

## 5 | Representing this world as it fights for another possible world

The Charter of Principles contains a double statement in this regard: first, the WSF does not claim to be representative of counter-hegemonic globalization; second, no one represents the WSF nor can speak in its name. These are two separate yet related issues: whom does the WSF represent? Who represents the WSF? In this chapter I address the first question by analysing the socio-political profile of the participants in the WSF, and the second question by discussing the issue of the composition and functionality of the International Council. It will become evident in the following that most of the organizational questions analysed in Chapter 4 are also questions of representation.

### Whom does the WSF represent?

The first issue – the WSF's representativeness – has been discussed at different levels.<sup>1</sup> One of them concerns the limits of the world dimension of the WSF. The numbers and the diversity of the geographical origin of participants have been increasing steadily, from the first to the fifth WSF. Here are some statistical data.

TABLE 5.1 WSF in numbers

Year/locale	Attendance	Number of workshops	Number of countries represented
I WSF – 2001, Porto Alegre, Brazil	20,000	420	117
II WSF – 2002, Porto Alegre, Brazil	50,000	622	123
III WSF – 2003, Porto Alegre, Brazil	100,000	1,286	156
IV WSF – 2004, Mumbai, India <sup>2</sup>	115,000	1,200	117
V WSF – 2005, Porto Alegre, Brazil <sup>3</sup>	155,000	2,300	149

Although unquestionably significant, these data conceal the limits of the WSF's geographical scope. To begin with, and as one might expect, nationals of the host country represent a very high percentage of participants: around 70 per cent in 2003, 84 per cent in 2004 and

80 per cent in 2005. Participation from neighbouring countries tends also to be very high: from Argentina, Uruguay and Chile in 2003 and 2005; from Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh in 2004. For instance, in the 2003 WSF, of the 100,000 participants it is estimated that more than 70,000 were Brazilian and 15,000 from other Latin American countries. If this is so, then no more than 15,000 participants from the 'rest of the world' could have been there. Participation is self-funded, which explains why participants from the USA, France and Italy are present in large numbers, regardless of where the Forum is held. Most movements and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have no financial capacity to support their own participation in the WSF. Those that have attended, particularly as regards the first three meetings of the WSF, have often been funded by European and North American NGOs. In such cases, the NGOs claim the right to choose who is to be funded. Thus, even if world participation becomes quantitatively broader and more diverse, the issue of representation will always be there until the selection criteria are more transparent and democratic.

This fact has led some critics to affirm that the WSF is far from having a world dimension. The absences of Africa and Asia in the first three meetings were specifically criticized. The scarce participation from Africa and Asia was negative in itself, but it was even more so if one bears in mind that the absence of movements and organizations from these continents is reflected, in part, in the absence of themes and debates particularly relevant or specific to their realities. A vicious circle may thereby emerge: African or Asian movements do not take part in the WSF because the debates that they most cherish are absent, and they are absent precisely because of the scarce participation of Africans and Asians.

As I mentioned in Chapter 4, with this concern in mind, in its meeting of January 2003 in Porto Alegre, the IC decided to convene the fourth WSF in Mumbai. The decision had been in train since the end of 2001, and the date was selected by the India committees. However polemical, the decision was quite successful in facilitating the presence of Asian movements and organizations. Of the 115,000 participants, the overwhelming majority came from India and other Asian countries.<sup>4</sup> The Mumbai WSF was a decisive step forward towards the globalization of the WSF process. It extended the experience of the WSF to a new and impressive set of movements and organizations coming from countries for which the WSF was still something quite remote. Above all, it showed that the spirit of the WSF – the 'Porto Alegre Consensus' (as it begins to be known, in contrast with the 'Washington Consensus'),

based on the belief in the possibility of another, more just and more solidary world, and on the political will to fight for it – can be re-created in other parts of the world besides Latin America. And if it can be re-created in Asia,<sup>5</sup> there is no reason whatsoever why it couldn't be re-created in Africa. The African presence in Mumbai was not much larger than in previous forums. Africa's problem is that the Atlantic Ocean separates it from Latin America and the Indian Ocean from Asia. For this reason, and encouraged by the Mumbai success, the IC decided in its meeting in Mumbai that the WSF to take place after the 2005 meeting – since 2003 scheduled for Porto Alegre<sup>6</sup> – would take place in Africa. In the following meeting, which took place in Italy in April 2004, the African representatives committed themselves to having the 2007 WSF in Africa and the specific location, Nairobi, was chosen at the meeting of the IC in Porto Alegre, during WSF 2005.<sup>7</sup> In another demonstration of the will and capacity to increase the globalization of the WSF, it was decided at the same IC meeting that the 2006 meeting would assume a new format: a polycentric WSF, as it was designated, taking place simultaneously, if possible, in three continents, in the Americas (Caracas), Africa (Bamako) and Asia (Pakistan).<sup>8</sup>

I do not question the relevance of this particular dimension of the issue of representation, and, as just shown, a sustained effort to enlarge and balance the geographical representation of the WSF has been made. Besides having the WSF take place in different regions of the world, other proposals have been made with a view to facilitating the participation of movements and organizations of the Global South. According to one of them, movements and organizations of the wealthier North, besides paying for their own participation, should contribute towards a common fund to support the participation of movements and organizations of the South that would otherwise be unable to participate. I believe, however, that the WSF must not be delegitimized for not being worldwide enough. If that were the case, we would be submitting it to a much more demanding criterion of globality than we apply to organizations and institutions of hegemonic globalization. Moreover, the criterion of geographical representation is only one of the representativeness criteria. There are no doubt others, with perhaps far more relevance from the political standpoint. Consider, for example, the representation of different themes and political philosophies, different kinds of organizations and movements, different strategies and agendas, and so on and so forth. Particularly after Mumbai, all these criteria tended to be taken into account more and more. As I will show in Chapter 6, when I deal with issues of political strategy, the question

of how to choose between different strategic alternatives is already in place and drawing heated debate.

I do think, however, that so far the issues of representation have been brought into the discussion in such a way that they fail to raise obstacles to the spontaneous congregation of movements and organizations that have been so decisive in affirming the existence of an alternative kind of globalization. The WSF had its origin in a small group of organizations that represented only themselves. The enthusiasm the idea generated surprised even its authors. It gave voice to the need many movements and organizations felt for an arena or space that would not be confined to contesting institutions of hegemonic globalization, but would rather function as a meeting point for the exchange of experiences, debate on alternatives and elaboration of plans for joint action. The idea's success was gauged by free circulation, celebration of diversity, participation without conditions, and the absence of negotiations that might compromise the movements. It was felt that any restrictive criterion would end up bringing about exclusion at a time when only inclusion would make sense. As a matter of fact, even if one had wanted to resort to criteria, it would have been impossible to identify them, let alone rely on an organization capable of legitimately selecting and decreeing them, and supervising their enforcement. It is, however, understandable that the success achieved by the WSF should have contributed to raising the issue of the representativeness of participation. In the evaluations of all the meetings of WSF this issue cropped up frequently. This was particularly the case with the 2003 WSF. As I discussed in Chapter 4, this meeting of the WSF was submitted to a systematic evaluation. One of its main dimensions was the evaluation of the social profile of the participants. It was believed that the results would provide a realistic assessment of the representativeness of the WSF as a counter-hegemonic global movement. The success of the 'systematization' led the organizers to repeat it with basically the same methodology at the two subsequent meetings of the WSF. There were, however, some methodological variations, and for that reason the results are not always comparable. In the following I analyse the social profile of the 'people of Porto Alegre' as established through the systematization of the 2003 WSF, comparing the latter whenever possible with the systematization of the 2005 WSF.

*The people of Porto Alegre in 2003* The social profile of the participants in the 2003 WSF was defined through a survey conducted on a representative and stratified sample of 1,500 interviewees.<sup>9</sup> The enrolled

participants were divided into three groups: delegates, non-delegate participants and campers (staying at the Youth Camp and other camps). The questionnaire was divided into three large themes: characteristics of the participants, engagement in the social and political struggle, and opinions on the public debates agenda.

**CHARACTERISTICS (MAIN RESULTS).** The majority of participants were Brazilians (85.9 per cent). Among the non-Brazilians, 39.7 per cent came from Latin America. The countries with the largest number of participants were the countries neighbouring Brazil, France and the USA: Argentina (13.1 per cent), Uruguay (9.5 per cent), Chile (8.7 per cent), Paraguay (8.4 per cent), France (7.2 per cent), USA (6.6 per cent); 46.3 per cent of the non-Brazilians came from the remaining 133 countries that were represented in the WSF. In the case of the delegates – participants who represent NGOs or movements, 23 per cent of the total number of participants – the presence of France and the USA was even stronger. While the Argentinian delegates represented 6.4 per cent of the total, the delegates from France and the USA made up 8 per cent and 10.4 per cent respectively. These data confirmed the deficit of globality in the WSF and the difficulty of including the bottom in the bottom-up globalization.

Women formed the majority, both of the participants in general (51 per cent) and of the delegates (50.4 per cent). The Brazilian delegates had a stronger feminine presence than the non-Brazilians, 52.7 per cent and 45.7 per cent respectively. As I have already said, the presence of women at the bottom had no reflection at the top of the Forum. As regards sexual preference, 6.1 per cent of the participants stated that they were homosexual, the rest heterosexual (6.1 per cent refused to answer).

As concerns age structure, youth had a strong presence at the Forum: 37.7 per cent of participants were in the age bracket fourteen to twenty-four years. As to delegates, however, only 13 per cent were in that same age bracket. In the camps, the majority were young: 68.5 per cent. The remaining age brackets of participants were as follows: between twenty-five and thirty-four years, 25 per cent; between thirty-five and forty-four, 19.9 per cent; between forty-five and fifty-four, 12.6 per cent; fifty-five years or older, 4.9 per cent.

The strong presence of the young had no expression in the activities organized by the OC, and it was not possible to draw any bridge between the activities of the Forum and the Youth Camp (the was true for all the meetings of the WSF). Hence the criticism of the young, who claimed they were marginalized inside the Forum.

Literacy is perhaps among the most intriguing theme in the data about the social base of the WSF. The level of literacy of participants was very high: 73.4 per cent of the participants held a college degree, whether complete or incomplete, a master's degree or a doctorate. Only 25.7 per cent had between zero and twelve years of schooling; 9.7 per cent of the participants had a master's or doctorate, a percentage that rose to 17.8 per cent in the case of the delegates, reaching 30.1 per cent in the case of non-Brazilian delegates. The criticism frequently addressed to the WSF that it is the expression of an elite among the counter-hegemonic globalization seems to be hereby confirmed.

As regards employment, 62.3 per cent of the participants and 81.2 per cent of the delegates were employed. In terms of their occupation, 43.2 per cent worked for private institutions or NGOs (this percentage reached 44.2 per cent in the case of the delegates) and 36 per cent were public officials; 4.3 per cent worked in manufacturing and 3.3 per cent in agriculture; 12.9 per cent worked in commerce. The tertiary sector (services) was thus the major sector of activity: it employed 79.5 per cent of the participants holding jobs. As regards social class, the waged petty bourgeoisie seemed to prevail.

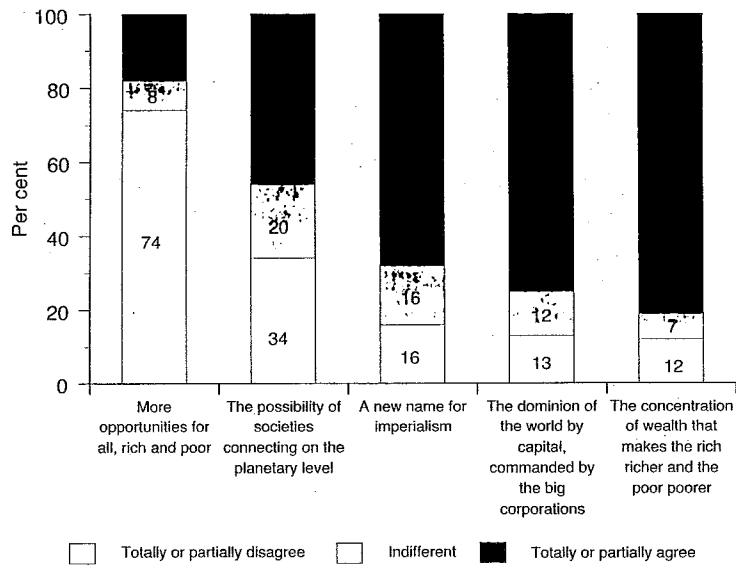
In terms of religious beliefs, 62.6 per cent of the participants declared they had a religion, the percentage being higher among the Brazilians than among non-Brazilians. The predominant religion was, by far, the Catholic religion, accounting for 61.6 per cent of those who stated they did have a religion. Religiosity was even stronger among the delegates (66.3 per cent). These data seem to point to the important role religion plays among the social groups fighting against neo-liberal globalization, and it may explain one of the ideological differences between the organizers of the WSF and its social base as detected in the other results of the systematization presented in Chapter 4. As we saw above, in the first three Forums the themes of religion and spirituality were never considered important enough by the OC and the IC for organized activities to be dedicated to them, let alone activities with high visibility. The situation changed to some extent in the Mumbai WSF.

**ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE.** The majority of participants (64.9 per cent) were engaged in some organization or social movement, a percentage that unsurprisingly reached 89.1 in the case of the delegates. In view of the data analysed above concerning the occupation of the delegates, we can say that most probably a high percentage were employed by the organization in which he or she was involved. The question about the ambit of the organizations with which

they were involved allowed for multiple answers. From the answers given, the conclusion may be drawn that organizations of national and sub-national ambit prevailed overwhelmingly: 33 per cent were local, 35 per cent regional and 36 per cent national. It comes as no surprise that only in the case of the non-Brazilian delegates did organizations of international ambit have a significant weight: 36 per cent, as opposed to 16 per cent in the case of participants in general. These data confirm what I said above about the nature of the WSF: its novelty resides in its having invested in the global links among organizations previously involved in national or local struggles.

As regards the institutional nature of the organizations and movements in which the participants were involved, the strong presence of social movements (25.7 per cent) and NGOs (19.4 per cent) was obvious. Trade unions came next (16.3 per cent). As to the area of action (the question allowed for multiple answers), education was by far the most prevalent, at 47 per cent, followed by popular participation/organization, at 30 per cent, and human rights, at 24 per cent; 35 per cent of the participants declared that they were members of political parties, a percentage that reached 44 in the case of the delegates. The more intense the involvement with NGOs and movements, the less probable was party membership. In the case of trade unionists, however, the majority belonged to a political party. The more leftist the political stance stated, the greater the probability of party affiliation: 46 per cent in the case of those who considered themselves extreme left, and only 28 per cent for those from the centre-left. This may suggest that among the parties on the left it was the extreme left parties which invested most in participation in the WSF. The extreme left position was, however, in the minority among the participants: only 6 per cent identified themselves as extreme left, 15 per cent centre-left, 63 per cent left. Among the delegates, the percentage of those considering themselves left was slightly higher, at 67 per cent.

**OPINIONS ON THE PUBLIC DEBATES AGENDA.** This is a field in which, in surveys of this nature, it is very risky to draw conclusions with any degree of safety. I selected those answers in which the risk seemed to be smaller. As regards abortion, it was asked whether the participants were totally in favour, totally against or whether 'it depends on the situation': 40 per cent said they were totally in favour, 36 per cent that 'it depends on the situation' and 20 per cent were against. More delegates said they were totally in favour, more non-Brazilian delegates (63 per cent) than Brazilian (40 per cent). Not surprisingly, religion

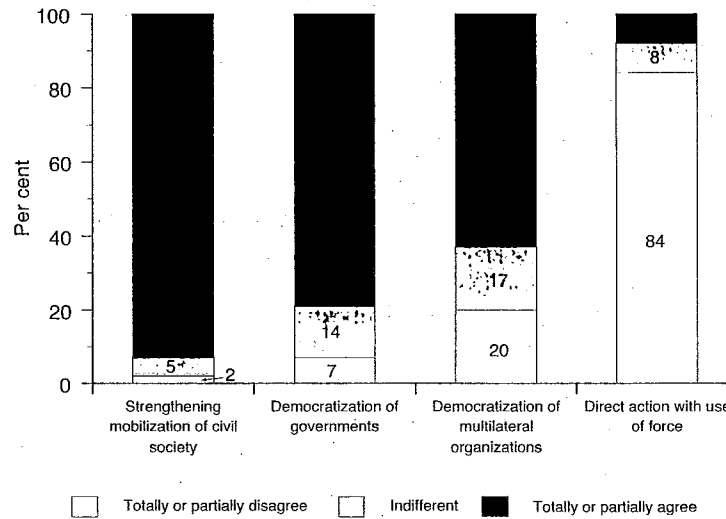


**Figure 5.1 Meanings of globalization (Source: Survey of the profile of participants at the 2003 WSF)**

seems to be the factor that most colours opinions about abortion: 26 per cent of those professing a religion were totally against abortion, while only 9 per cent of those not professing any religion were of this opinion. Among those participating in the organization of civil society, the proportion totally in favour was significantly lower among the trade unionists (31 per cent).

Several questions were asked concerning the processes of globalization and multilateral institutions. Participants were asked to declare their degree of agreement or disagreement<sup>10</sup> with the following characterizations of globalization: 'a new name for imperialism', 'the concentration of wealth making the rich richer and the poor poorer', 'the possibility of societies connecting on the planetary level', 'more opportunities for all, rich and poor', 'the dominion of the world by capital, commanded by big corporations'. Figure 5.1 presents the results.

Not surprisingly, the opinion most favourable to globalization ('more opportunities for all, rich and poor') was that most rejected. It is, however, significant that this rejection was lower among delegates (71 per cent). Equally interesting was the fact that the most ideologically loaded characterization ('a new name for imperialism') drew a higher rate of



**Figure 5.2 Means towards another possible world (Source: Survey of the profile of participants at the 2003 WSF)**

agreement among those active in social movements (72 per cent) than among those active in NGOs (64 per cent).

The interviewees were asked to express their opinion about the efficacy of the following mechanisms to bring about 'another possible world': 'strengthening mobilization of civil society on the global, national, regional and local levels', 'democratization of multilateral organizations (United Nations, WTO, World Bank, IMF)', 'democratization of governments' and 'direct action with use of force' (see Figure 5.2).

The overall results are not surprising, but there are some significant differences among different categories of participants. For instance, Brazilians – obviously under the impact of the then recent victory of the PT in the presidential elections – had much more confidence in the democratization of governments (81 per cent) than non-Brazilians (70 per cent). On the other hand, activists in social movements had much less confidence in the democratization of multilateral institutions (51 per cent) than the members of trade unions or NGOs (68 per cent). Similarly, the incidence of rejection of direct action with use of force was much higher among trade unionists (87 per cent) and NGO members (86 per cent) than among activists in social movements (76 per cent), and was also much higher among delegates – 87 per cent in the case of

Brazilian delegates and 82 per cent in the case of non-Brazilian delegates – than among the campers, i.e. the students and the participants in the lowest social strata (77 per cent). Not surprisingly, among those who saw themselves as belonging to the extreme left, the incidence of rejection of direct action was significantly lower (67 per cent).

*The people of Porto Alegre in 2005* The social profile of the participants in the 2005 WSF was defined through a survey conducted on a representative and stratified sample of 2,540 interviews.<sup>11</sup> This time, the distinction between delegates and participants was eliminated and attendees were rather divided into two different groups: participants and campers.<sup>12</sup> The 2005 questionnaire included the three large themes of the 2003 questionnaire – characteristics of participants, engagement in the social and political struggle, opinions on the public debates agenda – and added a fourth: evaluation of the WSF methodology.

CHARACTERISTICS (MAIN RESULTS). The majority of participants were Brazilians (80 per cent) but less so than in 2003 (85.9 per cent). The countries with the largest number of participants were again the countries neighbouring Brazil, the USA and France:<sup>13</sup> Argentina (13.1 per cent, the same as in 2003), followed by the USA (9.5 per cent, against 6.6 per cent in 2003), Uruguay (7.5 per cent, against 9.5 per cent in 2003), France (4.7 per cent, against 7.2 per cent in 2003) and Chile (4.3 per cent, against 8.7 per cent in 2003). In 2005, 34.7 per cent of the non-Brazilians came from the remaining 134 countries that were represented in the WSF (this corresponds to 46.3 per cent). In terms of the internationalization process of the WSF the two most remarkable facts are, on the one hand, the larger number of participants from the USA<sup>14</sup> and, on the other, the dramatic increase in the participation of Indians: in 2003, they represented a modest 0.6 per cent of the foreign participants; in 2005 this percentage rose to 2.5. This increase is certainly linked to the fact that the WSF was held in India in 2004 and confirms the political success of the strategy of geographical relocation of the WSF, initiated that year to broaden and diversify participation. Another significant factor is that in the Youth Camp (22.6 per cent of the total) campers from Canada and the USA were among the six largest delegations.

Attendance by gender was on average very balanced (49.4 per cent women, 49.6 per cent men). Among non-Brazilian and non-Latin American participants, however, there was a significant imbalance: 46.4 per cent women, 53.6 per cent men. By age group, women tend to be

younger: they made up 55.4 per cent of the fourteen-to-twenty-four age group. As regards age structure, the participation of young people has increased significantly: those in the age bracket fourteen to twenty-four represented 37.7 per cent of participants in 2003 and 42.2 per cent in 2005. The differences in the remaining age brackets of participants were not so significant.

The difficulties in drawing bridges between the Forum and the Youth Camp, identified in the previous meetings, remained in the 2005 WSF, even though the Youth Camp had a more central location inside the World Social Territory. Education continued to figure among the most intriguing data about the characterization of the social base of the WSF. The level of education of participants continued to be very high, even higher than in 2003: 77.7 per cent of the participants held a college degree, whether complete or incomplete, a master's degree or a doctorate (73.4 per cent in 2003). Only 22.3 per cent had between zero and twelve years of schooling (25.7 per cent in 2003). The criticism that the WSF is the expression of an elite of the counter-hegemonic globalization, already voiced in 2003, seems to be hereby confirmed.

Concerning occupation, changes in the questionnaire permitted the category student to coexist with other occupations. As a result, 40.8 per cent declared student as their occupation, with considerable variation among the different age groups, as one might expect. Comparison with the 2003 WSF becomes difficult. The most frequently represented occupations are civil servant and employee of NGO/civil society entity/political party/trade union. Almost 30 per cent of the non-Brazilian and non-Latin American participants are in this latter occupational category. Probably more revealing in class terms was the family profile as defined by the father's and mother's occupation. It transpired that the fathers' occupations were mainly civil servants, self-employed and employees of private companies, respectively 20.8, 20.4 and 20 per cent. As far as the mother's occupation is concerned, the data were revealing not only of the sexual division of labour but also of persistent sexual discrimination: 24.7 per cent were unemployed (4.2 per cent in the case of the father), 19.6 per cent maids, 13.5 per cent farmers (8.5 per cent in the case of the father), 12.1 per cent civil servants (20.8 per cent in the case of the father), 5.7 per cent self-employed (20.4 per cent in the case of the father) and 4.8 per cent employees of private companies (20 per cent in the case of the father). It is interesting to note that the father's occupation among Latin American participants deviates considerably from this pattern: 16.4 per cent are farmers (8.5 per cent in total), 18 per cent employers (7 per cent in total) and 12.5 per cent unemployed

(4.2 per cent in total). A preliminary analysis of the data warrants the conclusion that there are no significant changes as to the social class of the participants.

In the case of Brazilian participants, a question was asked concerning race/ethnic group. The great majority considered themselves to be whites (63.3 per cent) while the percentage of blacks and mulattos was basically the same (16 per cent and 15.5 per cent respectively).<sup>15</sup>

ENGAGEMENT IN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL STRUGGLE. In 2005, 23.4 per cent of the participants were affiliated to political parties, which represents a slight but clear drop in relation to the 35 per cent of 2003. There were significant changes in affiliation by gender: 29 per cent of the men, 18.2 per cent of the women. More significant, however, are the comparisons between the 2003 and the 2005 surveys concerning participation in social movements or organizations.<sup>16</sup> In the 2003 survey the majority of participants were engaged in some organization or social movement (64.9 per cent); in the 2005 survey this figure dropped significantly to 55.4 per cent. In part the explanation may lie in the fact that the campers formed a higher percentage of participants in 2005 than in 2003, and it was among them that the participation was lowest: 44.9 per cent. The low incidence of participation in social movements and organizations among campers must be reflected upon. Could it be that the WSF has become a site of international political tourism? Participation in movements or organizations was higher among older participants: 74.4 per cent in the age bracket thirty-four to fifty-four, compared to 40.2 per cent in the age bracket fourteen to twenty-four. The data on participation by occupation showed that participation is higher among civil servants than among employees of private companies, 67.6 per cent and 44.2 per cent respectively. New questions on family participation in movements or organizations revealed some important facts on family influence on activism. The probability of becoming socially and politically active increases significantly if a member of the family is also active: 72.5 per cent of the actives came from active families, while only 47.1 per cent came from non-active families.

Of the participants in movements/organizations (55.4 per cent of the total) the largest percentage participated in NGOs (33.8 per cent), followed by social movements (28.5 per cent), trade unions (15 per cent) and political parties (11.3 per cent). The often-voiced criticism that the WSF is heavily influenced by the general philosophy of NGOs as social actors (the NGOization of the WSF) finds some base here. Moreover, the connection with NGOs (33.8 per cent) rises to 52.7 per cent in the

case of non-Brazilian and non-Latin American participants. But in this latter case the travel costs are probably the decisive factor in explaining the difference. What deserves close attention is the comparison between this activism profile and that of the 2003 WSF, where the involvement in social movements was higher than in NGOs, 25.7 per cent and 19.4 per cent respectively. Should we conclude that the trend towards NGOization is deepening? If so, with what consequences? In this context it may be of interest to compare the data on self-identification of political identity. While in 2003 72.1 per cent of the participants considered themselves as belonging to the left and 15.2 per cent to the centre-left, in the 2005 survey these figures were 60.1 per cent and 19.8 per cent respectively.

As to the area of activism, the comparison between 2003 and 2005 is difficult as in 2005 this question was asked only of those who participated in movements/organizations.<sup>17</sup> The only reliable comparison concerns the area of education, which can safely be considered the most prevalent in both meetings of the WSF. Other comparisons are speculative but could be transformed into good working hypotheses as to the future of the WSF. Ranked by decreasing incidence, the following areas were identified in 2005: education, social assistance, combating discrimination, art and culture, popular organization/participation, human rights, environment, agriculture and land issues, defending and promoting rights (advocacy), public policies/public budget. Four variations between 2005 and 2003 might be fertile ground for further analysis: social assistance was second in 2005 and fifth in 2003; combating discrimination was third in 2005 and eighth in 2003; art and culture was fourth in 2005 and seventh in 2003; environment was seventh in 2005 and third in 2003.

In the 2005 survey new questions were asked about use of the Internet and the media. The data on the use of the Internet are relevant in terms of showing the continuing social deficit in the WSF process. Not surprisingly 80 per cent had regular access to the Internet. As we know, the WSF is an Internet-based network. More surprising is the high incidence of access to the Internet at home: 46.6 per cent of all participants, 50.7 per cent of the Brazilian participants. This also serves to confirm the perception that the WSF tends to attract people from higher-income strata.

OPINIONS ON THE LEGITIMACY OF INSTITUTIONS. Some of the questions on the public debates agenda (such as abortion or religion) asked in the 2003 survey were dropped in the 2005 survey.

Several questions were asked concerning the role of organized civil society, processes of globalization and multilateral institutions. In the last two cases it is possible to compare the data with those of 2003. There are no significant variations.

The same can be said concerning opinions about the efficacy of different mechanisms to bring about 'another possible world': 'strengthening mobilization of civil society on the global, national, regional and local level', 'democratization of multilateral organizations (United Nations, WTO, World Bank, IMF)', 'democratization of governments' and 'direct action with use of force'. There is, however, a significant new datum. In contrast with the 2003 survey, the 2005 survey distinguished two types of direct action: 'direct action' and 'direct action with use of force', the latter being the only one used in the 2003 survey. While direct action with the use of force continued to be strongly rejected (76.4 per cent), direct action (without the use of force) was strongly approved (59.3 per cent).

The 2005 survey introduced a new section on the evaluation of the WSF's methodology. The objective was to assess the extent to which the self-reform efforts – that is, the constant movement towards organizational innovation and experimentation – were being perceived and appropriated by the participants in the WSF.<sup>18</sup> The relevant fact in this regard is the growing involvement of the participants in the WSF as a process and not as a disparate event. While in 2003 33.6 per cent had participated in some kind of preparatory event leading to the WSF, this number rose to 54.5 per cent in 2005. As I described in Chapter 4, in 2004 a process of consultation and cohesion was set up to democratize the WSF process (all the activities during the WSF being self-organized; increasing the diversity of themes and facilitating greater dialogue). It is remarkable that 17.6 per cent participated in the process leading up to the 2005 WSF, a figure that rose to 20.4 per cent among non-Latin American participants. The evaluation of the consultation process and of the organizational decisions into which it was translated was clearly positive (62.4 per cent). As mentioned above, the 2005 WSF was organized around eleven thematic terrains or spaces. Half of the participants thought that all the terrains had been clearly defined. Interestingly enough, those who identified some confusing or obscure themes selected the following: 'Ethics, cosmo-visions and spiritualities – resistances and challenges for a new world' (17.8 per cent); 'Autonomous thinking, reappropriation and socialization of knowledge' (13 per cent); and 'Affirming and defending the commonwealth of the Earth and peoples as an alternative to mercantilization and transnational

control' (11.7 per cent). One could speculate that the spiritual, the epistemological and the commons are the most challenging grounds for most participants.

SOME REFLECTIONS. This preliminary analysis of the surveys' data is revealing in many ways:

1. The WSF has gradually evolved from a succession of disparate events to a process, and this evolution was accelerated after the 2003 WSF. Both the Mumbai WSF and the 2005 WSF tried to address all the deficits previously identified: the global deficit, the social deficit and the democratic deficit. The Mumbai meeting addressed most decisively the two first deficits, while the 2005 meeting had a very specific impact on the democratic deficit. Nevertheless, the deficits are still there and the social deficit seems particularly resilient.
2. Given the social and political profile of the participants in the WSF – a profile that has seen little variation in the different meetings – the counter-hegemonic nature of the WSF should be viewed by the participants as an open question and should be the object of constant reflection and vigilance. In each specific venue of the WSF, the participation of the most excluded and oppressed social groups should be actively pursued. The progressive activism of the middle classes or of the petite bourgeoisie is a precious political asset and as such must be cherished, but it cannot compensate for the absence of the most oppressed classes and silenced voices. The WSF cannot flourish on the premise that since the Forum exists for the sake of the oppressed the latter don't have to be present.
3. The overwhelming participation of nationals in the WSFs must be acknowledged. This is not a negative feature in itself, since the local impact of the WSF should be viewed as one of the mechanisms through which the local/global linkages are strengthened. The solution for the global deficit problem does not lie in limiting national participation but rather in changing the venue of the WSF.
4. Among the participants there is a basic agreement on several issues, but there are also significant disagreements, which most probably will vary from venue to venue. This raises several issues. First of all, is it possible to link up the different peoples of the WSF as an embryonic form of a counter-hegemonic civil society? Second, how to transform the areas of widely shared consensus into calls for collective action? Third, how better to explore the implications of both the agreements and the disagreements? Should, for instance,



the latter be the object of specific discussions in the WSF? How should the relationship between participants and organizers (IS, IC and the local OC) be framed? In different venues there will be different emphases, but how to link such diversity with the common core upon which the WSF builds its identity and eventually develops its capacity to act?

5. All these reflections and questions raise the issue of governance. Each meeting of the WSF raises specific governance issues, and both the principle of consensus and the principle of participatory democracy are subjected to specific pressures. But, beyond that, what is at stake are the transparency and democratic nature of the permanent governing structures of the WSF, the IS and the IC. The latter, in particular, because it is in charge of the strategic guidelines and organizational design of the WSF, must be the object of specific scrutiny. To this I turn now.

#### **Who represents the WSF? Composition and functionality of the International Council**

The second issue of representation – who represents the WSF? – was touched upon when I dealt with the relations between the IS and IC. It can be discussed from different perspectives. But in my view the discussions about the composition and functionality of the IC are most revealing in this regard.

The IC consisted originally of the groups and organizations invited to the first meeting and all that were admitted afterwards through co-optation. At present, the IC has no fixed number of members. In March 2006 it had 136 members<sup>19</sup> and seven observers (see Annexe I). The imbalances regarding gender, race, age and geography (scarce participation from Africa, Asia and the Arab world) were acknowledged from the very beginning. Equally central was the need to diversify the IC in terms of both the type of organization involved and the focus and scope of the social and political activism. The centrality of these concerns always presupposed the conception of the IC as the embryo of the representative entity of the WSF, the entity in which the diversity of the WSF would arrive at a kind of synthesis, in a body in charge of adopting political-methodological definitions concerning the WSF process.

In view of the serious organizational problems of the 2003 WSF, at the IC meeting that took place during the Forum it was decided to give more responsibility to the IC in planning and organizing the WSF. Accordingly, the following steps were considered necessary: 1) to

restructure the IC in order to render it more operational, namely by approving an internal set of rules and by creating committees in charge of specific tasks; 2) to take measures to increase the representativeness of the IC, namely by approving a proactive policy, aimed both at establishing criteria for the admission of organizations and attracting organizations and movements of world regions or thematic areas with weaker representation in the WSF, and in the IC in particular. It was decided that decisions on these matters would be taken in the following meeting of the IC, set for June 2003 in Miami. In Miami, it was not possible to have the internal rules approved, but six committees were created: strategy, expansion, content, methodology, communication and funding committees. The members of the IC chose the committees on which they would like to work, one of the members taking on the role of 'facilitator' in each of them. Each committee was intended to be in office permanently and submit reports to the meetings of the IC. The criterion for creating committees related to the problems previously identified and the felt need to respond to them urgently. Thus, the mission of the *strategy committee* was to analyse the international situation regularly, reflect on its impact on the development of the Forum, and propose new forms of linkage between the WSF and the social movements, namely the general assembly of the social movements that runs parallel to the WSF. The *expansion committee* was charged with proposing measures to enlarge the Forum's territorial and thematic ambit and with establishing criteria for the admission of organizations to the IC.<sup>20</sup> The *content committee* was charged with analysing the written record of the previous WSFs and proposing topics for discussion in future WSFs. In previous meetings of the IC, there had been exchanges on the need to attune the debates to the expectations and interests of participants, prevent the Forum from becoming repetitive, and identify emergent topics not yet approached in previous forums. The task of the *methodology committee* was to reflect on the problems raised by the structure of the Forum and to propose solutions. Some of these problems were: the problematical relationship between the activities organized by the IS and the self-managed activities (organized by the participant organizations themselves); the method of deliberation by consensus; the creation of linked spaces beyond the Forums among the various organizations or movements; the systematization and cohesion of the proposals for activities, so as to prevent fragmentation and overlapping. The *communication committee* was to propose measures to improve the Forum's internal and external communication. It was considered that many of the internal

criticisms about the lack of transparency of the decisions of the IS or the IC resulted from a lack of efficient communication channels covering the Forum's base overall. On the other hand, the WSF was finding it difficult to inform the public of its activities and messages. Finally, the *funding committee* was charged with taking care of two complex issues: the criteria for fund-raising and the creation of solidary funding systems to make possible the participation of organizations and movements deprived of resources in the activities of the WSF. The former issue was particularly urgent during preparations for the Mumbai WSF, because the Indian organizing committees refused to accept funding from institutions that had funded the previous WSFs, the Ford Foundation among others.<sup>21</sup> The performance of the committees has varied. The content and methodology committees have been the most active, working in close collaboration. Their work was directly reflected in the new organization model of the 2005 WSF. The work of the expansion committee has also drawn much attention. In fact, concerns over the expansion of the IC and the need to overcome the imbalances in representation have generated much debate at the meetings of the IC in the last three years. It has, however, been very difficult to establish the final criteria for admission to the IC, and as a result new admissions have been decided in the absence of such criteria and only on the basis of recommendations made by the expansion committee. At the meeting in Passignano sul Trasimeno (Italy), in April 2004, the decision was taken to accept as members of the IC nineteen new organizations, namely: Alternatives Russia; Asamblea de los Pueblos del Caribe (APC); Babels; COMPA – Convergencia de los Movimientos de los Pueblos de las Américas; CRID – Centre de Recherche et d'Information pour le Développement; Euromarchés; Federación Mundial de Juventudes Democráticas; Fédération Démocratique Internationale des Femmes (FDIF); Fundació per la Pau/International Peace Bureau (IPB); GLBT South-South Dialogue; Grupo de Trabalho Amazônico (GTA); International Network of Street Papers (INSP); Instituto Paulo Freire (IPF); Peace Boat; Project K; Rede CONSEU (Conferencia de Naciones sin Estado de Europa); UBUNTU – Foro Mundial de Redes de la Sociedad Civil; Unión Internacional de Estudiantes; and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (Amarc).<sup>22</sup>

In April 2005, during the Utrecht meeting of the IC, it was agreed that the well-known imbalances in the IC persisted and needed to be corrected. The plenary committee asked the expansion committee to draft a 'road map' aimed at the restructuring of the IC over an eighteen-month period. During the Barcelona IC meeting (July 2005), a

rather lively debate emerged on a proposal to reform the composition of the IC. This debate was a very eloquent expression of the concerns about the global deficit and the need to deepen the representative character of the IC. It also revealed the organization's capacity for self-reform and institutional innovation, and for that reason deserves to be mentioned. The proposal, drafted in the expansion committee, consisted of reviewing the status of all IC members and adopting clearer criteria for the membership of new organizations.<sup>23</sup> The document presented by the expansion committee reinforced the idea that a certain 'weighting would be given to considerations of representativity (on a range of criteria, not just geography, or sector, taken alone), as well as the track record of the organization's participation in the activities of the WSF' (WSF-IC 2005). The debate focused on several issues. With the purpose of avoiding precipitate decisions on admission to the IC, the expansion committee recommended that the slots made available to certain regions or thematic areas should remain vacant as long as the candidate organizations did not meet the criteria to fill them. The form of representation on the IC of continental, regional, sub-regional and local forums was also discussed.<sup>24</sup> The meeting called attention to the very size of the IC. The conclusion was that the 'IC needs to be sufficiently large to ensure diversity, without being so large as to be unwieldy' (ibid.). With the same concern in mind, the expansion committee suggested that the possibility of rotating membership of the IC be considered.

Because the inclusion of new members had traditionally been a rather complex issue for the IC, it was proposed by the expansion committee, and accepted by the IC plenary committee, that six organizations be accepted as new members immediately. The new members of the IC accepted were: Coligação para a Justiça Económica – Mozambique; International Federation Terre des Hommes (IFTDH) – Switzerland; National Network of Autonomous Women's Groups – India; Palestinian Grassroots Anti-apartheid Wall Campaign – Palestine; Réseaux Sous-régional sur la Dette et les DSRP – Mali and Niger; Solidarity Africa Network in Action – Kenya.

It was finally decided that in 2006 (January to April) member organizations of the WSF would be invited to apply for membership of the IC, on the basis of the final criteria to be adopted. Existing members of the IC wanting to continue their membership would also be requested to apply. These applications would have to be made in the prescribed format, and within agreed time frames. The expansion committee proposed three variants of mechanisms to evaluate the candidacies: the

TABLE 5.2 Headquarters of the movements/organizations represented on the IC

Region	Number	Percentage
Africa	13	9.6
Arab world	2	1.5
Asia	9	6.6
Asia-Pacific	1	0.7
Australia	2	1.5
Europe	45	33.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	38	27.9
Middle East	4	2.9
North America	17	12.5
Unknown/global	5	3.7
Total	136	100.0

Source: <www.forumsocialmundial.org.br>.

IC could delegate the final decision to a substructure; the substructure would make recommendations to the IC, and the latter would make final decisions; or the substructure would make final decisions on existing IC members (with panel members not participating in decisions concerning their own organizations) but only recommendations in relation to new applicants, which could be finalized by the IC.

A statistical analysis of the composition of the IC reveals the nature and the extent of the imbalances already mentioned, in spite of all the measures to reduce them throughout the period of consolidation of the IC (2003–05). As to the ambit or territorial scale of the activity, the distribution did not change significantly between 2003 and 2005: 49.3 per cent of the organizations operate globally; 33.1 per cent operate regionally; and 17.6 per cent operate nationally. In the latter category I include organizations whose activity is basically national, even though they may have departments of international relations that represent them on the IC (this is the case, for instance, with national federations of trade unions). The regional imbalances can be shown from different perspectives: 61 per cent of the organizations have their headquarters either in Latin America/the Caribbean and Europe (66.6 per cent in 2003), 12.5 per cent have their headquarters in North America, 47.1 per cent have their headquarters in the Global North (Europe, North America and Australia) (see Table 5.2).

Of the organizations whose scale of action is predominantly national,

41.7 per cent are based in Latin America and the Caribbean (47.8 per cent in 2003), while 33.4 per cent are based in the Global North (26 per cent in 2003) (see Table 5.3).

TABLE 5.3 IC organizations operating predominantly at the national level

Region	Number	Percentage
Africa	2	8.3
Arab world	1	4.2
Asia	3	12.5
Australia	1	4.2
Europe	1	4.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	10	41.6
North America	6	25.0
Total	24	100.0

Source: <www.forumsocialmundial.org.br>.

Of the organizations that operate at the regional level, 44.4 per cent operate in Latin America/the Caribbean (52.8 per cent in 2003) and 24.4 per cent in Europe (13.9 per cent in 2003) (see Table 5.4).

TABLE 5.4 IC NGOs/movements operating at the regional level

Region	Number	Percentage
Africa	7	15.6
Arab world	1	2.2
Asia	2	4.4
Asia-Pacific	1	2.2
Australia	1	2.2
Europe	11	24.5
Latin America and the Caribbean	20	44.5
Middle East	1	2.2
North America	1	2.2
Total	45	100.0

Source: <www.forumsocialmundial.org.br>.

Concerning the thematic areas in which the organizations concentrate their activity, the question of imbalances raises complex issues, some related to what balance should mean in this regard, others

TABLE 5.5 The IC by main thematic areas of intervention (2005)

Thematic area	Number	Percentage
Democratization	10	7.4
Economic justice	41	30.1
Ecumenical/religious	5	3.7
Education	4	2.9
Environment	4	2.9
Gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender	1	0.7
Housing	1	0.7
Human rights	12	8.8
Indigenous movements	2	1.5
Land/agriculture	5	3.7
Media/press	9	6.6
Peace	2	1.5
Research/knowledge-sharing	10	7.4
Labour/trade unionism	15	11.0
Feminism/women's issues	10	7.4
Youth/students	3	2.2
Unknown	2	1.5
Total	136	100.0

Source: <[www.forumsocialmundial.org.br](http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br)>.

related to the criteria of classification. Many organizations intervene in more than one area and seemingly different areas may be no more than different names for the same area. Not surprisingly, economic justice (development, debt, trade, socio-economic equality, etc.) is the dominant area of activity: 30.1 per cent. It is followed by labour/trade unionism (11 per cent), human rights (8.8 per cent), feminism/women's issues (7.4 per cent) and democratization (participatory, grassroots democracy) (7.4 per cent). If we compare this with the composition of the IC in 2003, the most significant increases occurred in the areas of research/knowledge-sharing, ecumenism/religious issues, media/press and land/agriculture (see Table 5.5).

These data, however preliminary and deserving of more detailed analysis, indicate that the expansion committee of the IC should strengthen even more its proactive stance as regards reducing the regional imbalances. The determination of other types of imbalances (among themes, types of organization, scope and type of intervention) needs to be based on new types of political debates within and outside the IC, broadly defined, systematic, well-prepared debates concerning

medium-term and long-term strategies to build another possible world. In the end, the issue of representativeness cannot be solved mechanically. It is a political rather than a technical question, even if its solution has important technical dimensions (funding, for instance). The IC represents the WSF to the extent that it reflects the *in sich* diversity of the WSF and transforms it into a *für sich* diversity.

#### Notes

- 1 On the subject of representation at the WSF, see Teivainen (2003).
- 2 Local participation amounted to 84 per cent of the total.
- 3 Local participation amounted to 80 per cent.
- 4 Of special note is the participation of 600 Pakistanis. Apparently many more would have participated if the Indian authorities had not created visa difficulties.
- 5 'Asia' is a North-centric concept that designates too wide a region to have a homogeneous social, political and cultural content. At the IC's meeting in Mumbai it was, therefore, decided that another WSF be planned in East Asia. In early 2005 it was decided that the 2006 WSF would be polycentric, one of the events taking place in Karachi. At the Asian consultation meeting of the WSF held in Sri Lanka in June 2005 it was decided that another polycentric WSF would be organized in South-East/East Asia, in Bangkok.
- 6 Holding the 2005 WSF in Porto Alegre was the result of a compromise with those in the IC who were against Mumbai as the venue for the 2004 WSF, arguing that the organizational risks were innumerable and that the existence of the WSF as we know it might thereby be jeopardized. Locating the 2005 WSF in Porto Alegre again aimed to reassure the sceptics that, should anything go wrong in Mumbai, there would always be the possibility of recovery in Porto Alegre. As we know, these pessimistic prophecies were not fulfilled. On the contrary, the exemplary way in which the Mumbai WSF was carried out created a new standard of quality for the 2005 WSF in Porto Alegre.
- 7 For some time now, the IC has been pondering whether the WSF should continue to convene annually or every two years. The argument in favour of the latter option is that the annual organization demands a tremendous organizational effort that distracts the movements and NGOs from their principal objectives. In favour of the annual event, the argument is that the success of the WSF resides in its symmetry with the World Economic Forum and that, while the latter continues to be annual, the decision to stop convening annually will always be understood as a sign of organizational and political weakness.
- 8 See note 5 above.
- 9 On the methodology adopted for the survey, see IBASE (2003: vol. 5).
- 10 The opinions could be expressed in five degrees from totally agree (1) to totally disagree (5). The responses were then aggregated in terms of 'totally or partially agree', 'totally or partially disagree' and 'indifferent'.
- 11 There were some methodological changes in relation to the survey of

the 2003 WSF and for that reason not all data are comparable. The results of the 2005 survey can be consulted in IBASE (2006).

12 The sample of participants was stratified according to three groupings: Brazilian participants, Latin American participants and participants from other countries. Participants represented 59.5 per cent of the total. Besides campers (22.6 per cent) there were communicators, volunteers, support services, exhibitors and participants in cultural events.

13 The data must be compared with some caution. In 2005, the countries with a small number of participants (134 countries) were included in a residual category ('other').

14 A trend that continued in the polycentric 2006 WSF in Caracas, where for the first time the US delegation had its own space to give information about its causes and campaigns.

15 In the 2005 survey the questions about religion were eliminated.

16 The real sociological meaning of the data can be revealed only through multivariate analysis, which is impossible at this juncture.

17 Moreover the 2003 questionnaire allowed for unlimited multiple answers while the 2005 questionnaire allowed only up to three options.

18 Only one-third of the participants claimed to know the Charter of Principles, even though another third knew some part of the Charter. It is significant that non-Brazilian and non-Latin America participants claimed a higher knowledge of the Charter.

19 Representing 136 movements and organizations; it also includes the IS, the Brazilian OC and the Indian OC.

20 Actually, in view of pending requests for admission, it was decided to establish a few basic procedural and substantive criteria. As regards procedural criteria, applications were to be submitted to the IS, to then be forwarded to the expansion committee for reviewing and subsequent final assessment by the IC. As to substantive criteria, on the one hand an organization is required to have existed for more than two years and its activities must have an international dimension; on the other, taking part in one of the committees becomes a condition for admission to the IC.

21 The issue of funding sources became polemical in the preparation for the Mumbai meeting but, for reasons already mentioned, it became particularly problematic in the 2005 WSF and in the 2006 polycentric WSF in Caracas, although for different reasons. The costs for the 2005 WSF had been estimated at US\$7,547,700 but the actual disbursements totalled US\$8,313,016. Resources effectively secured were US\$6,793,705, thus leading to the deficit of US\$1,573,311 (see van der Wekken 2005). For a list of the organizations that funded the previous meetings of the WSF (up to 2005), see Annexe IV.

22 All these organizations were admitted by recommendation of the expansion committee. All had presented their candidatures to the IC between the meeting in Barcelona, in April 2002, and that in Miami, in June 2003.

23 The Barcelona meeting of the IC also called attention to the need to clarify what constitutes an active and an inactive membership. Based on

preliminary calculations, and assuming that its membership would become inactive if the organization had not attended more than one meeting in the last two years, it could be said that the membership of more than thirty organizations had lapsed. Eighteen organizations had not attended a single meeting, including the first meeting of the IC to which they were invited.

24 As continental forums were initially accorded observer status, it was agreed that this representation should be strengthened and that they be given full delegate status.