
THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM : TOWARD A COUNTER-HEGEMONIC GLOBALISATION (PART I)

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The Newness of the World Social Forum

The World Social Forum is a new social and political phenomenon. The fact that it does have antecedents does not diminish its newness. Rather, quite the opposite. It is not an event, nor a mere succession of events. It is not a scholarly conference, although the contributions of many scholars converge in it. It is not a party or an international of parties, although militants and activists of many parties all over the world take part in it. It is not an NGO or a confederation of NGOs, even though its conception and organisation owes a great deal to them. It is not a social movement, even though it often designates itself as a movement of movements. Although it presents itself as an agent of social change, the WSF rejects the concept of a historical subject and confers no priority on any specific social actor in this process of social change. It holds no clearly defined ideology, either in defining what it rejects or what it asserts.

Given that the WSF conceives of itself as a struggle against neoliberal globalisation, is it a struggle against a *form* of capitalism or against capitalism in general ? Given that it sees itself as a struggle against discrimination, exclusion and oppression, does the success of its struggle presuppose a postcapitalist, socialist, anarchist horizon, or does it presuppose that no context be clearly defined at all ?

Since the vast majority of people taking part in the WSF identify themselves as favouring a politics of the Left, how many definitions of 'the Left' fit the WSF ? And what about those who refuse to be defined because they believe that the Left-Right dichotomy is a North-centric or West-centric particularism, and look for alternative political definitions ?

The social struggles that find expression in the WSF do not adequately fit either of the ways of social change sanctioned by western modernity : reform and revolution. Aside from the consensus on non-violence, its modes of struggle are extremely diverse

and appear spread out in a continuum between the poles of institutionality and insurgency. Even the concept of non-violence is open to widely disparate interpretations.

Finally, the WSF is not structured according to any of the models of modern political organisation, be they democratic centralism, representative democracy, or participatory democracy. In other words, the ‘movement of movements’ is not one more movement. It is a *different* movement.

The challenge posed by the WSF has one more dimension still. Beyond the theoretical, analytical and epistemological questions, it raises a new political issue : it aims to fulfil an utopia in a world devoid of utopias. This utopian will is expressed in the slogan ‘Another World is Possible !’ At stake is less a utopian world than a world that *allows* for utopia.

In this paper, I therefore deal with the WSF as critical utopia, epistemology of the South, and emergent politics.

The WSF as Critical Utopia

“Utopias have their timetable”, says Ernst Bloch.¹ The conceptions of and aspirations to a better life and society, ever present in human history, vary as to form and content according to time and space. They express the tendencies and latencies of a given epoch and a given society. They constitute an anticipatory consciousness that manifests itself by enlarging the signs or traces of emerging realities. Does the WSF have a utopian dimension ? And, if so, what is its timetable ?

The WSF is a set of initiatives — of transnational exchange among social movements, NGOs and their practices and knowledge of local, national or global social struggles against the forms of exclusion and inclusion, discrimination and equality, universalism and particularism, cultural imposition and relativism, that have been brought about or made possible by the current phase of capitalism known as neoliberal globalisation. The utopian dimension of the WSF consists in claiming the existence of alternatives to neoliberal globalisation.

As Franz Hinkelammert says, “we live in a time of conservative utopias whose utopian character resides in its radical denial of alternatives to present-day reality”.² The possibility of alternatives is discredited precisely for being utopian, idealistic, and unrealistic. Under neoliberalism, the criterion is the market. The total *market* becomes a perfect institution. Its utopian character resides in the promise that its total application cancels out all utopias. What distinguishes conservative utopias such as the market from critical utopias is the fact that they identify themselves with present-day reality and discover their utopian dimension in the radicalisation or complete fulfilment of the present. Moreover, if there is unemployment and social exclusion, if there is starvation and death in the periphery of the world system, that is not the consequence of the deficiencies or limits of the laws of the market; it results rather from the fact that such laws have not yet been fully applied. The horizon of conservative utopias is thus a closed horizon, an end to history.

This is the context in which the utopian dimension of the WSF must be understood. The WSF signifies the re-emergence of critical utopia, that is, of a radical critique of present-day reality and the aspiration to a better society. This occurs, however, when the anti-

utopian utopia of neoliberalism is dominant. The utopian dimension of the WSF consists in affirming the possibility of a counter-hegemonic globalisation; it is a radically democratic utopia. In this sense, the utopia of the WSF asserts itself more as negativity (the definition of what it critiques) than as positivity (the definition of that to which it aspires).

The specificity of the WSF as critical utopia has one more explanation. For the WSF, the claim of alternatives is plural, both as to the form of the claim and the content of the alternatives. The other possible world is a utopian aspiration that comprises several possible worlds. It may be many things, but never a world with no alternative.

Yet the question remains : once the counter-hegemonic globalisation is consolidated, and hence the idea that another world is possible is made credible, will it be possible to fulfil this idea with the same level of radical democracy that helped formulate it ?

The World Social Forum as Epistemology of the South

Neoliberal globalisation is presided over by technico-scientific knowledge, and owes its hegemony to the credible way in which it discredits all rival knowledge, by suggesting that they are not comparable, as to efficiency and coherence, to the scientific nature of market laws. This is why the practices circulating in the WSF have their origin in very distinct epistemological assumptions (what counts as knowledge) and ontological universes (what it means to be human). Such diversity exists not only among the different movements but also *inside* each one of them. The differences within the feminist movement, for instance, are not merely political. They are differences regarding what counts as relevant knowledge, on the one hand, and on the other, differences about identifying, validating or hierarchising the relations between western-based scientific knowledge and other knowledges derived from other practices, rationalities or cultural universes. They are differences, ultimately, about what it means to be a human being, whether male or female. The practice of the WSF also reveals, in this context, that the knowledge we have of globalisation is much less global than globalisation itself.

To be sure, many counter-hegemonic practices resort to the hegemonic scientific and technological knowledge paradigm, and many of them would not even be thinkable without it. This is true of the WSF itself, which would not exist without the technologies of information and communication. The question is : to what extent is such knowledge useful and valid, and what other knowledges are available and usable beyond the limits of utility and validity of scientific knowledge ? To approach these problems raises an additional epistemological problem : on the basis of which knowledge or epistemology are these problems to be formulated ?

Science is doubly at the service of hegemonic globalisation, whether by the way in which it promotes and legitimates it, or by which it discredits, conceals or trivialises counter-hegemonic globalisation. Hegemony presupposes a constant policing and repressing of counter-hegemonic practices and agents. This goes largely hand in hand with discrediting, concealing and trivialising knowledges that inform counter-hegemonic practices and agents. Faced with rival knowledges, hegemonic scientific knowledge either turns them into raw material (as is the case of indigenous or peasant knowledge about biodiversity) or rejects them on the basis of their falsity or inefficiency in the

light of the hegemonic criteria of truth and efficiency. Confronted with this situation, the epistemological alternative proposed by the WSF is that there is no global *social* justice without global *cognitive* justice.

This alternative is grounded on two basic ideas. First, if the objectivity of science does not imply neutrality, science and technology may as well be put at the service of counter-hegemonic practices. The extent to which science is used is arguable inside the movements, and it may vary according to circumstances and practices. Second, whatever the extent to which science is resorted to, counter-hegemonic practices are mainly practices of nonscientific knowledge, practical, often tacit knowledges that must be made credible to render such practices credible in turn.

The second point is more polemical because it confronts the hegemonic concepts of truth and efficiency directly. The epistemological denunciation that the WSF engages in consists of showing that the concepts of rationality and efficiency presiding over hegemonic technico-scientific knowledge are too restrictive. They cannot capture the richness and diversity of the social experience of the world, and specially that they discriminate against practices of resistance and production of counter-hegemonic alternatives. The concealment and discrediting of these practices constitute a waste of social experience, both social experience that is available but not yet visible, and social experience not yet available but realistically possible.

The epistemological operation carried out by the WSF consists of two processes that I designate as *sociology of absences* and *sociology of emergences*. I speak of sociologies because my aim is to critically identify the conditions that destroy non-hegemonic and potentially counter-hegemonic social experience. Through these sociologies, social experience that resists destruction is unconcealed, and the space-time capable of identifying and rendering credible new counter-hegemonic social experiences is opened up. The following description of the sociology of absences and the sociology of emergences represents the ideal-type of the epistemological operation featured by the WSF.

The WSF and the Sociology of Absences

The sociology of absences consists of an inquiry that aims to explain that what does not exist is, in fact, actively produced as non-existent, that is, as a non-credible alternative to what exists. The objective of the sociology of absences is to transform impossible into possible objects, absent into present objects. The logics and processes through which hegemonic criteria of rationality and efficiency produce non-existence are various. Non-existence is produced whenever a certain entity is disqualified and rendered invisible, unintelligible, or irreversibly discardable. What unites the different logics of production of non-existence is that they are all manifestations of the same rational monoculture.

I distinguish five logics or modes of production of non-existence. The first derives from the *monoculture of knowledge*. It turns modern science and high culture into the sole criteria of truth and aesthetic quality, respectively. All that is not recognised or legitimated by the canon is declared non-existent. Non-existence appears in this case in the form of ignorance or lack of culture.

The second logic resides in the *monoculture of linear time*, the idea that time is

linear and that ahead of time precedes the core countries of the world system. This logic produces non-existence by describing as 'backward' (pre-modern, under-developed, etc.) whatever is asymmetrical vis-à-vis whatever is declared 'forward'. The third logic is the *monoculture of classification*, based on the naturalisation of differences. It consists of distributing populations according to categories that naturalise hierarchies. Racial and sexual classifications are the most salient manifestations of this logic, with racial classification as one of the one most deeply reconstructed by capitalism.³

The fourth logic of production of non-existence is the logic of the dominant scale: the *monoculture of the universal and the global*. Globalisation privileges entities or realities that widen their scope to the whole globe, thus earning the prerogative to designate rival entities as local. Non-existence is produced under the form of the particular and the local. The entities or realities defined as particular or local are captured in scales that render them incapable of being credible alternatives to what exists globally and universally.

Finally, the fifth logic is that of productivity. It resides in the *monoculture of criteria of capitalist productivity and efficiency*, which privileges growth through market forces. This criterion applies both to nature and to human labour. Non-existence is produced in the form of non-productiveness. Applied to nature, non-productiveness is sterility; applied to labour, "discardable populations", laziness, professional disqualification, lack of skills.

There are thus five principal social forms of non-existence produced by hegemonic epistemology and rationality: the ignorant, the residual, the inferior, the local and the non-productive. The realities to which they give shape are present only as obstacle vis-à-vis the realities deemed relevant, be they scientific, advanced, superior, global, or productive realities. They are what exist under irretrievably disqualified forms of existing. To be made present, these absences need to be constructed as alternatives to hegemonic experience, to have their credibility discussed and argued for and their relations taken as object of political dispute. The sociology of absences therefore creates the conditions to enlarge the field of credible experiences. The enlargement of the world occurs not only because the field of credible experiences is widened but also because the possibilities of social experimentation in the future are increased.

The sociology of absence proceeds by confronting each one of the modes of production of absence mentioned above and by replacing monocultures by ecologies. I therefore identify and propose five ecologies : *the ecology of knowledges*, which confronts the logic of the monoculture of scientific knowledge with the identification of other knowledge and criteria of rigour that operate credibly in social practices. The central idea is that there is no ignorance or knowledge in general. All ignorance is ignorant of certain knowledge, and all knowledge is the overcoming of a particular ignorance. In this domain, the sociology of absences aims to substitute an ecology of knowledges for the monoculture of scientific knowledge.

Second, the *ecology of temporalities*, which questions the monoculture of linear time with the idea that linear time is only one among many conceptions of time and that, if we take the world as our unit of analysis, it is not even the most commonly adopted. Linear time was adopted by western modernity, but it never erased, not even

in the West, other conceptions of time such as circular time, cyclical time, the doctrine of the eternal return, and still others that are not adequately grasped by the images of the arrow of time. In this domain, the sociology of absences aims to free social practices from their status as residuum, devolving to them their own temporality and thus the possibility of autonomous development. In this way, the activity of the African or Asian peasant becomes contemporaneous of the activity of the hi-tech farmer in the USA or the activity of the World Bank executive; it becomes another form of contemporaneity.

The *ecology of recognition*, thirdly, opposes the monoculture of classification. It confronts the colonial mentality of race and unequal sexuality;⁵ it looks for a new articulation between the principles of equality and difference, thus allowing for the possibility of equal differences — an ecology of differences comprised of mutual recognition. The differences that remain when hierarchy vanishes become a powerful denunciation of the differences that hierarchy reclaims in order not to vanish.

The *ecology of trans-scale* confronts the logic of global scale by recuperating what in the local is not the result of hegemonic globalisation. The local that has been integrated in hegemonic globalisation is what I designate as localised globalism, that is, the specific impact of hegemonic globalisation on the local.⁶ The de-globalisation of the local and its eventual counter-hegemonic re-globalisation broadens the diversity of social practices by offering alternatives to localised globalisms. The sociology of absences requires in this domain, the use of cartographic imagination, to deal with cognitive maps that operate simultaneously with different scales, namely to identify local / global articulations.⁷

The *ecology of productivity*, finally, consists in recuperating and valorising alternative systems of production, popular economic organisations, workers' co-operatives, self-managed enterprises, solidarity economy, etc., which have been hidden or discredited by the capitalist orthodoxy of productivity. This is perhaps the most controversial domain of the sociology of absences, for it confronts directly both the paradigm of development and infinite economic growth and the logic of the primacy of the objectives of accumulation over the objectives of distribution that sustain global capitalism.

In each of the five domains, the objective of the sociology of absences is to disclose, and give credit to, the diversity and multiplicity of social practices in opposition to the exclusive credibility of hegemonic practices. The idea of multiplicity and non-destructive relations is suggested by the concept of ecology. The WSF is a broad exercise of the sociology of absences. But there are variations. If it is, in general, unequivocally a refusal of monocultures and an adoption of ecologies, this process is not present with the same intensity in all movements, organisations and articulations. If for some, opting for ecologies are unconditional, for others hybridity between monocultures and ecologies is permissible. Some movements or organisations act, in some domains, according to a monocultural logic and, in others, according to an ecological logic. It is also possible that the adoption of an ecological logic is de-characterised by the factionalism and power struggle inside one movement or organisation, and turn into a new monocultural logic. Finally, I offer as a hypothesis that even the movements that claim different ecologies are vulnerable to the temptation of evaluating themselves according to an ecological logic, while evaluating the other movements according to a hegemonic monocultural logic.

The World Social Forum and the Sociology of Emergences

The sociology of emergence is the second epistemological operation conducted by the WSF. Whereas the goal of the sociology of absences is to identify and valorise social experiences available in the world — although declared non-existent by hegemonic rationality — the sociology of emergences aims to identify and enlarge the signs of possible future experiences, under the guise of tendencies and latencies, that are actively ignored by hegemonic rationality and knowledge.

For some thinkers, the possible is the most uncertain and the most ignored concept in western philosophy.⁸ Yet, only the possible permits to reveal the inexhaustible wealth of the world. Besides All and Nothing, Bloch, for instance, introduces two new concepts: Not (Nicht) and Not Yet (Noch Nicht). The Not is the lack of something, but also the expression of the will to *surmount that lack*. The Not is thus distinguished from the Nothing.⁹ To say No is to say yes to something different.

The Not Yet is the more complex category because it expresses what exists as mere tendency, a movement that is latent in the very process of manifesting itself. The Not Yet is the way in which the future is inscribed in the present. It is not an indeterminate or infinite future, rather a concrete possibility and a capacity that neither exists in a vacuum nor are completely predetermined. Subjectively, the Not Yet is anticipatory consciousness, a form of consciousness that is extremely important in people's lives. Objectively, the Not Yet is, on the one hand, capacity (potency) and, on the other, possibility (potentiality). Possibility has a dimension of darkness as it originates in the lived moment, which is never fully visible to it. Also, as a crucial component of uncertainty that derives from a double want : one, the fact that conditions that render possibility concrete are only partially known; and two, the fact that such conditions only exist partially.

At every moment, there is a limited horizon of possibilities, and so it is important not to waste the unique opportunity of a specific change offered by the present : *carpe diem* (seize the day). Considering the three modal categories of existence — reality, necessity, and possibility — hegemonic rationality and knowledge focus on the first two and neglect the third one entirely. The sociology of emergences focuses on possibility. Possibility is the world's engine. Its moments are want (the manifestation of something lacking), tendency (process and meaning), and latency (what goes ahead in the process). Want is the realm of the Not, tendency the realm of the Not Yet, and latency the realm of the Nothing and the All, for latency can end up either in frustration or hope.

The sociology of emergences is the inquiry into the alternatives that are contained in the horizon of concrete possibilities. It consists in undertaking a symbolic enlargement of knowledge, practices and agents in order to identify therein the tendencies of the future (the Not Yet) upon which it is possible to intervene so as to maximise the probability of hope vis-à-vis the probability of frustration. Such symbolic enlargement is actually a form of sociological imagination with a double aim : on the one hand, to know better the conditions of the possibility of hope; on the other, to define principles of action to promote the fulfilment of those conditions. The Not Yet has meaning (as possibility), but no direction, for it can end either in hope or disaster.

The sociology of emergences therefore replaces the idea of determination by the idea of *care*. The axiology of progress and development, which have justified untold destruction, is thus replaced by the axiology of care. Whereas in the sociology of absences the axiology of care is exerted vis-à-vis alternatives available in the present, in the sociology of emergences the axiology of care is exerted vis-à-vis possible future alternatives. Because of this ethical dimension, neither the sociology of absences nor the sociology of emergences are conventional sociologies. But they are not conventional for another reason : their objectivity depends upon the quality of their subjective dimension. The subjective element of the sociology of absences is cosmopolitan consciousness and non-conformism before the waste of experience. The subjective element of the sociology of emergences is anticipatory consciousness and non-conformism before a want whose fulfilment is within the horizon of possibilities.

The symbolic enlargement brought about by a sociology of emergences consists in identifying signals, clues, or traces of future possibilities in whatever exists. Hegemonic rationality and science has totally dismissed this kind of inquiry, either because it assumes that the future is predetermined, or can only be identified by precise indicators. For them, clues are too vague, subjective, and chaotic to be credible predictors. By focussing intensely on the clue side of reality, the sociology of emergences aims to enlarge symbolically the possibilities of the future that lie, in latent form, in concrete social experiences. The sociology of emergences valorises clues as pathways toward discussing and arguing for concrete alternative futures. The care of the future exerts itself in such argumentation and negotiation.

As in the case of the sociology of absences, the practices of the WSF also come more or less close to the ideal type of the sociology of emergences. I submit as a working hypothesis that the stronger and more consolidated movements and organisations tend to engage less in the sociology of emergences than the less strong or consolidated. As regards the relations between movements or organisations, the signs and clues given by the less consolidated movements may be devalued as subjective or inconsistent by the more consolidated movements. In this as well, the practice of the sociology of emergences is unequal, and inequalities must be the object of analysis and evaluation.

The World Social Forum as Political Emergence ¹⁰

The newness of the WSF is more unequivocal at the utopian and epistemological level than at the political level. Its political newness does exist, but it exists as a field of tensions and dilemmas, where the new and the old confront each another. The political newness of the WSF resides in the way in which these confrontations have been handled, avoided, and negotiated.

Generally speaking, the political novelties of the WSF can be seen, first, in terms of the very *broad conception of power and oppression* that it seems to have adopted, and which responds to the fact that neoliberal globalisation is linked with many other forms of oppression that affect women, ethnic minorities, peasants, the unemployed, workers of the informal sector, immigrants, ghetto sub-classes, gays and lesbians, children and the young. This requires that movements and organisations give priority to the articulation amongst them, and ultimately explains the organisational novelty of a WSF with no leaders, its rejection of hierarchies, and its emphasis on networks made possible by the internet.

Second, the WSF strives for *equivalence between the principles of equality and of recognition of difference*, grounding the option for participatory democracy, which addresses equality without the exclusion of difference.

Third, the WSF *privileges rebellion and non-conformity at the expense of revolution*. There is no unique theory to guide the movements, because the aim is not so much to seize power but rather to change the many faces of power as they present themselves in the institutions and sociabilities. At this level, the novelty consists in the celebration of diversity and pluralism, experimentalism, and radical democracy.

It has become common to examine the WSF's political experience in terms of problems and tensions at three levels : representation, organisation, political strategy and political action. According to its Charter of Principles, the WSF does not claim to be representative of counter-hegemonic globalisation, and no one represents the WSF nor can speak in its name. But then : whom does the WSF represent ? Who represents the WSF ? The WSF's restricted geographical scope so far has led some critics to affirm that the WSF is far from having a world dimension. Some proposals have been made in this regard, including the decision to hold the fourth WSF in India. While this problem is real, I believe that the WSF must not be de-legitimised for not being worldwide enough.

A second, hotly debated question is the WSF's organisation, particularly the relation between the Organising Committee (OC) and the International Council (IC), the organisation of each of the three Porto Alegre Forums, and each event's structure. These aspects have raised many issues, which I cannot discuss at length here. (See other essays in this section, and other sections in this volume — Eds). Among the most discussed are : internal democracy, including issues of transparency of decisions and the articulation between the IC and the OC; the hierarchical structure of the events, chiefly the distinction among different kinds of sessions and the importance accorded to each, a feature of which feminist movements have been particularly critical (following the two mottos — 'Another World is Possible !' and 'No One Single Way of Thinking'); and the top-down organisation of the events.

A third site of tension and critique is the relation with political parties, social movements, and NGOs. The Charter of Principles is clear on the subordinate role of parties in the WSF. The WSF is an emanation of civil society as organised in social movements and non-governmental organisations. In practice, however, things are ambiguous.¹¹ In my mind, the issue is not whether relations with parties should exist or not, but rather to define the exact terms of these. If the relations are transparent, horizontal, and mutually respectful, they may well be, in some contexts, an important lever for the consolidation of the WSF.

A fourth area of contestation is size and continuity. To the steady increase in the size of the annual event, the IC has responded with a proposal to stimulate theme and regional, national and local events, that intercommunicate horizontally and that will not be articulated as preparatory for one another but as meetings with their own political value.

Finally, there are issues of strategy and political action. As a radical utopia, the WSF celebrates diversity, plurality, and horizontality. The newness of this utopia in Left thinking cannot but be problematical as it translates itself into strategic planning and political action.

The organisers themselves acknowledge many of these tensions and criticisms, which suggest that these tensions are part of the Forum's learning process. Some measures have been suggested, including the current restructuring of the IC and a deepening of horizontal organisational practices and systems of co-responsibility. Although it is clear that much remains to be done, it is fair to say that the WSF's organisational structure was the most adequate to launch the Forum and render it credible internationally. The current consolidation of the WSF will lead it to another phase of development, in which case its organisational structure will have to be reconsidered so as to adjust it to its new demands and tasks ahead. For now, it should be acknowledged that the desire to highlight what the movements and organisations have in common has prevailed over the desire to underscore what separates them. The manifestation of tensions or cleavages has been relatively tenuous and, above all, has not resulted in mutual exclusions. It remains to be seen for how long this will to convergence and this chaotic sharing of differences will last.

The last point concerns precisely this, the notion of cleavages. Here again we find a site of political novelty. There is a meta-cleavage between western and non-western political cultures. Up to a point, this meta-cleavage also exists between the North and the South. Given the strong presence of movements and organisations of the North Atlantic and white Latin America, it is no wonder that the most salient cleavages reflect the political culture and historical trajectory of the Left in these parts of the world. What is most instructive however, is that despite the reality of the cleavages that could be at play — reform or revolution; socialism or social emancipation; the State as enemy or potential ally; national and global struggles; direct action or institutional action; and that between the principles of equality and difference — it is clear that what is new about the WSF is that the majority of the movements and organisations that participate in it do not recognise themselves in these cleavages. They have political experiences in which there are moments of confrontation alternating or combining with moments of dialogue and engagement. In these long range visions of social change cohabit the tactical possibilities of the moment, in which radical denunciations of capitalism do not paralyse the energy for small changes when the big changes are not possible. Indeed, many movements of the South think that no general labels — even Left and Right — need be attached to the goals of the struggles.

According to the large majority of the movements, these conventionally conceived cleavages do not do justice to the concrete needs of concrete struggles. The decision on which scale to privilege, for instance, is a political decision that must be taken in accordance with concrete political conditions. Similarly, for many movements it is no longer a question of choosing between the struggle for equality and difference, but of articulating one with the other, for the fulfilment of either is condition of the fulfilment of the other.

Nonetheless, there is a cleavage among the movements and even, sometimes, inside the same movement on whether priority should be given to one of these principles. Concrete political conditions will dictate which of the principles is to be privileged in a given struggle. Any struggle conceived under the aegis of one of these two principles must be organised so as to open space for the other principle. Many of the tensions and cleavages mentioned above are not specific to the WSF, but belong to the legacy of struggles over the past 200

years. The specificity of the WSF resides in the fact that all these cleavages co-exist in its bosom without upsetting its aggregating power. The different cleavages are important in different ways for the different movements and organisations, providing room for action and discourse. Second, there has so far been no tactical or strategic demand that would intensify the cleavages by radicalising positions. On the contrary, cleavages have been fairly low intensity. For the movements and organisations in general, what unites has been more important than what divides. Third, if a given movement opposes another in a given cleavage, it may well be on the same side in another. In this way are precluded the accumulation and strengthening of divergences that could result from the alignment of the movements in multiple cleavages. On the contrary, the cleavages end up neutralising or disempowering one another. Herein lies the WSF's aggregating power.

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NOTES

¹ Bloch 1995, p 479.

² Hinkelammert 2002.

³ Wallerstein and Balibar 1991; Quijano 2000.

⁴ Santos 1995, p 25.

⁵ Quijano 2000.

⁶ Santos 1998, 2000.

⁷ Santos 1995, pp 456-473; Santos 2001.

⁸ For instance, Bloch 1995, p 241.

⁹ Bloch 1995, p 306.

¹⁰ This is a drastically abridged version of the corresponding section in the original text (Santos 2003). Please refer to this text for the lengthy and enlightening discussion of political novelty, tensions, problems and possibilities surrounding the Forum's experience — Eds.

¹¹ Sen 2003.