

Toward a Politics of Possibility: Charting Shifts in Utopian Imagination through the World Social Forum Process

Jose Ramos
Queensland University of
Technology
Australia

Abstract

In this paper, the World Social Forum Process (WSFP) is situated within contemporary and historical utopian contexts. In so doing the article puts forth the proposition that the WSF sits toward the end of two great utopian projects of the West, state socialism and economic liberalism. Through its tacit and explicit critique of both, the WSF re-configures utopianism around the principle of diversity. In counter-distinction to this, however, a number of forces are articulating totalities, utopian conceptions of alternatives to corporate globalisation. The WSF process is therefore becoming the site of a commingling between a utopianism of diversity and a utopianism of totality, in the movement toward alternative globalization.

Key words: Utopia, Social forum, Alter-globalization, Social movements

Introduction

In a workshop entitled "Utopia and politics" at the fifth World Social Forum (WSF) in Porto Alegre, Nobel Laureate José Saramago squared off with famed Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano. While Galeano celebrated the "utopian impulse", Saramago said:

I consider the concept of utopia worse than useless...What has transformed the world is not utopia, but need....The only time and place where our work can have impact—where we can see it and evaluate it—is tomorrow... Let's not wait for utopia (Engler 2005).

In this paper I argue that the World Social Forum Process (WSFP) commingles both a diversity

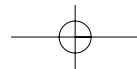
of projects and struggles with localized priorities, together with a grand project which carries a utopian impulse to change the global system as a totality. Operating through this creative tension, it has on one hand generated meetings of inconceivable size, diversity and complexity, while on the other hand has brought this diversity together in a semi-coherent struggle against neo-liberalism, toward creating a post-corporate, alternative globalization ("alter-globalization"). Since 2002, under the utopian banner "Another World is Possible" more than 160 forums have been held in more than 120 cities around the world, bringing together more than a million participants, and tens of thousands of organizations.¹

This paper initially emerged as an open exploration of the utopian contexts and futures orientation of the social forum process. What I began to notice on the outset was that, despite its own utopian declaration "Another World is Possible", the WSFP carries anti-utopian tendencies, in particular as a counter-totalizing process. The WSF stands at the "end of the End of History", meaning the two rival enlightenment projects that purport a teleological "rhythm or trajectory" to history, state socialism and economic liberalism. In particular it critiques neo-liberal turn neo-conservative utopianism, the "TINA" conception that there is no alternative to unfettered global (corporate) capitalism. Yet it likewise rejects the historicism associated with "Old Left" state socialism, and can trace its origins back to the New Social Movements (NSMs) and proliferation of non-government organizations (NGOs) that marked the rejection of the Old Left after 1968.

In rejecting teleological beliefs in a "rhythm or trajectory" to history, and accompanying historicist tendencies in the Western development model generally, the WSF represents a "critical utopianism" reconfigured around the principle of diversity. Diversity is established in a number of ways. First, through the methodology of Open Space Technology, which enforces inclusivity. The emphasis on methodology corresponds to a conception of processes (as opposed to content) as fundamental, and from manifestos to manifestations (Byrd 2005). Ontologically the social forums are more akin to network conceptions of social organization, and the corresponding cultural-political shift from verticalism to horizontalism (Tormey 2005). The open and horizontal nature of the social forum process works to nurture epistemological pluralism, in particular a counter-hegemonic epistemology of the global South.

Yet, even though at the moment social forums act to generate diverse participation under the ambiguous banner that "another world is possible", there is a growing demand among many to articulate what this actually means, and a sense of urgency in creating a global project to fulfill this. The collective global memory of the ideological vanguardism of the Old Left through Stalin, Mao, the Khmer Rouge, and other notorious revolutionary movements of the 20th century will mean that a global (Totalizing) project to create "another world" will be looked upon with suspicion, and may be rejected. The worsening situation globally, however, a deteriorating environment, unparalleled levels of poverty, unparalleled concentrations of wealth, and a breakdown in international conventions and law mean that individuals and groups will not wait to formulate coherent alternatives to the global system.

I therefore argue the WSFP is both a platform for localized struggles and projects of embodied alternatives, as well as the site of a utopian "anti-systemic" struggle and project to transform the world. In this commingling, the diversity of groups, issues and



visions comes into contact with and is negotiated with the totality of a grand project to create "another world" beyond corporate globalization and neo-liberalism. The macro "totality" and the micro "diversity" must now share space on the stage of history. I name this commingling "Alternative Globalization", which I see as re-formulation of emancipatory politics.

The razor's edge of history

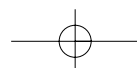
What I felt was something more intangible: the end of The End of History.

- Naomi Klein (2001)

Krishan Kumar argues the two great utopian projects of the 20th century were US techno-liberalism and the socialism of the USSR (Kumar 1987: 381), while John Gray restates this as two rival enlightenment utopias (Gray 1998: 2-4). The WSFP emerged antithetically to the claim that there was no alternative to neo-liberalism. James Mittelman argues the negation of alternatives was evident through Margaret Thatcher's "TINA" (There Is No Alternative) statement she pushed through in the UK (Mittelman 2004: 89), that there is no alternative to the economic liberalism, a concept carried forward by Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" thesis, which argued that liberal economic democracy (in the image of the US) is a historical end point (Fukuyama 1989). This shifted, however, with the emergence of neo-conservative power in Washington, such that the WSFP has become polarised in antithesis to US imperialism, neo-conservatism as well as neo-liberalism. In the case of socialism, the WSFP can be located partly as a confluence of the New Social Movements (NSMs) and NGOs that emerged from the rejection of the Old Left after 1968. In both cases the WSFP is situated politically toward the end of two great utopian projects of the West.

Neo-liberalism's teleological orientation has deeper roots, which saw its beginnings in the historical stage theories of Smith and Spencer as well as other 19th century writers, who posited universal capitalism as advanced stages in human development (Campbell 1997; Inayatullah 1997). This was naturally followed by the World War Two Western development model, which assumed that countries should follow in the example of the West's historical development, with categories such as "First World / Developed", "Second World / Developing" and "Third World / Under-developed". While critical futures scholars such as Zia Sardar have argued the entire narrative structure from which this model derives is a mis-portrayal of history (Sardar 2003), and historians like Robert Marks have debunked "rise of the West" conceptions of history (Marks 2002), the model remains a core assumption from which global institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund set global policy.

James Mittelman argues neo-liberal globalisation is a utopia, in the sense that it has never existed, and that previous attempts at its implementation have failed to be realised. It is also characterised by a dis-embedding of the market from society, reflected in Thatcher's other famous statement, that there is no such thing as society, only individuals (Mittelman 2004). He argues the task of alter-globalisation is the re-embedding of the market into society (Mittelman 2004: 90). As well, John Gray argues global capitalism is such a utopia, analysing its basic features. In Gray's analysis, the utopia of global capitalism has its roots in the European enlightenment, with



philosophers such as John Locke and Adam Smith. While much of Europe has already embraced post-enlightenment positions, the US (after the Soviet collapse) remains the world's last enlightenment regime, in which core assumptions such as the value of *laissez-faire* markets, Western development and universal human rights, are commonly held. Gray further argues this utopianism can be seen through the neo-conservative ascendancy in the 1980's and 90's. He shows how neo-conservatives were successful at linking America's identity with corporate priorities.

The American sense of self and its unique role in the world was co-opted by neo-conservatives, as the universality of US values was extended to its faith in free markets, leading to, by default, a metaphysical assumption the links the US with the universal and the global market (Gray 1998: 100-132). He writes:

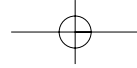
Today's project of a single global market is America's universal mission co-opted by its neo-conservative ascendancy. Market utopianism has succeeded in appropriating the American faith that it is a unique country, the model for universal civilisation which all societies are fated to emulate (Gray 1998: 104).

Neo-liberalism should be distinguished from neo-conservatism. While the former aims to universalise unfettered corporate access to the world's markets, labour and resources, the latter is militarised globalisation, in which the US acts unilaterally, through explicit and structural violence against those countries or systems that do not follow this orthodoxy. It parallels the steady commercialisation of a military industrial complex and an explicit practice in cultural manipulation that now buttresses neo-liberalism (Johnson 2004; Curtis 2006).

Using Fredrick Watkins analysis of ideology (Watkins 1964), we can see the utopianism of neo-conservatives expressed in several ways. It can be seen in respect to an oversimplification of reality, and construction of friend and enemy, through a "you are with us or against us" popular rhetoric; in particular the use of a clash of civilisations "West vs. the rest" discourse, through Samuel Huntington's influence and the social construction of the "War on terror" and the half-fictional "enemies" like Al-Qaeda it has conjured (Gray 1998; Curtis 2006). A related example is how World Economic Forum founder Klaus Schwab recently compared anti-globalisation protesters to terrorists.² The binary friend / enemy outlook is an example of the extreme denial of alternatives, be they policies or perspectives.

Neo-conservative utopianism can also be seen in respect to naïve optimism and confidence, based in a faith in the inevitability of its vision, where Progress and US power are inexorably intertwined. It is also seen through an extreme denial of counterfactual evidence, be this the fact that there were never any Weapons of Mass Destruction in Iraq, or the fact that both the IMF and World Bank not only fail miserably at what they purport to do, but actually exacerbate poverty across the world (Bello 2005).

By extension then neo-conservative utopianism transcends yet includes neo-liberalism's dream of the global market. While neo-liberalism's TINA conception that there are no alternatives is partly based on metaphysical assumptions about human nature and the unfolding of history, neo-conservatism's TINA conception is that there are no alternatives because a sufficient global military and media complex will enforce this. Militarised economic globalisation is described by Carl Boggs and Robert McChesney (Boggs 2005), and has galvanized a counter hegemonic process at the WSF, for exam-



ple through the Global Day of Action protest against the Bush II administrations' plans for the invasion of Iraq in March 2003, initiated at the third WSF, which consequently became the single largest (simultaneous) protest of any war in history. As well, an attack on the neo-conservative utopia of US global dominance, articulated through the Project for the New American Century (PNAC), was witnessed when the Brussels tribunal recently put the PNAC on trial.³

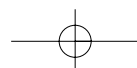
From the Old Left to the New Left

While Marx and Engels officially derided other socialist schemes as utopian (the term becoming a form of subtle ridicule), Marxist inspired socialism became associated with utopianism, through its vision of a radically different, classless society in which all forms of oppressive hierarchy are ultimately overcome, a system which produces based on every individual's actualised talents and distributes these products according to every individual's needs (Manuel and Manuel 1979: 697-715). Kumar argues utopianism largely waned during the early and middle part of the 20th century, after two horrendous world wars, under the shadow of nuclear apocalypse, and a nasty cold war. The early to middle parts of the 20th century saw a dramatic shift among writers like H.G. Wells, and Aldous Huxley from optimism to pessimism, and the emergence of popular dystopian imagination (Kumar 1987: 380-390). While fictions like George Orwell's *1984* critiqued totalitarianism, Karl Popper linked totalitarianism with "historicism", the belief in a determined direction to history (Popper 1957).

The resurgence of utopian thinking in the latter half of the 20th century, on the other hand, reflects a distinctly post '68, post statist vision of the world, albeit in fragmented form. In contrast with technocratic visions of post-industrial society, such as of Daniel Bell and Herman Kahn, a counter-cultural imagination began to blossom (Kumar 1987: 381). Herbert Marcuse sign-posted a resurgence of a counter-cultural utopianism through his "End of Utopia", its analysis of state violence, endorsement of counter culture movements, and call for the actualisation of utopia today by linking the personal with the political, liberation of consciousness with a new morality (Kumar 1987; Marcuse 1970). Thus, 1968 is offered as a symbolic year, in both the emergence of modern utopianism and also in tracing the origins of the World Social Forum.

Immanuel Wallerstein offers a deeper historical account of this shift. According to him the WSF can trace its roots to debates within the anti-systemic movements of the 19th century, between Marxists and Political Nationalists who insisted that capturing state power was essential to social transformation, and others like Anarchists and Cultural Nationalists who saw this as a diversion, or form of co-option. Marxists and Political Nationalists won this debate, and were "spectacularly successful" in their attempts coming into the mid 20th century. The East had become Communist and the West had accepted Social Democracy (Wallerstein 2004: 631). What Wallerstein terms the "world revolution of 68" was a reaction within anti-systemic movements to the perceived failure of the "Old Left" to deliver on their promise of social transformation.

One common feature of all these uprisings was the accusation of the revolutionaries against the "Old Left": you promised social transformation when you came to



power; you have not delivered on your promise. The world, they said, remains deeply inegalitarian, worldwide and within our countries; our political systems are not really democratic; there exists a privileged caste (a nomenklatura) within our regimes. Far less has changed than you said would change (Wallerstein 2004: 630).

Wallerstein argues the role of anti-systemic movements was forced to evolve when the revolution of '68 was put down across the world. Three strategies emerged: First multiple Maoisms emerged taking the Chinese Cultural Revolution as a model, but with the collapse of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the truth of the full extent of its horror revealed, these movements splintered and died (Wallerstein 2004). The second shift involved the emergence of a "New Left", which saw feminist, Green movements, and movements representing oppressed ethnic minorities or indigenous populations, and movements to pursue the rights of those that deviate from sexual norms or abilities (i.e. "dis-abled") (Wallerstein 2004). This "New Left" movement essentially rejected the centrist and state orientation of the "Old Left". The third development, through the 80's were groups that brought forth human rights as a core issue, though in variegated form, which saw the formation of NGOs such as Amnesty International or Greenpeace. This stream of the New Left argued that the Old Left failed to insure human rights "in their struggle for state power, and even more in their practice following the achievement of state power, when the governments in power actually violated such rights (Wallerstein 2004: 631).

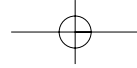
Reflecting this, Osava recently argued that the WSF is a child of '68. The diversity of peoples, struggles, movements, and causes reflected in the Forum, he says, saw their beginnings in the struggles of the 60's:

...democracy, sexual freedom, gender equality, recognition of civil rights for blacks in the United States, or the survival of indigenous peoples worldwide ... [this] era also marked the beginning of environmental movements, campaigns to reform psychiatric hospitals and to integrate people with mental or physical handicaps into larger society. The consequence was a dispersal of the progressive forces into isolated movements, reflected in the proliferation of [NGOs], each dedicated to specific actions or issues, such as feminism, human rights, street children, or cancellation of the foreign debt. With the [WSF], it seems that cycle is ending and a process of convergence is getting underway (Osava 2001).

Wallerstein argues that these post '68 shifts form the backdrop of the anti-globalisation movement which emerged in the 90's, described in three "symbolic moments", which has now shifted into what I consider *alter-globalisation*. First was the revolt of the Zapatistas (EZLN) in Chiapas, Mexico, which symbolically began on the first day of the implementation of NAFTA on 1 January 1994. Second were the activist protests against the WTO that became known as the "Battle in Seattle" in 1999. Third was the first meeting of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre in 2001 (Wallerstein 2004: 632).

The shift from conservative to critical utopianism

Boaventura de Sousa Santos describes the work of the WSF as the creation of "critical utopias", as the "WSF aims to fulfil utopia in a world devoid of utopias"



(Santos 2004: 8). The concept of "critical utopias" is contrasted with what Franz Hinkelammert speaks of as "conservative utopia", which is a radical denial of alternatives to present day reality. Conservative utopias can also be seen to enforce a logic of efficiency, (i.e. what is not efficient should not exist), as well as identify with present day reality and the fulfilment of already existing features of that reality (Santos 2004: 10). Within conservative utopias, people believe the problems of today exist not because of their utopian vision, but because it is incompletely implemented. Thus it is a closed world, and of history, a "rejection of alternatives toward status quo" (Santos 2004: 10). Likewise, Karl Mannheim argued that the conservative outlook always speaks to the established order, writing that: "the representatives of a given order will label as utopian all conceptions of existence which from their point of view can in principle never be realised." (Mannheim 1936: 196) He argued the established order will blur the distinction between absolute utopias and relative utopias in order to assume that they are ALL unrealisable. He argued relative utopias are realisable alternatives to the existing order.

According to Santos many 20th century critical utopias became perverted utopias, in also denying alternatives to the constructed status quo. The WSF represents a critique of perverted utopianism, be this from the Left or the Right, toward critical utopianism, through a process of establishing spaces for the participatory development of an emancipatory imagination open to many visions – a politics of possibility (Santos 2004). But what does this mean in positive terms?

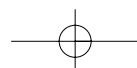
Elements in the critical utopianism of the WSFP

The WSF process draws from Open Space Technology (OST) articulated by Owens, who saw the limitations of conferences that were rigidly organised (Owen 1997). He noticed that the creative and interesting conversations happened during coffee breaks, and began to ask what a conference would look like if it were designed by the participants in a minimalist "open-space" format. Through experiments he came up with a few principles of OST:

- *Whoever comes is the right people;*
- *Whatever happens is the only thing that could have;*
- *Whenever it starts is the right time;*
- *When it's over, it's over*

There is but one law in OST, "The law of two feet", which encourages participants to leave a session / workshop if they feel they are neither learning nor contributing. Open Space has some similarities with the Temporary Autonomous Zones envisioned by Hakim Bey (Peter Lamborn Wilson).⁴ In very clear terms the WSF has articulated itself as a "privileged space" for civil society to construct a new politics for another world. In this sense the WSF process can be considered a sheltered and protected space for cultural and ideational mutation, or a womb in which the embryos of alternative futures can develop, or as Arundhati Roy stated: "Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing" (Roy 2003).

Critical utopianism also works through de-centring. In this spirit the WSFP works along principles of networked self-organization, which have been theorised within the systems and complexity discourses.⁵ For example Chesters has explored the alter-



globalization movements self-organisation as an oppositional / antagonistic "strange attractor" (Chesters 2004). The open space format of the WSF might be seen to act as this kind of strange attractor, a networked platform for emergence. In effect the new global social movements and WSF are built on the back of the very modern information architecture of the network society (Cohen and Rai 2000), with the power of the network demonstrated during the Global Day of Action (GDA). The irony of global social movements and the WSF process thriving on technology originally developed by the Pentagon should not be lost. As Hardt and Negri express this when they write:

We have to rid ourselves of the notion that innovation relies on the genius of the individual. We produce and innovate together only in networks. If there is an act of genius, it is the genius of the multitude.....Just as the multitude produces in the common, just as it produces the common, it can produce political decisions (Hardt and Negri 2004: 338-399).

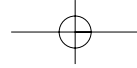
Another aspect of this critical utopianism, related to networks is a shift towards "horizontalism". Simon Tormey develops this through his distinction of "utopias of place" as opposed to "utopias of space". He argues the fundamental tension within the social forum process is between utopian places and utopian spaces, or "verticalism" vs. "horizontalism" respectively. Older social movement orientation sees the need for well organised collective action aiming to bring about a better world of the future, it carries the baggage of rigid ideologies, hardened practices, identity politics, and a particular version of utopia / the future. Tormey's analysis of verticalism (a term which can also be interpreted as "hierarchy"), reveals several characteristics, but generally it is a "teleological politics". First vertical politics follows a particular "fixed and determinate" rationality. Second they are teleological in that they "reduce political action to ... an end point... rational and true". Third they embody a transitional politics of *deferral*: "you have to break eggs to make an omelette", or "we must sacrifice a generation to build communism". Finally verticalism sees the WSFP as a vehicle to fulfill the designs of that type of teleological politics (Tormey 2005: 4-6):

Verticalism is the correlate of the view that the forums are a means to an end; horizontalism is the correlate of the view that forums are an end in themselves – that they provide their own justification and should not be annexed to a wider "process" to find validity (Tormey 2005: 2).

The WSFP embodies this horizontalism, by which a multitude of identities are drawn together: social movements, NGOs, community groups, a diversity that spans from liberation theologians to ecotopian perma-culturalists and Open Source enthusiasts. As Tormey writes, "The great difficulty is not the exhaustion of utopian energies so much as the *incommensurability* of utopias: your utopia is not my utopia, and mine is not yours" (Tormey 2005: 3). Tormey shows how, in the post '68 critique of verticalism, utopias of space reject the content of a utopian future and "master signifier", and replace it with a radical de-centering and proliferation process of autonomising micro-politics of everyday practices:

...the generation of utopian spaces are now at the core of contemporary radical politics. Indeed if horizontalism can be construed as a political project, then this might itself be defined in terms of the continual and on-going expansion and multiplication of utopian spaces (Tormey 2005: 2).

In describing the contradictions within the alter-globalisation movement, Tormey



reveals a "double negation" in this movement's relation to the future. This double negation means that, on the one hand, the alter-globalisation movement is united in opposition to neo-liberalism, and shares what might be considered elements of a larger paradigm, yet on the other hand is opposed to a unitary framework or totality. As he writes:

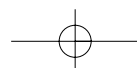
The movement not only resists neoliberal capitalism, but incorporation into an ideology and movement dedicated to overcoming neoliberal capitalism. Symbolic of this double-negation, this Janus face of the movement, was the issuing by Marcos in 2003 of a declaration entitled "I Shit on all the Revolutionary Vanguard of this Planet" (Tormey 2005: 4, citing sub-commander Marcos 2003).

A number of thinkers explain this cultural shift. Susan Hawthorne has theorised the rejection of unitary approaches to development, arguing the new approach can be seen as a "diversity matrix" of resistance and alternatives. The diversity matrix is the anti-thesis of mono-cultural globalisation – the synthesis being a "Wild politics" in which universalist approaches are transcended by multi-versalist ones. She writes: "the multi-versalist recognises that there is not just one view of the world, or one way of organising knowledge to reflect truth (Hawthorne 2002: 30). Ashis Nandy re-iterates this:

A social movement by itself will not be an alternative... That would be as bad as the neo-conservative vision. We need many alternatives to choose from. And in future, I am sure, we shall see a whole new set of alternatives that will bring together many of the single-issue movements we are seeing around us. I suspect that many movements are moving towards new visions and new analytic frames; only the dying movements, mostly guided by Euro-pean social thought sired by the age of imperialism, believe that they have the final clue to history.⁶

Thus one of the core values that underpins this shift is an emphasis on diversity, individual, cultural and biological, from which conformity, mono-culture and monologic are critiqued as fundamentally regressive – or as Tormey writes: "it is not coalescence of outlook that marks the politics of the alter-globalisation movement, but the accelerating multiplication of differences, positions and standpoints" (Tormey 2005: 4). This understanding of multiplicity is touched on by Hardt and Negri, through their concept of the "multitude", which is a re-conceptualisation of the class forces articulated by Marx. The multitude, in their formulation, is not a unitary entity which counters Empire, but is a network of singularities typified by diversity, united in their praxis of defending, developing and maintaining alternatives to Empire.

Connecting epistemology to this principle of diversity, Boaventura de Sousa Santos argues the WSF is an example of an emerging epistemology of the Global South. *Status quo* globalisation relies on the hegemony of techno scientific knowledge, and its way of discrediting rival knowledges, through enforcing its own criteria of validity based in efficiency and coherence. He writes that: "discrediting, concealing and trivialising counter hegemonic globalisation go largely hand in hand with discrediting, concealing and trivialising the *knowledges* that inform counter hegemonic practices and agents" (Santos 2004: 13). This is especially so because the vast majority of literature on globalisation is produced in the wealthy North and: "The knowledge we have of globalisation, whether hegemonic or counter hegemonic, is less global than globalisation itself" (Santos 2004: 13).



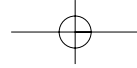
The WSF represents diverse counter-hegemonic ways of knowing, the practices and knowledges through the WSFP express epistemological assumptions at odds with Western techno-science. Conflict emerges in the contrasting validity claims, on one hand the efficiency / truth criteria of techno-science, and on the other the social experience of the South. "Hegemonic rationality" discredits the social experience of the South, constituting a "waste of social experience, both social experience that is already available, but not yet visible, and social experience that is not yet available but realistically possible" (Santos 2004: 14). Because of this "the epistemological alternatives proposed by the WSF is that there is no global social justice without global *cognitive justice*" (Santos 2004: 13). Santos formulates the epistemology of the South into two sociologies, the sociology of *absences* and the sociology of *emergences*.

The sociology of absences looks at how counter-hegemonic alternatives are made nonexistent, into a "non-credible alternative to what exists", and how the hegemonic criteria of rationality and efficiency "produce the non-existence of what does not fit them" (Santos 2004: 15). This is done through enforcing a (monocultural) hegemonic epistemology and rationality which attributes to rival knowledges the characteristics of being: *ignorant, residual, inferior, local, and non-productive*. The sociology of absences aims to widen the field of social experiences, and the "possibilities of social experimentation in the future". Santos argues this is done through replacing monocultures with counter-hegemonic ecologies: of *knowledge, of temporalities, of recognitions, of trans-scales, and of productivities* (2004).

Drawing upon Ernst Bloch's writings on "concrete utopia", Santos argues the sociology of emergences is the inquiry into the alternatives that are contained in the horizon of concrete possibilities, who's ethos is a shift from the modernist determination of the future, toward a care for the future. The sociology of emergences acts in a field of social expectations "to radicalise expectations based on real possibilities and capacities here and now" and create a "new semantics of expectations" (Santos 2004: 27). He argues "the subjective element of the sociology of emergences is anticipatory consciousness and non-conformism before the want whose fulfilment is within the horizon of possibilities"³¹ while objectively "the sociology of emergences valorises clues as pathways toward discussing and arguing for concrete alternative futures" (Santos 2004: 28).

Conclusion: Commingling Diversity and Totality

The conception that the WSFP successfully addresses the problems which form its contexts (neo-liberalism etc.), through embodying principles of diversity, of ontologies, spaces, and epistemologies, finds constructive criticism through the neo-Marxist tradition, in particular from Fredrick Jameson's defence of the Hegelian category of Totality, and his development of *cognitive mapping*. One question posed is whether diversity is really subversive of capital, or whether it is the cornerstone to its reproduction.³³ In respect to Jameson's category of totality, Colm McNaughton writes: "the position of totality keeps alive the idea that an alternative to capitalism is possible, and is itself the source from which any socialist politics must spring" (McNaughton 2005: 63). Jameson contrasts closed forms of totalizing, which amount to reductive analysis, to open forms which: "situates seemingly isolated phenomena within their larger rela-



tional context and draws connections or mediations between the different aspects of the whole" (McNaughton 2005: 64). In this tradition Verity Burgmann uses cognitive mapping to argue the myriad struggles, localised resistance against forces associated with corporate globalisation, are in fact an example of a broader struggle – global anti-capitalism. Be they are against World Bank funded Dam projects, clear cutting of tribal forests, the patenting of traditional seeds and medicines, the fragmentation of community, or the endless spiral downward in labour rights, *individually* they share the fact that what they struggle against is an element of capitalism, and a radical rejection of the status quo which constitutes utopianism (Burgmann 2006).

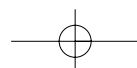
Likewise, while remaining cautious about what the WSFP can achieve, Wallerstein nevertheless argues that the WSFP is presently the only global anti-systemic force which is at the moment challenging the world capitalist system, and believes it has already exceeded the global scope of previous anti-systemic movements (Wallerstein 2004). He has also articulated four imperatives for the alter-globalisation movement:

1. *An open debate about the transition we are hoping for;*
2. *Short-term, defensive action, including electoral action;*
3. *Middle-range goals such as the progressive de-commodification against neoliberal attempts to commodify everything;*
4. *Develop the substantive meaning of long-term emphases, most crucially a world that is democratic and egalitarian.* (Hayden and el-Ojeili 2005: 15)

From quite a different tradition, Patrick Hayden and Chamsy el-Ojeili invoke a "reasoned" (through Bourdieu) or "de-centered" (through Hudson) utopianism, which they stress is "attentive to difference, and theoretically open and multidimensional while remaining committed to democratic inclusiveness, the community of humanity and the expansion of justice across the globe" (Hayden and el-Ojeili 2005: 17). They insist on the visionary and utopian dimensions of alter-globalisation, but steer clear of being overly prescriptive in this new political context of diversity and space.

What is interesting to observe is the degree to which those who articulate a totality (alternative globalisation or alternative to capitalism) qualify their conceptions with nuanced appreciation for diversities. It will probably be impossible to stop academics from conceptualising totalities for all eternity. But it seems within this new emergent horizontal culture of transnational networking and social forum processes, the vanguardism of old is presently restrained, and a new respect for diversity and participation now exists. At the fifth WSF in Porto Alegre, nineteen well known individuals within the WSFP recently issued what they called a "Porto Alegre Manifesto". While a flood of criticism ensued, what was challenged was not the content of the manifesto, but just the fact that it was seemingly top down (not to mention practically all male).⁸ In another instance, a "Bamako Appeal" was put forth to mark the 50th anniversary of the famous Bandung conference, endorsed by the Assembly of Social Movements of the World Social Forum.⁹ Despite both being visionary documents, neither the Bamako Appeal nor the Porto Alegre Manifesto have hit the world like the Communist Manifesto apparently did back in 1848.

In the commingling between diversity and totality, micro-projects and macro-projects must work together in the effort to create another world. For the moment, drawing upon the various writers in this paper, I conceptualize this using three dimensions:



through the notions of space, time and perception. First, space is reconfigured in such a way that there is no one acceptable utopia, but rather open and participatory spaces for dialogue on diverse visions and proposals – "utopian spaces". The era of the top down blueprint for society is waning, and the terms of formulation are changing toward bottom up "globalisation from below". Manifestos must now emerge from inclusive social processes and diverse voices. Second, time is reconfigured from a linear progression with an "end of history" to a constant process of evaluating what new directions exist, and what needs to be created. The manifesto becomes a (participatory) heuristic process – never a static equation to impose on the world for all time – a shift from manifesto to manifestations. Third, perception is reconfigured through an epistemological pluralism, which values the diversity of contrasting views on issues, while at the same time maintaining a counter-hegemonic position, and an anticipatory consciousness which holds fast an emancipatory imagination. Perhaps this commingling requires what Mittelman refers to as grounded utopia:

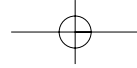
At bottom, implementation of a grounded utopia requires empowering its agents. It is the responsibility of critical intellectuals to strive to discover the ways to achieve alter-globalization so as to realize a peaceful, democratic, and equitable transformation. A civilised future requires no less (Mittelman 2004: 98).

Correspondence

Jose Ramos
Centre for Social Change Research,
Queensland University of Technology,
Brisbane, Australia
Address: 28 Fontein St.,
West Footscray Victoria,
3012 Australia
Email: actionforesight@gmail.com

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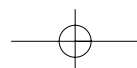
1. http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/quadro_frc.php?cd_forum=8 accessed April 2006.
2. The Wikipedia Foundation. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Economic_Forum Accessed March 20, 2006.
3. For The Project for the New American Century (PNAC) go to <http://www.newamerican-century.org/> and for the The Brussels Tribunal: Questioning the New Imperial World Order. A Hearing on the "Project for the New American Century." Held in Brussel. April 14-17, 2004. See: <http://www.brusseltribunal.org/>
4. The Wikipedia Foundation. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hakim_Bey Accessed March 15th 2006.
5. See a perspective on self organizing systems: Maturana H. and Varela F. 1987. *The tree of knowledge*, Boston: Shambhala. Also see Hardt and Negri's discussion on neural networks and the decision making capacity of the multitude: Hardt M. and Negri A. 2004. *Multitude: War and democracy in the age of Empire*, NY: Penguin. P. 338.



6. From an interview of Ashis Nandy. Melbourne Australia. 2003.
7. This question was posed to me by Colm McNaughton. July 2006.
8. http://opendemocracy.typepad.com/wsf/2005/02/previous_posts_.html Accessed Sept. 9th, 2006.
9. <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/bamako.html> Accessed Sept. 9th, 2006.

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