
THE SECRET OF FIRE

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The WSF 1 in Porto Alegre, 2001, was mostly marked by *protest* against the WEF taking place at the same time. The WSF 2 in 2002 attempted to *specify the meaning* of “Another World is Possible !” The WSF 3 in 2003, was marked by a *questioning* of the extent to which the Forum — now an increasingly globalised phenomenon — itself embodies what it is preaching to others. I look at WSF 3 in terms of the :

- danger of going forward to the past of social movements and internationalism;
- problematic relationship with the ‘old’ trade unions;
- uneven age, gender, ethnic, etc., composition of the Forum;
- uncertain future of a proposed global social movement network;
- necessity of a communications, media, and cultural internationalism;
- possibility of an academy of global empowerment.

My conclusion is that the ‘secret of fire’ of radical-democratic and internationalist social movements is now a public one, thus offering some guarantee of a continuation and deepening of the Forum process.¹

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

At the centre of initiative and decision-making within the WSF have been the Brazilian national Organising Committee (OC) and the International Council (IC) it created. These are not subject to the principles of participatory or even representative democracy or of accountability to their respective communities (mass organisations, NGOs, funding agencies), the role of which seems to have been to give international legitimacy to the OC, whilst having a quite ambiguous relationship to it. The historical justification for the existence of both has been the quite remarkable vessel they have launched — an international and internationalist encounter, outside the immediate spheres of capital and State, targeted against neoliberalism and capitalist globalisation, increasingly concerned with proposing radical-democratic alternatives to such. And all this on the understanding that the place, space and form is the guarantee for the necessary democratic dialogue of

countries and cultures, of ideologies, of political levels, collective subjects and movements and organisations. In so far as re-presentation is today as important, or even more important, than representation (a problematic quality within both liberal democracies and, for example, labour movements), the forms and contents of a new counter-hegemony have been at least sketched out by the committees of the Forum and on a global scale.²

This space however, has never been a neutral or innocent one, (like death and taxes, money and power are always with us, and the failure to confront these openly suggests either occupational blindness or bad faith). This space has not been as far beyond the old politics and parties and parliaments as it might like to claim.

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

The IC was created top-down by invitation of the OC (of 90–100 members, mostly NGOs and inter/national unions of which only 8–10 are women's networks). This gargantuan assembly has no clear mandate or power, therefore acting for the OC largely as a sounding board and international legitimator. The nature and representation of the members, and the extent to which they are answerable to any but themselves, remains obscure. Many of them do little other work in the IC than turning up and then fighting for their corner — such as the maximum number of representatives within the Central part of Forum programmes in the hands of the OC / IC. The IC does not operate behind closed doors, but its proceedings are barely reported by its members to even the interested public. There has, recently, been formal discussion about the role and rules of the IC, consequent on an intended shift of weight from the Brazilian national to the international committee. But whilst part of this discussion — actually more like an interesting experiment in online consultation, for which see <http://www.delibera.info/fsm2003ci/GB/> — is posted on a publicly accessible website, the existence of this is known to few. Moreover, only a tiny fraction of IC members have taken part in this consultation, again suggesting that their motivation for membership has more to do with a search for recognition and influence than with the advance of this — admittedly novel and complex — project as a whole. The Centre, however, is not a monolith. On the contrary, it is itself in movement, under its own momentum, as indicated by post-Forum web updates (<http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/>

[home.asp](#)). At the very least, however, it has signally failed to *communicate itself* to even an interested public. This is a matter to be returned to below.

The Porto Alegre Forum is an agora in which there are a few large, well-publicised and well-placed circus tents, surrounded by a myriad of differently-sized others (now around 1,700 in all — which means 3–400 events per *day*), proposed by social movements, international agencies, political organisations, academic institutions and even individuals. The Suburban / Peripheral events compete for visibility, for sites, for translators / equipment and often overlap with or even *reproduce* each other, and — whilst certainly adding to the pluralism of the Forum — have an inevitably minor impact. Whilst, again, the decision that the Forum is not a policy-forming body allows for pluralism and creativity, the result is, inevitably, domination by the official programme — one which has been conceived without notable discussion beyond the governing committees.

The concentration of power at the Centre is reinforced by the presence of our very own celebrities — who may have to choose between appearance in a hall seating thousands, or in a classroom seating twenty-five. Indeed, even the major Central Themes (sets of panels on specific problem areas) were somewhat marginalised this year, either by being placed away from the central university site, or simply by the attention focused on celebrity events, rallies and demonstrations. This formula is out of control in different ways.

WSF 3, with maybe 70,000 Brazilian and 30,000 foreign participants, was too big for the hosts to handle. A number of experienced local organisers had apparently been lured away to Brasília by the new government, and the original PT local-government sponsors had lost influence in both the city and the state. Unlike last year, the programme was never published completely in either English or Portuguese. A well-organised North American Left, internationalist, and pro-feminist group, invited to run a five-day programme on ‘Life after Capitalism,’ found itself without publicity, and then geographically marginalised in a country club unmarked on the Forum maps, unknown to information booths, and a taxi-ride away from the main site. The Brazilian feminist tent, a major focus of attention at WSF 2, had been moved to some anonymous site elsewhere in the city. Other radical groups, which consider themselves initiators of the GJ&SM more generally, likewise complained of marginalisation.

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

The Forum is in danger of losing its social profile, as major politicians and governments recognise the importance of this agora, and turn up invited (President Lula da Silva) or uninvited (President Hugo Chavez). There was no way that the Forum could fail to invite Lula, or even to wish him well on his way to Davos. But well-wishers might have been alarmed by such newspaper headlines as ‘Lula is Applauded in Davos and Starts the Dialogue

between Porto Alegre and Davos', and 'IMF Approves Financial Discipline of Lula Government.' This is not speaking of Lula's conciliatory Davos speech itself.

Those who seek to give it not only a national but also a nationalist character are putting the Forum's place as, what I call, the 'new global solidarity' in question. This is evidenced in the Indian case. Here a declaration of the Asian Social Forum (ASF), dominated by a major Indian Communist Party, attacked *imperialist* wars in Asia but forgot about the *nationalist* Indo-Pakistani conflict — in which nuclear threats are issued by two opposed chauvinist regimes — both enjoying US imperial military cooperation ! An informative report on the ASF (Jain, this volume), proposed that strong nation-states, and alliances of such were the necessary answer to globalisation, this traditional — not to say archaic — notion being reinforced by an editorial sub-head that turned the writer's proposal into an ASF-WSF conclusion ! An impressively open WSF 3 event on WSF 4 in India suggested that certain party-aligned leaders of recent Forums in India have learned to 'talk the talk,' but scepticism is in order about whether they can also 'walk the walk.'

Given all this, there is a danger that the Forum will be overwhelmed by the *past* of social movements and internationalism. This was one in which such movements were dominated by the institutions they spawned, by the political parties that instrumentalised them, in which the movements were state-oriented and or state-identified, and in which internationalism was literally that : a relationship between nations, nationals, nationalisms, nationalists. Proletarian solidarity turned into military aid to approved regimes. West-Rest solidarity came to be dominated by one-way state-funded 'development cooperation.' And in which Rest-Rest solidarity could be reduced, for example, to slogans of solidarity with the revolution in El Salvador, or in a tribal village of India, where any sign of solidarity with other tribals, or tribals in the neighbouring Indian state, were absent.

The Union-Forum Relationship : Moveable Objects and Resistible Forces

WSF 3 saw a growth and deepening of the relationship between the traditional international union institutions (TIUIs) and the Forum. There are already about a dozen international unions on the IC, most of which are anti-neoliberal but not anti-capitalist, and many of which are, due to globalisation, in considerable crisis. There is no evidence that they have tried to act as a bloc. With one or two exceptions, they may have been primarily concerned with finding out what kind of exotic animal this is.

The increasing interest of this major traditional movement in the Forum was demonstrated by the presence, for the first time, of the General Secretary of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). But top officers of Global Union Federations (GUFs, formerly International Trade Union Secretariats) were also present, either prominently on platforms or quietly testing the water. Present, further, were international union organisations and networks from beyond the ICFTU 'family' (now formalised as Global Unions). This year there were, in addition to the radical union networks from France or Italy, an independent left union confederation from the Philippines, two left mineworker activists from India, and, no doubt, hundreds of movement-oriented unionists from other countries. I noted also an increasing openness amongst even the most traditional

of TIUIs. Whilst the first big union event was a formal panel with only gestures in the direction of discussion (here, admittedly, only reproducing a problematic Forum formula), another major panel saw the platform shared between the Global Unions, independent Left unions and articulate leaders of social movements or NGOs identified with the Forum process. The unions seem increasingly prepared to recognise that they are institutions, and they need to come to terms with a place and process that, whilst lacking in formal representation and often inchoate, nevertheless has the appeal, dynamism, public reach and mobilising capacity that they themselves lack but need.

But, what *kind* of relationship is developing here? From the first big union event, patronised by the charismatic Director of the ILO, veteran Chilean socialist, Juan Somavia, I got the strong impression that what was shaping up was some kind of understanding or alliance between the unions, the Social Forum and progressive states / men. The unconditionally praised PT Government and President Lula here evidently represented the latter. Somavia, who had just met Lula officially in Brasilia, made explicit comparison between the ILO's new programme / slogan of 'Decent Work' and Lula's election slogan 'For a Decent Brazil.' The fact that the TIUIs adopted 'Decent Work' as their slogan suggests the emergence of a global neo-Keynesianism, in which the unions and their ILO and WSF friends would recreate the post-1945 Social Partnership model (or ideology), but now on a global scale — and with the aid of friendly governments.

The model seems problematic in many ways. The main one is whether the role of the WSF, or the more general GJ&SM, is going to be limited to supporting a project aimed at making capitalist globalisation 'decent'. Or, should the movement not have a project for labour that might be simultaneously more *utopian* (post-capitalist) and, under present conditions, more *realistic* (making work-for-capital an ethical issue, treating 'non-workers' as equals of wage-earners, addressing the closely inter-related civil-social issues such as useful production, sustainable consumption)? There needs to be a discussion about the political, theoretical and ethical bases of the two labour utopianisms, one within and the other beyond the parameters of capitalism.³

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

Combined and Uneven Development : Gender, Ethnicity, Class and Age

I was somewhat alarmed, in the hotels, at the panels, at the receptions and in the news coverage, by the number of people who looked like me : White, Male, Middle-Aged (I am not yet 70) and evidently, Middle-Class. I suspect the bias applies also to the decision-making committees. This does not mean that women, Africans, Indians, indigenous peoples, workers or the under-thirties are actually excluded from these — but

the youth were under canvas in the Youth Camp or in private 'solidarity accommodation'; the Argentinean *piqueteros* were in the streets (sleeping who knows where?); and women were less visible than they had been at WSF 2, though this may have been an effect of the de-centralisation and dispersal at WSF 3 (including that of myself!).

Amílcar Cabral, assassinated leader of the anti-Portuguese struggle in colonial Africa, once suggested that after independence, there would (or should) occur the 'suicide of the petty-bourgeoisie'. As the more skeptical Frantz Fanon argued at the same time, however, the post-colonial elites were going to do everything they could to retain and increase their privileges. There are striking power and wealth differences between Forum participants, particularly visible, predictably, in the case of the South. In two or three Latin American cases known to me, the poorer participants travelled by bus — this sometimes meaning a 4–5 day journey, with entry obstacles at various border-crossings. I am not suggesting that the existent Forum elites are suicidal without irresistible pressure from outside or below (nor even that I was going to abandon a hotel with hot and cold running internet). Insofar, on the other hand, as the WSF has declared, certain principles relating to liberty, equality, solidarity, horizontality and pluralism, it might be possible to confront them (us) with the necessity of re-balancing the power equation. The elites could then put their efforts, in their home states / constituencies, into *facilitating* rather than dominating or *controlling* the Forum process.

The experience of women and feminists within the Forum might point to different directions. I have no figures for WSF 3, but at both previous events, women were almost fifty percent of the participants. There are powerful feminists and feminist networks on the panels and in the IC, quite capable of making the Forum a Feminist Issue. As, also, of making a feminist contribution to, and impact within and beyond, the Core programme. There were regional and cross-regional meetings of feminists at Porto Alegre, an important one connected with planning for WSF 4. There were numerous panels on gender and sexuality in both the central and more marginal programmes. Feminists and feminisms at the Forum are, however, confronted with devising a strategy that combines working within decision-making bodies, making their presence felt within the Forum itself, and addressing a feminist and general public beyond the Forums. To me, the problem is one of publicly confronting the decision-making bodies (the shortcomings of which, with respect to women's representation, have been indicated above). Whereas leading figures might declare good intentions with respect to women and feminism within the Forum, the step from talking to walking has still to be taken here also.

The power and presence imbalances within the Forum might be corrected by two measures. One, quotas for under-represented categories and two, a Forum programme structured according to collective subjects as well as major problems. Thus, one could have major panels and programmes on Labour, Women, Youth, Indigenous Peoples — even the Aged (I hope to become such myself one day). At present, for example, Labour may be represented in a series of union-sponsored or union-approved events, some within and some beyond the Core programme. But this implies a dispersal of attention and impact where there should, surely, be concentration. (Fisher and Ponniah 2002 have but two contributions on the union movement as such, and the single one on feminism does

not address the international / global at all !) Alternatively, or additionally, imbalances can, could and should be corrected by autonomous Forums. Or what about a re-invention, in the light of the WSF, of the World Youth Festivals of Communist origin ?

A Social Movement Network : De/Centralised ?

At two previous Forums there has been issued a 'Call of Social Movements.' The initiative for this has come from members of the OC and IC, some of these being recognisable social movement organisations, others being recognisable NGOs. Both Calls have been publicly presented and then signed by 50–100 other organisations and networks. This year, the notion of a 'Social Movements World Network' (SAWN) was widely circulated on the web and subject to a two-session public discussion within the Forum. This eventually produced a declaration, proposing a continuation of discussion about the nature of such a network, with further meetings to take place during major movement events this year.⁴

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

I am actually favourable to, even enthusiastic about, the creation of such a network. In part because it doesn't exist internationally; and in part, because it is going to provide information and ideas on a continuing basis — and to those people / places otherwise excluded from the periodic Forums. In so far as this will have an existence in "real virtuality" (Manuel Castells), it may go beyond a WSF that remains largely earth-bound and institutional. The very experiment is going to be important for progress in this area.

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

Even in the best of all possible cyberworlds, however, there remain questions of

appropriate modes (information, ideas, dialogue), of form (printed word at one end, multimedia at the other) and control (handling cybernuts and our own home-grown fundamentalists). There do exist various relevant models of international social-movement, civil society, anti-globalisation networks — earth-bound or cyberspatial. Indymedia Centre (IMC) has got to be the most important here, and needs to be publicly reflected upon both for what it does well and what it doesn't (dialogue ?). Finally, any Social Movements World Network (SMWN) is going to have to go beyond network-babble and recognise that even networks do not exist on one, emancipatory, model. In discussing the issue, Arturo Escobar has suggested :

It is possible to distinguish between two general types (of networks) : more or less rigid hierarchies, and flexible, non-hierarchical, de-centralised and self-organising meshworks. Hierarchies entail a degree of centralised control, ranks, overt planning, homogenisation, and particular goals and rules of behaviour conducive to these goals. Meshworks...are based on decentralised decision-making...self-organisation, and heterogeneity and diversity. Since they are non-hierarchical, they have no overt goals. It can be said they follow the dynamics of life, developing through their encounter with their environments.⁵

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

From Organisation to Communication in the Global Justice and Solidarity Movement

The movement-in-general has shown, at its best, an almost instinctive feel for the logic of the computer,⁶ and expressed itself in the most creative and provocative ways. For example, at the demonstrations in Quebec City in April 2001, a man was arrested for threatening to catapult a — possibly largish — teddy bear over the globalised razor wire. However, this is not the case for the WSF in particular. The WSF *uses* the media, culture and cyberspace. But it does not *think* of itself in cultural / communicational terms, nor does it live fully within this increasingly central and infinitely expanding universe.⁷

The WSF website remains problematic — promoting year-old ideas (chosen by whom ?) in its meagre library. Trying to reach a human being on this site, to whom one could pose a question, reminds one strongly of Gertrude Stein (or whoever) on Oakland, California, “There is no *there*, there”. The site's own claim, that it was visited during WSF 3 by X million, cannot deal with visitors such as myself, repeatedly seeking for information that wasn't there. The website perked up in the Post-WSF 3 period, providing more useful information than it had during the previous year (http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic/eng_portoalegrefinal.asp), but it is difficult to have confidence that this improvement will continue.⁸

The only WSF daily is *Terra Viva*, an admirable effort by the customarily unaccountable NGO, but which this year seemed to me to add to its space-limitations, delays and superficialities a heavier bias toward the Forum establishment. The commercial, professional, and substantial regional paper in Rio Grande do Sul, *Zero*

Hora, gave wide coverage but, unsurprisingly, in Portuguese. For background information and orientation one was, this year, dependent on free handouts of *La Vie / Le Monde* (inspired by French social Catholicism), and *Ode*, a glossy, multi-lingual, New Age magazine from Rotterdam, with impressively relevant coverage (which I have used in this paper). Other alternatives, and non-Forum sites, provide better information and / or discussion than the Forum itself.⁹

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

The open secret of the electronic media, the decisive political factor, which has been waiting, suppressed or crippled, for its moment to come, is their mobilising power. When I say mobilise I mean *mobilise*...namely to make [people] more mobile than they are. As free as dancers, as aware as football players, as surprising as guerrillas. Anyone who thinks of the masses only as the *object* of politics, cannot mobilise them. He wants to push them around. A parcel is not mobile; it can only be pushed to and fro. Marches, columns, parades, immobilise people. The new media are egalitarian in structure. Anyone can take part in them by a simple switching process. The new media are orientated towards action, not contemplation, towards the present, not tradition. It is wrong to regard media equipment as mere means of consumption. It is always, in principle, also means of production. In the socialist movements, the dialectic of discipline and spontaneity, centralism and decentralisation, authoritarian leadership and anti-authoritarian disintegration has long ago reached deadlock. Network like communication models built on the principle of reversibility of circuits might give indications of how to overcome this situation.¹⁰

And then there is, of course, also The Rally — a panel built on the scale of the Titanic. The paucity of cultural expression at WSF 3 is surprising, bearing in mind we are speaking of Brazil, the country that brought down the corrupt President Collor by cultural-political protest. The WSF 3 song, which has an attractive but complex lilt, is sung only in Portuguese, and was, in fact, the WSF 2 song. As in 2002, the tee shirts were still not going to win any design prizes. And the most popular icon (no fault of the organisers) remains Che. Something of an exception to the general Forum rule was, in 2002, the campaign against fundamentalisms of the *Articulación Feminista Marcosur*. I had and have doubts about the interpretation offered by this campaign, but it was one which intimately combined the customary Forum modes with dramatic cultural expression of undeniable originality and impact : last year there were masks, an enormous hot-air balloon, hoarding-sized posters and more. This year, activity was possibly less dramatic, but peaked with a packed-out book launch, at which was also projected a 10-minute CD

production of considerable invention and power.¹¹ Lucy Garrido, the Uruguayan designer, opted for visuals, music and minimal words, in successive English and Spanish. We could have had, we should have had, a discussion around this. Or maybe even a panel...?

An Academy of Global Empowerment

A review of the recent literature on globalisation reminds us of what happened in the US academy during the Vietnam War.¹² It was a moment at which the academy, not only in the USA, divided between those either committed to or complicit with the existing power relations and those who challenged these. There were, no doubt, excesses on the Left here (not yet free of the excesses of the Right), but opposition to the war in Vietnam, to racism, to class-discrimination, to sexism, to corporatism in the university, gave rise to a wave of high-quality radicalism, some of it still alive — despite neo-liberalism — today. Consider only the US-based NACLA Report on the Americas (<http://www.nacla.org/>). What has happened in the intervening years is well summarised by Arturo Escobar :

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

The last point here is significant. According to Raúl Zibechi, the capacity of popular movements to train their own leaders, to develop their own educational principles, and to develop their own intellectuals is amongst the seven or eight major characteristics of the newest wave of social movements in Latin America.¹³ He mentions the Intercultural University of Indigenous Peoples and Nationalities, coming out of Ecuadorian struggles, the 1,500 schools of the MST (Landless Workers Movement) in Brazil, and others.

But there is also a growing alternative to this from within the academy. This lies, as one might expect, in individual academic staff and students turning their attention to either the GJ&SM in general or to the Forum process in particular. I mention here only a few new academic centres and recent initiatives, to give an impression of what must be taking place on a much wider and more varied scale and, hopefully, spilling out from the social sciences to the academy more generally.

First, the Centre for Civil Society, at the Centre for Global Governance at the London School of Economics in the UK, and second, the Observatorio Social de América Latina (Latin American Social Observatory) in Buenos Aires. The first is oriented towards a liberal-social-democratic notion of global civil society, and is inspired by the LSE's tradition of social reformism and social engineering. The second, concentrates on social movements, protest, and the global movement processes themselves. Though different, these two projects should not (for political reasons) and cannot (for epistemological

ones) be set up in binary-oppositional terms. They represent two cases of academic response to the development of global civil society and global social movements. They are both worthy of closer attention than I can give them here.

Global Civil Society 2002 is the second of two weighty annuals produced by the Centre for Civil Society.¹⁴ The first annual gave considerable attention to not only the title area but also to various global social movements and their dynamics.¹⁵ The GCS project sets a standard for data collection and analysis that others are going to be challenged to surpass. And the accessibility of this work sets new standards, both in the sense of its excellent printed and graphical layout, but also because it is available, free, for chapter by chapter download, from the GCS website, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/Depts/global/Yearbook/>

The Observatorio Social de América Latina (OSAL) is sited within one of Latin America's premier research institutes, Latin American Council of Social Sciences, in Buenos Aires (CLACSO). This bland-sounding project represents what may be the most ambitious monitoring of social movements (under globalisation) anywhere. Although its basic publication form is that of a serial journal of the same name (nine since 2001), and although a large part of it is devoted to country-by-country reports, the current issue also extends beyond Latin America, and it includes analysis and theoretical debates.¹⁶ OSAL / CLACSO has also published a number of books about the current wave of protest. This orientation is clearly toward the new global social movements. After years or decades in which social-movement studies, and commitment to social movements, were somewhat marginalised in Latin America, this is a dramatic declaration of commitment to movement-oriented research. Whilst the audio-visual offerings are from CLACSO rather than OSAL, these include numerous complete books and other resources (all, I think, in Spanish / Portuguese), the subjects and authors of which are often related to the OSAL project. Furthermore, CLACSO runs a computerised distance-education project, making its courses potentially available throughout the continent.

At WSF 3, CLACSO had a well-equipped stall with several staff at a major site, and is also an influential member of the International Council of the Forum. And OSAL was well represented in the Core programme of WSF 3. I have warned against setting up OSAL / CLACSO as a polar opposite to GCS / LSE, as some kind of model for a university of global emancipation. But it is a challenging experiment. Of particular interest might here be the extent to which the commitment of OSAL to the movement is reciprocated by the movements themselves — particularly those closest to it in its home base.

The mention of a university of global emancipation brings us to the pre-Forum proposal of Boaventura de Sousa Santos for a Popular University of Social Movements.¹⁷ Launched with the blessing of IBASE, possibly the key Brazilian NGO behind the Forum, the proposal is for the mutual self-education of both scholars and activists, with a particular focus on the South, and with a specific rooting in the proposed locale. This was one of many individual, even personal, initiatives arising around the WSF and was proposed for discussion at WSF 3 and on the internet. The last initiative in my list is the most marginal in terms of recognition and power. This is less a specific project than the general orientation of a new feminist network, NextGENDERation. NG is a Netherlands-based network of young feminists in academia, which appears to combine

the enthusiasm of seventies feminism with orientations and concerns of both postmodernism and, well, post-capitalism. What is of particular interest is its concentration on the transformation of the university itself :

The NextGENDERation network wants to stand for a type of feminist knowledge politics, deeply concerned with the democratisation of higher education. This concern relates to different, although interconnected, dimensions. The access to higher education, and the way in which power mechanisms such as gender, ethnicity and class structure access this on different levels (with horizontal segregation according to disciplines, and vertical segregation according to academic hierarchies), are of primary concern to us. The production of knowledge is a second dimension on which our attention is focused: the brands of critical and situated knowledges produced from feminist, anti-racist, post-colonial and anti-heterosexist points of view have already begun to transform the old curricula and canons. We are committed to continuing this transformation. Both of these dimensions are related to a vision of what the university, and higher education in general, stands for. From our feminist perspectives, we start from a critical distance towards the classic conception of the university as an ivory tower. At the same time, we don't buy into the current neo-liberal ideals of higher education as a training-place in function of the needs of the labour market. We are invested [sic] in a vision of the university as a place for the production of critical and socially relevant knowledge, and want to work towards that ideal in our specific historical time and space. Another university is possible !¹⁸

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

Conclusion — The Secret of Fire

I am concerned about the future of the Forum process, but not worried. Pandora has opened her box, the genie is out of the lamp, and the secret of fire for emancipatory movements is now an open one. This secret is to *keep moving*. In other words : a moment of stasis within a movement (institutionalisation, incorporation, bureaucratisation, 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. In Florence, young libertarians were grumbling and mumbling 'Another Forum is Possible'. This possibility is not only a matter of information and communication technology. It may be the combination, precisely, of this with youth — given that at least urban kids are growing up with cellular phones, playing arcade computer games, and therefore with an affinity for other computer technology (and a healthy disregard for attempts to coral such).

For the rest, I am inspired. By the energetic and innovative social protest, and original analyses of the local-national-global dialectic in Argentina. By the belated appearance of a network, Raiz (Root), in Peru that clearly has some feeling that the WSF is more than an NGO jamboree. By the Kidz in the Kamp who were discussing, under a tree, and with informal translation, how to ensure that the emancipatory and critical forces have more impact on the Forum process. By the struggle, against all odds, of the

US ZNet people to mount 'Life after Capitalism', an event of post-capitalist *propuesta* within the Forum. By the massive global anti-war demonstrations of February 15–16, 2003 — something that puzzled even radical specialists on the new social movements. By the increasing number of companer@s of various ages, identities, movements and sexual orientations, who believe that, in the construction of a meaningfully civil global society, transparency is not only the best policy but also the *only* one.

FEBRUARY 2003

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Peter Waterman — See 'Editors' (this volume).

NOTES

¹ This is an edited version of Waterman 2003c, which reveals intellectual debts and includes an extensive bibliography. Edward Fullbrook, who cannot, regrettably, be held responsible for any of its continuing short- (or long-) comings, provided stimulus for the production of this tauter version.

² Since this piece was first drafted, Boaventura de Sousa Santos (March 2003) has produced the most original analysis and theorisation of the Forum that has yet appeared. He gives considerable importance to the 'self-democratisation' of the Forum — the aspect on which this paper concentrates.

³ Waterman 2003e.

⁴ Social Movements World Network 2003.

⁵ Escobar 2003.

⁶ Klein 2001.

⁷ For more on this new and challenging area, see Cardon and Granjon (2003) and the Cyberspace panel within 'Life after Capitalism' <http://www.zmag.org/lacsite.htm>.

⁸ Later visits to the WSF website update revealed that my first and second reflections on WSF 3 had been posted. Grateful that, after 5-10 previous efforts over two years, I had finally been given such recognition, I remain in ignorance about the selection principles or procedures involved.

⁹ www.choike.org/links/about/index.html, www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/free/wsf/.

¹⁰ Enzensberger 1976, pp 21-53.

¹¹ Cotidiano Mujer/CFMEA 2002.

¹² Munck 2002.

¹³ Zibechi 2003

¹⁴ Glasius, Kaldor, and Anheier 2002

¹⁵ Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor 2001, reviewed Waterman, forthcoming b.

¹⁶ OSAL 2003

¹⁷ Santos 2003b.

¹⁸ NextGENDERation 2003.