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Neo-liberal globalization is presided over by techno-scientific knowledge, and owes its hegemony to the credible way in which it discredits all rival knowledges, by suggesting that they are not comparable, in terms of efficiency and coherence, to the scientificity of the market laws. Since neo-liberal globalization is hegemonic, no wonder that it anchors itself in the knowledge, no less hegemonic, of Western-based modern science. This is why the practices and knowledges circulating in the WSF have their origin in very distinct epistemological assumptions (what counts as knowledge) and ontological assumptions (what it means to be human). Such diversity exists not only among the different movements but also within 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, differences about identifying, validating or hierarchizing 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 reveals that the epistemological diversity of the world is virtually infinite.

The counter-hegemonic globalization to which the WSF aspires thus immediately confronts the epistemological problem of the ability of that same scientific knowledge to advance the counter-hegemonic struggles. To be sure, many counter-hegemonic practices resort to the hegemonic scientific and technological knowledge, and many of them would not even be thinkable without it. This is true of the WSF itself, which would not exist without the new information and communication technologies. The question is to what extent such knowledge is 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, indeed a meta-epistemological problem: on the basis of which knowledge or epistemology are these problems to be formulated?

The core idea that dominates the epistemological questioning provoked by the WSF is that the knowledge we have of globalization,

whether hegemonic or counter-hegemonic, is less global than globalization itself. Scientific knowledge, however supposedly universal, is almost entirely produced in the countries of the developed Global North and, however presumably neutral, promotes the interests of these countries and constitutes one of the productive forces of neo-liberal globalization. Science is doubly at the service of hegemonic globalization, whether by virtue of the way in which it promotes and legitimizes it, or the way in which it discredits, conceals or trivializes counter-hegemonic globalization. Hegemony presupposes a constant policing and repressing of counter-hegemonic practices and agents. Discrediting, concealing and trivializing counter-hegemonic globalization go largely hand in hand with discrediting, concealing and trivializing the 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.¹

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 in three basic ideas. First, the expansion of Western-based global capitalism was made possible and justified by the supposedly all-powerful and only valid form of rationality and knowledge, modern science. On this basis an immense variety of non-Western, non-scientific knowledges were destroyed, suppressed or marginalized and, with them, the peoples whose lives and practices were run according to such knowledges. This destruction of knowledge I call epistemicide, and more often than not it took place concomitantly with genocide. Acknowledging this fact amounts to recognizing that the understanding of the world by far exceeds the Western understanding of the world. Without establishing a more balanced (neither relativistic nor imperialist) relationship among rival knowledges, all the policies aimed at promoting social justice will end up furthering social injustice. Second, the objectivity of science does not imply neutrality; science and technology may just as well be put at the service of neo-liberal globalization as at the service of counter-hegemonic globalization. The extent to which science may be resorted to is in general arguable within the movements, and it may vary according to circumstances and practices. Third, whatever the extent to which science is resorted to, counter-hegemonic practices are mainly practices of non-scientific knowledges, practical, often tacit knowledges that must be made credible to render such practices credible in turn.

This third point is more polemical because it confronts the hegemonic concepts of truth and efficiency directly. The epistemological denunciation that the WSF engages in consists in showing that the concepts of rationality and efficiency presiding over hegemonic technical-scientific knowledge are too restrictive to capture the richness and diversity of the social experience of the world, and particularly that they discriminate against practices of resistance and production of counter-hegemonic alternatives. Hegemonic rationality and efficiency thus bring about a contraction of the world by concealing or discrediting all the practices, agents and knowledges that are not accounted for by their criteria. The concealment and discrediting of these practices constitute a waste of social experience, both social experience that is already 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 a sociology of absences and a sociology of emergences (Santos 2004b). They are critical sociologies of a new kind built in opposition to hegemonic social sciences and upon alternative epistemological presuppositions. They aim at critically identifying the conditions that destroy non-hegemonic and potentially counter-hegemonic social experience. Through the sociology of absences and the sociology of emergences, 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 exemplified by the WSF. In real life, the practices and knowledges of the different movements and organizations, as well as of the global interactions among them, come more or less close to this ideal type.

The World Social Forum and the sociology of absences

The *sociology of absences* consists of an enquiry 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. Its empirical object is deemed impossible in the light of conventional social science, and for this reason its formulation already represents a break with it. The objective of the sociology of absences is to transform impossible into possible objects, absent into present objects, invisible or non-credible subjects into visible and credible subjects.

There is no single, univocal way of not existing. The logics and

processes through which hegemonic criteria of rationality and efficiency produce the non-existence of what does not fit them 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* and *rigour of knowledge*. It is the most powerful mode of production of non-existence. It consists in turning modern science and high culture into the sole criteria of truth and aesthetic quality, respectively. The complicity that unites the 'two cultures' (the scientific and the humanistic culture) resides in the fact that both claim to be, each in its own field, exclusive canons of production of knowledge or artistic creation. All that is not recognized or legitimized by this 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 history has a unique and well-known meaning and direction. This meaning and direction have been formulated in different ways for the last two hundred years: progress, modernization, development. Common to all these formulations is the idea that time is linear and that ahead of time the core countries of the world system proceed and, along with them, the dominant knowledges, institutions and forms of sociability. This logic produces non-existence by describing as backward (pre-modern, underdeveloped, etc.) whatever is asymmetrical vis-à-vis whatever is declared forward. It is according to this logic that Western modernity produces the non-contemporaneity of the contemporaneous, and that the idea of simultaneity conceals the asymmetries of the historical times that converge into it. The encounter between the African peasant and the officer of the World Bank on his field trip illustrates this condition. In this case, non-existence assumes the form of residuum, which in turn has assumed many designations for the past two hundred years, the first being the primitive or savage, closely followed by the traditional, the pre-modern, the simple, the obsolete, the underdeveloped.

The third logic is the logic of social classification, based on the monoculture of *naturalization of differences*. It consists in distributing populations according to categories that naturalize hierarchies. Racial and sexual classifications are the most salient manifestations of this logic. Contrary to what happens in the relation between capital

and labour, social classification is based on attributes that negate the intentionality of social hierarchy. The relation of domination is the consequence, rather than the cause, of this hierarchy, and it may even be considered as an obligation of whoever is classified as superior (for example, 'the white man's burden' in his civilizing mission). Although the two forms of classification (race and sex) are decisive for the relation between capital and labour to stabilize and spread globally, racial classification has been the one most deeply reconstructed by capitalism.² According to this logic, non-existence is produced as a form of inferiority, insuperable inferiority because natural. The inferior, because insuperably inferior, cannot be a credible alternative to the superior.

The fourth logic of production of non-existence is the logic of the dominant scale: the *monoculture of the universal and of the global*. According to this logic, the scale adopted as primordial determines the irrelevance of all other possible scales. In Western modernity, the dominant scale appears under two different forms: the universal and the global. Universalism is the scale of the entities or realities that prevail regardless of specific contexts. For that reason, they take precedence over all other realities that depend on contexts and are therefore considered particular or vernacular. Globalization is the scale that in the last twenty years has acquired unprecedented relevance in various social fields. It is the scale that privileges entities or realities that widen their scope to the whole globe, thus earning the prerogative to designate rival entities as local. According to this logic, 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.³

Finally, the fifth logic of non-existence is the logic of productivity. It resides in the *monoculture of the criteria of capitalist productivity and efficiency*, which privileges growth through market forces. These criteria apply both to nature and to human labour. Productive nature is nature at its maximum fertility in a given production cycle, whereas productive labour is labour that maximizes generating profit likewise in a given production cycle. In its extreme version of conservative utopia neo-liberalism aims to convert labour into a productive force among others, subject to the laws of the market, like any other productive force. It has been doing this by transforming labour into a global resource while at the same time preventing at any cost the emergence of a global labour market (via immigration laws, violation of labour standards, union busting, etc.). According to the logic of capitalist productivity,

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. They are social forms of non-existence because the realities to which they give shape are present only as obstacles vis-à-vis the realities deemed relevant, be they scientific, advanced, superior, global or productive realities. They are, therefore, disqualified parts of homogeneous totalities, which, as such, merely confirm what exists, and precisely as it exists. They are what exists under irretrievably disqualified forms of existing.

The social production of these absences results in the waste of social experience. The sociology of absences aims to identify the scope of this waste so that the experiences produced as absent may be liberated from those relations of production and thereby made present. To be made present means to be considered alternatives to hegemonic experience, to have their credibility discussed and argued for and their relations taken as an object of political dispute. The sociology of absences aims thus to create a want and turn the supposed lack of social experience into a waste of social experience. It therefore creates the conditions to enlarge the field of credible experiences in this world and time. 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 absences proceeds by confronting each one of the modes of production of absence mentioned above. Because the latter have been shaped by conventional social science, the sociology of absences cannot but be transgressive, and as such is bound to be discredited. Nonconformity with such discredit and struggle for credibility, however, make it possible for the sociology of absences not to remain an absent sociology. Indeed, nonconformity and struggle for credibility are embedded in the practices of transgressive freedom – both practices of transformative action and practices of transformative knowledge – adopted by the organizations and social movements involved in the WSF. The sociology of absences works by replacing monocultures by ecologies.⁴ I therefore identify five ecologies.

The ecology of knowledges. The first logic, the logic of the monoculture of scientific knowledge and rigour, must be confronted with the identification of other knowledges and criteria of rigour that operate credibly in

social practices. Such contextual credibility must be deemed a sufficient condition for the knowledge in question to have enough legitimacy to participate in epistemological debates with other knowledges, namely with scientific knowledge. The central idea of the sociology of absences in this regard is that there is no ignorance or knowledge in general. All ignorance is ignorant of a certain knowledge, and all knowledge is the overcoming of a particular ignorance (Santos 1995: 25). Learning certain forms of knowledge may involve forgetting others and, in the last instance, becoming ignorant of them. In other words, in the ecology of knowledges, ignorance is not necessarily the original state or starting point. It may be the result of forgetting or unlearning implicit in the reciprocal learning through which interdependence is achieved. Thus at each phase in the ecology of knowledges it is crucial to question whether what is being learned is valuable or whether it should be forgotten or unlearned. Ignorance is only an unqualified form of being and doing when what is being learned is more valuable than what is being forgotten. The utopia of inter-knowledge is learning other knowledges without forgetting one's own. This is the idea of prudence that underlies the ecology of knowledges.

The ecology of knowledges begins with the assumption that all relationship practices between human beings and also between human beings and nature involve more than one form of knowledge and, therefore, of ignorance. Epistemologically, modern capitalist society is characterized by the fact that it favours practices in which scientific knowledge predominates. This means that only ignorance of it is truly disqualifying. This privileged status granted to scientific practices means that the interventions in human and natural reality that they afford are also favoured. Any crises or catastrophes that may result from these practices are socially acceptable and seen as inevitable social costs that may be overcome through new scientific practices.

As scientific knowledge is not socially distributed in an equitable manner, the real-world interventions it favours tend to be those that cater to the social groups that have access to scientific knowledge. Social injustice is based on cognitive injustice. The struggle for cognitive justice will not be successful, however, if it is based solely on the idea of a more equal distribution of scientific knowledge. Apart from the fact that this form of distribution is impossible under the conditions of global capitalism, this knowledge has intrinsic limits in relation to the types of real-world intervention that can be achieved. These limits are the result of scientific ignorance and an inability to recognize alternative forms of knowledge and interconnect with them on equal terms. In the

ecology of knowledges, forging credibility for non-scientific knowledge does not involve discrediting scientific knowledge. It simply involves its counter-hegemonic use. It consists, on the one hand, of exploring alternative scientific practices that have been made visible through the plural epistemologies of scientific practices and, on the other hand, by promoting interdependence among scientific and non-scientific knowledges.

This principle of incompleteness of all knowledges is the condition of the possibility of epistemological dialogue and debate among the different knowledges. What each knowledge contributes to such a dialogue is the way in which it leads a certain practice to overcome a certain ignorance. Confrontation and dialogue among knowledges are confrontation and dialogue among the different processes through which practices that are ignorant in different ways turn into practices that are knowledgeable in different ways. All knowledges have internal and external limits. The internal limits relate to the restrictions on the real-world interventions that they allow. The external limits result from the recognition of alternative interventions made possible by other forms of knowledge. Hegemonic forms of knowledge understand only internal limits. The counter-hegemonic use of modern science constitutes a parallel exploration of both internal and external limits. This is why the counter-hegemonic use of science cannot be restricted to science alone. It makes sense only within an ecology of knowledges.

The ecology of knowledges permits one not only to overcome the monoculture of scientific knowledge but also the idea that the non-scientific knowledges are alternatives to scientific knowledge. The idea of alternatives presupposes the idea of normalcy, and the latter the idea of norm, and so, nothing being further specified, the designation of something as an alternative carries a latent connotation of subsidiarity. If we take biomedicine and African traditional medicine as an example, it makes no sense to consider the latter, by far the predominant one in Africa, as an alternative to the former. The important thing is to identify the contexts and the practices in which each operates, and the way they conceive of health and sickness and overcome ignorance (as undiagnosed illness) in applied knowledge (as cure).

Ecology of knowledges does not imply acceptance of relativism. On the contrary, from the point of view of a pragmatics of social emancipation, relativism, as absence of criteria that establish hierarchies among knowledges, is an untenable position, because it renders impossible any relation between knowledge and the objectives of social transformation. If anything is of equal value as knowledge, all projects

of social transformation are equally valid or, which means the same, equally invalid. The ecology of knowledges aims to create a new sort of relationship between scientific knowledge and other kinds of knowledge. It consists in granting 'equality of opportunities' to the different kinds of knowledge engaged in ever broader epistemological disputes aimed at maximizing their respective contributions to building 'another possible world', that is to say a more democratic and just society, as well as a more balanced society vis-à-vis nature. The point is not to ascribe equal validity to all kinds of knowledge, but rather to allow for a pragmatic discussion of alternative criteria of validity, which does not immediately disqualify whatever does not fit the epistemological canon of modern science.

The ecology of knowledges focuses on concrete relationships between knowledges and on the hierarchies and powers that are generated between them. The aim of creating horizontal relationships is not incompatible with the concrete hierarchies that exist within the context of concrete social practices. Indeed, no concrete practice would be possible without these hierarchies. What the ecology of knowledges challenges is the universal and abstract hierarchies and powers that have been naturalized by history and reductionist epistemologies. Concrete hierarchies must emerge on the basis of valuing a particular real-world intervention in confrontation with other alternative interventions. Complementarity or contradictions may exist between the different types of intervention and, in every case, the debate between them is governed by both cognitive judgements and ethical and political judgements. The prevalence of cognitive judgements in the construction of any given knowledge practice is therefore derivative, that is to say derived from a previous context of decisions on the production of reality in which political and ethical judgements predominate. The objectivity that presides over the cognitive phase does not clash with the non-neutrality that presides over the ethical-political phase.

The basic impetus behind the emergence of the ecology of knowledges, as the epistemological form of the WSF, lies in the fact that the Forum, while giving voice to the global resistance against global capitalism, has made visible the social and cultural realities of societies on the periphery of the world system where the belief in modern science is more tenuous, where the links between modern science and the designs of colonial and imperial domination are more visible, and where other non-scientific and non-Western forms of knowledge prevail in resistance practices.

The ecology of temporalities. The second logic, the logic of the monoculture of linear time, is confronted 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. The predominance of linear time is not the result of its primacy as a temporal conception, but the result of the primacy of Western modernity which embraced it as its own. Linear time was adopted by Western modernity through the secularization of Judaeo-Christian eschatology, but it never erased, not even in the West, other conceptions of time such as circular time, cyclical time, glacial time, the doctrine of the eternal return, and still others that are not adequately grasped by the images of the arrow of time. This is the case of the temporal palimpsest of the present, the idea that the subjectivity or identity of a person or social group is a constellation of different times and temporalities, some modern, some non-modern, some ancient, some recent, which are activated differently in different contexts or situations. More than any other, the indigenous peoples' movements bear witness to such constellations of time.

Moreover, different cultures and the social practices they ground have different rules of social time, different temporal codes: the relationship between past, present and future; how to define early and late, short-term and long-term, life cycle, urgency; accepted rhythms, sequences, synchronies and diachronies, tempos, paces of life. Different cultures thus create different communities of time: some control time, others live within time; some are monochronic, others polichronic; some focus on time needed to carry out activities, others on activities to fill the time; some privilege clock time, others event time, subscribing thus to different conceptions of punctuality; some value continuity, others discontinuity; for some time is reversible, for others irreversible; some see themselves evolving in linear progression, others in non-linear progression. The silent language of cultures is above all a time language.

The need to take into account these different conceptions of time derives from the fact, pointed out by Koselleck (1985) and Marramao (1985), that societies understand power according to the conceptions of temporality they hold. The most resistant relations of domination are those based on hierarchies among temporalities. Domination takes place by reducing dominated, hostile or undesirable social experience to the condition of residuum. Experiences become residual because they are contemporary in ways that are not recognizable by the dominant temporality. They are disqualified, suppressed or rendered unintel-

ligible because they are ruled by temporalities that are not contained in the temporal canon of Western capitalist modernity.

In this domain, the sociology of absences starts from the idea that different cultures generate different temporal rules and that societies are constituted of various times and temporalities. It aims to free social practices from their status as residuum, devolving to them their own temporality and thus the possibility of autonomous development. Once these temporalities are recuperated and become known, the practices and sociabilities ruled by them become intelligible and credible objects of argumentation and political debate. For instance, once liberated from linear time and devolved to its own temporality, the activity of the African or Asian peasant stops being residual and becomes contemporaneous with the activity of the high-tech farmer in the USA or the activity of the World Bank executive. By the same token, the presence or relevance of the ancestors in one's life in different cultures ceases to be an anachronistic manifestation of primitive religion or magic to become another way of experiencing contemporaneity.

The time diversity of the movements and organizations participating in the WSF is inviting the development of a new kind of time literacy, which I would call multitemporality. Building coalitions and organizing collective actions across different time rules is no easy task. As I will show later on, some of the debates and cleavages within the WSF derive from unacknowledged differences as to social time conceptions and rules. Movements and organizations embedded in clock time, monochronicity, discontinuity, time as a controlled resource and linear progression have difficulties in understanding the political and organizational behaviour of movements embedded in event time, polichronicity, continuity, time as controlling, non-linear progression and vice versa. Only by learning from each other and thus through multitemporal literacy will such difficulties be overcome.

The ecology of recognitions. The third logic of production of absences is the logic of social classification. Although in all logics of production of absence the disqualification of practices goes hand in hand with the disqualification of agents, it is here that the disqualification affects mainly the agents, and only subsequently the social experience of which they are the protagonists. The coloniality of Western modern capitalist power mentioned by Quijano (2000) consists in collapsing difference and inequality, while claiming the privilege to ascertain who is equal or different. The same can be said of the unequal sexuality of modern capitalist power. The sociology of absences confronts coloniality and un-

equal sexuality by looking 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. It does so by submitting hierarchy to critical ethnography (Santos 2001a). This consists in deconstructing both difference (to what extent is difference a product of hierarchy?) and hierarchy (to what extent is hierarchy a product of difference?). The differences that remain when hierarchy vanishes become a powerful denunciation of the differences that hierarchy reclaims in order not to vanish. The feminist, the indigenous and the Afro-descendants movements have been in the forefront of the struggle for an ecology of recognitions.

The ecology of recognitions has become a structural innovation of the WSF owing to the social and cultural diversity of the collective subjects that participate in it, the different forms of oppression and domination they fight against and the multiplicity of scales (local, national and transnational) of the struggles they engage in. This diversity has given a new visibility to the processes that characterize the differentiated and unequal dynamics of global capitalism and the ways in which they generate different types of contradictions and struggles, not all of which may be simply integrated into or subordinated to class struggle, and which do not necessarily take the nation as their privileged arena. More than that, it has shown that the Eurocentric assumptions about world history, development and emancipation do not allow for a sufficiently wide-ranging circle of reciprocity capable of capturing the new called-for balance between the principle of equality and the principle of recognition of difference. On the basis of such assumptions the 'political' has been defined according to a narrow principle of superordination which condemns many forms of sociability, contradiction, opposition, resistance or struggle to the past or to marginality. It obscures, for example, the fact that during the process of creating capitalist relations of production in the colonies it was not only class relations which were reproduced but also hierarchical relationships that involved regions, cultures, languages, sexes and, above all, races.

Feminist, post-colonial, peasant, indigenous peoples', ecological, and gay and lesbian struggles have brought into the picture a wide range of temporalities and subjectivities and have converted non-liberal conceptions of culture into an indispensable resource for new modes of resisting, formulating alternatives and creating insurgent public spheres. In their struggles, the 'cultural' incorporates and shapes alternative rationalities, without constituting a differentiated sphere of social life, as in the liberal conception. The recognition of cultural

difference, collective identity, autonomy or self-determination has given rise to new forms of struggle (for equal access to existing rights or resources; for the recognition of collective rights; the defence and promotion of alternative local or traditional normative frameworks, of communal forms of producing livelihoods or resolving conflicts, etc.). As a result, the idea of individual or collective multicultural citizenship acquires a more exact meaning as the privileged site of struggles for the mutual articulation and activation of recognition and redistribution.

By widening the circle of reciprocity – the circle of equal differences – the ecology of recognitions creates new demands for mutual intelligibility. The multidimensionality of forms of domination and oppression gives rise to forms of resistance and struggle that mobilize different, and not always mutually intelligible, collective actors, vocabularies and resources, and this can place serious limitations on attempts to redefine the political arena. To address the issue of mutual intelligibility, I see emerging in the WSF inter-knowledge exercises which I call procedures of mutual translation, and which I will deal with in Chapter 7. Unlike any general theory of emancipatory action, the procedure of translation maintains intact the autonomy of the different collective subjects and their struggles, since only that which is different can be translated. Making things mutually intelligible means identifying what unites and what is common to entities that are separated by differences. The procedure of translation allows common ground to be identified in an indigenous, a feminist and an ecological struggle, etc., without effacing the autonomy and difference that sustain each one of them. Autonomy and difference presuppose that the movements condition their mobilization on having their own reasons to mobilize. That is why the procedure of translation is also fundamental in order to link the diverse and specific intellectual and cognitive resources that are expressed through the various modes of producing knowledge about counter-hegemonic initiatives and experiences.

The ecology of trans-scales. The sociology of absences confronts the fourth logic, the logic of abstract universalism and global scale, by recuperating both hidden universal aspirations and alternative local/global scales that are not the result of hegemonic globalization. Viewed from the Global South, universalism is the expression of an apparent convergence or reconvergence of the world under the aegis of neo-liberal globalization. It is, therefore, a false universalism. It comprises the following general and abstract principles: free market, democracy, rule of law, individualism and human rights. Their abstraction and generality

are of a new type. Rather than being decontextualized or disembedded, these principles are conceived of as being globally embedded, providing the global criteria for the evaluation of the particularities of the world. The convergence of universalism with globalization is thus both the cause and the consequence of the convergence of the world.

The sociology of absences operates here by showing that the world, rather than converging or reconverging, is diverging or rediverging. While uncovering an alternative globalization – the counter-hegemonic globalization, of which the WSF is an embryonic manifestation – the sociology of absences shows that the new universalism is both excessive and fraudulent. Two main absences are thereby made present. The first one relates to the fact that there are alternative universal aspirations, all of them expressed in the WSF: social justice, dignity, mutual respect, solidarity, community, cosmic harmony of nature and society, spirituality, etc. In our world, universalism exists only as a plurality of partial and competitive universal aspirations, all of them embedded in particular contexts. Recognizing the relativity of such aspirations does not involve relativism; it simply broadens the ‘conversation of humankind’ called for by John Dewey (1960) by both lending credibility to and expanding the scope of localized clashes among alternative universal or global aspirations. Henceforth another absence is made present: there is no globalization without localization, and as there are alternative globalizations there are also alternative localizations.

The local that has been integrated in (and indeed created by) hegemonic globalization is what I designate as localized globalism – that is, the specific impact of hegemonic globalization on the local (Santos 2000: 179).⁵ The disempowerment of the local – its being reduced to the expression of an impact – derives from its imprisonment in a scale that prevents it from moving beyond impact and aspiring to globalize itself. The sociology of absences operates here by deglobalizing the local vis-à-vis hegemonic globalization – by identifying what is there in the local which is not reducible to the effect of the impact – and by exploring the possibility of reglobalizing it as a counter-hegemonic globalization. This is done by identifying other local formations in which the same oppositional globalizing aspiration can be detected, and by proposing credible linkages among them. Through such linkages the different local formations delink themselves from the inert series of global impacts and relink themselves as sites of resistance and generation of alternative globalization. This inter-scale movement is what I call the ecology of the trans-scales. In this domain, the sociology of absences amounts to an exercise of cartographic imagination, whether to see in

each scale of representation not only what it reveals but also what it conceals, or to deal with cognitive maps that operate simultaneously with different scales, namely to identify local/global articulations (Santos 1995: 456–73; Santos 2001b). Most movements involved in the WSF started as local struggles fighting against the social exclusion brought about or intensified by neo-liberal globalization. Only later, often via the WSF, have they developed local/global linkages through which they reglobalize themselves in a counter-hegemonic way.

The ecology of productivities. Finally, in the domain of the fifth logic, the monoculture of capitalist productivity, the sociology of absences consists in recuperating and valorizing alternative systems of production, popular economic organizations, workers’ cooperatives, self-managed enterprises, solidary production, etc., which have been hidden or discredited by the capitalist orthodoxy of productivity. Peasant movements for access to land and land tenure or against mega-development projects, urban movements for housing rights, popular economy movements, indigenous movements to defend or to regain historical territories and the natural resources found in them, low-caste movements in India to protect land and local forests, ecological sustainability movements, movements against the privatization of water or against the privatization of social welfare services – all these movements base their claims and their struggles on the ecology of productivities.

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 social justice and sustainability) characteristic of global capitalism. Invisibility or disqualification of alternative sociabilities and logics of production is here most likely. All the more so as they bear no resemblance to the seemingly only credible alternatives to capitalism experimented with throughout most of the twentieth century, that is the centralized socialist economies.

The scale of these initiatives is as varied as the initiatives themselves. The alternatives range from micro-initiatives undertaken by marginalized sectors in the Global South, seeking to gain control of their lives and livelihoods, to proposals for national and international economic and legal coordination designed to guarantee respect for basic labour and environmental standards worldwide, novel forms of capital controls, revamped systems of progressive taxation and spending, and expansion of social programmes, as well as attempts to build regional economies based on the principles of cooperation and solidarity.

These alternative conceptions and practices of production and productivity share two key traits. First, rather than embodying comprehensive blueprints or system-wide alternative economic agendas, they entail in most cases efforts by local communities and workers, often in tandem with transnational advocacy networks and coalitions, to carve out niches of solidary production and political mobilization within the context of global capitalism. They seek to open up spaces for further transformations of capitalist values and socio-economic arrangements. They are not nearly as grandiose as centralized socialism. Also, their underlying theories are less ambitious than the firm, classic Marxist belief in the historical inevitability of socialism. In fact, the very feasibility of these alternatives, at least in the short and medium term, depends to a great extent on their ability to survive in a capitalist context. Aware of such context, their aim is to facilitate the acceptance of alternative forms of economic organization and lend greater credibility to them. Second, their broad notion of the economy includes such key goals as democratic participation; environmental sustainability; social, gender, racial and ethnic equity; and transnational solidarity.

In this domain, the sociology of absences broadens the spectrum of social reality through experimentation in and reflection on real economic alternatives for building a more just society. By embodying organizational values and forms that are opposed to those of global capitalism, the economic alternatives extend the principle of citizenship beyond the narrowly defined political realm, thus keeping alive the promise of eliminating the current separation between political democracy and economic despotism.

In each of the five domains, the objective of the sociology of absences is to disclose and to give credit to the diversity and multiplicity of social practices and confer credit on them in opposition to the exclusive credibility of hegemonic practices. The idea of multiplicity and non-destructive relations is suggested by the concept of ecology: ecology of knowledges, ecology of temporalities, ecology of recognitions, ecology of trans-scales and ecology of productivities. Common to all these ecologies is the idea that reality cannot be reduced to what exists. It amounts to an ample version of realism that includes the realities rendered absent by silence, suppression and marginalization. In a word, realities that are actively produced as non-existent.

In conclusion, the exercise of the sociology of absences is counterfactual and takes place by confronting conventional scientific common sense. To be carried out it demands both epistemological imagination and democratic imagination. Epistemological imagination allows for

the recognition of different knowledges, perspectives and scales of identification, analysis and evaluation of practices. Democratic imagination allows for the recognition of different practices and social agents. Both the epistemological and the democratic imagination have a deconstructive and a reconstructive dimension. Deconstruction assumes five forms, corresponding to the critique of the five logics of hegemonic rationality, namely un-thinking, de-residualizing, de-racializing, de-localizing and de-producing. Reconstruction comprises the five ecologies mentioned above.

The WSF is a broad exercise in the sociology of absences. As I have pointed out, it is internally unequal as to its closeness to the ideal type. If it is in general unequivocally noticeable as a refusal of monocultures and an adoption of ecologies, this process is not present with the same intensity in all movements, organizations and articulations. If for some movements opting for ecologies is unconditional, for others hybridity between monocultures and ecologies is permissible. It is often the case, as well, that some movements or organizations 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 decharacterized by the factionalism and power struggle inside one movement or organization, and that it turns into a new monocultural logic. Finally, I offer as a hypothesis the idea 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 emergences is the second epistemological operation conducted by the WSF. Whereas the goal of the sociology of absences is to identify and valorize social experiences available in the world, although declared non-existent by hegemonic rationality and knowledge, 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.

Drawing attention to emergences is by nature more speculative and requires some philosophical elaboration. The deep meaning of emergence can be observed in the most different cultural and philosophical traditions. As far as Western modernity is concerned, however, it happens only in its margins, as, for example, in the philosophy of Ernst Bloch. Bloch takes issue with the fact that Western philosophy has

been dominated by the concepts of All (*Alles*) and Nothing (*Nichts*), in which everything seems to be contained in latency, but whence nothing new can emerge. Western philosophy is therefore a static philosophy. For Bloch, the possible is the most uncertain and the most ignored concept in Western philosophy (1995: 241). Yet only the possible permits revelation of the inexhaustible wealth of the world. Besides All and Nothing, Bloch introduces two new concepts: Not (*Nicht*) and Not Yet (*Noch Nicht*). The Not is the lack of something and the expression of the will to surmount that lack. The Not is thus distinguished from the Nothing (ibid.: 306). To say No is to say yes to something different. In my view, the concept that rules the sociology of emergences is the concept of Not Yet. 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 exist in a vacuum nor are completely predetermined. Indeed, they actively redetermine all they touch, thus questioning the determinations that exist at a given moment. Subjectively, the Not Yet is anticipatory consciousness, a form of consciousness that, although extremely important in people's lives, was completely neglected by Freud (ibid.: 286–315). 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 itself, as well as a component of uncertainty that derives from a double want: 1) the fact that the conditions that render possibility concrete are only partially known; 2) the fact that such conditions only exist partially. For Bloch, it is crucial to distinguish between these two wants: it is possible to know relatively well conditions that exist only very partially and, vice versa, it is possible that such conditions are widely present but are not recognized as such by available knowledge.

The Not Yet inscribes in the present a possibility that is uncertain, but never neutral; it could be the possibility of utopia or salvation (*Heil*) or the possibility of catastrophe or damnation (*Unheil*). Such uncertainty brings an element of chance, or danger, to every change. At every moment, there is a limited horizon of possibilities, and that is why 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 entirely. The sociology of emergences focuses

on possibility. As Bloch says, 'to be human is to have a lot ahead of you' (ibid.: 246). 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 enquiry into the alternatives that are contained in the horizon of concrete possibilities. It consists in undertaking a symbolic enlargement of knowledges, practices and agents in order to identify therein the tendencies of the future (the Not Yet) in which it is possible to intervene so as to maximize 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 that favour the fulfilment of those conditions.

The sociology of emergences acts both on possibilities (potentiality) and on capacities (potency). The Not Yet has meaning (as possibility), but no predetermined direction, for it can end either in hope or disaster. Therefore, the sociology of emergences 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 is a conventional sociology. 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 nonconformism before the waste of experience. The subjective element of the sociology of emergences is anticipatory consciousness and nonconformism before a want whose fulfilment is within the horizon of possibilities. As Bloch says, the fundamental concepts are not reachable without a theory of the emotions (ibid.: 306). The Not, the Nothing and the All shed light on such basic emotions as hunger or want, despair or annihilation, trust or redemption. One way or another, these emotions are present in the nonconformism that moves both the sociology of absences and the sociology of emergences.

Whereas the sociology of absences acts in the field of social

experiences, the sociology of emergences acts in the field of social expectations. The discrepancy between experiences and expectations is constitutive of Western modernity and has been imposed upon other cultures. Through the concept of progress, this discrepancy has been so polarized that any effective linkage between experiences and expectations disappeared: no matter how wretched current experiences may be, they do not preclude the illusion of exhilarating expectations. The sociology of emergences conceives of the discrepancy between experiences and expectations without resorting to the idea of progress, seeing it rather as concrete and measured. The issue is not to minimize expectations, but rather to radicalize the expectations based on real possibilities and capacities, here and now.

Western-based expectations have been grandiose in the abstract, falsely infinite and universal. As such they have justified death, destruction and disaster in the name of redemption ever to come. With the crisis of the concept of progress, the future stopped being automatically prospective and axiological. The concepts of modernization and development diluted those characteristics almost completely. What is today known as globalization consummates the replacement of the prospective and axiological by the accelerated and entropic. Thus, direction turns into rhythm without meaning, and if there is a final stage, it cannot but be disaster. Against this nihilism, which is as empty as the triumphalism of hegemonic forces, the sociology of emergences offers a new semantics of expectations. The expectations legitimized by the sociology of emergences are both contextual, because gauged by concrete possibilities, and radical, because, in the ambit of those possibilities and capacities, they claim a strong fulfilment that protects them, though never completely, from frustration. In such expectations resides the reinvention of social emancipation, or rather emancipations.

The symbolic enlargement brought about by the sociology of emergences consists in identifying signals, clues or traces of future possibilities in whatever exists. Hegemonic rationality and science have totally dismissed this kind of enquiry, because they assume that either the future is predetermined, or that it can only be identified by precise indicators. For them, clues are too vague, subjective and chaotic to be credible predictors. By focusing 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 notion of *clue*, understood as something that announces what is to come next, is essential in various practices, both human and animal. For example, it is well known how animals announce when they are

ready for reproductive activity by means of visual, auditory, and olfactory clues. The preciseness and detail of such clues are remarkable. In medicine, criminal investigation and drama, clues are crucial to decide on future action, be it diagnosis and prescription, identification of suspects or development of the plot. In the social sciences, however, clues have no credibility. On the contrary, the sociology of emergences valorizes clues as pathways towards discussing and arguing for concrete alternative futures. Whereas animals' clues carry highly codified information, in society clues are more open and can therefore be fields of argumentation and negotiation about the future. 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. The stronger and more consolidated movements and organizations tend to engage less in the sociology of emergences than the less strong or consolidated. As regards the relations between movements or organizations, 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.

Notes

1 On this subject, see also Santos (1995, 2000, 2004b).

2 See Wallerstein and Balibar (1991), Quijano (2000) and Mignolo (2000). Quijano considers the racialization of power relations as an intrinsic feature of capitalism, a feature that he designates as the 'coloniality of power' (2000: 374).

3 On the negative dialectics of the global and the local, see Santos (2002b: 163–87).

4 By ecology I mean the practice of assembling diversity by way of identifying and promoting sustainable interactions among heterogeneous partial entities.

5 The global and the local are thus both produced by the processes of globalization. These are sets of unequal exchanges in which a certain artefact, condition, entity or local identity extends its influence beyond its local or national borders and, in so doing, develops an ability to designate as local rival artefacts, conditions, entities or identities. Although these unequal exchanges are played out in many different ways I have distinguished elsewhere four main ones which I have designated as modes of production of globalization: globalized localisms, localized globalisms, subordinate cosmopolitanism and common heritage of humankind (Santos 2002b: 177–82). The first two modes of production are the double face of hegemonic globalization with

core countries specializing in globalized localisms and peripheral countries being forced to specialize in localized globalisms. From the perspective of hegemonic globalization, the world system is a mesh of localized globalisms and globalized localisms. The other two modes of production of globalization refer to the globalization of resistance against globalized localisms and localized globalisms. They are the counter-hegemonic globalization.