi). From its beginnings in the south of Brazil, the WSF has spread its message all over the world. Importantly, over this time it has proven to be an adaptable and resilient institution capable of learning and self reflection. The

future direction of the WSF is a contentious issue with many fault lines. A subsequent chapter will show that there is increasing pressure to abandon its open-space method of horizontal organization and adopt a more active political course with identifiable objectives and programs. Calls to action to become a political movement are being promoted from a large array of channels: from Venezuelan president, Hugo Chavez, to prominent global activists like Walden Bello, and other groups pursuing their own particular interests (Santos 2006a, 53; Bello 2007). The spread of local and national Forums all over the world has opened the door for the WSF to expand its actions outside the Porto Alegrean context and hold its events in cities on other continents (Glasius & Timms 2006). Conversely, the global phenomenon of the WSF has its roots in Porto Alegre and this may motivate organisers to consolidate activity in a South American center where the process began and is strongest as is evidenced by the frequent return trips of WSF gatherings on Brazilian soil. By analyzing the results of past Forum events, I hope to understand the variables that most contribute to the success of a WSF event.

The WSF is a permanent process but its events occur in a time and place. The existing conditions at the meeting place of each gathering affects the event's outcome in both foreseeable and unanticipated ways. This research explores the impact that factors, specific to the location of each WSF, have on the overall success of each forum. The WSF has held large-scale events in several different cities throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century. Important here is the impact of these locations on individual WSF events; how the local conditions affect the relative success of the event; and what particular variables have the greatest impact on the success of an event. Determining what constitutes a Forum success is, likewise, not straightforward and one has to consider a number of different dimensions of success and

indicators appropriate to each. This research investigates what variables affect the success of individual WSFs and how these variables exert their influence. A successful WSF gathering will have a positive local impact and will strengthen the WSF globally.

For many people, especially perhaps for professional observers and commentators, it is the size of the WSF meetings that speaks the loudest and that therefore tends to be cited as the real measure of the relevance of the Forum. But it is not numbers alone that count. Sen 2009, p.xx.

Measuring the results will depend on a series of different factors beyond participation numbers and will show the *influence of location on event outcomes*. Importantly, the physical location of a WSF event greatly influences the dynamics of the event and certain contributing factors associated with that particular location are more influential than others. Can the early success of the WSF, and its accompanying political process, be attributed to its occurrence in time and space at Porto Alegre, Brazil, and what are the necessary variables that created this success? An answer to my research question must incorporate a definition of success for application to WSF events and the larger political experiment of the WSF. A main objective of the WSF is to articulate its message that 'another world is possible': that there are alternatives to neoliberal globalization.

The WSF continues to attract large gatherings after over twelve years of organising. Its most recent event coincided with the fall of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak last year and the rise of global concern for African and the Middle Eastern protests. These areas are of paramount importance to the future of the WSF and one wonders when the first large scale Middle Eastern WSF gathering will occur. Chapter 1 outlines the history of the WSF process and its formative events. It looks at who was involved in the formation and its continued

organisation as it spread to different areas of the world. Additionally, chapter 1 discusses some of the theoretical cleavages that surround the existence of the WSF. Most notable are the debates concerning the open space method advocated by some of the original organisers versus the level of tactical involvement in concrete world events. Chapter 2 discusses the research method utilised to assess the success of individual WSF events. There are three events that were of great significance to the WSF here under investigation. Drawing from the research, four variables are isolated to determine their impact on each particular event. The variables of the role of the state, funding, trade unions, and local civil society are broadly defined with some unavoidable overlap. These variables are discussed concerning why they were chosen and how they exert their influence on the ten day event and the WSF in general. Assessing the success of a Forum event relies on many different indicators drawn from literature on the subject and a personal assessment of the WSF objectives. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 investigate the dynamics of each event in Porto Alegre, Mumbai, and Nairobi respectively. These case studies incorporate information surrounding the events, before and after, and the outcomes of the events themselves. This should show the impact these particular locations have on forum success. Tracing how each variable affects the event through a within-case analysis highlights the impact favourable or unfavourable local conditions can have. This focus on what affects the success of individual events contributes to an understanding of the success of the WSF as an emergent global entity. The global identity of the WSF is impacted by the local effects of its gatherings and the subsequent success or failure of these events. In this way, the location for the events, and conditions at the location, are important to the overall success of the WSF. The conclusion looks at the level of success each event achieved relative to each

indicator of success and a cross case comparison of the variables assesses their relative impacts. The success of each forum event lies on a continuum and some events have had much greater success across all of the dimensions of success here under investigation.

## **Chapter 1: Theory**

The WSF is a product of an historical moment of rising anti-globalization energy and transnational activism. Its organization and implementation will be traced from its original conception to the large annual events over the last ten years. The history and background of the Forum are important in understanding what it is meant to achieve and the method by which WSF and its organisers are going to reach their objectives. The WSF is a part of Global Civil Society, but this term is problematic. GCS has many meanings for many people and will here be treated as a normative framework which the WSF has much to contribute. GCS as a concept has an ethical and descriptive dimension. Using the WSF charter as a guideline for a more clear understanding of what is meant by GCS helps to describe GCS actors and groups as well as a framework for how they should act. The WSF's role among GCS and as a provenance for alter-globalization has led to debates on the future course and capabilities of the WSF. The existential elements of the WSF are often reduced to a debate on open space versus movement. Organisers, participants, and global activists see the WSF as an open space for idea formation and discussion or alternatively as a gathering of movements with an inevitable mobilising function or a 'movement of movements'. This debate has surrounded the WSF from its original formation and is something that organisers of each individual event must consider.

### **History / Background of WSF:**

The global phenomenon of the WSF grew from inauspicious origins among a group of global activists and left intellectuals to a large gathering of GCS in Porto Alegre, Brazil. In the



wake of an anti-WEF march from Switzerland to Davos that saw many logistical difficulties and a heavy police presence, new methods of resistance were sought. Generally attributed to Oded Grajew of the Brazilian based CIVES (Brazilian Association of Entrepreneurs for Citizenship), the idea for the WSF was first presented in Paris in February of 2000 by Grajew to Bernard Cassen of the French journal *Le Monde Diplomatique* and ATTAC (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions and for Citizens' Action) and Francisco Whitaker, a Brazilian social activist and liberation theologian (Patomaki & Tievainen 2004a, 116). After that initial meeting Whitaker and Grajew began rallying support for the idea's realization. As Whitaker describes it:

Once back in Brazil, we started to find out what organizations were willing to accept this challenge and take on this huge task. On February 28, there was a meeting in Sao Paulo of delegates from 8 organizations that today have signed a "Cooperation Agreement" to hold the World Social Forum, the first edition of which will be held in Porto Alegre from January 25 to 30, 2001. Whitaker 2004.

Through Cassen's organisations and others, the idea was spread via transnational activist networks and support for the initiative began to mount (Patomaki & Tievainen 2004a, 117). Support was also solicited and received from the governments of Porto Alegre and the province of Rio Grande do Sul. With the Brazilian Organising Committee in place and steps being taken to realise the WSF event, representatives travelled to a large gathering of movements opposed to neoliberal globalization in Geneva. They introduced the WSF as:

a new international space for reflection and for organization of all those who counter neo-liberal policies and are constructing alternatives to prioritize human development and overcome market dominance in every country and in international relations. Leite 2005, 80.

This new stage of resistance was intended to aid in the dynamic of international coordination of struggles (Leite 2005, 81), and help integrate global and local activists beginning in January of 2001.

The WSF organizers came from a variety of backgrounds in different social movements, many of which were located in Brazil. The decision to hold the first meeting in Porto Alegre fit nicely within the three framing concepts that the organizers developed around the first WSF. The first of these concepts was that the location of the Forum should take place in the South; second, the name of the event will be the World Social Forum in order to clearly identify it with, and counterpose it to the World Economic Forum; and third, the event will be held at the same time as the World Economic Forum (Fisher and Ponniah 2003, 4). Clearly, the Forum has gained a lot of momentum since inception, but more important was that it was gaining meaning and relevancy for those involved with the process. More groups expressed a desire to get involved in the WSF process and alongside the Brazilian Organising Committee (OC) a new body was formed that would “reflect the global character of the fight against capitalist globalization” (Leite 2005, 97). After the first event the organizing work was divided between an International Council (IC), which was intended to be made up of members drawn from regional or global networks as opposed to national organizations, and the Brazilian OC.<sup>1</sup> The functions of each body were often indistinguishable with the IC holding little influence until the decision for global expansion in 2004 was made (Teivainen 2003).

The Brazilian OC has since evolved into the WSF Secretariat who do hold decision making powers regarding what groups adhere to charter principles and are thus eligible for

participation (Patomaki & Teivainen 2004, p120-126). Both the IC and Secretariat have become less influential in directing the actual Forum event (starting with the expansion to Mumbai), but they are part of the permanent process of the WSF<sup>ii</sup>. In Mumbai, the IC acquired an advisory role to the Mumbai OC which was a precedent to be repeated at subsequent Forums. Each Forum is organized by an ad hoc committee that is, ideally, chosen from all interested groups that are able to support the WSF principles. This can lead to certain groups asserting more influence than others in specific cases (Oloo 2007 in Nairobi; Prashad 2004 in Mumbai), but the Secretariat and IC are present to provide monetary, logistical, and other necessary support. The Secretariat and IC are influential in deciding the time, place and the scale of each WSF event and there are many calls for more democratic practices in this decision making process (Santos 2006a, 48-51). More important for this research however, is the decision making process at each individual Forum event by their respective OC. The decisions they make can greatly affect the activities and outcomes of the event and thus influence the deliberations in the WSF process to determine future venues.

The world has seen the proliferation of smaller social forums into every global region including several more in Porto Alegre and other parts of Brazil. Initially this spread was unwanted by the organizers of the Forum: "Originally, the WSF International Committee had no intention of developing or linking to any other social forums...and other regional and thematic forums sprang up spontaneously without connection to the master plan" (Glassius and Timms 2006, 195). Global expansion of the WSF is largely being accomplished through the regional and thematic Forums that occur with great frequency and in many areas of the world (Tievainen 2003a, 98). These Forums have created tension between WSF organisers in the past.

During a European Social Forum the Italian delegation invited political parties to formally participate in opposition to the WSF Secretariat requests; also controversial was a 2002 Social Forum event in Quito that the IC found narrowly organised as its thematic focus was dedicated to the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). The WSF process does help coordinate many of these regional and thematic Forums but they do not take direct command of them:

While there are reasons to maintain coherence and some underlying rules in the process so that the WSF brand does not simply evaporate, too much control by the IC and the Secretariat is bound to limit the creativity of those in charge of the de-centralised events. Tievainen 2003a, 98).

The WSF may not always succeed in exporting both its message of open-space politics and its ability to attract a diverse range of GCS whether in its official large scale events or during the unofficial local events that are organised under the WSF banner.

The political novelty of the Forum process and the attention received by its first meetings are not necessarily easily exportable. The WSF cannot simply take its message on the road and set up franchises. According to the charter, Forum events offer a space that protects inclusivity and diversity while rejecting hierarchical and binding decisions; it also provides the means to help groups and individuals achieve effective change and strengthen the global network of progressive social movements. The WSF organizers do not know exactly where the social forum process will end up, but they do have some control over the place that the event will occur. Global Expansion of the WSF caused apprehension on the part of Brazilian organizers: “The decision to move the WSF out of Brazil was a controversial one. The WSF is a fruit of a distinctly Brazilian political culture and social movement know-how” (Conway 2004, p.357). The

variables that the physical location offers will affect the outcomes of an event in myriad ways. Once the Brazilian IC decided to hold an event outside Brazil many worried that the global community that attended Porto Alegre events would not follow.

Others worried about the risks of disrupting a young and fragile practice, of entrusting the WSF charter to another organizing group, and of the enormous logistical challenges of mounting the gigantic event in a less congenial environment. Conway 2004, p.358.

These concerns notwithstanding, members in both the Brazilian OC and the IC were excited by the further globalization of the WSF and had started advocating for a WSF event in India as early as 2001 (Santos 2006a, 72). The event occurred in 2004 after three annual Forums were held in Porto Alegre. The Forum was back in Porto Alegre in 2005 before expanding out again in a new, smaller scale series of gatherings. In 2006 the WSF hosted the Polycentric round of Forums consisting of smaller events in Caracas Venezuela, Bamako, Mali, and Karachi, Pakistan. The WSF hosted its first large scale African Forum in Nairobi Kenya in 2007 before transforming itself once again by not having a single or polycentric event in 2008 but rather to replace it with a call for self-organised actions at all levels – local, national, and transnational – over the course of one week. In 2009, the Forum returned to Brazil this time in Belem. 2010 was not host to an event and the most recent event occurred in January of 2011 in Dakar, Senegal. Each event consisted of an altered configuration and though they shared similarities, they diverged from each other dependant on the participants and the decisions of the particular Organising Committee.

The diversity of the organizing group, both between the previous OC's as well as within the individual OC, attempts to achieve greater levels of democracy within the WSF. Sometimes

this has led to the WSF charter being interpreted differently than the authors may have intended. The political struggles that occur both inside and outside its official bodies cannot always be avoided, but the WSF does explicitly intend not to have a locus of power for participants to contend (Patomaki & Teivainen 2004a, 125). It is not expected that decisions made by organisers will ever be free of contention but certain decisions are more existential to the future of the WSF. Worries over an unreceptive event location continue to plague WSF decision makers and can have profound consequences. The WSF remains a movement largely of the Global South, but the Global South is an often hostile environment to organise and host a progressive GCS event. Location matters among the complex array of variables contributing to WSF outcomes. With the diversity among WSF participants and the complexity of interactions and interdependencies among participating actors at the local and global level, how location will affect a WSF event is hard to analyse. The global network of social movements, NGOs, and other transnational activists are interconnected in a way that defies easy categorization. The participants active at WSF events do follow a very broad pattern of behaviours and identifications under the umbrella of GCS.

### **Global Civil Society**

GCS is a dynamic influence on geopolitics and upon local issues. Empirical definitions are elusive and this has “resulted in a situation in which no one seems to know exactly *what* global civil society is, only *that* it is” (Bartelson 2006, 372). As discussed above, GCS here will focus on certain types of actors undertaking good causes that fit into an agreed upon

normative framework. The normative elements are not bound by the limitations placed upon it by the WSF charter but this charter does give a starting point to understand the WSF contribution to GCS. I will treat the WSF charter as illustrative of the groups and the principles of GCS in general, though that document is not intended for this theoretical step. The restrictions that exclude political parties or groups advocating violence, for example, demarcate the actors and ideas that the WSF would endorse, and the charter is inclusive and indefinite enough for a wide array of interpretations going forward.

The WSF charter gives a broad outline of some elements of GCS vis-à-vis the actors involved and an ethical dimension but it does not say much about how GCS works in its geopolitical context. GCS here will be understood as somewhat analogous globally to past national definitions of civil society like this one:

Civil society, according to my definition, is the process through which individuals negotiate, argue, struggle against or agree with each other and with the centres of political and economic authority. Through voluntary associations, movements, parties, unions, the individual is able to act publicly. Kaldor 2003, 585

In discourse with centers of political and economic authority civil society has expanded globally through its transnational networks and its focus of attention beyond state power towards global rules and institutions. A neo-Gramscian reading of civil society expands the space of GCS further beyond the market, state, and family to the realm of culture, ideology, and political debate (Ibid, 584). This understanding sees neoliberal globalization as an ideology promoted by the dominant classes. Elements of civil society can be implicated in the construction of a dominant ideology, such as when organic intellectuals in academe work with the state and the

dominant class to develop and maintain the dominant ideology. Neoliberal ideology privileges economism by reducing transformations in all aspects of social life to economic determinants. Beyond this ideology, Gramsci uses the term hegemony to describe an historical period's dominant discourse that encompasses whole ways of life:

For Gramsci, hegemony is a dynamic lived process in which social identities, relations, organizations, and structures based on asymmetrical distributions of power and influence are constituted by the dominant classes. Hegemony, then, is as much economic as it is "ethico-political" in shaping relations of domination and subordination. Mittelman 2000, 167

While Gramsci viewed civil society as a realm that included elements associated with dominant forces, this thesis will follow the WSF's Charter in emphasizing progressive elements in GCS. In Gramsci's framework, the control over whole ways of life by hegemonic forces will necessarily be met with resistance in many different areas, especially civil society. In total, this resistance, if properly organised and coalesced, has the capacity to become a counterhegemonic movement made up of different forms and dimensions<sup>iii</sup>. Hegemonic rule is not exerted through economic or political control alone and is instead "established when power and control over social life are perceived as emanating from "self-government" (i.e., self-government of individuals embedded in communities) as opposed to an external source(s) such as the state or the dominant strata" (Mittelman 2000, 167). The WSF and activists within GCS view the current manifestation of hegemony propagating economism and a form of globalisation that allows an unequal power distribution to a dominant class, and seek to advance alternative understandings of what is possible.

Establishing hegemony is never complete and, for those active in the WSF, counterhegemonic forces can resist its expansion through the ideas and actions of GCS (Santos



2003, 192). Hegemony is not located in a place or explicitly expressed by any one group of actors. This can lead to a fragmentation within GCS about effective resistance strategies and inclusion:

The fragmentation that characterizes and is characterized by simultaneous membership in different groups means that it is possible, if not probable, that the subaltern can be progressive on certain issues and reactionary on others in the same instance. Mittelman 2000, 168.

A neo-Gramscian approach views GCS as a site of ideological struggle where certain actors within GCS beco-opted by hegemonic forces. Western NGO's like OXFAM may fall into this category whereby their actions fit into a WSF model of GCS but they offer little or no political and ideological resistance to hegemonic globalization (Berry & Gabay 2009, 347-356). To this end, GCS as space for ideological struggle may be oversimplified if viewed as a dichotomy of hegemon versus counterhegemon. Class reductions take away agency from actors and some account of the 'good causes' and progressive actions by individual groups need to be infused into conceptualization of GCS:

It is possible to recognize the transformative potential of transnational political action, while also acknowledging the neo-Gramscian point that global civil society may serve to make the global political economy 'governable'. Ibid, 355.

GCS active at WSF events is certainly in a struggle with neoliberal globalization though every action may not be the most effective form of resistance available. The WSF as a coordinator of social movements and GCS does not direct the strategy as a counterhegemonic actor.

Indeed, this frustrates some of the more radical actors and is what separates the WSF from the traditional Left's International's of the twentieth century. Principles of equality and respect for difference within the WSF process do not have:

a privileged social actor (workers or workers and peasants); a privileged type of organization (trade unions and working-class parties); a centrally defined strategy (the Internationals' resolutions); a politics originating in the North...and prevailing in the anti-capitalist North. Santos 2006, 38.

Instead, the WSF attracts actors and social movements that are socially, culturally, and politically diverse. WSF diversity is evidence of its ability to overcome traditional dichotomies of collective action (Ruggiero 2005, 297). Social movements often suffer from 'reform vs. revolution', or 'global vs. local' cleavages which obstruct large scale gatherings or cooperation. The WSF does not eliminate these fissures, but its dedication to principles of equality and diversity in its charter is a progressive step and its commitment to dialogue could actually encourage cooperation.

The social movements involved with the WSF span a wide array of social, cultural, and political space. Some adhere to strategies of reform and working within established states or institutions, and some social movements are more radical with objectives to overturn these institutions. Some groups prefer strategies of 'localization' whereby global economic and political ties are *de-linked* in order to achieve environmental sustainability, grassroots democracy, and/or genuine community (Sandbrook et.al. 2006, 76), where "participants formulate radical alternatives to the global economy by withdrawing from official markets altogether" (Ruggiero 2005, 300). Most within the WSF system have some levels of global integration but not necessarily the ties that fall under traditional definitions of globalization referring to : "the integration of national economies into global markets through the increasingly unrestricted flow of trade, investment, finance, and skills " (Sandbrook et.al. 2006, 80). Localization can also refer to alterglobalisation strategies where existing links are broken

but alternative global ties are established through networks of social movements. These social movements are expanding transnationally and the WSF is instrumental in coordinating the global social movement networks. This network subsumes many groups and actors and it is often hard to separate social movements from other actors.

Charles Tilly defines a social movement as “a sustained, organized public effort making collective claims on target authorities”; operating globally, these social networks also have elements of a collective identity within those that identify with the movement as well as a durable network structure (Tarrow 2006. 6-7). The latter two elements of a durable network and identification with a movement tend to distinguish global social movements from other organizations, such as non-governmental organizations (NGO) and other global actors, but the lines of separation are not always clear. Transnational networks of social movements are apparently growing and spreading and certain actors are more connected, well funded, and identifiable than others; the WSF’s method is not to direct the actions of these strong or weak actors but to be:

an open meeting place for reflective thinking democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among humankind and between it and the Earth. WSF 2001, Charter: Principle 1.

How this open meeting space operates and the future of the WSF method is the subject of the next section.

### **Open Space Versus Movement:**

The WSF promotes a discourse within GCS that focuses on a 'globalization from below'. This can be taken to mean that as an alternative to neoliberal globalization, the actors involved in the WSF equate themselves with a de-centered and more democratic ideal of global governance. But also, the individual component parts of the WSF (the self organised seminars, workshops, acts of resistance, informal connections, etc...) that act within a Forum event are themselves creating an alternate globalization. Their individual actions are common enough practices around the world, but organised and coordinated at a specific location of GCS creates novelty. This organic *emergence* of a globalization from below is based around both the rejection of the inevitability of the logic of capital as discussed, and in a belief in cultural and political references that are non-Western (Santos 2006a, 6-7). Ideas and ideologies of the Global South, of individual movements and groups, mix with each other and their global counterparts to create an epiphenomenon separate from the coordinated event:

The Forum was unknowable, chaotic, dispersive. And that overabundance created an exhilaration in everyone, at being lost in a sea of people from so many parts of the world who are working similarly against the present form of capitalist globalization. Hardt 2002, 113.

In contrast to many other world gatherings discussing global issues and globalization, the WSF offers a policy of openness towards social movements, groups, and interested individuals. This is qualified by certain criteria but it means that a high proportion of attendees to the Forum are local and regional citizens that do not have prohibitive travel expenses. In this way, many of the attendees of the WSF's global event are drawn from the Global South and become active participants in the formation of the particular WSF event.

The WSF creates the space for a globalization from below to emerge by centering itself among the Global South with the views of the South being included and given weight. This heightens the importance of event location not only by bringing a message of anti-capitalism or global activist networks to those that are outside the modern information revolution, but also by listening to the contextual specificity and historical/cultural practices of new participants.

The WSF's focus on neoliberal globalization has tended to privilege discourses of economic justice and fair trade over struggles against discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and religion. But one cannot be in India and ignore the power of religious identities and practices nor reduce their status to epiphenomena of capitalism. Conway 2004, 358.

Indeed, many of the struggles of the South predate modern forms of capitalism, Indian caste systems being an obvious example. The origins of the WSF may have been as a counter forum to the WEF but as the Forum process grows and learns alternative resistance emerges. Each event includes high attendance among the local activists and social movements and they bring with them their cultural and political references. The WSF filled a lack for many activists and movements of the Global South and helped to increase their global potential:

What was missing was a space where the greatest number of social players, geographically isolated and usually lacking funds, could meet to articulate and exchange their views and their experience of political struggles. Cassen 2006, p.79.

The space first created was in Porto Alegre: in the Global South, away from the support centers of activists of the North that had been the most vocal anti-globalisation advocates. The WSF became the inclusionary space where large actor constellations from the North and South would meet and also where actors from diverse activist fronts would gather.

The mass gatherings of the WSF leave many intrigued and wondering about the political nature of the Forum and where the process is heading. The debate on the political nature of

the Forum starts from an understanding of the novel approach that is presented. The WSF charter characterizes the process as one of an “open meeting place for reflective thinking” and “democratic debate of ideas” in its first principle. While an open forum approach is not new to political debate or to other fields of inquiry, the WSF presents an environment for an alternative discourse and a novel approach to global dilemmas. In the charter, open-space methodology is bounded by an opposition to neoliberalism and rejection of violence among other statements that present a minimal political program. These are general guidelines and do not merit a highly structured restraint on behaviour for participants. The structure advocated by the WSF is horizontal, or certainly non-hierarchical, with the promotion of self organised activities and autonomous action with the WSF attempting to act as non-political facilitator. Chico Whitaker contrasts this with the stratified design that the configuration as a movement with an overt political programme would adopt:

Its organizational structure will necessarily be pyramidal however democratic the internal process of decision...its effectiveness will depend on the explicitness and precision of its *specific objectives*, and therefore, of its own boundaries in time and space. Whitaker 2006, p. 83.

The political objectives could not possibly include all the aims of the current WSF participants which are often contradictory (anarchists and parliamentary reform advocates may have very little common ground for example); this would lead to the privileging of specific ideas and groups. This is not seen as negative for those advocating this approach but it is a different approach relative to the WSF charter. Diversity and openness would necessarily be sacrificed for specific objectives; the WSF does, however, espouse certain general guidelines. The charter of the WSF does not accept participation from party representatives or military organizations.

It advocates universal human rights, environmental stewardship, and only non-violent measures. It opposes large multi-national corporations, governments, and international institutions that are complicit with the policies of neoliberal globalization (World Social Forum 2001). Even with these basic criteria for participants, the WSF charter is still arguably a highly inclusive document promoting a very open approach for GCS.

Within discussions of the political nature of the Forum most of the discourse surrounds the conceptualization of the Forum as either an open space or a Global Left movement. Among the original organisers of the WSF, Whitaker<sup>iv</sup> is perhaps the most outspoken advocate for the Forum as open space and he sees the dichotomy as being relatively mutually exclusive:

...you can't be both things at the same time, not even be a bit of each-which would end up by impairing one or the other. Movements and spaces may be seeking, each one performing its roles, the same general objectives. But each one works in a way of its own, aiming at different specific objectives. Whitaker 2009, p.82.

Obviously, the WSF is both, but Whitaker's point is not without merit. During the actual event, efforts are made to be as open a space as possible. The ongoing actions of the WSF outside of the actual events - the permanent process of the WSF - have more elements of a movement.

The decisions made on where to have events, which topics to highlight, who should be approached for involvement, (either as a speaker, or sponsor, or organiser) all must consider the political implications of the WSF as a movement. While acting as an open space, the WSF's method differs from that of a movement (Tievainen 2003a, 99). It provides an outlet to influence global discourse that can subsequently be acted on by social movements; but many of the decisions made by the IC and Secretariat do strengthen the practice of open space politics.

The WSF acts as an open space at one moment and a movement at another as a

complementary blend of method and strategy. The WSF is neither a pure open space nor a global movement but falls on a continuum that is wavering between the poles.

The dichotomous conceptualization becomes a constraint if the WSF is too narrowly defined. Understanding the meaning of what the WSF presents to alter-globalization discourse and GCS is crucial to determining if its aims and goals are being met. The objectives sought by the 'open space movement' of the WSF allow for the construction of another possible world *without managing it* and it promotes the deconstruction of neoliberal globalization. By 'open space movement' I mean that the WSF is a movement that uses a method of open space forums and one that is repeatedly trying to move towards a more open space along the open space / movement continuum. Whitaker wishes to reduce the WSF to an open space but it is the particular blend of open space and movement that has formed its political novelty.

The movement along the open space movement continuum is illustrated through the real world examples taking place at WSF events. The open space is being continuously re-defined wither by organic events that occur with the WSF's diverse participants and also through decisions made by WSF organizers. For example, organisers arrange for high profile speakers to gain coveted times and stages alongside the self organised activity. This privileges certain groups or individuals but seems necessary as some speakers will be more popular. Direct action advocated by the WSF committees does not occur and early in the WSF process a controversial arrest was made of Jose Bove and other members of *via campesina* and the movement of landless workers (MST). During the first WSF event some attendees of the forum were involved in the destruction of agricultural property. Arrests were made following the destruction of a field of genetically modified soy and were responsible for some very negative



attention for the Forum by the media (Leite 2003, 87). Besides the officially organised activities, seminars, and speakers, the self organised spaces have led to a broad focus of events at each Forum. The 'Youth Camp' was originally unplanned during the initial WSF events and is now incorporated into each subsequent event (Ibid, 89). The Youth Camp attracted large numbers of youths, indigenous people, and landless workers and led to additional self organised events. One such event was a one-day training course in direct action tactics. This was intended to teach local Brazilians the popular tactics of Northern activists. One organiser of this training session described it as:

On the one hand we hope we taught them something valuable. On the other hand, a one day training for fifty people – even the series of training we hope to do here – seems such a small effort toward helping them build the political culture they want. It left us both with a lot of questions about how particular models of organising can transfer from culture to culture, and stimulated a lot of thought. It was on the most challenging days I've ever spent – but also one of the most exciting. Starhawk 2002, 76.

The space at a WSF event aims to offer a venue for autonomist and self organised action free of commands and top-down structures. This is an inclusionary and diverse practice of politics that "becomes a permanent process of seeking and building alternatives, which cannot be reduced to the events supporting it" (World Social Forum 2001, Principle 2). The open space movement contributes to alter-globalizations beyond the five day event through a global network of like-minded groups and individuals.

Chico Whitaker uses the analogy of the 'public square' to describe the open space configuration of the Forum. This analogy implies no private ownership or hierarchical structure that controls and organizes the square but only an initial formation with minimal structure. All are welcome and are able to enjoy the space to whatever benefit they desire. The open space

is organised by the WSF intending to provide an open meeting place for self organised, autonomous action free from micro management and authority based rule making.<sup>v</sup> There are rules constraining the ‘public square’, i.e. non-violence, when and where the event will be held, etc..., but the analogy is a good one because the activity of the square is not subject to direct intervention. Jai Sen<sup>vi</sup> outlines three principles that are at the core of open-space politics: Self organization, Autonomous action, and emergence. While the first two have been written on often concerning the WSF, emergent politics results from grassroots organisation learning and adapting to create a larger structure surrounding the WSF that still maintains its integrity. This is an organic and leaderless process that learns as it goes along (Sen 2010, 994). Arturo Escobar, an anthropologist specialising in South American social movements, defines emergence in this context as:

when the actions of multiple agents interacting dynamically and following local rules rather than top-down commands result in some kind of visible macro-behaviour or structure. There is more : these systems are (sometimes not always) ‘adaptive’ – they learn over time, responding more effectively to the changing environment. Sen 2010, pg 1002.

As applied to the WSF, emergence of a novel alternative globalization practiced at Forum events has the potential for political novelty. It is an evolutionary process without definite horizons: without telos. It is because there is no final cause or end that many reject the WSF method as ineffective or utopian (James 2009, 210) and advocate a movement with a political programme.

The open space of the WSF is more than a method for GCS to resist neoliberalism but is a form of resistance: “we must accept that open space is not inherently open, neutral, or

equal, let alone progressive; it can only be so if we struggle for it to be so” (Sen 2010, 1010). This struggle to create an alter globalization by creating and utilizing an open space must be a directed struggle without the constraints of a managed and directed political programme. The non-prescriptive WSF charter is utilised alongside specific condemnations of, for example, the Iraq war and intellectual property rights; after WSF05 the ‘Porto Alegre Manifesto’ was released setting out prescriptive principles for social movements and was subject to much controversy<sup>vii</sup>. The WSF did not officially endorse the manifesto but it was released to the media leading many to believe it representative of a larger WSF political programme (Santos 2006a, 205; Tievainen 2003a, 100). This was problematic because it set out very specific ambitions for the WSF but also ignored many issues important to participants not involved in its drafting. Tracing the evolution of this manifesto is analogous to the operation of an open space movement. Individuals set out a document that may or may not ‘speak’ for the WSF and the WSF Secretariat then walks it back saying it was an independent document. These are movements along a continuum of pure open space at one end and politico-social mobilization at the other. There are principles in place that continually determine certain points on the continuum, but the non-teleological WSF will always be in flux.

In addition to declarative statements by participants, individual Forum events have emphasized anti-racism / anti-war topics (Mumbai), over democratic sustainable development (WSF 2003), or other thematic areas important to GCS. These illustrations are not indicative of a political narrowing of the WSF, though they are examples of how the WSF is utilised by autonomous actors pursuing specific objectives:

As I see it, and even if the actual practice of the WSF also has plenty of inversions and contradictions, all this – taken as a whole - constitutes a most significant contribution to a vocabulary of more autonomist movement and a more open politics; and as such, and even if the WSF has been and continues to be full of inversions and contradictions, its attempted practice of open space has contributed significantly to opening spaces for such action – and, in particular, for more such autonomist action. Sen 2010, 1017.

The practice of open space at the WSF has evolved as the Forum has matured to redefine, with each evolution, what open space is.

Open space is messy and can be chaotic without clear rules or leaders. By relinquishing control, through a method of self organization, the open space politics of the WSF may continue to maintain its global relevance. Peter Waterman<sup>viii</sup> highlights the importance for the WSF to continue its practice of open-space politics conceiving it as akin to discovering the ‘secret of fire’ for emancipatory movements:

This secret is to *keep moving*. In other words: a moment of stasis within a movement (institutionalization, incorporation, bureaucratization, collapse, regression) requires that activists be prepared to move to its periphery, or to move beyond it, or to create a new movement to advance, again, the potential represented by the old movement during its emancipatory moment. Waterman 2003, p. 124.

The emergence of a strong open space movement from WSF practices is not assured. The WSF as an emergent learning Forum requires transparency and openness. This motion is what the WSF offers to GCS through open space politics and creating the terrain for alternative politics. It accomplishes this when it is responding well to the needs of GCS.

The political novelty of the WSF makes it hard to use traditional indicators of relevance or success. The indicators common to social movement assessments are inadequate in

determining the creation of the global subjectivities of groups and individuals for which the Forum is responsible. The promotion of planetary citizenship and the coalescing of existing social movements transform the discourse of traditional global actors. This political space transforms those involved through the proliferation of ideas, tactics, and strategies. The secret to the open space success of the Forum is to keep moving, adjusting, progressing without a definite horizon or ideological goal, but to allow the creativity of the open space to create another possible world. The WSF success is as concerned with method as it is with outcomes. A clear objective or ideological goal would give quantifiable measurements of WSF success vis-à-vis geopolitics or global economic indicators but this is not the case. A more complex assessment is required that incorporates what the WSF offers. The coordination of transnational struggles and the coalescing of social movements through the strengthening of a global network of resistance are a complex objective and not all critics agree these should guide the WSF. Others argue that the WSF should become a global political party, or should produce a political programme for action (cf: Porto Alegre Manifesto), or should be a space for democratic debate, or some kind of eternally incomplete project (Dowling 2009, 222-223, 227). Some sort of balance ought to be found in order to continue the open space politics that is emerging from WSF activities and the continuation of real world results that affect positively the lives of participants and those negatively affected by neo-liberal global policies. What then would be an appropriate measure of success for such a diverse project? The next chapter focuses on what should be measured to determine WSF success and how best to assess this.

## Chapter 2: Analytical Framework

The overarching goal of this thesis is to identify variables associated with the local that contribute to the overall level of success of a specific WSF event. This chapter describes how the level of success will be measured and the local variables that affect the level of success. Determining the success or failure of any particular WSF event must account for the existential objectives of the WSF. How the event location affects outcomes is the method for undertaking this project, but the variables impact on events also includes a normative dimension. The normative indicator of success relies on the principles drawn up in the WSF charter and subsumes an ethical element found in GCS as discussed above. Each variable is important in helping attract participation and involvement with the large-scale WSF events, but the impact these variables have also contribute to the WSF's future trajectory. If, for example, compromises must be made by WSF decision makers, or by participants due to unfavorable local conditions then this can set precedents for future events unforeseen in the WSF charter. For each variable under discussion, unfavorable conditions could entail the WSF to alter its configuration and constrain the openness and diversity that it espouses. It is because of this potentiality that I include adherence to the WSF charter as an indicator of success for WSF events along with other indicators that look to measure WSF impact locally and globally.

The WSF's placement along the open space movement continuum is in flux and each case study has different challenges to the open space of the WSF. The three case studies were chosen because of their prominence for the WSF process as well as for

their usefulness in this debate. They show both how their local context impacts their particular event and how the variables at work in their location impact how the WSF can operate and how it is constrained. The case studies show this by tracing how each variable impacts the event and the WSF process. The variables of the role of the state, funding, trade unions, and local civil society were chosen because of how their impact became quite obvious in the research. An account of all of the variables addresses the largest questions about how the local context affects the event and in what ways. The broad categories that are here used as variables is drawn from the available literature, however, this has led to less emphasis on variables not specifically accounted for. This is a result of a lack of focus by WSF organisers and critics on certain areas of social research. The largest omission is in the area of gender equality and women's rights. This is indicated through the lack of equal representation among WSF organisers as well as a lack of emphasis in reporting on the WSF. Despite certain omissions, the variables chosen are chosen as a comprehensive approach to understanding the outcomes of each case study and illustrating the relative success of each.

### **Indicators of Success**

Gauging the success of this movement necessarily relies on more than the attendance numbers at events. The numbers are however important, especially regarding the diversity of attendants and the involvement by members that would not otherwise be active in GCS. Bernard Cassen provides four indicators to measure the success of the WSF movement and the number of participants is of the least valuable (Cassen 2006, p.81). A second more influential

indicator is *the broadening of the WSF's social base and the increasingly wide spectrum of organizations seeking 'a different kind of world'*. This indicates the coalescing of social movements into the WSF global network. Traditionally, many actors of the global left have been politically too discordant to work together or be civilly engaged. The effect of these disparate groups creating a global network to oppose corporate led globalization is encouraging for GCS. A third indicator is *the incorporation of the host country or continent's social forces in the anti-globalisation movement*. North America and Europe were the base of support for the anti-globalization movement during the mobilizations in Seattle and elsewhere. With the advent of the WSF, South America has taken its place among the polycentric GCS. The WSF has held events in every major region of the Global South, except perhaps the near East. How these events have integrated its global network with local civil society is paramount for WSF success in the region for future events. A final indicator promulgated by Cassen is *the public projection of proposals elaborated within the WSFs and their injection into national, continental, and international politics*. The WSF as a movement is more than a forum of debate. It ought to lead to substantive change in reality. Even if this reality is the perception of the WSF as effective, it strengthens the idea that another world is possible. From media attention to the changing mandates of state policies, how the objectives set out by actors at the Forum event are actualised is important for those involved. The proposals that come out of each Forum event should lead to change in the foreseeable future. These indicators of success lay out the objectives that each event seeks to attain and they also are the objectives of the WSF as a part of GCS.



Building on the four indicators of success above, I would include an indicator for Forum success regarding its ability to maintain its open space methodology. Similar to the discussion above, the WSF ought to adhere to the principles of its charter. Certainly, this is only true as long as the document is historically relevant, but as a tool for assessment the charter provides some clarity. In sum, for the WSF to be gauged successful I will attempt to assess it using the previously noted indicators:

1. Large numbers: attendance, demographics.
2. Diversity: representativeness of GCS, expansion to new participants and social movements.
3. Local Participation: active engagement by the Global South in event locations during Forum events and with GCS.
4. Political Effect: inclusion of WSF based activity into global politics at all levels.
5. Charter Adherence: practice of WSF principles and open space methodology.

Especially true for indicators 1 and 3, attempting to assess WSF success requires an investigation of the actual events and not necessarily the permanent process of the WSF. Thus, I undertake to investigate case studies of Forum events. The three case studies of large international WSF gatherings have been held in Porto Alegre 2005, Mumbai 2004, and Nairobi 2007. I have chosen these cases because they are the best examples of large-scale events with very different locations. Porto Alegre is the birthplace of the WSF and in many ways is the standard by which other Forum events will be judged. Mumbai is the first global expansion for the WSF and, despite being a world apart, has similarities to Porto Alegre. Nairobi was the first

African large scale WSF event and is an example of a radically different host city. Comparing the outcomes of these WSF events will be the primary focus of the empirical research. A second inquiry into the comparative outcomes between cases will then further illuminate the effect of location on Forum success. Success of the individual event lies along a continuum that includes the success relative to other events and by participant perceptions. The levels of success along the continuum are multidimensional. The level of relative success based on each above indicator can work independently. Each Forum event may not achieve high levels of success for each indicator, but perhaps it will relative to other Forums. The multidimensional elements of success illustrate the areas where the particular event achieved tangible positive results and conversely can show where even relatively successful events can improve.

### **Case Studies**

Each case study explores the impact that the particular location and all its variables has on the event outcomes. Each case varies in the perceptions of the levels of success and varies greatly in their local conditions. Each case has different values on the four variables. By tracing each variable's influence in each case will illustrate the level of success achieved. The three cases chosen are all unique environments to hold WSF events. They are large scale events that have been important for the overall process of the WSF and to the lives of participants involved. These three case studies have the most data available to investigate their relative success and impact on the WSF. Each one offers insight into the WSF process and how the favorability of local conditions operate in determining Forum outcomes.

## 1. Porto Alegre – WSF05

This event was the fourth such instalment of the WSF in the city of Porto Alegre. By 2005, the process of institutional learning that the WSF underwent continued with some tangible changes relative to earlier gatherings. WSF05 was the most democratically organized event thus far, intensifying the effectiveness of the open space method. Additionally, it also positioned each seminar, workshop, lecture, and event into a category of global resistance called ‘terrains’. The terrains were geographical locations within the event that aimed to maximize common links and actions based on areas of interest. Though imperfect, this helped the large numbers of individuals and groups in attendance identify a common ground amongst activist and assist network connectivity. Increasingly, seminars and workshops were self-organized, but the intention of the terrain system was to bring like-minded social movements together. WSF05 had its share of problems, but the excitement that came out of Porto Alegre will in many ways be used as a standard to gauge subsequent events.

## 2. Mumbai – WSF04

Although this event took place prior to the 2005 event, analyses of within case conditions in Mumbai are aided by the Porto Alegre standard. As the first attempt at global outreach by the WSF, there was much trepidation for this new global strategy of the WSF. Perhaps nowhere on Earth are the contradictions of neoliberal globalism more apparent than in Mumbai. This vast city is home to some of the world’s wealthiest individuals and some of the most oppressive slums. India’s astounding economic growth throughout the past two decades

is a testament to the benefits of globalization. The growing inequality, poverty and crime rates, and overpopulation in Mumbai are evidence of its policy failures. WSF04 was an opportunity to practice the South American Forum process in a venue in great need of an alternative politics. It also would determine the viability of the Forum process away from its accustomed stronghold. Mumbai is not Porto Alegre, and organizers of WSF04 had to deal with many unfavourable elements that did not exist for WSF05. A successful Forum event in Mumbai would indicate an open future for the WSF; a failure would cast serious doubt on any further global expansion. The differences between the Brazilian and Indian societies were going to create a Forum event unlike anything that had come before.

### 3. Nairobi – WSF07

The road to the Nairobi Social Forum was a long process that had very encouraging prospects despite the unfavourable conditions prevalent in any poor African nation. WSF07 was to be Africa's largest gathering of global civil society up to that date, and could set the tone for the Forum process in Africa for years to come. The African Social Forum (ASF) had helped organize events in many African centers over the past decade including an event in Nairobi that had shown great promise. Hoping to build on this and exert influence on an upcoming Kenyan election, the WSF07 had the potential to meaningfully transform Kenyan and African politics. Furthering the WSF's goals of transparency, inclusion, and democracy, this event was organized by an independent African committee and would introduce many innovations that may be reproduced at subsequent forums. WSF07, perhaps more than any other Forum event, required the WSF to re-evaluate its existence as an open-space, as a movement, and as a

geographically exportable political phenomenon. WSF07 was a unique Forum experience but the impact on the progress of the Forum is still undetermined.

### **Within-case Analysis and Cross-Case Comparison: Independent Variables**

The WSF position within GCS and its global perception benefit through the success of each individual Forum event. The benefits will be seen by continued global support of the WSF process. The higher the perception of WSF effectiveness, the more the open space method is re-iterated as an effective tool against neo-liberal globalization. The WSF is effective if it can successfully rally GCS before, during, and especially after its global events. In Porto Alegre, there are many favorable conditions and variables that help to create a successful gathering. If success of an event depends on the proper conditions at the location of the event then it should be determined what the most important variables are. A within-case analysis reveals how each variable influences the event. During the course of a Forum event, many factors contribute to the relative success of the gathering. The global conditions at the time of the event will have its effects, but these forums take place in a geographical location and are subject to the vicissitudes of the local context. There are four variables that will be analyzed to determine the importance of location on Forum success. These variables emerged as significant through repeated themes in the research. Their importance permeates the scholarly analysis as well as the individual reporting from participants. These variables will be investigated within each case drawing conclusions regarding their relative importance to each event. The variables under consideration are the role of the state, event funding, trade union

strength, and local civil society; how each variable contributes to overall success requires investigation. I, obviously, cannot explore every dynamic that is going to influence a Forum event. Certain variables are bound to be overlooked; future research could encompass a broader look at omitted variables. I have focused on four factors, though, it is not possible to neatly compartmentalize and isolate each one. For example, the strength of women's movements and feminist thought could conceivably merit a fifth variable, but here will be apportioned under local civil society. Additionally, the strategy utilised by each individual organizing committee is discussed but not analysed for its overall effect on event outcomes. I have chosen broad categories that search for measurable indicators of each variable for each particular Forum event and in comparison between events. Based on the literature on the Forum and on important variables for GCS in general the following four variables were chosen.

#### **Variable 1: Role of the State**

The state and the regulative effects it holds over society in general and GCS in particular has been greatly affected by aspects of globalization. The exact place of power that the state is situated in is a very contentious question in the globalization literature. The state can be shown to be much constrained by international institutions and supranational organizations as well as by the transnational networks that assert their influence on domestic governments.

Globalization, alternately, has strengthened many powerful states and these same international institutions have in many ways re-asserted the role of states in global politics.<sup>ix</sup> The perspective undertaken here will be to view global governance as polycentric "to denote its distinctive feature of emanating from multiple interconnected sites" (Scholte 2005, 187). The state may

no longer be the sole target for social activists seeking reform or revolution but all meaningful change still needs to incorporate some form of state interaction. The state may have lost some of its capabilities in the context of contemporary globalization but governments can certainly still “shape the effects of globalization on their territories and populations: with fiscal policies, monetary policies, consumer policies, labor policies, environmental policies, data protection policies, and so on” (Scholte, 191). Even with the pressures of globalization to create ever more polycentric governance models the state’s relevancy is not extinguished for GCS; certain aspects of state power are diminished while others are enhanced.

In addition to the role of domestic governance in an increasingly interconnected world, the state is still a site for accountability and legitimacy. A major complaint of opponents of a strengthened GCS is its lack of proper representation of differing voices in society at large. The dominant model of geopolitics still relies on the nation-state to confer authority and legitimacy in whatever form the existing government takes. A congenial role of the state with GCS provides an authority that is not present in its unelected membership. Certain groups such as trade unions and some NGOs acquire legitimacy through election of members but none of these are as widely representative as the state. GCS can attempt to leverage the state legitimacy for its own cause but may often need to look elsewhere for sources of authority. In most cases the state is a potential target for activism as its representative nature (in liberal democracies) means it is accountable to citizen demands and therefore is susceptible to pressure. In non-democratic states external pressure on the state by transnational networks is often a very effective strategy against unaccountable governments. One final point on the role of the state is its ability to represent the will of its people in international discourse. Global

social actors and groups may influence international bodies in various ways and “NGOs may have the right to a voice, but not necessarily to a vote in global fora” (Edwards 2001, 7). The attitude of the state is certainly a prominent condition that could greatly influence the results of a forum. The reaction to street protests in Seattle, Prague, and Genoa show a level of state violence that drew much global attention to the Global Justice Movement but also created fear in some activists of police countermeasures. So far this discussion has centered on national governments but the local government conditions must also be considered for specific WSF locations. Overall, the state will contribute to the success or failure in a myriad of ways and it is necessary to highlight the most prominent among them both for past forums and for future consideration.

#### Expected Effects on WSF events

The state, despite exaggerations of its demise or retreat, is a significant social force that holds much influence in the lives of groups and individuals. There is little evidence of direct government intervention in the evolution of different WSF organizing structures. The forums were not devoid of government presence however (Teivainen 2009). The legal conditions and particular levels of civic freedom and civil rights are certainly a factor. It would seem that the ideal conditions for a WSF event would involve a sympathetic government that is willing to remove itself from the process. Intuitively, the most likely government type to support the open-space process of the WSF would be a classical liberal government. But, perhaps a social democratically structured government would be more sympathetic to the grassroots social movements active at WSF gatherings. Also relevant for this topic is the nature of state



involvement in the event coordination and not specifically the character or type of government. State support through funding and in the media will gain legitimacy and accountability for the event. Hostile or indifferent governments may be beneficial for gaining moral authority but the consequences may be very repressive. A measured distance from even a sympathetic state seems crucial to creating the atmosphere and subjective experiences for those in attendance that the WSF espouses. Critics of any state involvement point out that “according to radical autonomists, collaboration with the state will always end up compromising the organization’s autonomy” (Santos, 115). Each event will have to weigh the consequences for even minimal state collaborative efforts. The nature of state involvement will be analyzed based on two assertions: As domestic government support through funding, resource allocation, and/or public legitimization increases the likelihood for a successful forum; as government intervention in decision making increases likelihood for forum success decreases. These claims work in conjunction and a favourable judgment for the state’s role in an event should see a favourable combination of these two elements.

### **Variable 2: Funding**

Funding, as an independent variable, is obviously going to be influenced by the state, labor groups and NGOs meaning it could be encompassed by other variables. The weight of funding on the success of social movements and the controversy that necessarily accompanies it warrants an isolated investigation. The WSF will likely never agree to any type of corporate sponsorship based on its charter principles and thus a significant source of global funds is morally contradictory. Michael Edwards highlights the importance for all NGOs and social

movements to focus on diversifying funding sources and especially encourages raising local funding to promote sustainability (Edwards 1996, 19). An important goal for NGOs and grassroots organizations (GRO) when fundraising is to remain autonomous in order to pursue their definition of social transformation. The study conducted by Edwards concerning NGO's relationships to sources of official aid concludes that:

there are no universal relationships between increasing dependence on official aid, and thus particular trends in NGO programming, performance, legitimacy and accountability. Context circumstances and the quality of relationships between the actors are of crucial importance (Edwards, 18).

Program autonomy is thus conceivably attainable according to this study, though many on the far left would disagree with any involvement other than an antagonistic one towards capitalist states or organisations. Issues surrounding policy autonomy from sources of funding become far less contentious through diversification of funding sources.

There are many concerns about the level of autonomy that can be maintained as the WSF expands globally and thus requires increased funding. On the other hand, the expansion globally both opens up new sources of funding and will perhaps cut the ties that have previously maintained the WSF. The removal of traditional sources can reveal any conceits that were otherwise unnoticed by the organizers contributing to a continual learning process. Using the charter as a basis for funding priorities is merely a broad guideline and not a decisive document. The charter makes no overt mention of funding and perhaps amendments shall be necessary in the future. Even if the sources of funding cannot be proven to have influenced greatly the decisions of WSF organizers in the past it is still imperative to be aware of potential consequences. Certain groups could potentially hold greater influence over the WSF based on

contributions and the involvement of radical groups in the Forum could dissuade more moderate groups from donating.

#### Expected Effects on WSF events

The exact methods by which funding influences decisions are often quite opaque. Biases can be unconsciously developed by decision makers and independent inquiries and accountability measures are thus necessary. One crucial factor for policy autonomy relative to funding will be the ability of Forum events to reduce overall costs. There are going to be large costs to hosting events of this scale and cost saving measures ought to reduce the actual or apparent external dependency. The ability to be self-reliant using local resources and expanded funding sources is going to be a factor for Forum success. Open spaces are susceptible to pressures by powerful voices. An open space that promotes diversity needs to protect against moneyed interest from attempting to assert an unfair amount of influence. There is also a need for the less well funded social movements to be able to participate. In this way, an event needs economic autonomy so as not to be beholden to any one strong group. If there are an ample number of sources for funds and other necessary resources then the influence of any one group is diminished. As the influence of individual members and groups are diminished it should contribute to the overall democratic participation of the event. From this discussion two factors present themselves: First, as the funding diversification increases the favorability for Forum success increases; secondly, as costs of the event increases the favorability for Forum success decreases. The first factor will likely serve a more influential role

at each event, but with the size of the events in question, the overall budget will certainly require much deliberation by organizers.

### **Variable 3: Trade Union Strength**

By definition the Global South has a relatively high prevalence of underprivileged members of society of varying degrees. This leads to demands on government and business by these members that are often best addressed collectively through involvement in trade unions of the South. Union strength has trended down over the last few decades, but there are some areas where “new worker’s movements in the South are demonstrating powerfully that there is a future for working class politics North and South – at least for militant, democratic, grassroots class struggle politics” (McNally 2006, 316). A strong network of transnational labor groups and activists are also available to globally aid grassroots labor movements. A revitalized union movement implies both a strengthening of numbers but also “a vision of expanded democratic representation and social solidarity” (Turner 2005, p.387). This will certainly be important to the WSF process as it continues its efforts to strengthen both its numbers and its innovative vision and strategies. Others would not be so optimistic about union strength and usually “when we think of the impact of globalization on labor, we tend to think of its negative aspects: export processing zones (EPZs), child prostitution or forced labor” (Schmidt 2007, 1). The working conditions in parts of the South are viewed with horror by many at the same time that Northern workers complain of their inability to find work. It is these complaints and the perceived (if not actual) ‘race to the bottom’ of working standards as a result of neoliberal transnational economic policies that led to a renewed emphasis for the labour movement.

Trade union contributions include the significance of the labor movement to confer democratic legitimacy on the forum process. In many areas of the South, unions are the result of mass movements that can convey a larger sense of legitimacy for their members than the national governments. Many unions operate through participatory democracy and horizontal organization similar to the values espoused by the WSF. Additionally, Southern workers are often pressured by their Northern counterparts and Northern NGOs to conform to global standards that are perceived as one-sided. This is viewed as an extension of Western imperialism and can lead to resentment: "Lectures from well-heeled Americans about the urgency of reducing carbon dioxide emissions must offend nationals of developing countries enjoying one-twentieth the per-capita consumption of fossil fuels" (Clark 2001, 21). Through involvement with Southern unions, solutions for attaining better working conditions and environmental practices can be developed in tandem with other concerned members of GCS instead of being imposed by international dictate. The struggles of labor are often focused locally and towards domestic governments and business. The network integration with the transnational community that the WSF process offers helps to strengthen the necessary relationship between labor and GCS. Union participation in the permanent process of the WSF provides an important voice emanating from the Global South.

#### Expected Effects on WSF events

The Brazilian labor organizations and labor movements were very influential for the initial successes of the WSF. They provided intellectual, financial, and popular support without reducing the WSF message to its own. The global weakening of many labor movements and

organisations has been negative for the struggle for workers' rights. But it has given rise to many social movements to take the place of the traditional leftist movements. In the WSF, these movements are incorporated into a global network of old and new progressive politics that can coalesce to amplify their message. Labor movements and trade unions can share ideas, garner support from the masses gathered at WSF events, and plan alternative strategies for workers' rights. An effective event can unite global and local strategies for labor and strengthen both the WSF movement and the labor movements. The open space of the WSF also allows for additional voices to promote and support labor strategies that are not emanating from the largest sources. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and large Northern Unions can endorse their labor strategies alongside Southern strategies that incorporate and focus on local conditions. The WSF movement allows unions to coalesce but this could threaten the open space of the WSF. Solidarity among union movements can indeed be powerful, but that solidarity could overpower less unified groups at the WSF. It is a disservice to the global labor movement if the event solidifies Universal notions of labor strategies. The labor movement outside the Forum certainly benefits from unity, but that is separate from an open space Forum. What the labour movement and trade unions add is an independent organizational structure that they utilise. This helps mobilization efforts of other groups involved in the WSF. The existing labour institutions are able to provide funding, and their organizational structure to the network of social movements, NGO's, and other actors during and after WSF events. This contribution of experience and resources can greatly impact the initiatives of others and the overall impact of the event. Therefore, for the WSF to gain most by the contributions of trade union and the labor movement two factors must be

assessed. First, as the overall attendance of union members increases the likelihood for WSF success. This is qualified by the second factor, whereby as diversity among labor movements and trade union members including local representatives increases, the likelihood of Forum success increases. Members and groups in attendance ought to be representative of a large array of diverse ideas and groups within the labor movement to ensure that a powerful few do not dominate the discourse.

#### **Variable 4: Local Civil Society**

The WSF is an opportunity to create harmony of these disparate voices. It is out of the market excesses that destroy the lives of the powerless that civil society acts as a countervailing force to establish alternatives through social movements. Neoliberal practices like structural adjustment programs of the international financial institutions leave a void in the ability of domestic actors to continue to provide social protection. States have often been the primary purveyors of social services but under the economic austerity measures of neoliberalism this task is being shifted to civil society. The need for private actors to provide public goods has strengthened the importance that many NGOs have over the lives of individuals. Their effectiveness in the domestic realm affords legitimacy in other contexts. The authority conferred on them due to market excess (the inability to properly incorporate market externalities) becomes translated into a viable alternative to status quo politics. The ability of social movements to mobilize forces for a specific cause and create mass grassroots participation is what allows transnational non-state actors to challenge neoliberal expansion. The ability of those transnational actors to diffuse information, ideas, and strategies to inter-

state groups and inter-issue movements becomes crucial to creating an alternative globalization. The breadth of actors that make up a country's NGO network is at risk of being too unmanageable and the task thus becomes, once again, to create harmony among the disparate voices.

The WSF provides an arena for a global network of organisations, movements, intellectuals, individual activists, and a whole host of groups that form an emerging GCS. The WSF offers a space for these highly heterogeneous actors to build relationships and mobilise across borders. A WSF event brings together local individuals and organizations and coalesces them with larger global social movements.

*Global social movements* can be defined as cross-border, sustained, and collective social mobilizations on global issues based on permanent and/or occasional groups, networks, and campaigns with a transnational organizational dimension moving from shared values and identities that challenge and protest economic or political power and campaign for change in global issues. (Della Porta 2007., p.31)

These movements are given a geographical space to meet during WSF events where local communities and local civil society are integrated into the network. This integration is important in expanding these movements into wider areas of the Global South and also to infuse the movements with ideas and strategies. A WSF event helps to solidify relationships between global social movement actors but these global events are most effective locally. "They work to highlight local conflicts that make local-global connections and urge member organizations to develop concrete proposals for action" (Tarrow 2006, p.135).<sup>x</sup> There are many determinants on how effective a WSF event is towards aiding the actions of the local civil



society including the levels of media attention before, during , and after an event. The benefit for these actors may depend on their strength prior to any large scale WSF event.

#### Expected Effects on WSF events

The majority of attendees at any WSF gathering are drawn primarily from the local region and from local civil society. WSF events aspire for active participation by local civil society groups otherwise the need for global expansion into other areas of the world would not be logically necessary. If the participants and beneficiaries of the WSF process were globally mobile groups then the event could occur in any location regardless of many of the above discussed variables. By hosting events in the Global South, local groups become involved in a global process and network that often neglects them. The goal of an event is to offer an open space for local and global civil society to interact and to help these groups affect change and mobilize in directions in alignment with the WSF charter principles. The open space of the WSF benefits from a strong presence of local civil society through its infusion of ideas, culture, and support. This is where GROs and NGOs can co-mingle with their global counterparts in a free exchange of ideas and strategies and it is also why it is important for the WSF events to occur in the Global South. The WSF offers a level space for the often unheard voices of the globally underrepresented to listen, learn, and be heard. WSF favorability expectedly increases as engagement with local civil society by GCS increases. The purpose of the WSF to hold events in the Global South is to increase this interaction but there are obstacles that will be discussed in the research. Additionally, as the influence of local civil society and local participants over the event proceedings increases, the likelihood of WSF success increases. There is a balance

between global and local actors that ought to be achieved. The influence of local actors must be of significant impact that new and unique voices contribute to WSF dialogue at the event. Additionally, the local civil society ought to be diverse enough to benefit from the diversity of WSF transnational participants and not reduce proceedings to an overemphasis on local issues. As the influence of local civil society increases the WSF reasserts itself as a unique and inclusionary voice in global politics that is able to promote alternatives to corporate-led globalization. This assumes that the local civil societies in attendance are a positive progressive force that would adhere to the nature of the WSF and promote its minimal political program of planetary citizenship.

### **Sources of Data**

The chosen variables were drawn from the literature on both the WSF process and formation, and also from accounts by attendees and participants. The variables are broad categories that attempt to account for the factors that have the largest impact on Forum success. However, this has led to less emphasis on variables not specifically accounted for. This bias stems from the limitations of the available research and the limitation of space in this study to properly account for all influencing factors. One aspect of these limitations is a result of a lack of focus by WSF organisers and critics on certain areas of social research. Much of the data and theoretical emphasis referenced in this work is from WSF organisers and actors very close to the WSF. Much of the bias in the research comes from the biases of these individuals. This would include an emphasis on the WSF charter which is a document drawn up and

defended by many of the authors subsequently used in this research. The largest omission is in the area of gender equality and women's rights. This is indicated through the lack of equal representation among WSF organisers as well as a lack of emphasis in reporting on the WSF. There are other omissions worthy of a more accurate detailing here, but the variables chosen are chosen as a comprehensive approach to understanding the outcomes of each case study and illustrating the relative success of each.

An additional bias in the research arises from the data and personal accounts produced by attendees and participants. The result of this is the data reflects and confounds the gaps in the data for unrepresented variables. Unequal representation of issues or people at the event would be enhanced by their lack of reporting on the event. An example of this might be the overrepresentation of religious organisations in Nairobi and an underrepresentation of government of trade unions (Reese et.al, 2008, 435). This bias in reporting, while important, does reflect the demographics of the event and the relative importance of certain groups and actors relative to each case. In the case of organisers, the underrepresentation of women is something that is being addressed and Forums after 2007 continue to both reach for gender equality as well as improve the democratic accountability of the Forum. Each Forum event handles these issues of representation differently and the resulting data outputs from the events differ between each case study. These differences and the over or under representation of groups or factors does place limitations on this research. Overall, the information on each of the cases does reflect many of the attitudes and opinions of WSF participants.

### **Chapter 3: Porto Alegre**

Within each of the three case studies, the level of achieved success is going to be greatly impacted by the local conditions and the influence of the four variables. How these variables influence the event outcomes will be investigated within the local context of each case. Porto Alegre is the first of the three cases to be reviewed and it is the most cited example of Forum success. The conditions in Porto Alegre seem to increase the likelihood of success and hint that the political culture and context of Brazil and South America are the ideal locations for Forum events. This Hypothesis is investigated by a close look at how the variables operate and influence the Forum event prior to the event, during the event, and how they affect the outcomes of the event. Each variable will be investigated independently and their impact assessed.

#### **Porto Alegre 2005:**

In 2005 the decision of the World Social Forum<sup>xi</sup> was to once again hold its annual event in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The initial decision in 2001 to hold the Forum in Porto Alegre highlighted the contrast as a counter Forum to the World Economic Forum held in Davos: “One meets in a luxurious ski resort cordoned off by the police; the other gathers in Porto Alegre, a city steeped in grassroots participation in public management” (Grzybowski 2006, p.8). Porto Alegrean civil society is also a product of a continent of resistance to past imperialist and colonial powers. It is situated in a country and land mass whose people have grown disillusioned with the promises of corporate-led globalization and the dismantling of many social programs over the previous

decades. “In South America, what tipped the balance towards successful mass resistance was the antagonism of whole swathes of the middle class whose savings were destroyed by the combination of unstable currencies, recession and unemployment” (Vanaik 2004a, p.254.). This disillusionment with neoliberal actions helped establish the WSF process; conditions in Porto Alegre and Latin America in general have allowed it to continue.

Each event has its own character and this is in part due to the chosen municipality. The largest identifying feature of the municipality of Porto Alegre is its radical implementation of a participatory budget. The proportion of the budget that is constitutionally accessible to public participation is relatively small and is limited to simple choices; it nevertheless is “one of the most cited real-world models of participatory democracy” (Patomaki & Tievanen 2004, p.117). In addition to the much heralded budget program, the city of Porto Alegre and province of Rio Grande do Sul were a stronghold for the Brazilian Worker’s Party the PT (Ibid). The future president of Brazil, ‘Lula’, was leader of the PT and was able to procure a mutually beneficial relationship with the WSF. Ties with the political arm of the Worker’s Party prior to their electoral success helped gain prestige for the WSF, but not without some controversy. This is perhaps the closest tie that the WSF has with a political party, despite its charter principle against it. However, the prestige that followed the PT’s electoral success lifted its public exposure in the eyes of all worker’s movements across Brazil and South America, but also in the eyes of the electorate in general who had so recently been affected by social restructuring led by neoliberal policies. Another world is possible began to gain relevance to the disillusioned masses and this alternative was emanating from the WSF.

Descriptions of the characteristics of Porto Alegre will be detailed below, but it is worth mentioning here the impact of the South American context to the WSF. The other two cases under investigation occur on different continents and are equally influenced by their respective national and regional circumstances. Location matters for the WSF in large part because demography matters. Table 3.1 shows the nationalities of participants in the 2005 event.<sup>xii</sup>

Table 3.1: Participants (59.5% of the total) by geographical location

Continent/National Origin	Number of People	%
Brazil	73,856	80.0
Latin America (without Brazil)	8,083	8.8
Europe	4,154	4.5
USA/Canada	2,376	2.6
Asia	2,266	2.5
Africa	1,474	1.6
Oceania	72	0.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>92,281</b>	<b>100</b>

*Source:* IBASE 2004-5 X-Ray of Participation

These numbers are similar to the regional numbers that were experienced in the other two cases with high levels of attendees from the host nation and surrounding region. This data indicates the importance of location for an event that adopts a method of horizontal networked organization. More detailed demographic information will not be available for all Forum events and is used where available. Obviously, all attendees from a region as diverse as South America (and Brazil in particular) are not going to speak with one voice; but a distinct South American character permeates the 2005 event considering the high levels of regional and national participation.

WSF events held in Porto Alegre are the paradigm for successful gatherings of GCS and are symbolic of participatory governance as well as alternative globalization. The 2005 event

was the fourth such event held in Porto Alegre and benefitted from an educated local civil society with local and global connections that contributed to positive attendance numbers and resource availability. Past events had seen very favourable reactions from participants from the labour movement, local civil society, state representatives, and international attendees. A breakdown of the contributing factors will indicate the significance of their presence or absence. Identifying the state, funding, trade union, and local civil society variables will clarify both how the success of each Forum event is measured and perceived and, hopefully, lead to an understanding of the necessary conditions for success. Importantly, it must be determined if these variables are necessary for a successful event or if the complex interactions of these variables are strong/weak indicators of Forum success. After a closer look at each variable in context, an analysis of their respective impact will follow.

### **1. Role of the State**

Any WSF will benefit if the state is supportive of the event through funding, resource allocation such as public lands and municipal services, and through public recognition of the event. The event does not benefit through too close of an involvement in the decision making process of the WSF or through politicians grandstanding at the event. The Charter of Principles of the World Social Forum makes clear that “representatives of political parties and military organizations are not allowed to take part in the Forum”. Nonetheless, political representatives and parliamentarians endorsing the fundamental principles of this Charter are invited to attend ‘in a personal capacity’.<sup>xiii</sup> This can allow for a closer connection between institutional actors and social movements if so desired, and allows for a promotion of debate concerning reform

versus radical cleavages among anti-capitalist activists.<sup>xiv</sup> This does not necessarily occur but the differences between these groups can often revolve more around method than ideology. Open space methods offers common ground around which diverse opinions may revolve. The WSF offers openness to establishment actors and receives certain benefits in return. There are specialized workshops that allow senators, ministers and other politicians to speak informally before they freely attend other Forum events just as there are workshops that are targeted towards other groups (union members, feminist action groups, etc..). This has led to the “inclusion of elected and government representatives in the broader WSF movement. Moreover, it has facilitated contact between such politicians, trade unions, and NGO activists” (Cassen 2006, p.81). Certain groups and activists have called for a near complete disengagement with the state (Graeber 2009; RUPE 2003), but there seems to be little evidence that this is required and would necessitate a very strict reading of the WSF charter. In an open-space network, eliminating this access to resources and establishment voices potentially narrows political and social options.

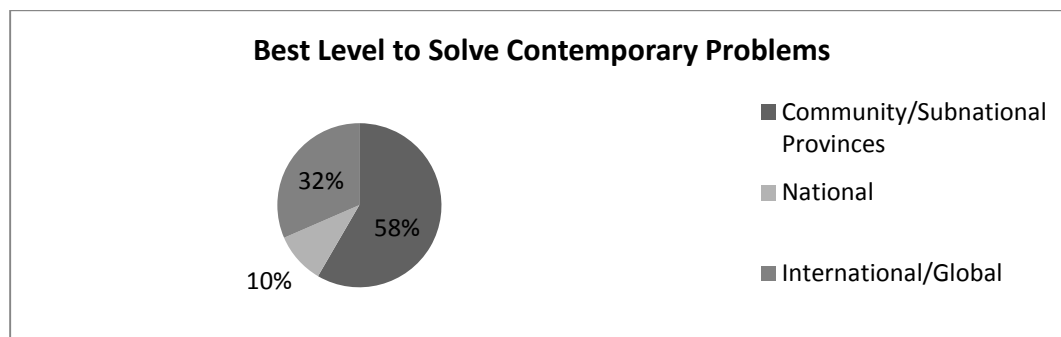
The abhorrence that many activists feel towards governments in general is perhaps not as pronounced in the Brazilian context. It is through citizen mobilization in conjunction with progressive social movements like those involved in the WSF process that have led to an exciting political climate of new possibilities all over South America including Brazil (Brunelle 2009, 272). Success through citizen uprisings and electoral victories have led to a multiplication, extension, and plurality of citizen mobilization that generate heightened views of efficacy towards both social movements as well as national governments:



In the Americas, as we have seen, these changes also played themselves out at the political level and in the political sphere with the result that Latin America is presently, in many instances, ruled by progressive movements that owe their accession to power to the innumerable social mobilizations in the hemisphere. Brunelle 2009, 272.

Indeed, the involvement of government in any capacity would be opposed much more strongly if the groundwork for efficacy through political involvement were not established. This does not mean that there have not been setbacks to this very cursory trend, not the least of which is the abandonment of socialist policies by Lula in Brazil and recent successes by pro-business governments in Chile. In many regions of Brazil the PT has been effective in gaining elected office and working with like-minded social movements like The Movement of the Landless Farm workers (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra - MST). Indeed, among attendees in Porto Alegre the national government is viewed as the least effective level to affect change or solve contemporary problems. Figure 3.1 shows the community level better capable to address problems of global capitalism based on surveys taken at random of attendees at the Forum.

Figure 3.1: Political Views of WSF 2005



Source: Reese et. al. 2008. p.438.

It is unclear from the data if this is caused by a mistrust of the state as a political ally or a growing belief in the effectiveness of 'acting locally'. Either way, these political views are a benefit to the WSF. Participants at the WSF view it as an effective outlet to create meaningful change.

Perceptions of WSF efficacy presumably benefitted from the election of the Worker's Party (PT) following shortly after its involvement with the establishment of the WSF. Its control of the regional government in the province of Rio de Grand Sol and influence in the municipal politics of Porto Alegre was well established prior to the first WSF event. By the WSF meeting in 2005 it controlled the national government of Brazil under Lula but had experienced local and regional defeats. There is little doubt that the PT's relationship with the WSF is mutually beneficial despite the Charters disavowal of political party allegiance. The PT's role in the WSF is thus controversial, but by the 2005 event its role was markedly diminished. One WSF insider notes its limited role:

Contrary to what some other critics argued, I do believe, however, that the PT did not interfere substantially in the choices of the organization, whether as regards thematic areas or invited guests. The WSF became too big and too diverse for the PT to have a significant impact in this regard. Santos 2006a, p.56.

Additionally, an historical look at the PT argues for a party that values democratic participation with strong ties to civil society (Baiocchi 2004). The PT is a major donor of the WSF process (Ibid), but it supports the WSF without seeking to control it and in some ways the WSF mirrors the organizational style of the PT:

Ultimately, the relationship between progressive party and social movement as currently exemplified in the WSF, as well as in PT experiments in governance, may serve as a model for those involved in global justice causes. One of the truly novel

features of the WSF is in fact this relationship; a leftist party involved in governance investing resources and energy to foster autonomous spaces of discussion in which it does not even participate” Baiocchi 2004, p. 212.

As noted above, politicians were able to speak and attend which Brazilian president Lula has done before and after taking office. There is no indication that the president is dictating policy or handcuffing organizers. Other South American leaders like Evo Morales of Bolivia and Hugo Chavez of Venezuela have taken part in Porto Alegre Forums. Reactions to Chavez’ two hour speeches are criticized because of their message for the WSF to take action and move past their theoretical imperative of offering an open space; but, so far the WSF has not conceded to his or any other governmental authority (Santos 2006, p.53). The ability of these ‘superstar’ politicians to attract large crowds and gain the best speaking venues can be problematic. Their potential to grandstand and proselytise their party’s political message is a threat to open space. Certainly they have a right to speak at these events but with limited regulation on open space, theirs becomes the loudest voice out of many.

The WSF in Porto Alegre has opted for a mutually beneficial relationship with national governments of South America. The open-space process of the WSF has led to a lessening of political liability for government officials. With no concrete demands or policy proposal submissions to members of government the established political class is able to voice support for the massive event with negligible political responsibility. Groups and individuals have the opportunity to contact local or national representatives if they desire but do not do so as representatives of the WSF as a body. Government and political parties are reduced to attendees on par with others that adhere to the WSF charter leading to a government presence without special privileges except perhaps in their ability to draw large crowds and media

attention.<sup>xv</sup> The role of the state is substantial within the Porto Alegre forums from national, regional, and local levels. It is not antagonistic and the WSF organizing committee remains relatively autonomous (Baiocchi 2004, 211). Although there is evident distrust of the state in Brazil and the Brazilian government is perceived as imperfect, WSF participants are willing to engage it somewhat to create alternative globalization practices. Thus far this relationship has caused only minor critiques (the most actively discussed being the relationship between political parties like the PT and the WSF) of the Porto Alegre events with considerable benefits considering the next section on WSF funding.

## **2. Funding**

Porto Alegre was chosen in large part because of the successful implementation of a participatory budget led by the PT. This model incorporates the principles of inclusion, diversity, and openness in opposition to predominant free market principles. Participation involves more than a deferring to representatives but instead an activist role for the citizenry. This idea is supported by the WSF as it continually struggle to gain funding without being beholden to its financial supporters and the particular interests of those supporters. The funding needed to host the event that results from the WSF process requires a variety of sources in order to maintain autonomy. The Forum event is going to benefit by increasing and diversifying the sources of the funds and by decreasing the costs required for the events. As the WSF expands internationally it has proven “impossible to find hosting local governments willing to dedicate as much energy and resources to the process as the municipality of Porto Alegre and the state of Rio Grande do Sul” (Patomaki & Teivainen 2004, p.125). This being said, the

2005 WSF event in Porto Alegre occurred after the PT was ousted from power in elections; however, the external support and material resources for the Brazil event had, by now, alternate recourse. New ideas about resource acquisition and allocation built on past forums and the networks that were already in existence. Like the event itself, WSF sponsors of the event expanded in 2005.

The WSF charter implies independence from corporate sponsorship but the definition of what constitutes a corporate enterprise has led to no small amount of controversy.<sup>xvi</sup> For instance, the 2005 event received funding from groups like the Ford Foundation which transparently receives money from large corporations. Because the charter is not explicit about funding, it is left to event organizers as well as those involved with the entire WSF process to determine protocol. Criticism of funding sources has compelled WSF organizers to act more transparently and provide information about sponsors to both the process of the WSF and the particular events. As early as the 2003 Forum a funding committee was established within the IC to help with both the protocol or criteria for each individual event as well as to help fundraise to “make possible the participation of organizations and movements deprived of resources in the activities of the WSF” (Santos 2006a, 102). The Porto Alegre event in 2005 received funding from many sources and did not need to rely on funding that is anathema to its participants. Many groups within the WSF process do object to certain sources and the way in which it reflects on the WSF process:

Marxists, being materialists, would point out that one should look at the *material base* of the forum to grasp its nature. But the organizers of the WSF do not agree. They claim that they can draw funds from imperialist institutions like Ford

Foundation while fighting ‘domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism’. RUPE 2007 (author’s emphasis)

This supply of funds and sources like it are perhaps a necessary evil considering that no visible compromises to WSF principles have been made on behalf of corporate sponsored NGOs (Glassius & Timms 2006, p.231). Table 3.2 shows the breadth of funding sources for the 2005 event but the individual amounts or the conditions for contributions are not available.

Table 3.2: Sponsors of the WSF 2005<sup>xvii</sup>

<b>Governmental Bodies</b>	<b>Brazilian Private Enterprises</b>	<b>Northern Foundations</b>	<b>NGO / Church Organisations</b>
Brasil Governo Federal	Banco de Brasil	Ford Foundation	CCFD
Governo do Rio de Grande do Sol	Infraero, Brazilian Airports	Rockefeller Brothers Fund	Christian Aid
Correios	Electrobras		CAFOD
Furnas	Fundacao Banco do Brasil		Misereor International
Caixa do Brasil	BR Petrobras		Oxfam Netherlands
Município de Porto Alegre			

Source: Glasius & Timms 2006. p. 230.

The information provided by the WSF does not indicate the allocation of the funds or the amounts. Extrapolating from this data is hindered by the lack of specific amounts but it would appear that many sectors are involved. Most of these donors are local which is to be expected. Relative to future Forums, the list is rather short and less diverse, though transparency of funding at the Forum has continued to increase. Beyond the list tabled above, certain groups sponsored the Forum either by donating to a specific aspect of the event (donating water, land, equipment etc...) or to the participants themselves.

However transparent the funding sources are, what is opaque is the overall influence the sponsors acquire. While the charter principles may be left intact, issues surrounding participant invitations and WSF subsidized groups or other areas that the WSF organizers are

directly involved in may be subject to corruption, influence peddling, and to less overt biases. More transparency is ultimately needed to ensure that sought after booths and timeslots for workshops are not being remunerated. Influence within the local context is also controversial. There are many goods and services needed to host an event like the WSF. The decision making process on vender, employee, and volunteer hiring need also be subject to higher levels of transparency. I have found no evidence of overt donor influence other than some extrapolative critiques. The following example concerns possible influence between funding Foundations and the PT:

But it should be taken into account, for example, that in order to get funding from the Ford Foundation, the organisers had to convince the foundation that the Workers Party was not involved in the process. Since autonomy from political parties has been important for the WSF organizers for various other reasons as well, the importance of funding conditionality should not be exaggerated. Tievainen 2003b.

Potentials for collusion or indirect influence certainly exist but so far allegations of corruption or even of some level of co-optation are not widely spread concerning the 2005 event.

Beyond funding *sources*, the overall cost of events and the allocation of resources require political decisions. Volunteer networks are essential and thus far have been available for Porto Alegre. One commentator points out the inherent political project of the WSF simply by removing funding that would ordinarily come from corporate sponsorship: "In fact, the Forum is already becoming more than open space. Its on-site solidarity economy empowers street vendors and cooperatives while banning corporations, in an attempt to regulate an inherently unequal playing field" (Lerner 2006). This redistributive effect may be overstated but does reveal an alternative that is especially significant with its contrast to the underfunded

Mumbai event and visibly corporate sponsored Nairobi Forum. The 2002 event in Porto Alegre saw the state government provide the WSF with US\$1 million, and an additional \$300,000 came from the municipality. These donations were not without political controversy from taxpayers and other government officials concerned about whether or not the WSF warranted their support; but “according to most estimates the thousands of visitors filling local hotels, restaurants and other commercial establishments bring in much more money than what is spent by local authorities” (Teivainen 2002, p.624). Even after the government changed to a less friendly one towards the WSF, funding was still secured through the established networks that had been cultivated through past successes (see Table 3.2 above).

The 2005 event made an attempt to align its provision of services and consumables with the principles of the charter. Their solidarity economy initiatives help participants envision an alternative economy:

...when the principles of solidarity economy are supported, they lead not only to increasingly innovative forms of exchange, production and service provision, but also to a lasting network and infrastructure for maintaining such provision beyond the annual forum. Glassius & Timms 2006, p.233

Solidarity economics is an alternative to both capitalistic and state socialist economics.

It is not however a third way but a *process*:

Instead of putting forward a single vision of economic *organization* (how the economy should be structured); solidarity economics provides a model for economic *organizing* – a process by which we can democratically strengthen and create new kinds of economic relations in our communities. Miller 2004.

This is an historical grassroots practice that incorporates a spirit of openness and diversity and views the economy as more than markets. The human economy includes areas often ignored



by market principles such as household economies and barter systems as well as others. There are many different definitions of solidarity economy often dependant on the historical and geographical conditions in operation. The practices of those involved in the economy strive for more than the capitalist pursuit of financial profit and instead aim to utilize the economy to serve its members and community.<sup>xviii</sup> Initiatives surrounding solidarity economics have prospered in Latin America and have seen a mutually beneficial relationship with the WSF that continues today. Already, in southern Brazil, the town of Santa Maria has hosted a Solidarity Economic Fair for 15 years which promises further integration and learning opportunities for the WSF<sup>xix</sup>. This allows for a greater diversity of participants as well as ideas present at the Forum. More importantly, it is probably the best example of the political effect that the WSF event can have on local civil society. Porto Alegre has the advantage of hosting several WSF events and benefitting from their initiatives on an almost annual basis. The solidarity economy is an alternative to status quo market economics and provides unique funding sources and other resource provision options. At the WSF 2005 gathering the solidarity economy was given a very high profile showing it as a fundamental part of the social forum process in Brazil and “a maximum of goods and services used during the WSF05, including food and paper, will come from the solidarity-based economy or the public sector” (WSSE 2005).

The practice of the solidarity economy within the event in Porto Alegre in the context of a city with a heralded participatory budget is much more than symbolic posturing. The goal is to prove that another world is possible and for many attendees it is being created by their very actions. The ability to attend and participate in this alternative process and economy becomes increasingly important. Moreover, it leaves behind a lasting legacy of participatory politics and

alternative policies. Each event that has taken place in Brazil has strengthened these practices for Brazilians. In addition, the principles of the WSF charter concerning ethical consumption are emphasized and enacted in the lead up to the 2005 WSF:

Partly due to the efforts of a working group on solidarity economy, and partly because of the government support over a number of years, a significant proportion of the goods and services required for the operation of the WSF were produced by more than 1500 workers in 35 solidarity economy initiatives. Glassius & Timms 2006, p.232

Before, during, and after the event the process manifests itself; the local economy is altered, as are the participants. This is clear evidence of the lasting effect a WSF event has had on the local civil society and it also provides a good example of an alternative economy being effective because of WSF support. Conversely, these initiatives reveal how integral the local context is to the success of a Forum. They also show creative alternatives to accounting problems in the run-up to a large expensive event. These local and regional groups are integral to Forum success as are the next group of actors, the trade unions.

### **3. Trade Union Activism**

Initiatives surrounding a solidarity economy need not threaten the strength of the Brazilian trade unions; conversely, in many ways the grassroots economic organizing initiatives can enhance the Brazilian labor movement. The WSF charter promotes a 'diversity of activities' and does not advocate nor oppose the consolidation of union membership. The WSF benefits from both increased diversity as well as increased attendance by trade union members. The charter certainly promotes union involvement in the WSF process but does not adhere to any model of labor organization. In fact, an expansion of available tactics for unions opposing

neoliberal forces can restore much of the vigour and union strength that was lost in Brazil in the 1990's. Diversity of strategy and practice at the Forum puts a focus on expanding a broader network for trade unionists that go beyond top-down recruitment practices.

This suggests that in order to improve Brazilian working conditions increased information sharing occur among members of the workforce that are not necessarily members of large trade unions. A broadened network would increase worker representation and union power: "it is important to revive this objective, which was one of the main issues for trade unionism in the 1980's and which was largely ignored in the defensive phase of the 1990's" (Scherer 2007, p.96). The 1980's saw a strong union movement active in Brazil, but it is now under strain with the advent of globalization and neoliberal policies as is true with many nations of the Global South (Ibid). Porto Alegre and other areas of Brazil have been able to insulate themselves somewhat through the strength of the Partido dos Trabalhadores: the Worker's Party (PT). Another source of strength for Brazilian labour is the Central Unica dos Trabalhadores: the Single Worker's Confederation (CUT). The CUT is a coordinating force for the many trade unions in Brazil whom, along with the political representation of the PT, allow the potential for a strong united voice for labour in Brazil. The WSF events are certainly not dominated by union politics but many attendees are union members (Chase-Dunn et.al. 2007; Reese et.al. 2008, 435). Workshops at WSF events can be a powerful networking tool for union recruitment and the spread of new ideas about labor and the improvement of working conditions.

Proposing alternatives to working class Brazilians and other WSF participants spreads alternative tactics to business stakeholders. Progressive labor strategies are not foreign to Brazil; their continued effectiveness is greatly aided by the network of social movements and the open space created by the WSF. Despite the lack of a specific mandate for labor movement revitalization at the 2005 meeting, there were small and significant indicators of the subject's importance. The 2005 meeting in Porto Alegre did not specify unionization or labor recruitment as a thematic area, but the worker's interest is visible in the content analysis of many of the workshops and conferences of the event. The number of events dedicated specifically to labor at WSF 2005 was 322 or 4.5% of total events which is higher than the 2003 meeting in Porto Alegre that saw only 87 events or workshops (Glasius & Timms 2006, p.211-212. Obviously labor is not taking center stage at the Porto Alegre event but that belies the importance that labor has throughout the political landscape of Brazil.

The involvement of the labor movement within the WSF comes together to form a mutually beneficial relationship with other movements also involved. Peter Waterman declares as fact that the WSF is now the "field, place, site, agora that aggregates and adds value to social protest" (Waterman 2004., pg.241). He claims that this occurs through affinity and dialogue between movements in a non-hierarchical environment where movements gain strength through 'political equivalence'. Through this process, movements may not necessarily align tactics, goals, or ideologies but their involvement on this plain "is an expression of recognition and an act of solidarity" (Ibid). It is substantively different than traditional union institutions though these institutions still play an active role in the future progression of the labor

movement. Table 3.3 represents a general indicator of movement affiliation all of which conspire to create the unique character of the 2005 Forum event<sup>xx</sup>.

Table 3.3: Affiliations of WSF Participants (percent)

Organizational Affiliation	WSF 2005
NGOs	41.3
Labour Unions	21.8
Political Parties	20.6
Social Movement Org.	36.3
Government Agency	03.2
No Affiliations	19.6

Source: Reese et al. 2008., pg. 435

Union member participation in the Forum is a good indicator of local trade union strength but, importantly, the WSF allows the labor movement to cooperate and benefit mutually with other movements. The almost 22% of Porto Alegre respondents that were trade union members is much higher than the average of 12% for the general public. This 12% shrinks further if the general public is widened to all of Brazil and further still for Latin America (Reese et.al., 436). This shows a greater integration of the WSF attendees than the general public with trade unions and an ability of the WSF to attract a large proportion of union members in Porto Alegre. It is also a good indicator of how the WSF helps local participants coalesce with other movements and actors of GCS. It is obvious that union members are relevant to the event in Porto Alegre and their relevance is strengthened by their involvement in the anti-capitalist movement of the WSF. Trade unions are part of a larger social movement(s) that meet and collude at the ‘agora’ of the Forum. Other movements overlap and extend into the traditional space of the labor movement.

**4. Local Civil Society**

The WSF benefits from the local civil society exerting its influence over the five day event and bringing its uniqueness and local character. One of the benefits of this strong influence over the event will be the engagement with their global counterparts and global networks of activists. An increased integration between local and global civil society favours the WSF process and the strength that all involved will be able to gain for their cause. The local civil society that is active in Porto Alegre at the WSF is already very transnationally integrated. There are indeed local initiatives like the land invasions of the MST or the “coops from the Amazon region like Polo Pro Bio that sold lovely leaf shaped hot mats made out of sustainably harvested and processed rubber.”(Kawano 2010). Local indigenous groups host workshops on their cultural concerns and local artists display their wares. The local participants in the WSF become connected to counterparts from all over the world that are engaged in precisely the same anti-capitalist struggle in their home regions. Transnational networks are part of the local civil society in Porto Alegre. Decades long environmental struggles to protect the local rainforests have built up a strong NGO network from across the globe that operates throughout Brazil. The MST are part of the international farming solidarity structure called the Via Campesina that links land distribution issues in Brazil with agrarian struggles all over the world (Bove 2001). This blurring of lines between the local and global (often described as glocal), is what creates a transnational civil society out of the actions of local citizens. In Porto Alegre, the experiences of civil society over the past decades have created an ideal climate for the WSF to gain the political strength and global awareness that lead to its success.

The WSF is a product of GCS; its very existence is indicative of the high level of legitimacy that the people of Brazil feel towards civil society. Certainly, the success of past WSF

events is likely a factor in favourable views toward civil society actions. As an open space and gathering place for social movements, the WSF attracts attendees that are active within transnational civil society networks. Thus, responses from WSF participants should indicate general attitudes towards civil society from within civil society actors; and not to extrapolate from the data too far, these responses should give broad indicators of local civil society attitudes. Table 3.4 investigates the level of involvement in which participants wish to see civil society engaged taken from a random sampling of over 2400 willing respondents attending the event.

Table 3.4: Role of Organized civil Society in relation to Governmental Policies (%)

<b>Role of Organized civil Society in relation to Governmental Policies</b>	Disagrees	Indifferent	Agrees
<b>(1) Organized civil society should take part in formulating policies</b>	3.4	8.5	88.1
<b>(2) Organized civil society should criticize and pressure to change policies</b>	4.2	8.4	87.4
<b>(3) Organized civil society should exercise social control/monitor policies</b>	6.6	13.2	80.2
<b>(4) Organized civil society should carry out social policies</b>	18.1	24.3	57.5
<b>(5) Governmental policies are the full responsibility of the government</b>	58.1	20.7	21.2

Source: Ibase 2005, X-ray pg., 42

The views of the participants show overwhelming support for civil society involvement in governmental policies. There is much more disparity on this question but obviously, respondents view civil society very favourably vis-à-vis higher levels of control by governments. This could indicate high levels of distrust in government, which is likely the case among WSF attendees, and also to the growing influence of groups other than the government in citizen's lives.

Certain groups within civil society are viewed more favourably than others all contributing to the particular make-up of GCS present at the Porto Alegre Social Forum. Each context under investigation will have different groups within civil society that are being rewarded by higher levels of civil society legitimacy. When asked about levels of trust in other features of society respondents were most likely to support social movements and NGOs, two groups that greatly benefit and help to define the WSF process. Table 4.5 also shows a great level of mistrust in the media and in religious institutions which are bodies that elsewhere have much greater legitimacy.

Table 4.5: Degree of Trust in Society (%)

Trust in Relation to Society	Distrusts	Indifferent	Trusts
<b>(1) Social Movements</b>	6.0	23.4	70.6
<b>(2) Non-Governmental Organizations</b>	12.3	29.5	58.3
<b>(3) Academic Institutions</b>	22.5	35.2	42.4
<b>(4) Trade Associations</b>	21.0	41.2	37.8
<b>(5) Trade Unions</b>	27.6	37.5	35.0
<b>(6) Religious Institutions</b>	60.8	22.8	16.4
<b>(7) Media/Press</b>	67.0	21.3	11.7

Source: Ibase 2005, X-Ray., pg. 49.

There is a pronounced majority that trusts social movements in a country and continent with many successful and unsuccessful movements. Combine this with the overall view of favorability for an increased social role for civil society leads to a highly positive climate for an event like the WSF in Porto Alegre. One would expect that those involved in transnational civil society networks would view other civil society actors favourably. This appears to be the case as participants in the WSF process in Porto Alegre strengthen their local and transnational links. Not only does this contribute to the strengthening and political effect of groups involved with



the WSF process but also extends the diversity practiced at the WSF out past the 5 day Forum event onto those groups.

The 2005 event has a high percentage of attendees that have attended previous WSF events (39) which is higher than events elsewhere for the obvious reason that so many events have been previously held in this location. The Porto Alegre Forum is thus able to draw active members of civil society while continuing to attract a wide range of demographics: “The highest share of nonaffiliates was found at Porto Alegre, where youth membership was particularly high and where the WSF had gained the reputation of the “Woodstock” of Brazil” (Reese et al. 2008. Pg.434-5). The youth camp, the *acampamento*, continued its growth to become a substantial percentage of attendees. The youth camp consisted of an estimated 35,000 participants which was seven times more than the turnout for the Mumbai event (Glasius 2006, p.200)<sup>xxi</sup>. This is seen in the demographics of Forum attendees especially in the widely heralded youth camp that saw the ordinarily politically apathetic give hope for a next generation of social movement organizers. The Porto Alegre 2005 event organizers chose to have the youth camp as a central part of the Forum experience. This came after earlier Porto Alegre events situated the youth camp further from the workshops in “far from ideal conditions” (Leite 2005, pg.90). Subsequent events, including the 2005 Forum, highlighted the energy and vibrancy that the international youth camp offered:

There was an impressive change in the forum’s composition: an enormous growth of the Youth Camp and its internationalization demonstrated the global movement’s increasing appeal to the new generation of the political Left that was emerging. Ibid, pg 105.

The growth and internationalization of the Youth Camp is partly indicative of the WSF's ability to attract younger members, but Mumbai and Nairobi's failure to have the same results indicates something about the Brazilian context. The events that have taken place in Porto Alegre have adapted and improved on themselves and have created a learning Forum unique to their context. This ability to learn and adapt is the most important variable that separates the character of the Porto Alegre Forum from other international events.

## **5. WSF05 – Summary**

The 2005 meeting in Porto Alegre had almost 7000 registered groups and 200 000 attendees (Glasius 2006, p.200). Their funding came from a diversity of sources and organizers were able to continue growing their event in size despite electoral defeat of the PT in the municipal and regional elections. Most importantly for the local context of Porto Alegre, when taking a broad view of the 2005 event, is its ability to be more than an annual event. The organizers and attendees have created a WSF process that has characteristics of a learning forum that acknowledges its problems and alters them accordingly. This section will describe some critiques of the Porto Alegre WSF process that have been overcome and that still need to be overcome for future forums. The WSF objectives of democracy and equality led to some changes in scheduling for 2005: "the emphasis within the Forum has shifted and is now more on smaller workshops and seminars where different groups come together to organize sessions on different political themes" (Dowling 2009, p.214). This method strengthened the open space for participants, but it too came under critique. The 2005 Forum departed from earlier gatherings and showed itself to be a learning Forum; its emphasis on 'intense forms of

democratization' may not have been implemented perfectly but were an organizational experiment aligned with alternative globalization priorities (Santos 2006, p.77). Multiple events at the same venue have given Porto Alegre a chance to experiment and evolve with the knowledge that they can still attract large, diverse, and politically charged participants from local and global civil society.

As a learning forum, the WSF underwent large scale structural changes in the organizing of the 2005 event. These grew out of lessons from the four previous annual meetings including valuable lessons from the Mumbai event:

In the first three Forums there was a contradiction, inevitable perhaps but ultimately debilitating if it had continued. Its founders claimed that it would be a self-managed space for the plurality of activities that make up the resistance to neo-liberalism and war. But the reality was a programme dominated by plenaries organized by an increasingly unrepresentative though well-intentioned organizing committee. Wainwright 2005.

The Mumbai meeting initiated a program of reducing these plenaries and in 2005 the official program was eliminated altogether. Instead, opportunities for input were opened and 'terrains' were created so groups that have similarities around particular themes could develop plans for coordinating actions and events. The WSF website and certain facilitators would help in the process and help move toward a more self-managed space. The terrains are a radical experiment that addresses the largest critiques of the Forum process. Within each terrain are a variety of diverse activities from "serious academic debate, roundtable conversation, political organizing and new age spirituality one finds something for everyone's taste of intellectual, emotional and spiritual appetites" (Allahwal & Kiel 2005, pg.409) This separation, thematic and physical, of groups at the 2005 event led to more in-depth discussions and stronger networking

potentialities; the separation however, detracted from attendees moving between thematic areas easily. This organizational method introduced a further element of democratization to the WSF process, though certain groups that fell outside the thematic areas did not equally benefit.

The two loudest critiques of the 2005 forum are not related to the new radical format. The first concerns the 'Manifesto of Porto Alegre' which is a set of principles released by nineteen high profile participants that many saw as an attempt to speak for the WSF as a body. This manifesto is problematic for two reasons: it takes positions for the WSF as a movement by declaring a political program constraining further the WSF's open space. Similarly, it is a top-down approach set forth by a group of leftist intellectuals instead of upholding the grassroots spirit of the WSF. The WSF adeptly handled the situation by stating the 'Manifesto' did not speak on behalf of the Forum, and the resultant discussion may help the Forum's identity in the long run. The second critique is from the youth camp where close to 100 cases were reported of violence against women (Mueller 2005, 275). Campers organized security units for the remainder of the event due to the seriousness of the crimes (Santos 2006, pg 79-80). The latter issue has thankfully not arisen at any subsequent events but debate over the former still continues.

Trying to determine the level of success of the 2005 event may often blend with the political culture of Porto Alegre that has seen global attention because of the WSF. The past successes of the WSF may overshadow the success of the particular event of 2005. That being said, the variables under investigation here, all have high values for this particular event. This

event was able to gain substantial financial support from various government bodies even though some levels of government chose to distance themselves relative to past events. The PT (worker's party) continued to step further back from WSF operations and combined with higher levels of transparency by the WSF is evidence of an ever decreasing role of government involvement. The funding for the event is the most ambiguous relative to how it affected the indicators. Funding did come from large Northern foundations creating controversy over the need for a charter principle on appropriate funding. The event was free, attracting large crowds of youth, peasants, and indigenous groups that were to positively benefit the gathering. The use of a solidarity economy of local farmers and entrepreneurs was not necessarily the most effective way to provide resources for such a large event (Mueller 2005). But, the political effect for the region and for the integration between local and global civil society is perhaps a more important indicator here.

The local trade unions provided great attendance numbers but were not given as central a thematic role as they merited. The terrain system adopted for this event did not have a location for labour movement issues but this allowed union members to coordinate themselves with other social movements important within GCS. One in five participants at the Forum claimed an involvement with a union and perhaps more of a larger should have been given to this group; this indicates the potential for an even greater involvement by labour at the WSF if sought. This lack of focus around labour led to a greater diversity of focus for the event within local civil society. The terrain system led to more opportunity for self organised groups to coordinate with their global counterparts in areas of interest. Local civil society provided great attendance numbers and were certainly a diverse group. They were involved with the event

through self organised activities and the solidarity economy. Their presence and the level of their contribution is evidence of the WSF charter principles in action. The local conditions in Porto Alegre helped create high levels of success at the Forum. All variables positively impacted the event leading to a strengthening of the WSF process in general. It provided a large scale GCS event that was unique and was able to advance the open space movement.

## **Chapter 4: Mumbai**

The second case study in Mumbai, India was not perceived as an unequivocal success and an investigation of the variables will show where the local conditions helped to achieve its levels of relative success. The Mumbai event differed somewhat from Porto Alegre in every variable. This differentiation did sometimes achieve similar results in some cases. The impact of the local conditions is apparent for each variable and helped to create a unique setting for the WSF event. The ability of the event to meet with success despite conditions less favorable than the ones experienced at Porto Alegre speaks to the strength of the WSF process. The results of this Forum strengthened the initiative for continued global expansion of the WSF.

### **Mumbai 2004:**

The World Social Forum began its international expansion in the city of Mumbai in 2004. After the first three large-scale events, the international council desired to reach out to areas that were not as widely represented in Porto Alegre. In Mumbai, the WSF repeated the success of the 2003 event by attracting an estimated 100,000 attendees from organizations and locations all over the world. The new Asian context provided Forum attendees with many similarities to the previous Forums but also greatly contrasted those events. Like Brazil, India is a country with a strengthening economy that Northern nations invest heavily in and many economic indicators show a rise in living standards. This rise in living standards is not equally distributed throughout the population and has led to anti-capitalist and anti-globalisation resistance. For these and other reasons, India has also become home to a wide array of social movements and left-wing political representation as well as a vibrant NGO community.

Symbolically, the two cities could not be further apart. The south Asian region has a very different history and tradition of popular mobilization; Although India is home to many large social movements and groups, often their “political awareness was more limited and sectoral in nature” (Vanaik 2004a, 246). India’s policy progression appears to be expanding toward more economic openness instead of a tightening of national regulation.<sup>xxii</sup> At the local level, Mumbai does not share the same international respect that the previous host of this event enjoyed:

There was an obvious irony in shifting the 2004 World Social Forum from Porto Alegre, home of the participatory budget, to an indifferent Mumbai, the city most starkly symbolizing the impact of neo-liberalism in India. Vanaik 2004b, pg. 53.

Instead of being a symbolic inspiration for global social movements, Mumbai was a symbolic victim and cautionary tale. This was the venue that most needed the attention of the World Social Forum, and in 2004 it would get what it needed.

The organizing committee for the WSF event in Mumbai was starkly different than the one that had heretofore been in charge of Forum activity. By design, the organizing committee for Mumbai did not include the Brazilian organizers in an attempt to create a uniquely Asian event. The IC and WSF Secretariat began their process of greater transparency and accountability by divesting their responsibilities to “a new organising structure consisting of Indian organizations” (Patomaki & Tievainen 2004a, 123). By all accounts this was successful and the atmosphere was distinct and instructive for future forums. The organizing committee for Mumbai insisted on ratcheting up Forum ideals of inclusivity, openness, and diversity:

In marked contrast to Brazil, where eight major organizations organize the WSF, in India over 250 were directly involved in negotiating its character through the Indian General Council. This group eventually mandated a group of 57 to form the India Organizing Committee. Conway 2004, pg.359.



There are many innovations that Mumbai introduced to the Forum process that will be discussed below, but the most important dynamic that differentiated it from earlier events is the higher level involvement of mass people’s movements. This trend would continue, most notably in the acampamento (youth camp) in Brazil, and it offered a more vibrant and energetic atmosphere as an alternative to many of the workshops that centered on the Western dominant discourse:

Unlike the WSF in Brazil, a sizeable majority of participants in Mumbai came as part of mass poor, people’s movements, notably movements of adivasi, or indigenous peoples, and dalits, or “untouchables”. The presence of these movements in such numbers transformed the political culture of the WSF. Ibid.

These groups provided spontaneous cultural events creating a more diverse and dynamic atmosphere and would have a great effect on the local civil society variable.

This political culture has substantially changed the WSF process for the better, and for this contribution alone the international expansion of the WSF seems justified. The energy and diversity aside, an investigation of the variables previously listed will further highlight the successes and failures of WSF 04.

Table 4.1 Statistics of the World Social Forum, 2001-5

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Registered Participants	4702	12,274	27,000	74,126	155,000
Estimated Total Participants	20,000	68,000	100,000	111,000	200,000
Registered Organizations	500	5000	n/a	1,653	6,872
Countries Represented	117	131	123	132	135
Registered Journalists	1,870	3,356	4,094	3,200	6,823
Volunteers	860	400	650	800	3,100
Interpreters	51	n/a	n/a	180	533
Official Languages	n/a	n/a	n/a	13	16
Estimated Youth Camp Participants	2,000	16,000	26,000	5,000	35,000
Total Events	458	718	1,372	1,470	2,157

Source: Glasius & Timms 2006, pg.200.

Table 4.1 shows the large number of participants in WSF 04, consistent with the general growth in the global significance of the WSF. There are, however, some discrepancies. The youth camp in Mumbai was held away from the event much as it was in the 2001 event. This led to much fewer numbers of the next political generation in visible attendance making it less likely that they were as involved relative to previous Forums. Additionally, the smaller number of registered journalists begins to hint at a major failing of the WSF 04. While the political culture within the venue of the event was something new and admired, outside the walls the rest of India was not paying attention. Such a large gathering should have garnered the kind of excitement and attention that the previous Porto Alegre events received, but for many reasons this did not happen. Aspects of the event were successful, but many factors contributed to make the overall process in India lack substance or a sustainable momentum. In Porto Alegre, major social institutions were affected by, and tried to affect, the WSF event during and after the time it convened. The state, labour unions, and local civil society contributed time, energy, and support to the process. The India Organizing Committee was unable to repeat this kind of far reaching success that the process has obtained in Brazil.

### **1. Role of the State**

The contrast between the involvement of Brazilian and Indian governments at their respective WSF events is stark. Favourable conditions for the WSF would see the state involved through funding and other support without direct intervention. There is a different political climate in India relative to the successful social movements of Brazil and Latin America. India had seen a qualitative move to the right in the lead-up to the Forum event. Elections

immediately after the Forum seemed to reverse this trend, but neo-liberal reforms continued as did growing inequality (Vanaik 2004a, 251-253). India is a diverse country with stark differences between regions. Often, political parties from these disparate regions are radically different, thus creating greater tension during coalition building. The neoliberal reforms have a shorter history in India than Latin America and their increase ought to help progressive forces to collectively mobilise in civil society. This should be a boon to a counter-hegemonic Forum and in some ways this has played out. Overall however “mutual suspicions and tensions remain within the social movements and parties, as well as between them” (Vanaik 2004a, 253). Even though a large number of groups were involved in the political process of organizing the Forum they were often distant from the mass movements whose “primary form of political self-expression was in the streets of the WSF” Conway 2004, 359). WSF events would benefit from a greater coordination amongst the Left and more radical forces in India to confront an expanding neoliberal project (Vanaik 2004b, 64). Certainly, the 2004 event moved domestic civil society toward this goal but with certain setbacks.

One of the major obstacles in the way of this process in India is the WSF charter itself. Although, the WSF attempts to create an open-space of diversity, the regional nature of political involvement in India does not work well under this formula. One of the concerns is that “the WSF is not open to ‘all forms of struggle’, referring to the rule, expressed in Article 9 of the Charter of Principles, that military organizations cannot participate in the WSF”<sup>xxiii</sup> (Patomaki & Tievainen 2004b, pg 148-9). This omission of certain groups that operate in India lessened the strength of the left wing voices at the Forum. In Porto Alegre many of the guerrilla groups that do not reject all violence still participated in the Forum as individual attendees

instead of organized groups. In Mumbai, quite a different tactic was used. A counter-Forum known as Mumbai Resistance, which included Leftist communist groups and groups vying for political power, was organized and will be discussed later. The counter-Event to the larger WSF event was insignificant relative to the overall numbers, though, as previously stated, it meant the loss of an important leftist voice for the Event.

In addition to the exclusion of military organizations, Article 9 of the charter does not allow political parties to participate in the Forum. This issue was again avoided in Porto Alegre because of ambivalent attitudes towards the term participate. The PT is demonstrably active in the WSF process as were Communist parties in the Mumbai event. However, neither chose to actively participate in workshops or events either through direct recruitment attempts or overt sponsorship of resources. This scenario seemed to work well in Brazil where Lula could come and speak without the WSF being perceived as co-opted. As the WSF process became more democratic in the 2005 event and onwards, the PT was also able to step away from controlling important aspects of the process. In India, however, the two main communist parties were visibly involved on the Mumbai Organizing Committee though it was decided that they would not be formally inside to sidestep any controversy (ibid, 149). Political parties were not visible at the Mumbai event and this led many to question this rationale:

Indeed, one of the most important issues thrown up by the Mumbai WSF, and by the experience of the World Social Forum in Brazil and in India, is whether it might not be better for parties to participate openly as such instead of informally exercising their substantial influence behind-the-scenes as they now do – whether it is the PT(Workers’ Party) in Brazil of the CPM and CPI (Communist Parties) in India. Vanaik 2004a, pg 253.

There are, of course, myriad problems that allowing political party participation would invoke. Most notably, would be the threat to the open-space method of the WSF. The 'politicization' of the WSF is still being strongly advocated by many, but it is in the Indian context that political party involvement would be more effective relative to Brazil. The diffuse and diverse nature of Indian politics across regions would be aided by a Forum for further integration of leftist politics.

WSF-04 contrasts the Brazil meetings by the indifference of the ruling national government. There will not always be conciliatory national governments that will want a Forum event held in their country. Indeed, the first two events in Porto Alegre occurred under the mandate of a rightist national government. Significantly, the Brazilian state viewed the WSF events as legitimate outlets of social and political participation.<sup>xxiv</sup> In Mumbai, although there was no overt hostility to the event it was largely ignored by the national and regional governments. Little media attention accompanied the event although the amount of participants clearly showed the message was being spread (Vaniak 2004a, 248). Indeed, the political party that makes up the Mumbai municipal government is antithetical to the WSF process. The Shiv Sena has been in and out of power in Mumbai since the mid 1980's and are supporters of the national ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) party. The Shiv Sena are isolationists and militaristic. Along with the BJP are responsible for many violent acts against Indians: in Gujarat state the BJP government allowed a pogrom that saw the killing of 2,000 Muslims by fanatic Hinduists in March 2002 (Leite 2004, Vaniak 2004a, 250). The Mumbai organisers, therefore, did not expect nor want donations from the state.

A major concern surrounding the international move away from the Latin American antagonism towards neoliberalism was the increasing integration of neoliberal policies by the BJP. The Mumbai event was a success for several reasons, but the hostile environment of Vajpayee's India may have affected the long-term effects. The lack of strong alternate globalization movements in general led to a different kind of participant than the ones in Porto Alegre. Hopefully, the lessons learned at WSF-04 will translate into stronger social and political connectivity in Indian society at large. Political parties in India are still torn apart by cleavages surrounding radical and reformist methods. The majority of the population want to see change come from government that will resolve the vast social inequalities that are growing despite indicators of GDP growth. At the same time, communist and parties further left strive for more substantial revolutionary measures.

The growing adherence by the state to neoliberal policies should aid the Indian relevancy of the WSF. Those adversely affected by the negative trends of globalization should welcome this counter hegemonic Forum and most benefit from its proven ability to coordinate GCS. WSF inclusiveness of certain Leftist groups relative to the radical elements in Indian domestic politics led in one instance to "a vicious denunciation of the WSF as an agent of imperialism, of the NGOs in India as a counter-revolutionary force and of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) for having betrayed the revolution while becoming the driving force behind the WSF in Mumbai" (Santos 2006a, 7). Attitudes reflecting the traditional communist rivalries would lead to a counter-forum during the event across the street. This counter-forum is detailed below, but it highlights the tensions between India, new social movements and its traditional ones. The inability to attract attention or support from the government and instead

attract very negative attention from certain political parties of the traditional Left is unfavourable for the WSF in India.

## **2. Funding**

The funding of WSF04 in Mumbai was a very successful attempt to create new levels of financial autonomy. The organizers were able to raise the required amount of funds and did so in a principled way. They made a very political statement by refusing foreign funds from corporations and large foundations. There are two elements regarding foreign funding that need to be separated. First is the cost of hosting the event and providing all necessary resources for the attendees and delegates. The second element, which is the bulk of the cost for the event, is for the participating organizations and attendees transportation, accommodations, and food. Funding for the WSF benefits from a diversification of sources and a reduction of overall costs. One estimate of the total expenditure of the event places the cost at \$29.7 million of which \$26.2 million is the cost of delegate participation. The initial estimate by the India organizing committee to host the event was that \$2.5 million would need to be raised (RUPE 2003). Of the \$2.5 million raised none of it came from donors that did not fit a certain criteria:

The WSF India committee has decided not to accept any money from corporate sponsors and to reject money from "sources that are clearly aligned to forces that promote globalization. Funding agencies that will NOT be approached to fund the WSF in Mumbai include DFID [British government funding agency], USAID, and corporate controlled funding agencies such as Ford and Rockefeller Foundations." Prashad 2004.

The Ford Foundation and other groups like it were still able to contribute to the WSF process which means the funds would go to the international council but the event itself endeavoured

for a higher level of autonomy. Corporate sponsors and funding agencies were able to assert their influence through donations to movements, NGO's and individuals attending the event. This is unavoidable due to the widespread integration that these donor agencies have in Indian and global civil society.

The Mumbai event approached the issue of funding in a new and ambitious way. Before accepting any donations the Mumbai organizing committee went through long deliberation and required consensus among its members:

Our decision to accept donations from any agency was taken after long deliberation and consensus among organising committee members. None of the donors here are MNC-funded. In the case of the Ford Foundation, although they have nothing to do with the Ford Motor Company, we have chosen not to receive funds from them. Simonson 2004, 9.

This is much different then what occurred in Porto Alegre and many previous agencies that donated funds were told that their offers were declined. Even with these measures in place many left wing groups chose to boycott the event:

Despite the decision, however, some critics continue to claim that the WSF is funded by "imperialist sources". People Against Imperialism, an umbrella organisation of Indian groups involved in organising Mumbai Resistance 2004, claim that multinational corporations continue to funnel money for the WSF through other agencies. Simonson 2004, 9.

This claim is certainly valid through the funding of participants at the Forum. While the WSF refused funds for their internal use in organising the event, they had no control over how the self organised activities or individual participants were funded. Notwithstanding these critiques, it is significant that the WSF04 was able to raise all the funds it needed on its own terms.



One reason it was able to accomplish this was that from the beginning organisers believed that the event should be modest and should avoid ostentations. This resulted in an event that cost less than half of what was spent at WSF03 in Porto Alegre (Prashad 2004). There were complaints of less than adequate resources for participants, specifically a great lack of translators, but this unfortunate oversight is not enough to condemn the organisers (Santos 2004a, 74). The budget of the WSF 04 was made up of approximately 60% of foreign funds with the remainder coming from 200 Indian organizations (Simonson 2004, 9). Some of the local funding would be indirectly from government sources but not through direct sponsorship. This is also quite a contrast to the Brazilian context. The principled approach to accepting donations practiced by WSF 04 officials was unique to their context and its level of integrity would not be repeated by any subsequent forums. Even though far less funds were required for this event it is still remarkable that organisers were able to accomplish what they wanted on their own terms. In many ways the Mumbai event excelled at adhering to the spirit of the WSF charter principles. In fact, the challenge that Mumbai presented to the WSF process surrounding funding is one that has been, unfortunately, largely ignored.

### **3. Trade Union Activism**

Mumbai highlights the most egregious elements of unequal globalization. The disparity between the rich and poor is well-documented and is in part due to a weakening of working class organisation. India is synonymous with low working standards and the South Asian region has been part of an ongoing 'race to the bottom' of working conditions in order to attract global financial capital. The WSF open space movement benefits from high participation among

union members from many different organizations and perspectives. There are indicators of a previously vibrant labour movement still active in India. Both a Leninist-type (CPI) and Maoist-type (CPM) communist party still manage to gain limited electoral success. Indeed, the CPM have led a coalition government in the province of Bengal for over thirty years but even when in power these groups have not implemented policies that reverse the damages done to working Indians and has proven to be “little different from any other state in its attempts to attract private capital through low labour costs, subsidized infrastructure and tax concessions” (Vanaik 2004b, pg 61). The CPM has championed many other Leftist policies that make them a good ally of the WSF, but they have shown little success in dealing with modern labour problems. In India an estimated 3 per cent of the labour force is unionized out of a total 340 million workers (Ibid). There are many causes and explanations for this abysmal rate, but labour organizers have faced very uncooperative government agencies in their attempts to revitalize India’s labour movement.

This is most apparent in the city of Mumbai where previous communist parties had so much success following Indian independence. Especially daunting is the control of the regressive and nationalistic Shiv Sena who discriminates against all non-native Mumbai residents’ ability to work in the city (Prashad 2004). Their isolationist policies and the spread of fear of outsiders has caused many of the worst victims of globalization to distrust GCS perspectives. Regional movements are unable to offer assistance to many workers in Mumbai, and organised labour in Mumbai itself is reeling from the massive influxes of foreign capital: “Like New York City, Mumbai’s strong organized working-class was assassinated in the past three decades by Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (FIRE)” (Prashad 2004). The protection of

workers is left up to charitable organisations, NGO's, single issue groups and social movements. The lack of public protection has led to the growth of social movements in general but they have not organised themselves in the same way that has occurred in Brazil.

Perhaps even more important than the weakened position of organised labour is the inability of the Left in India to adapt to a globalising world. Unlike the international and open space methodology of the WSF that grew out of the Brazilian context, India is continuing with its established Leftist traditions:

India is where the old left (still largely unrepentant about its Stalinist and Maoist Legacies and traditions) survives as a substantial force, replete with its own mass fronts of trade unions, women, peasant and student wings. Vanaik 2004b, pg 61

These traditional institutions viewed the WSF as a threat and many of them organised a counter forum event called Mumbai Resistance 2004(MR). Although it only attracted a fraction of the participants that attended the WSF event it is unfortunate that connections could not be made and difficulties could not be resolved between the two groups of organisers. The Mumbai event showed an inability of many left wing groups to accept the open space method and other charter principles of the WSF. MR dedicated itself to organising confrontations with imperialist globalisation and wars and adopts an approach that is more 'action-oriented' versus the 'debate-oriented' WSF. Among its many critiques of the WSF, is the inaction that accompanies the open space method. MR takes a more militant stance and many of its organizers are members of groups advocating action through violent means. These groups view the WSF approach as an attempt to reform the system from within which does not resist but promotes imperialist interests:

MR was proposed as an alternative forum to the WSF because it was felt that the World Social Forum “camouflaged crucial issues, thereby diffusing the struggle against imperialist globalisation, rather than giving a focus to it”. Simonson 2004., pg. 51

In fact, much of the rhetoric coming from MR was directed towards criticising the WSF taking the focus away from attacks on neoliberalism and US imperialism (Vanaik 2004b, pg 61).

The MR Forum was a self organised and spirited counter-forum and although it did not attract huge crowds, it did offer a unique challenge to the WSF’s open space movement. MR was comprised and organised by 26 different organisations from across the globe with approximately 2/3 of these groups coming from India (Simonson 2004, pg 52). MR included a large section of Indian civil society beyond the labor movement but is included in this section because of its ties to the traditional Left of India that saw the proletariat as a privileged actor.<sup>xxv</sup> These groups issued the “Mumbai declaration” which lays out several resolutions for concrete action. The proposals in the declaration concern resistance to global imperialism as well as many domestic conflicts (MR 2004). They do not restrict methods of resistance, i.e. violence, or mention open space in contrast to the WSF charter. MR and some of the Communist parties in operation in India illustrate a much different approach than the WSF process. There is a strong instrumentalist attitude among these left parties that wish to see the Forum more as a political movement and less of an open space. Overall, the counter-forum was unable to attract large numbers but it did detract from the diversity at the WSF event and highlighted the inability of this event to coordinate resistance practices between local activists and GCS. It is not easy to speculate on whether the Forum process will be able to take hold in India to the same level that it has been adopted by the South American Left.

#### 4. Local Civil Society

The fourth WSF event attracted approximately 115,000 people to Mumbai from all over the world but primarily from India and surrounding Asian countries. The large proportion of Indians could not help but offer a unique Forum event. The WSF benefits from the influence of local civil society on the proceedings and by having large numbers of participants drawn from the local context. 91% of registered delegates were from India and neighbouring countries (Jordao 2004). As mentioned above many of the attendees are of the Dalit and Adivasi people's movements but overall the registered delegates constitute a relatively elite group of society. Table 4.2 is a comparison to the previous event in 2003.

Table 4.2 Breakdown of WSF participants (percent)

Categories of Participants	Porto Alegre 2003	Mumbai 2004
Completed undergraduate studies or are graduates	37	63
Affiliated to a political party	37	15.5
Belong to a social movement	64.9	60.4
Youth profile: Age 14-34	62	63
Male/Female rates in attendance	49/51	55/45

Source: Jordao 2004.

This data is slightly skewed because it is a breakdown of registered delegates of which there were 71,000. Other attendees would presumably be local, less educated, and have fewer political and social affiliations. There is still however a disproportionate amount of delegates with post secondary education and there is also a larger percentage of men in attendance. Not to over-emphasize the data, but this gives the demographics of the delegates, not overall attendance, an elitist turn. This made some conclude that there was a different Forum for delegates and for mass movements:

That many more people were marching and celebrating outside speakers venues than were attending the speaking events themselves was new, however. It apparently owed in part to poor translation facilities. If you came from parts of India that didn't leave you fluent in English or Hindi, you were at a loss to understand many talks being given. But I suspect people not attending talks had another reason as well. As with other WSFs most of the presentations were about how bad globalization, capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and caste relations, not to mention Hindu fundamentalism, are. The people parading all day outside the talks knew all this without having to hear it. Albert 2004.

Other accounts of the WSF04 also stress the visibility and importance of the underprivileged classes to the event (Conway 2004; Chaudry 2004). The mass movements participated differently than in past Forums leading to both praise and concern for this phenomenon as should be expected in an open space gathering.

The large numbers of an impoverished class in India has led to a growing presence of NGOs and charitable organizations in operation in India year round. This creates somewhat of a problem for many Indian activists in a way that is downplayed in Brazil. The Porto Alegre events saw much less controversy over funding sources and this may be partly due to the perception by many Indian activists of the role of NGO's in local civil society. Critics of NGO influence in India (and elsewhere) see several mechanisms by which "the extraordinary proliferation of NGOs serves imperialism" (RUPE 2003).<sup>xxvi</sup> It is through NGO accountability to their funders that they are constrained and de-radicalised. This is true everywhere and especially true in India: "Minus foreign and government funding, the entire NGO sector in India would collapse in a day" (RUPE 2003). In India amid continuing austerity measures to social programs as a result of neoliberal policies NGO's have proliferated.

These NGO's are functioning to help Indians in ways that their government is unable or unwilling to do. Although these groups are performing a great service to scores of the

underprivileged, they are foreign and are able to dominate public discourse relative to local poorer charitable organizations. Similar to this point, the Indian political landscape is increasingly influenced by these groups: “Political life itself is increasingly NGOised, that is, bureaucratized and alienated from popular presence and representation” (RUPE 2003). As NGO’s become ever more present in the lives of individuals they can create a barrier between citizen and state. This phenomenon surely occurs in Brazil as well but it does not garner the same level of critique. The introduction of the traditional Left in India to the WSF process is perhaps what brings this salient point to the debate.

The purpose of the move away from Brazil was to locate itself in an area where people have been hurt the most by the unequal effects of globalization. The setting of Mumbai with its hostile government, strong capital interests and unorganised masses led to much fear among organisers. The impetus for the move was to show a sector of society that another world is possible; to accomplish this, the poor and underprivileged would have to attend in a meaningful way and be able to contribute their rarely used voice. Many did attend and bring their unique stories and cultures to the event and helped the WSF justify its location decision:

In 2002, according to the chief Indian organizer, not 200 people in India had even heard of the WSF. In 2004, hundreds of organizations, and more than 100,000 Indians alone attended it, coming from every conceivable social group – at least 30,000 dalits (untouchable), adivasi (tribal peoples), and women everywhere. Furthermore, against all of previous Indian political culture, they represented a wide range of political views, working together. Wallerstein 2004.

One group that exemplifies this ability to use the WSF event to work together were the large number of Pakistani activists in attendance. These activists were able to interact with Indians to discuss the recently begun state-level dialogue process. They organised “free and frank

discussion on Kashmir and put its people, not the Indian and Pakistani states, at the center of the problems resolution” (Bidwai 2004). This is how the WSF process works. It strengthens the connections between people and organizations and in return the WSF itself is strengthened.

One of the more important themes at this particular Forum was the Iraq war and US imperialism (MR 2004; Bidwai 2004). This was the first Forum since the beginning of the war and it is the closest Forum to that area of the world. Outrage over Iraq motivated many activists to become politically involved and was widely discussed across many workshops and seminars throughout the event. The combination of the Iraq war as well as fears of Indian and Pakistani nuclear capabilities gave focus to many of the discussions. Numerous sessions were organised concerning the Israel/Palestine conflict and there was an overall emphasis on war and peace issues and political activism (Bidwai 2004). This sense of historical importance contributed to the uniqueness and overall success of the event.

## **5. WSF04 – Summary**

The Mumbai event offered a focal point for various global and Indian social movements. The WSF grew out of a Brazilian context and thus it was the first time for many local groups to experience the social and political processes in practice at a Forum event. As mentioned above, the traditional left in India presented a major problem to WSF operations and challenged the *raison d’etre* of the WSF. Many groups rejected the notion of an open space method to dealing with unequal globalization and creating alternate globalizations. Other groups did not outright reject the WSF process but were not always sympathetic to how the Brazilian organizing committee liked to operate:



In 2004, when the Forum took place outside Brazil for the first time, in Mumbai, it tended to move back to being all about resistance-to neoliberalism and a host of other things-rather than being focused on alternatives. (This fighting-from-the-bunkers view largely took shape because of the particular ideological make-up and imagination of those who had seized the leadership of the WSF in India). Sen 2009, pg xx

The original organizers did not want to extend a top down approach to the Mumbai event and attempted to create a grassroots mobilization with a wide group of Indian organizations in charge of the process. What resulted was not necessarily as transparent or accountable as expected. The communist parties and the old left political culture were less than welcoming to non-invited people or organizations and, thus, much of the novelty of the WSF was downplayed (Santos 2006, pg 74).

In addition to the Mumbai organising committee's often uninviting demeanour, many attendees of the event felt a level of exclusion. As mentioned earlier, this event had a certain level of elitism, especially within the more intellectually driven workshops and events:

Many participants noted that due to these socio-economic and cultural divisions, there were, in effect, two Fora: one inside the meeting rooms where intellectual debates were held among the elite and another on the streets where informal networking, cultural performances, and marches dominated, with little interaction between the two. Simonson 2004, pg 38

This would be addressed in Porto Alegre where workshops were increasingly self-organized and thematic terrains were created to steer concerned activists into specific areas of interest. The WSF gained much from its first experience away from Porto Alegre but it did disappoint in many ways. The event failed to provide the platform for the various Asian social movements to coalesce around themselves and their foreign guests. There were problems with certain groups

dominating the discourse of the event and, as well, with individuals and groups rejecting the WSF process as a whole (RUPE 2003; Vanaik 2004b, 61).

The WSF's open space movement faced new and tough challenges surrounding the 2004 event. It was unable to achieve positive results for all the indicators of success, but certainly there were some important measure of success. There is also a great potential to improve upon the 2004's outcomes in many key areas. Unless a very favourable government is elected at one or more levels of state it seems unlikely that the WSF would ever find the kind of support that would be optimal for a large GCS gathering. If, however, the diverse network of political parties could cooperate together then the negative impact of this on the 2004 event could be reversed. This coordination did not occur during the event and may have added to its fragmentation which is a poor result. These political parties sought influence among the WSF organisation for the event itself which was previously viewed as a negative contributor to WSF success. Taken in the Indian context however, perhaps party involvement (prohibited in the charter) would benefit the particular case of Mumbai where parties attract large and diverse members. This opens a useful debate for the WSF.

Similarly the principled approach to funding the event is a challenge to the WSF process. Although it did not cause future Forums to copy this great example, the discussion surrounding it does indicate a beneficial political effect within GCS. Trade unions at Mumbai were integral for attendance numbers for local participation, but the traditional focus of these participants fragmented its influence and led to a counter-forum. This, as well, challenged the open space movement of the Forum in a negative way. It narrowed the diversity of ideas at the Forum and

the coordination between local and global civil society. The local civil society that attended the Forum brought great numbers, diverse participants, and formed a completely unique experience for Forum goers. The overall political impact is not as emphasized as Porto Alegre's for a couple of reasons, but perhaps the comparison is unfair for Mumbai's first event. The 'NGOization' of the Forum will detract from the political impact of the mass movements in attendance and perhaps in their global integration. Problems with translation at the event and the privileging of large NGOs reduced local civil society's ability to influence the event. Each variable impacted the event but in different ways than in Porto Alegre. Specifically in the case of event funding, the hypothesis that an overall reduction in event costs is here challenged as funding may have been available (this is unknown) but was not sought impacting the event negatively. If organisers requested a larger budget perhaps some inadequacies of the event could have been handled. The Mumbai event was not as successful as Porto Alegre but it did achieve some level of success and shows the potential for even greater achievement.

## **Chapter 5: Nairobi**

The third case study in Nairobi, Kenya is viewed less favorably than the previous two cases. The local conditions were, again, less favorable than those at Porto Alegre, but in this case it led to some doubt about the future of the WSF in Africa. The impacts of the four variables are investigated here in their particular Nairobi context, but this GCS event may have an impact for the African context in general. Each variable has problematic existing conditions and a close look at each one illustrates how the Forum was positively or negatively affected at the event. Success of the event is multidimensional and many of the critiques of this event highlight important issues, but do not perhaps condemn the event as a whole. The impacts of the local conditions on the event was in many case harmful, but certain elements of the event were a hopeful indicator of the WSF in Kenya and Africa.

### **Nairobi 2007:**

The WSF process was gaining strength all over the world and this strength would now all be focused on Nairobi. The WSF International Committee had gained a great deal of experience from previous global outreach events, and the Nairobi forum promised to utilise this knowledge in support of the WSF's continuing global success. Kenya is an incredibly poor country but one with great potential for future prosperity, located on a continent "where all of globalization's evils are concentrated" (Nanga 2007) - including being excluded from the potential benefits of globalization. The continent of Africa is home to plural and diverse networks of social movements, activists, and cultural groups. Holding the WSF in Africa seemed like a logical way to expand the participatory and plural open space politics of the WSF given the fact that "every

African country has experienced structural adjustment programs in some form at some point” (Van der Wekken 2005, 2). The African Social Forum (ASF) had supported national forums in many areas of the continent and the social forum process was enabling a social network of activist to promote a ‘continent in global resistance’. By bringing its unique political processes to Nairobi, the WSF promised to help these social movements and activists coalesce with movements from all over the world. The success that these processes had in Porto Alegre and South America could translate into renewed resistance to neoliberalism in Nairobi and in Africa.

The lead up to the WSF07 was filled with great expectations for renewed strength in the struggle against neoliberal capitalism. Many of the African social movements look like ‘fledgling infants’ relative to the potent movements of South America that are helping to spread the WSF message across global frontiers (Ngwane 2006). This next Forum edition was to be held in Nairobi, Kenya, but was to encompass African struggles and bring together global attitudes about African presence in geo-political, economic, and social arenas.

After expanding the movement in Asia, it became a logical and necessary step to ‘make a halt’ in Africa. Even though the continent is wracked by social and economic tragedy...African social movements remain the great ‘absentees’ of the anti-globalisation movement. Bonford 2007.

Certainly many areas of African civil society could greatly benefit from the WSF process in their geographical location. For these reasons, and encouraged by the outcomes from the Mumbai WSF, as early as 2005, the IC decided to the WSF would be hosted in Africa (Santos 2006a, 87). Instead of the IC or Secretariat deciding on the details, the African Social Forum (ASF) would determine the host city: “the major coup by Kenya in winning the bid was achieved on the back of international recognition and strong lobbying by some of its leading civil society figures” Van

der Wekken (2005,3)<sup>xxvii</sup>. This quotation was taken from a Nairobi newspaper and presents the decision as a success because of the expected boom in tourism and the associated economic benefits. It also presents the decision making process as a bidding war but it is important to know “that the decision for Kenya to be hosting the WSF 2007 was a decision made in the regional council of the Africa process, which joins 40 representatives from 40 different regions” (Van der Wekken, 4). As early as December 2004 the Kenya Social Forum began its bid for a large-scale WSF event to be held in Kenya. At a special meeting of the ASF council in June of 2005 the decision was finalised and all present agreed that Nairobi would be the venue for WSF07 (Organizing Committee WSF07 2007, pg.9).

The plurality and diversity of social movements across the African continent seems insufficient when faced with the myriad problems facing Africans: human rights violations, levels of corruption, civil war, starvation, pandemics, and social and natural exploitation. There was a risk that the WSF could become one more failed socio-political experiment on a continent that has seen much failure. The Forum was to be held in Nairobi, and to be a success must first be of benefit to local Kenyans as they try to organise and network with the thousands of participants that would be travelling to the Forum. Initial estimates of expected attendance were near 150,000 according to local newspapers (Maina 2007; Mulama 2006). Officially, the WSF marks attendance at approximately 75,000, though most other estimates range from 30,000-50,000 participants or lower (Bujra 2007; Hubert 2007; Manji 2007; Messiah 2007). Certainly, these numbers are much lower than expectations and much lower than previous events, though it should be noted that it was the largest gathering of civil society in Kenyan history; additionally, the country of Kenya is markedly smaller than Brazil and India (Messiah

2007; Organizing Committee WSF07 2007, pg.5; Oloo 2007)<sup>xxviii</sup>. Table 3.1 shows a regional breakdown of the participants in attendance in Nairobi. This data differs in some ways from previous gatherings most significantly by the lower percentage of the local population. The reasons for this will be discussed below but must also be attributed to the less populated region of East Africa.

**Table 1: General Attendance - per region**

	Region	Attendance	Percentage
	Africa (Kenya-among Africans)	43,901 (30,206)	59.08 (68.80)
	Global North	13,662	18.39
	Global South	5,832	7.85
	Did not declare region of origin	10,914	14.69
Total		74,309	100

Source: Organizing Committee WSF07 2007

WSF07 could be viewed as a failure both for its low attendance and the overrepresentation of the Global North<sup>xxix</sup>. In contrast to Mumbai, where the Brazilian organizing committee and the WSF international council were challenged on the future direction and philosophy of the WSF process, the Nairobi event created a more existential crisis for the WSF.

Previous Forum standards for success cannot necessarily be equated with success for African civil society events. The African context meant the factors hypothesized to make Forum success more likely were not strongly present in Nairobi. The conditions in Nairobi, generally, were less propitious for a successful event. If we can lower our expectations on indicators like the attendance numbers and the political effect coming out of an African Forum event, perhaps more emphasis should be placed on indicators like diversity, local participation and Charter

adherence. Table 3.2 shows some of the affiliations and opinions of WSF07 participants relative to WSF05 attendees.

**Table 2 Affiliation of WSF Participants (percent)**

Organizational Affiliations	WSF 2005	WSF 2007
NGOs	41.3	56.2
Labour Unions	21.8	11.6
Political Parties	20.6	06.8
SMOs	36.3	17.4
Government Agency	03.2	01.9
Religious group	n/a	10.7
No Affiliation	15.59	14.9

Source: Reese et.al. 2008., pg.435.

There are some striking differences here concerning the make-up of participants especially the relatively high levels of representation by NGOs in Nairobi. Religious group data is, unfortunately, unavailable for the 2005 event and as we have already seen several of WSF05 donors were Christian charity organisations. However, religious groups in Nairobi would play a much more dominant role at this event as will be discussed in a later section. Nairobi participants were much less likely to be affiliated with unions, political parties and social movements. Overall, the WSF05 participants were much more likely to have some form of affiliation with one or more groups in these categories. As noted in other sections, travel costs require increased funding and are thus usually accompanied by some form of organizational affiliation to help out with costs. This means that the lower numbers of overall affiliations is likely coming from local attendees.<sup>xxx</sup> The lack of affiliations by Kenyan participants is not necessarily going to harm the WSF process. These participants are likely going to create the acquaintances and network links that will enable many to become more involved in African political and civil society.



## 1. Role of the State

Similar to the role of the Indian government in WSF04, there was almost no attempt by the Kenyan government to support or oppose the Nairobi event. The WSF benefits if the host government is willing to support the event without impinging upon its operation. The local, regional, and federal governments had very few resources that could help the organisers and they offered virtually nothing. From the beginning the Kenyan government was receptive to the event being staged in Nairobi due to the potential gains to the tourism industry (Van der Wekken 2005, 2). There was no attempt to discourage the event from taking place, and so, similar to WSF04, organizers were met with relative indifference (Organizing Committee WSF07 2007, 23-25). This indifference, potentially, could have been turned to support except for the political tensions that so often arise between NGOs and African national governments. Foreign funded NGOs are often critical of state governments and many ministers see them as a corrupting force on their citizens. African NGOs take funding from foreign governments and funders but “raise their eyebrows and (shout) ‘autonomy’, ‘sell-out’ if any of their members has close financial or political links with their own governments” (Abdul-Raheem 2007). This is destabilizing over time even if these NGOs are providing necessary social services and providing necessary government oversight. The Kenyan national government is, thus, naturally sceptical of such a large gathering of NGOs and other civil society actors in a way that is less apparent to South American governments.

The Kibaki government was initially viewed as working towards the promotion of social justice bucking the trend of many African regimes when he was democratically elected in 2002.

By the time of the WSF07 event Kenyans were already quite disillusioned despite an improvement to many social programs:

Here we were in Kenya, where the Kibaki government is staggering under accusations of extensive corruption in the highest places and a continuing failure to transform the economy in the interests of its poverty-stricken masses. Bujra 2007.

Kibaki's victory in 2002 had led many in Kenya to hope for democratic governance and the choice of Nairobi for the WSF coincided nicely with an upcoming federal election. That election saw Kibaki retain his mandate but was highly contested with allegations of voter fraud and was followed by riots and ethnic violence. In the realm of electoral politics, it would appear that WSF07 had little or no positive impact. The insidious corruption that is often synonymous with African politics extended to the organisers of WSF07. While the government provided no official funds to the event (Organizing Committee WSF07 2007, 24-25), the brokering of deals for the commercialization of the event was allegedly influenced by individual government officials. In one instance, a restaurant was overrun by activists due to its exorbitant prices in its prominent location at the main food stand. The ownership of the restaurant was exposed as that of a government minister who ensured other food outlets were hidden from sight (Bujra 2007). WSF07 was to be an opportunity for social movements to promote their attitudes and methods relative to existing rent-seeking behaviour and the isolationist and ethnic politics of the region. These regressive fears and past political violence<sup>xxxi</sup> led to another negative government involvement in the Nairobi event. The security presence at the Moi sports complex, where the event was held, was based on the initial expected estimates of 150,000 participants. This gross exaggeration combined with an historically repressive government led

to an unprecedented securitization of the event. It was the organisers of the event that asked the Kenyan government to provide the necessary security for the event.

Almost at every briefing and debriefing meeting, the WSF 2007 Organizing Committee was invariably challenged to give an account of the extent to which security arrangements had been made to address the safety need of the participants. Organizing Committee WSF07 2007, pg.53

Certainly, security was important to participants but this emphasis on security led to a heavy presence of national security forces at the event. There were complaints of pick-pocketing, stealing, and other minor offenses but overall the security did its job.<sup>xxxii</sup> The long-term effects, though, are the perception of the militarization of the event which is not in keeping with the WSF charter. A balance must be maintained between the safety of participants and their relative freedom. A heavy police presence is not favourable to the open space process that wishes to eliminate social restrictions and promote civil rights in whatever form that may take. This is an ongoing challenge for all WSF events to find a balance between security and a safe open space.

Similar to participants in Porto Alegre, the majority of Nairobi attendees do not favour a large state presence at the event. Overall, the political views and attitudes of participants differ in many ways from those attending WSF05; they converge on their feelings on the best level to solve contemporary problems. Table 5.1 shows some of the political views of the two events.

Table 5.1: Political Views of WSF Participants (percent)

	WSF 2005	WSF 2007
<i>Best Level to Solve Contemporary Problems</i>		
Community / Sub-national Provinces	58.5	50.5
National	10.1	09.8
International / Global	31.5	39.8
<i>Views on Establishing Democratic World Government</i>		

Good idea, and it's possible	25.0	46.8
Good idea, but it's not possible	39.4	38.4
Bad idea	35.6	14.8

*Source: Reese et.al. 2008., pg.438.*

Once again, the community level is viewed as the best level to address concerns of global capitalism. This is the case for most surveys of social forum attendees (Della Porta 2007; IBASE 2005). The global level is less than the local one but both are viewed as more effective than the state level among social forum participants. Concerning the global level, questions asked about a democratic world government did differ between the two events. Over 85 percent of Nairobi participants though it was a good idea compared to 64.4 percent in Porto Alegre. These numbers are higher in both cases than the general public in Latin America and Africa respectively, but this support for world government indicates a further lack of faith in national efforts:

Support for a democratic world government was greatest in the Nairobi sample...perhaps because domestic opportunities for activists to influence policies are more closed within Kenya and other African countries than in Brazil..., either because of greater repression or insufficient revenue. Reese et.al. 2008, pg.439.

Likely, these attitudes would be even further imbalanced away from state efficacy following the vicious political battles surrounding the 2007 federal elections. Despite these attitudes, the WSF07 organizers could have used the support of their government to combat some of the larger problems they faced. "In the case of Africa, it was learnt that it is necessary to push the progressive members of parliament and local governments to engage, in their own way, with the WSF process" (Organizing Committee WSF07 2007, pg.58). The discussion above shows that the state did not provide much support at the same time as elements of the state (corrupt officials)

intervened too much. The role of the state at WSF07 negatively affected all of the indicators of Forum success.

## **2. Funding**

Funding for a large civil society event may never be easy, but in Kenya one would suspect that few resources would be available locally. The WSF benefits if it is able to diversify its funding and, in addition, it benefits if it can reduce its needed costs. The most obvious failings of organisers will be highlighted here, but overall the important lessons from WSF07 are the several breaks with the WSF charter. Charter principles 4 and 11 state their opposition to global capitalism and may not explicitly proscribe corporate sponsorship they do condemn the promotion of the capital interests of multinational corporations and their form of globalization.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Those involved with the Nairobi OC also point out the top-down structuring of organizers of the event:

...the working environment at the Nairobi-based WSF 2007 Secretariat is the very antithesis of the WSF concept of an open space. Authoritarian decisions are made, often without consultation, by people who insist on imperiously chairing every single meeting-a far cry from the rotating chairs I was accustomed to. Oloo 2007

These comments reflect the feelings of other observers that saw the running of all of the Forum's activities handed over to private companies instead of relying on the energy of Kenya's social movements (Bujra 2007; Raheem 2007). This meant that the provision of services including transportation, accommodations, food, translation, and others were all run along commercial lines. The groups involved with the WSF were limited in how they could contribute as everything had to be either rented or bought (Bonford 2007). This is a far cry from the solidarity economy initiatives of Porto Alegre and even Mumbai.

Other Forum events focused a lot of attention on ensuring the involvement of the local community most noticeably through the creation of a solidarity fund. This fund promoted African participation and has helped to integrate the WSF process before, during, and after the event itself. Due to budgetary constraints, the solidarity fund for WSF07 was eliminated leading to less African participation (Organizing Committee WSF07 2007, pg.25). Perhaps the most appalling result of the financial crunch was the heightened costs of activities involved with the event. This was due to an inability to properly fundraise, a quixotic idea of the event's appeal, and lack of understanding of the Kenyan condition:

This forum was marked by delusions of grandeur: the organisers believed it was possible to attract 100,000 persons...while fixing prohibitive entry rates: 500 shillings (£6), the sum demanded from Kenyans was equal to a week's minimum wage...Such a decision implies a complete loss of contact with the living conditions of the majority of the Kenyan population or a lack of real concern with the participation of that population. Hubert 2007.

Protests were staged to gain entry for those who could not afford the entry fee and eventually security relented. Another problem was the overall commercialization of the event. This resulted in both limited involvement of local social movements and prevented local Kenyans from selling their wares or affording the food, water, and transportation to the event. The food at the event was three or four times the cost of normal domestic prices (Bonford 2007; Leon & Burch 2009, pg.300-1). Kenyans did not have the opportunity to benefit from the increase in visitors and money to the region, the event itself, or the opportunities to strengthen solidarity economy initiatives after the event. Instead, corporations were the beneficiaries of this anti-capitalist gathering.

Transnational corporations (TNCs) have played a role in funding every WSF Forum. In Porto Alegre it was through Foundations and participant sponsorship. In Mumbai it was restricted as foundations were no longer permitted to sponsor the WSF directly. These restrictions were severely relaxed in the case of Nairobi. The most high-profile corporate sponsorship deal of WSF07 was the deal signed to garner monopoly rights for phone calls to and from the Forum. The multi-national Celtel telecommunications company won the bid to be the communications facilitator for WSF07. They signed a 15 million Shilling deal in which they would provide 100,000 sim cards to participants of the event (Maina 2007). They were actively involved in advertising prior and during the event as were other commercial enterprises. The Windsor Golf and Country Club secured a strategic location and was able to lock out several community-based vendors as a result of influence peddling (Oloo 2007). The Norfolk hotel was also noticeably present at the event and these last two businesses have ties to wealthy investors and the Kenyan government. The Windsor Golf and Country Club was raided by poor people from the slums during the course of the event in protest of their staggering prices as an act of civil disobedience (Ibid). These examples illustrate the obstacles faced by local civil society to fully integrate into the WSF open space movement and create a unique and lasting political space in Nairobi.

Besides the corporate sponsorship of certain aspects of the event, the sources of funding for WSF07 raise other questions. No funding was secured from local, regional, or federal Kenyan governments. Less than half of the budgetary requirements were met and, of these funds, most of them came very late (Organizing Committee WSF07 2007, pg.25). The organisers knew well in advance that the event would require a large amount of funds and,

unlike Mumbai, they did not operate under strict criteria concerning the sources of funding. Some of the most critical decisions surrounding the event show a lack of understanding of the reality of the balance sheet. This event was incredibly expensive relative to previous events. Even if the full estimate of participants arrived it is hard to imagine WSF07 meeting its budget. This event cost nearly three times that of the Mumbai event. At almost 7 million USD for the total budget only US\$3,187,037 or 46.59% was realized leaving unaccounted a majority of the expenses. The WSF07 net result was a substantial deficit of 110,000 Kenyan Shillings (Ibid)<sup>xxxiv</sup>. The event should have been able to operate with a much smaller budget which would require far less dependence on corporate sponsorship and exorbitant event pricing.

### **3. Trade Union Activism**

One of the lasting impressions of WSF07 for many participants was the tone of moderation that was taken. Consistent with their decision to allow corporate sponsorship, the NGO community and the organizers of the event created an atmosphere that emphasized moderate reform as the path to combat the negatives of globalization. The WSF benefits if the members of the trade union and labour movement are both numerous and also if they are diversified. Smaller, poorer groups had less influence over procedures relative to large international NGOs. Radical proposals of alter-globalization were not as pronounced as at other events and “those pretending to give capitalism a human face dominated over the more radical and alternative voices” (Bonfond 2007). This, combined with the inability of Kenya’s poor to attend meant this version of the WSF becomes noticeably more hierarchically



organized. This is not the case for everyone involved; some viewed the Nairobi event as monumental for the African labour movement:

One of the Forum's successes was the strong trade-union presence. Nearly fifty African trade unions actively participated in the Forum. The Nairobi Forum saw the very first public appearance at the continental level for the African trade-union movement. Messiah 2007.

A weakened traditional labour movement in Africa may actually play to the WSF's strengths as new ideas about labour movements are allowed to flourish.

There is evidence that many grassroots labour groups attended and benefitted from the Forum, but there is also concern about a top-down approach to labour organization being promoted. There was much debate trying to get the phrase "right to decent work" included in the major principles for the event (Oloo 2006). The capitalized Decent Work (DW) is a specific ILO campaign that incorporates the involvement of the International Financial Institutions (IFI) as well as multi-national corporations and state governments. Thus, many WSF veterans see the DW campaign as collusion with the promoters of economic globalization. The promotion of DW could have great benefit to the heavily exploited workers in many areas of Africa especially where "an inter/national labour movement (is) lacking an ideology or strategy of its own" (Waterman 2007). If DW comes to dominate the discourse within the WSF then:

...this must be understood as also the responsibility of the Assembly of Social Movements and of other labour movement activists (including myself), for having themselves failed to struggle for an emancipator discourse on work and a broad appeal to labouring people globally. Ibid.

Nairobi, in general, marks a rightward evolution of the WSF and this is expressed both through the reformist language of the WSF07 organising committee as well as through the opinions of representatives of organised labour and others attending the WSF.

Relative to Brazil, union density is about half the level in Kenya. Brazil is also home to a more radical and activist base for labour movements to draw from: “The reformist orientation found among Kenyans could reflect the moderating influence of Western and government control of the Kenyan labour movement...”(Kwon et.al. 2008, p.425). Table 5.2 shows some political characteristics of Labour representatives from Brazil and Kenya. These are from a representative sample of over 1000 WSF participants at different venues at the event and in multiple languages.

Table 5.2: Political Characteristics of Organized Labour Representatives from Brazil and Kenya

	Brazil 2005	Kenya 2007
Protests in Last 12 Months		
None	18.1	42.9
One	20.9	06.8
2-4	34.3	29.2
5 or more	26.6	21.1
Reform or Abolish Capitalism		
Reform it	35.6	61.9
Abolish it	64.4	38.1
What should be done with the IMF/WTO		
Reform	09.9	68.4
Abolish/Replace	90.1	19.1
World Government is a good or bad idea		
Bad idea	34.8	04.6
Good idea	65.2	95.5

*Source: Kwon et.al. 2008., p.424*

There is considerable divergence between the two groups as they show a difference in attitudes towards global conditions. The relative weakness of a national labour movement in Kenya certainly helps to explain their advocacy for global partnerships in the struggle. These

responses also indicate a much less radical viewpoint for Kenyan labour representatives. This may indicate a further move away from the radical factions within the WSF in general or may be specific to the Nairobi venue (Hubert 2007).

Either way, the WSF event in Nairobi is an opportunity for a strengthening of the labour movement and expansion of the labour discourse in East Africa. The WSF's ability to 'minimize what divides and maximize what unites' within these movements should help the grassroots labour movements enter an African labour discourse that is currently dominated by DW proposals. Firstly, the networking capacity that accompanies WSF events can help with the coordination of various labour movements:

Nairobi should at least provide an opportunity for both the traditional unions, alternative labour movements and pro-labour groups, to strategise, preferably together, for the kind of recognition that – thanks to feminist mobilization – women have already achieved. Waterman 2007.

This certainly did occur to some extent though perhaps not as much as was hoped for, or at the same levels at other forums (Ibid). Secondly, this coordination can then spread the links beyond labour representatives to the other gathered social movements (Leon & Burch 2009., p.288). Labour is a key social movement for the coordination of other social movements even in areas, like East Africa, where it is not as strong a presence as is needed. Developing relationships with trade unions during WSF07 is a positive way to incorporate the Kenyan local civil society into GCS. Certain ideas were promoted over others at this event but the gathering was an opportunity for the labour movement to be exposed to new ideas and share their strategies and triumphs.

#### 4. Local Civil Society

A strong, well-connected labour movement could have allowed local civil society organizations and social movements to meet the influential NGOs that dominated WSF07 on an equal footing. Instead, international NGOs were able to direct much of the discourse in Nairobi which led to a rightward progression of the Forum event. For many in attendance, the Forum was less of a radical political experiment and open space, and more of an NGO fair (Manji 2007). The WSF open space movement will be most benefited by a local civil society that can exert its unique influence over the event and energize all in attendance. The event, constructively, discussed many important and diverse problems but it did so with a discourse that diverged very little from past NGO conferences. This perception by the local media that the WSF07 was similar to past conferences was strengthened by the lower than expected turnout from local and regional Africans (Mushtaq 2007). Among the Kenyans and diverse local community groups in attendance, it was the large, well-funded NGOs that had the places of prominence during the five day event:

...to describe only the diversity would be to miss the real, and perhaps more disturbing, picture. The problem was that not everyone was equally represented. Not everyone had equal voices. This event had all the features of a trade fair – those with greater wealth had more events in the calendar, larger (and more comfortable) spaces, more propaganda –and therefore a larger voice. Manji 2007.

WSF07, as NGO fair, has serious consequences for the more radical elements involved in the WSF process as detailed above.

More importantly for the political culture of Africa is the lack of inclusivity that the event enjoyed in Mumbai and Porto Alegre. This is not a dichotomous relationship where either local

social movements are the winners or it is the large NGOs. These groups should mutually benefit from WSF events and many did in Nairobi. The benefit may not be as distinguishable as it was in Porto Alegre where the social movements were strong enough to infuse their important voice into the discourse:

Still, the big Brazilian and Latin American left, strengthened by the mass struggles of the recent period, have continued to have a major impact on the WSF. By Contrast, the organized left and social movements in Africa are quite weak. As a result, the NGOs had a dominant role in Nairobi, which was magnified by the problems of poverty and underdevelopment in Africa. Sustar 2007.

Many accounts of the WSF07 showed a real excitement for the local civil society and social movements that were in attendance (Warschawski 2007, Sustar 2007). Unfortunately, that excitement did not reach its potential or the levels of expectation and the “Forum failed to capture the imagination or attention of Nairobi’s poor people who should have been the natural constituency of the ant-globalization activists” (Mushtaq 2007). This ‘failure’ speaks to all of the success indicators used in this research. The low participation by local civil society resulted in lower diversity of ideas and viewpoints, overall attendance, the hope for a lasting political effect and allowed for more powerful actors to prevent poorer voices from participating equally. One of these groups that had a more noticeable influence and a high profile presence in Nairobi were the Christian churches including reactionary Christian groups (Nanga 2009, p.289). The lack of diversity among the churches represented is not indicative of the variety of religious groups that are active in Nairobi or East Africa. Along the ‘main avenue’ of the Forum these Christian churches shared the spotlight with development organizations, international institutions and some NGOS (Leon & Burch 2009, p.294). These high profile

groups were able to utilise influence to dominate the Forum while other actors were limited in their level of involvement.

The WSF, no matter where it is held, is always able to attract people that enliven the event and rise above the specific problems that occur and this event was no exception. Two specific occurrences stand out making this event momentous in the face of defeat. First is the alternative forum held by a local organization called the 'people's parliament'. This group reacted to certain exclusionary practices and Nicola Bullard, of the WSF international council, describes this very positive attribute of the WSF07 thus:

On the 'marvellous' side there were the people and the fact that we did not accept the situation. We protested...the People's Parliament held a three-day 'alternative' forum at a park in downtown Nairobi. This is something that I loved about this forum: the spirit of resistance, the spirit of protest and the fact that people did not accept that 'their' forum was being taken away from them. Sustar 2007.

The alternative Forum was in reaction to the faults of the main Nairobi event and helped many experience what the WSF process can accomplish other than being a WSF trade fair. It welcomed thousands of participants and was a down to earth, democratic and grounded event (Bonford 2007). The second meaningful process of the Nairobi event was the Social Movements Assembly (SMA). The SMA came out of the meetings in Nairobi and it undertook a different mandate than the WSF. It is an independent parallel structure of social movements that grew out of the WSF process but that do not have the same political limitations (Warschawski 2007).

The SMA is an action-oriented coalition with international coordination that:

can take practical decisions and organize campaigns, days of actions and mass initiatives. Moreover: in the SMA, the relative weight of the Social Movements, compared to the weight of NGOs, is more important, and thus gives it great possibilities of mass mobilizations. Warschawski 2007.

This is an interesting political experiment growing out of the WSF process, and one that may continue to flourish in African civil society and within the WSF itself. The SMA developed in reaction to inadequacies of the WSF07 and also because of the importance that the WSF process puts on remaining an open-space. The SMA's ability to mobilize social movements around specific thematic areas is an exciting prospect. The structure of the SMA will require more improvement and the direction of the organization is not yet certain (Warschawski 2007). There are positive aspects of the Nairobi event that suggest the WSF should continue its presence through actual events in Africa. Certainly, Africa is the least represented continent in Forums held anywhere else in the world.<sup>xxxv</sup> The overall picture coming out of WSF07 leads to many questions about the WSF's future in Africa.

## **5. WSF07 - Summary**

Critiques of the Nairobi event should not overlook the novelty of the gathering and the important step taken for many social movement organizations. The impetus for the WSF is whether this novelty can be turned into a process for Africans. Is there a future for the WSF process in Nairobi, or anywhere on the continent, or was this, instead, a damaging political experiment. The fact remains that there were scores of problems, inadequacies, and misconduct surrounding the event. However, this first step in establishing a strong foothold in Africa for the WSF process may still have merit. It is unwise for WSF Organizing committee and International Council members to remain content with the knowledge that the event merely 'happened'. Without results that promote the meaningful process and social presence of the WSF itself in global affairs the way forward becomes steeply inclined. The theme of 'People's Struggle, People's Alternative' was chosen by the Nairobi OC for the actions of groups intending

to participate. Many of the choices made by them ended up affecting the event negatively and thus the individuals involved in event decisions were criticized along with other variables (Oloo 2007). The OC as brokerage of contracts for multinational corporations and international NGOs involved with the event led to little investment in any form of solidarity economy; lack of Kenyan participation in the event left the majority of the local population untouched. The interest with Africa's poverty and their slums was a local attraction instead of the reason for hosting this African event:

Processions to and from the slums were a tasteless addition to the WSF menu. The poor people of the world are not for display, not even to the sympathetic multitudes that attend the WSF. Poverty should not be a fascinating event within the WSF...WSF should actively include poor people in its program or stay away from their homes rather than march in fascination to slums. CADTM 2007.

-The attitude of many involved with the WSF07 neglected the long term benefits that can be attained through hosting this event. The imperative must go beyond organising a five day event and focus on creating alter-globalisations that benefit the local and global community.

Nairobi did, however, contribute to the WSF process in certain of its innovations at the event. These innovations created a character for the Forum opposed to the one dominated by NGOs, religious groups, commercialization, and militarization of the event that has been prominent in the post event analysis. The first was the emphasis given to an international coordination of groups involved in the organising process. The Secretariat of the Nairobi OC was formed from a diverse global constituency to gain attention and promote openness surrounding the event. This, unfortunately, led to an underrepresentation of the local community, but was able to attract the most globally diverse forum to date. This diversity included a large representation from every continent. Its failing was to take for granted the



event's attraction to the local community. If the local participation was on par with events in other areas of the world the Nairobi innovations would be much more remarkable.

Another innovation by WSF07 organizers, and the one most likely to be duplicated, is the 4<sup>th</sup> day of proposals for action and campaigns. Again, this policy did not attain its maximum potential due to mismanagement, but the concept excited social movements that were looking for concrete results from the event: "The idea behind the innovation was to enrich the WSF format by introducing a day in which all organizations that are keen to present proposals for actions, campaigns and struggles would make them visible during the fourth day" (Organizing Committee WSF07 2007, pg.11). This policy, combined with the achievements of the Social Movements Assembly (SMA) left many hopeful of a new political dynamic within the WSF. The proposals on the 4<sup>th</sup> day and the proposals by the SMA are an organic and complementary tactic to the WSF open space and movement strategies. Both these initiatives are outlets for participants in the WSF to become involved as part of a movement strategy. These initiatives have been discussed and given attention in the open space of the Forum are an illustration of the complementary strategies of the open space method and the actions of movements. The WSF07 did not have the desired results that many had hoped for and it did not inspire the alter-globalization movement the way previous events had. It did, however, give an opportunity for many Africans to meet new friends, explore new ideas, 'to laugh and to dance':

It was perhaps the most impressive gathering of leftist organizations ever to have convened at one place in Africa. It provided, especially to the African participants, an unprecedented opportunity to 'strengthen and create new national and international links among organizations and movements' CADTM 2007.

The spirit of the WSF process was present in Nairobi and was able to inform many Africans that 'Another world is possible'.

As an isolated event, the WSF in Nairobi successfully attracted a record number of participants to an African GCS event. It occurred without violence and involved a diverse array of nationalities and social movements. State involvement was not only indifferent to the funding crisis of the event, but members of government were subject to allegations of corruption or at least unethical influence. They did provide security and did not repress the participants or the event in any real way. It is probably not realistic to think that this event could dramatically affect the subsequent elections, but the corruption and ethnic violence that followed does not reflect well on the WSF's future in Kenya. The overt corporate sponsorship and privatisation of services is a direct challenge to the WSF principles. Exorbitant prices to enter and for provisions prevented higher attendance of local populations. The overall cost of the event and the inability to raise even close to the cost of the event belies some structural problems with the process. Beyond these two variables the outlook gets slightly better.

Trade unions were able to attract decent numbers given the relative weakness of the labour movement in Kenya. Although the discourse was somewhat dominated by DW discussions, the labour movement showed signs of coalescing with the global community in attendance. There may be a lack of diversity among the movement but the political effect could start to gain momentum if given the opportunity at similar local and global events. Fees prevented larger crowds of local civil society but the fees also generated a moment of participatory politics at the 'people's parliament'. The SMA is a development that is gaining

strength at the WSF after the Nairobi event and has helped critics of the WSF charter to see it as an action-oriented group that operates in tandem with the Forum. The political effect of local civil society was hindered by the presence of powerful NGOs and church organizations but they were still able to create a unique Forum experience. Less successful than previous Forums, Nairobi still offers some potential for the future of the WSF in East Africa.

## Conclusion

From a wide enough perspective, all three events could be considered a success. They all attracted scores of attendees, groups, donors, and attention. Participants were exposed to new ideas, new methods, and new challenges for the future of GCS. The transnational network of activists is certainly better off after each event and WSF organisers are in no hurry to discontinue Forum events. What is outlined above are some of the key variables that contributed to the overall outcomes of each event. What began as a counter forum of resistance to hegemonic globalising forces has become a locus of alterglobalizations. The WSF not only “reflect(s) the global character of the fight against capitalist globalization” (Leite 2005, 97) but is an emergent form of political practice. The combined efforts and actions of participants have created a network of transnational practices and principles that have helped constitute GCS. The WSF is a movement that uses a method of open space politics and one that is repeatedly trying to move towards a more open space along the open space / movement continuum. This emergence of the WSF open space movement takes place during the ten day events and gets dispersed globally during the interim. Where the event takes place is of import as can be seen through the different dynamics at play for the different events. The WSF does have an identity, but each event is unique enough to contribute lasting effects on local and global participants. The uniqueness and differentiations of each event impacted the relative successes of each event. The prevailing local conditions greatly influenced Forum outcomes and this shows through how each variable operates in context. Relative to each case, comparing the variable’s impacts illustrates the method for assessing levels of Forum success.

## Role of the State

I proposed that the state would increase the likelihood of successful outcomes if it showed material support through funding and resources but kept its distance from organisers and decision making. This is certainly the case for Porto Alegre where the PT who were instrumental in forming the WSF were able to remove themselves and fulfill their promise once they met with success. Even after the PT lost power regionally, the WSF could still count on financial support from a right leaning government. In Mumbai and Nairobi the WSF was negatively affected by a lack of government resources. The Indian case however could have conceivably benefitted by allowing government actors and parties to actually become more involved in the WSF process. They were involved but not officially and thus without transparency. A symbolic example of this is the large billboard erected by a particular communist party that every participant passed right before they entered the event; this showed their influence without necessarily being part of the official process. Ties with political parties in India could help with sustained organising for the WSF in the long run. Nairobi could equally benefit from building relationships with sympathetic government members. Perhaps not by involving them in the organisation but engaging the government to help promote them. In another WSF event held in Dakkar, an initially good relationship was built with the government that provided University venues for events before the relationship soured. This led to organisers having to scramble to find alternates less than ideal venues leading many to think the government actions were premeditated to disrupt the event.

## Funding

Funding impacted the events favourably, I argue, specifically through its diversification of sources and its frugality. Nairobi had the largest funding shortcomings whereby they relied heavily on corporate sponsorship, and the problems that arise from that, but also on overspending where their event was three times more expensive than Mumbai. Mumbai showed that restrictions of the diversification of sources could be principled and their approach should be lauded. They were however underfunded or underprepared for additional costs perhaps because they did attempt to be frugal. They were not adequately prepared for the amount of local mass movement participants in attendance and were deficient on resources like translators and support staff. My expectation of the benefits of keeping costs low came from accounts at events that participants needed very little from organisers and that self organised activities and events provided the culture and led to positive experiences. Porto Alegre could learn from Mumbai's principled approach to funding but they did stand out in this variable because of the solidarity economy that was in place prior to the first WSF event but that has been exponentially strengthened because of previous events.

### Trade Unions

As mentioned earlier, all three events showed potential expansion for the role that trade unions could play at future events. In Porto Alegre, the influence of the PT presents a danger of workers co-opting the WSF platform and has so far, perhaps wisely, not been the center of attention at the events. Certainly, trade unions are represented and probably deserve more attention than they received in 2005. Nairobi's trade unions have the opposite danger. Their attendance was positive and a stronger presence would more favorably impact the event. If

local trade unions involvement were less, the larger transnational unions would have been more able to dominate the discussion. In Mumbai, trade union factionalism hurt the event. Attendance and diversity were favorable as expected but an inability to adopt the WSF principles of unity and inclusiveness exacerbated existing disagreements. This was unfavorable for the event but raises questions about how the WSF as an agent of GCS can be seen as a force to make the global labour movement more governable. All three cases show a great potential for further involvement by their respective labour movements and by transnational trade unions. With the organisational structures and many human and material resources of trade unions around the world, it behoves WSF organisers to more actively engage with trade unions.

#### Local Civil Society

The strong presence of local civil society at the Porto Alegre events has allowed organisers to increasingly move to a more democratic and self organised space. They are still able to attract large amounts of unaffiliated attendees as seen through the proliferation of the youth camps and attendance overall. Similarly in Mumbai, the mass movements of underprivileged peoples were very present and although they were unable to participate in some aspects due to translation or lack of education, they indelibly made their mark on the event. The same is not as true in Nairobi. Overall costs and poor organisation prevented wider involvement and led to many protests and civil disobedience. One inspiring correlation to this was the People's Parliament that organically organised to counteract some event problems. Compare this with the Mumbai Resistance counter forum in India. MR opposed the WSF principles of openness and inclusivity and also its advocacy of non-violence, whereas the People's Parliament of

Nairobi organised to see that the WSF principles were upheld. They eventually succeeded by allowing those who could not afford admission to get in for free and holding impromptu self-organised activities of their own.

## Measuring Success

Where each event takes place not only affects the outcomes for the event but has the potential to alter the trajectory of the WSF process and subsequently the influence upon GCS.

“The WSF is a fruit of a distinctly Brazilian political culture and social movement know-how” (Conway 2004, p.357). Conway’s statement was prior to the first global expansion of the WSF event and may no longer be entirely accurate. Brazilian influences can certainly be delineated in the charter and the organisational structure and Brazil is still where the WSF is most popular. But, is there any underlying Universal appeal to the WSF open space practices? Perhaps not Universal, but there is evidence that the WSF has at least limited appeal everywhere it has chosen to congregate. Through the cases here discussed, this appeal is more often in favour of a globalization from below than a resistance to globalization. Each event location has attracted large numbers of participants meaning the potential for a successful forum event is possible conceivably anywhere. But the physical space matters to the outcome of the event. Some events were more successful than others and I have shown how certain important variables affected event outcomes. Success is multidimensional and the indicators for success(es) merit re-stating.

1. Large numbers: attendance, demographics.



2. Diversity: representativeness of GCS, expansion to new participants and social movements.
3. Local Participation: active engagement by the Global South in event locations during Forum events and with GCS.
4. Political Effect: inclusion of WSF based activity into global politics at all levels.
5. Charter Adherence: practice of WSF principles and open space methodology.

In Porto Alegre, the event was a colossus which attracted a diverse gathering from all over the world. Building on the successes of past events, the structure of the event was able to focus the actions of social movements and participants in an increasingly democratic forum. It increased the number and kind of individuals and groups that became more active in the WSF process through self organised activities and meetings. It expanded its already significant impact on local civil society through the strengthening of the local solidarity economy. This not only brought unfamiliar groups to the WSF but spread creative ideas to those involved. WSF05 continued to garner international attention and transnational actors alongside local participants invariably strengthening GCS and the WSF's involvement with GCS. The open space movement of the WSF was challenged during the event by the "Porto Alegre Manifesto" which was perceived to speak for the WSF. The overall effect however, was to highlight the WSF's open space methodology while still projecting an activist and principled approach to geopolitics. By all indicators here outlined, WSF05 was a consummate success.

The Mumbai event attracted numbers as huge as those in Porto Alegre. Among participants was a diverse array of local, regional, and global activists and groups from virtually

all areas of GCS. This first global expansion brought the WSF onto a new continent with new ideas and a new focus for the event. This event expanded the democratic capabilities of the WSF involving local actors into the OC in a way that would be recreated at subsequent forums. The local involvement was perhaps elitist in many plenary sessions and seminars but India's underprivileged were in attendance and involved in many different ways with the event. This involvement would likely greatly expand in the case of future events similar to expanded Brazilian involvement with each Forum event in Porto Alegre. Much of the global impact and building of transnational networks was deterred by the inability of many groups to integrate into the WSF process. The process of aligning similar social movements was met with some contention to the detriment of the overall process. There was in-fighting surrounding the WSF's open space method and its stance on the involvement of political parties. Both of these challenges to the WSF charter could ultimately leave the open space movement in a stronger position. WSF04 was not without its faults but according to the indicators above a very good case could be made that it was a success. Perhaps the biggest failing of the event in Mumbai was its inability to live up to the very high standards set in Porto Alegre. The WSF would have a future in Mumbai and any subsequent events in the city would very likely result in increasingly favourable outcomes.

Nairobi's event was unable to equal the standards of Porto Alegre events, but they were also unable to equal their own projections. The attendance numbers, while being a very large GCS event by African and Kenyan standards, were a fraction of what organisers expected. The local population were able to participate in great numbers it seems despite many of the actions of organisers. Their involvement in the event could have been greater indicating that

the appeal is present, but many factors limited their access. The event was at times dominated by large church groups and NGOs diminishing the presence of the diverse social movements and groups that were in attendance. Some innovations that came out of Nairobi such as the Social Movement Assembly and the Fourth Day of Action helped incorporate local groups and align them with their global counterparts. The international presence at the Forum made the most of their opportunity in this first WSF event to be held on the African continent. Despite the overall lack of Kenyan participation the expansion into Africa did much to strengthen the global message of the WSF. Many decisions made by organisers were not in the spirit of the WSF charter and this hurt the open space movement. Additionally, corporate sponsors and more powerful actors using their influence was detrimental to the efforts to move the WSF to increasing levels of democratic accountability and inclusivity. This event was unable adequately involve the Kenyan population but this is the fault of organisers and powerful actors and not local civil society. WSF07 also failed to adequately adhere to charter principles relative to all other WSF events. I would qualify this Forum as a failure but the results would not condemn Nairobi or other African centers as out of reach of a successful Forum. There are many indicators that a Forum success is very possible.

The WSF is an adaptable process that is emerging into a new practice of geopolitics and alter-globalisation. There is ultimately no one variable that will determine success or failure, they work in tandem and change dependent on the vicissitudes of the local context. One variable that exerted its impact on event outcomes that was not investigated was the effect of organiser decisions made by individuals. In each case, the role of the organisers shaping the event resulted in noticeable effects on the event. On In the above list of indicators of success,

the adherence to charter principles is the indicator most likely to gauge whether the WSF continues to be a novel and innovative political phenomenon as it has been or if it will become a more traditional political movement for good or ill. Other indicators can be overlooked over the long term as they may alter in importance dependent on WSF objectives. If the WSF wishes to maintain its open space politics adherence to charter principles is the indicator to highlight. If the objective moves along the open space movement continuum towards more concrete political objectives and programs then the other indicators become more important. Small attendance at one or two events, or an event's inability to make a global impact are not going to be as detrimental to the current configuration of the WSF as an abandonment of some of its key principles would.

The WSF strives to be a globalisation from below and has introduced to global social movements what that idea might look like. But, it is also, in part, the decisions made by organisers based on the locations they are working with that the future of the WSF is made. Whether the WSF continues to be an open space movement still requires some guidance by individuals. Complete structurelessness is not attainable or desired at this point and the WSF's open space practices are still in movement. The future success of the WSF will rely on its adherence to its charter and its theoretical configuration as an open space. The WSF could likely achieve success as a mobilising faction or a 'movement of movements' but this would require many compromises to the original conception of the Forum. The existential crisis for the WSF is not whether it is an open space *or* a movement, but is on how it will maintain its open space elements with the mounting forces calling it away from its charter principles.

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<sup>i</sup> The inaugural OC is made up of the Central Trade Union Confederation (CUT), the MST and six smaller groups in Brazilian civil society. The CUT and MST hold most of the decision making power but generally act generously towards smaller members (Tievainen 2003b).

<sup>ii</sup> See Santos 2006, p.100-7 for detailed analysis of 'who represents the WSF' at the IC and other supervisory bodies.

<sup>iii</sup> For Gramsci. the processes of hegemony "can never be complete because a hegemonic project presumes and requires the participation of subordinate groups...it can be challenged and resisted in the interlocking realms of civil society, political society, and the state" (Mittelman 2000., p. 167). The effectiveness of resistance is likewise never assured and the emergence of a counterhegemonic project will depend on the different forms and dimensions of resistance.

<sup>iv</sup> Francisco Whitaker advocates many ideas found in liberation theology of which he practices (Patomaki & Tievainen 2004a)

<sup>v</sup> The minimal structure and guidelines make the space different than a 'pure' open space which, practically speaking, may only be a theoretical possibility.

<sup>vi</sup> Jai Sen is the director of CACIM (the India Institute for Critical Action: Centre in Movement), has been involved in several WSFs and is the author and editor/co-editor of several books and articles on the Forum.

<sup>vii</sup> Similarly, following the 2006 event in Bamako, the 'Bamako Appeal' was released and many thought it was representative of the WSF political and social principles.

<sup>viii</sup> Peter Waterman is a retired professor from the Institute of Social Studie, The Hague, and as a scholar activist specialises on labour and social movement internationalisms. He is also author/co-editor of several articles and a book on the World Social Forum.

<sup>ix</sup> See Held 2004., p.3-10 concerning the myths of globalization surrounding state issues and many of the complaints of the anti-globalization movement.

<sup>x</sup> See Tarrow 2006 pp.136-8 for importance of the internet for transnational activism and "The internet as Movement Form" beyond a form of communication.

<sup>xi</sup> The organizing committee decides on venue after a deliberation process discussed earlier. See Santos 2006a; Tievainen 2002a; Candido Gryzboeski 2006.

<sup>xii</sup> This table represents 59.5% of participants as these are the registered and verified attendees. The actual numbers probably indicate a higher local presence but are subject to error.

<sup>xiii</sup> World Social Forum Charter of Principles. Principle 9. World Social Forum, WSF 2001.

<sup>xiv</sup> Reformist social movements are here meant to involve groups that seek change through engagement with status quo powers, while radical movements seek a replacement of these powers. Both terms for existing social movements are neither mutually exclusive nor inclusive of all social movement forms.

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<sup>xv</sup> This could be viewed as a very large exception , though it is one that many think is diminishing as Forums: “The proposal to invite well-known names from the left, be they Fidel Castro, Huo Chavez, Ben Bella or Mario Soares, has also caused controversy. The organizational changes introduced in the WSF of 2004 and 2005, in particular the increased prevalence of self-organized activities, helped a great deal to tone down the criticism and controversy in this regard” (Santos 2006a, 53). evolve See Lerner (IPS: January 18 2006) on the problems of unregulated Open Space.

<sup>xvi</sup> Ibid, Principle 4; This does not deal directly with sponsorship but declares “opposition to a process of globalization commanded by the large multinational corporations...” My interpretation is an ambiguous guideline where involvement from sponsors must be from sources that put global human interests ahead of corporate interests.

<sup>xvii</sup> . The categories created for the purpose of this research are broad and subject to critique. For example the Banco do Brasil is controlled by the Brazilian government but its stock is traded at the Sao Paulo Stock Exchange. Many other donors do not fit neatly into my heuristic categories.

<sup>xviii</sup> Additional principles and shared elements of solidarity economies that are generally agreed to are available in Neamtan, 2002., p.2-3.

<sup>xix</sup> Kawano 2010.

<sup>xx</sup> Respondants were able to identify affiliation with more than one of the categories listed.

<sup>xxii</sup> Lula’s government may have similar policy outcomes to attract transnational capital in many instances, but arguably, Brazil is less conciliatory to the principles of free market ideology.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Patomaki &Tievainen point out that this exclusion has been used against militant groups in Latin America. Those groups never went to the extent of a counter-event like the Mumbai Resistance though their complaints should not be overlooked.

<sup>xxiv</sup> There may be little evidence of this for the Cardoso government but certainly Lula and the PT have shown monetary and public support for the WSF. (Leite 2005, p.125)

<sup>xxv</sup> This is a gross oversimplification of the traditional Left program in India and is meant only as an aid for categorization.

<sup>xxvi</sup> This report lists a variety of ways that social movements, activists and state resistance is co-opted by the actions of the NGOs and how these mechanisms are ‘depoliticized’.

<sup>xxvii</sup> I was unable to track down the text of the original newspaper article and am instead quoting directly from Van der Wekken, 2005.

<sup>xxviii</sup> According to Onyango Oloo (Oloo 2007), there had never been a conference on Kenyan soil larger than 46,000.

<sup>xxix</sup> Relative to Porto Alegre and Brazil, organizers were hoping to see more local participants due to historical low turnouts of Africans at civil society events. The high percentage of Brazilians at Porto Alegre events that is viewed negatively by some would here be welcomed if large numbers of Kenyans attended: “It should be no surprise if there were many Africans since this is taking place in Africa but so marginalized are we in our own affairs at these meetings even when they are happening here” (Abdul-Raheem 2007).

<sup>xxx</sup> Reese et.al 2008, hint at this idea regarding political orientation of attendees at WSF07 though further investigation of participants is needed.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Terrorist networks are in operation in Kenya as evidenced by the 1998 US embassy bombing and 2002 Mombasa bombing of an Israeli owned hotel.

<sup>xxxii</sup> Sustar 2007. This article reports the alleged killing of 23 slum-dwellers and suspected ‘vandals’ by police during the event. Not necessarily related to the WSF event but indicative of a repressive police force. The Kenyan police, armed with rifles, also searched every car going into the Kasarani sports complex where the event was held.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> This point has been implicitly understood by all previous Forum organizers. No other Forum has had such overt dealings with multinational corporations.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> The Organizing Committee report gives a detail account of the 19 largest donors and the amount of their donations

<sup>xxxv</sup> The Mumbai event had an abysmal 1% of participants from the continent of Africa.

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