Abstract

The emergence of transnational practices of publicity challenges the established political theories of democracy, which presuppose a national citizenry and a national democratic state. The subjects of transnational public spheres lack a common citizenship status to develop legitimate public opinion, as well as corresponding decision-making institutions to address their demands. However, by creating solidarity, building legitimate public opinion and communicating their demands on the base of alternative premises, transnational public spheres defy Westphalian assumptions. The World Social Forum (WSF) serves as a paradigmatic case: while it develops new types of solidarity "among strangers" through horizontal debate and articulation, it unfolds antagonistic forms of communication with global neoliberal institutions of power.

This dissertation aims to contribute to the debate on the critical function of the notion of publicity in the context of globalization. Drawing on Habermas's theory of deliberative democracy and Mouffe's democratic theory of "agonistic pluralism," I examine the World Social Forum's forms of communication, creation of solidarity and legitimation of alternative discourses. Agonistic and deliberative theories of democracy have been traditionally regarded as antithetical, since the former stress conflict and dissent, while the latter emphasize dialogue and consensus. However, the analysis of political experiences like the World Social Forum not only shows that both perspectives are not fully incompatible, but also that they are both necessary to grasp

the complexity of actual transnational publicity. In particular, I argue that the combination of these theories reveals one of the main characteristics of the WSF: the merging of antagonistic and consensual practices of communication.

TRANSNATIONAL PUBLICITY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE:

THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM
BETWEEN DELIBERATION AND AGONISM

by

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In memory of René and Poupeé

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List of Abbreviations

ATTAC   Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens

IBASE   Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses

GATS   General Agreement on Trade in Services

ICC   International Criminal Court

IMF   International Monetary Fund

INGOs   International Non-Governmental Organizations

IRC   International Interhemispheric Resource Center

MST   *Movimento Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (Landless Workers' Movement of Brazil)

NGOs   Non-Governmental Organizations

PT   *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' Party of Brazil)

TANs   Transnational Advocacy Networks

WEF   World Economic Forum

WSF   World Social Forum

WTO   World Trade Organization

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Deliberative/Agonistic Features of the World Social Forum's Publicity

Today, peoples from distant parts of the world carry out discussions on a diversity of topics, seeking to capture the attention of national governments, international institutions and the general "global" public. In seminars, workshops, forums and other types of encounters as well as in networks and protests, activists get involved in transnational public practices of opinion-formation for claiming peace, the protection of the environment, or more recently, the redistribution of wealth and power.

These facts show that new forms of publicity are emerging. However, this is a puzzle because it is hard to understand how existing transnational publicity can fulfill critical democratic functions historically associated with the idea of the public sphere. As Habermas points out, the political public sphere is "a sounding board for problems that must be processed by the political system because they cannot be solved elsewhere" (1998a, 359). This refers to the interplay between processes of discovery and thematization of social problems in informal public spheres and processes of decision-making in formal, democratic institutions. In order to be democratic, public spheres must meet certain conditions of communication such as commonality, openness, inclusiveness, reciprocity and legitimacy. Briefly, these principles imply that interlocutors in the (informal) public sphere must, a) share a

solidarity rooted in particular collective identities and equal rights of political participation; b) take a second-person attitude, reciprocally attributing communicative freedom to each other; and c) create legitimated demands through debates in open fora in principle accessible to all 'who are potentially affected.'

Nevertheless, these principles presuppose a bounded political community with a corresponding bounded territorial state, usually associated with the nation-state. On one hand, the subjects of public communication are conceived implicitly as fellow members, hence as "citizens" invested of equal rights of participation and shared attitudes about common national affairs. Consequently, they are assumed to generate legitimate demands through reciprocal, horizontal forms of communication. On the other hand, the officials and authorized decision-making bodies of a bounded territorial state are tacitly understood as the addressees of national public opinion.

In view of these normative criteria, transnational publicity looks problematic. On one hand, the subjects who participate in debate and deliberation across national borders lack of legal mechanisms for the provision of equal rights of participation, as presupposed by the status of citizenship. Thus, they seem to be unable to develop the solidarity needed for growing generalizable interests in a way that makes their claims legitimate. On the other hand, as these transnational publics lack of corresponding decision-making institutions, they seem to be unable to communicate the public opinion they generate in a way that assures the translation of their demands into binding decisions.

As Nancy Fraser reminds us, "public sphere theory has been implicitly informed by a Westphalian political imaginary: it has tacitly assumed the frame of a

bounded political community with its own territorial state" (2007, 8). Public spheres were theoretically and in practice connected to national citizens, national democratic states and national public policies. As she also asserts, a rethinking of public sphere theory within a new transnational frame has been only possible since the occurrence of recent phenomena associated with globalization, postcolonialism and multiculturalism.

From all this it follows that actually existing transnational publicity does not easily fit with Westphalian theoretical underpinnings. The World Social Forum (WSF) serves as a paradigmatic case. Started in 2001 as a counter-summit to the World Economic Forum (WEF), the WSF aims to provide forums for the construction of alternative strategies to neoliberal economic globalization through public debate and shared action. At the same time as it promotes dialogue between global social movements and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for achieving social justice, it encourages antagonistic discourses to neoliberal ones in the global public sphere. In brief, the WSF offers alternatives for democratizing transnational politics, helping to develop new types of solidarities "among strangers" through equal participation in debate and the articulation of democratic struggles in multiple forums. Besides, while it develops horizontal forms of political communication stressing openness and consent, it unfolds vertical forms of communication emphasizing antagonism to neoliberal institutions and all forms of oppression.

Paradoxically these characteristics echo theoretical assumptions from both deliberative and agonistic theories, which have been traditionally regarded as antithetical conceptions of democracy, since the former emphasize inclusiveness,

solidarity and consensus, while the latter stress exclusiveness, conflict and dissent. In other words, the WSF is a place where deliberative and agonistic theories get together, showing how empirical facts teach us something new about theoretical tools: each catches up on the WSF's attributes of publicity. Habermas's theory of discourse ethics and Mouffe's perspective of agonistic pluralism help to elucidate this apparent contradiction. Let me explain.

While Habermas's account of communicative solidarity grasps the collective identification created through shared participation in debate, Mouffe's 'logic of equivalences' informs the alternative pillar of solidarity developed from the articulation of different struggles. Likewise, the Habermasian model of a deliberative public sphere informs the principles of openness, plurality, mutual recognition, and consent that govern communication within the WSF, whereas Mouffe's model of an agonistic public sphere informs the agonistic stance of WSF vis-a-vis external powers, considering its intervention in a broader public sphere where it is struggling against hegemony of neoliberalism. Finally, Habermas's account of "communicative legitimacy" grasps WSF's claim for the capacity of its participants to deliberate about the content of collective decisions that affect them, while Mouffe's account of 'agonistic legitimacy,' grasps WSF's articulation of hegemonic discourses and strategies in order to render its fight for social justice politically relevant to local, national, regional and 'supranational' institutions of power.

Generally, the Habermasian public sphere is characterized by a communication structure that is related to the social space generated in

communicative action, that is, through the communicatively negotiated interpretations on questions of common concern.

Chantal Mouffe, in contrast, elaborates an agonistic conception of publicity. According to her perspective of "agonistic pluralism," the aim of democratic institutions is to defuse the potential for hostility that exists in human societies by providing the possibility for antagonism to be transformed into "agonism." She defines agonism as an "us/them" relation of adversaries who share a symbolic space but struggle for the hegemony of their interpretations about the organization of that shared symbolic space. Accordingly, she envisions an "agonistic public sphere" for the mobilization of passions and collective forms of identification.

While both Habermas and Mouffe argue for the need to deepen democracy, their views on the "nature" of politics differ. Habermas emphasizes the institutionalization of the procedures and conditions of communication, and the interplay of institutionalized deliberative processes with informally developed public opinions. For Mouffe, instead, the fundamental question for democratic politics is to defuse the potential antagonism that exists in human relations with the aim of establishing a certain order and organize human coexistence.

This dissertation aims at contributing to the debate on the critical function of the notion of publicity in the postnational constellation by an analysis of the World Social Forum that combines deliberative and agonistic theories. The assumptions underlying this goal are threefold: first, the persisting emergence of public spaces that exceed national boundaries despite the absence of accountable transnational decision-making institutions. Second, the problems arising from applying Westphalian

concepts (e.g., citizenship) to transnational public arenas. Finally, the corresponding need of a reconstruction of the theories of public sphere for expanding conceptual tools for analyzing new global political phenomena.

As highlighted above, the WSF defies existing public sphere theories on account of its complex, multifarious social and political attributes, which resist monological analysis. It is not coincidental that in all the years from its inception it continues to give rise to numerous empirical and theoretical works attempting to characterize the Forum from different perspectives.

In this dissertation, the WSF serves as an empirical point to explore the plausibility of the notion of transnational publicity through a combination of deliberative and agonistic theories. By selecting this case, I am restricting the concept of transnational public spheres to spaces with some degree of institutionalization, inclusiveness, debate, shared action, and not only the exchange of information. Besides, the work is not intended for evaluating the meetings of the forum. Rather, I make use of data from researches and reports on the WSF's events to describe and analyze the main attributes of the Forum's publicity. Additionally, I refer to the World Social Forum indistinctly as the "WSF", the "forum" or "forums" to denote the common features of the encounters that since 2001 follow the rules for participation of the WSF's charter of principles.

In summary, the aims of this dissertation are:

1. To contribute to the debate on the prospects of democracy in a "postnational" constellation, by reexamining the validity of the notion of publicity in transnational arenas.

2. To explore the features of emergent transnational public spheres through an analysis of the WSF.

3. To demonstrate the possibility of combining deliberative and agonistic theories to explain new practices of transnational publicity.

The analysis develops along three main chapters (2, 3 and 4) arranged around three categories that structure central premises of the theories of publicity: collective identification, forms of publicity and addressees. Let me explain these categories in turn,

1. The term "subjects" refers to the formation of collective identity related to the process of emergence of new political subjects through involvement and articulation. In terms of Habermas, it denotes participation in public debate about matters of common concern, in principle accessible to all who are potentially affected. In terms of Mouffe, it designates a type of commonality, a collective form of identification created by the articulation of different struggles, which involves a multitude of interactions within an agonistic public space.

In both cases the constitution of political subjectivity implies a certain type of solidarity, although differently shaped. While for Habermas, solidarity is the result of a communicative process directed to reaching understanding, for Mouffe it is mainly the outcome of a chain of democratic equivalences among different struggles.

2. The term "forms of communication" is related to the practices of political interaction present in a public space. According to Habermas, the public space is constituted discursively among groups and individuals engaged in inclusive,

reciprocal, constrained-free discussions directed to reach consent on common matters. For Mouffe, instead, the public space is itself the site and object of contestation, as it is marked by antagonisms that are its condition of existence and will inevitably involve exclusions and hierarchies.

The term also entails those mechanisms and devices of different kind (regulations, organization, printed and digital material, etc.) that support communicative practices.

3. The term "addressees" applies to those decision-making bodies subject to the influence of public spheres and the demands of citizens. Previously, the addressee was tacitly assumed to be the officials and authorized decision-making bodies of a bounded territorial state. Today, however, the addressees can be national, regional, local governments, international institutions of governance and even transnational agencies. The democratic relation between public opinion and representative authority presupposes legitimate mechanisms of opinion-formation for steering administrative and political powers.

In the remaining section of this chapter, I shall explain the conditions of emergence of existing transnational practices of publicity. I shall also introduce the agonistic and deliberative features of the WSF in light of the categories already described.

Finally, I shall outline the content of the chapters.

Globalization, Transnational Publicity and the World Social Forums

Broadly speaking, the term globalization connects with the accelerated spread of goods, capital, technologies, information and ideas across the world. It involves an intensification of cross-border integration of markets through trade and social, cultural and political interactions (Held 1995, Ruggie 1993, Sassen 1996). These processes have contradictory effects, as they encompass positive events like the expansion of communication technologies that allow people across the world to instantaneous connection, as well as destructive ones, like global pollution.

Indeed, over the last few decades, globalization has been strongly related to infamous neoliberal discourses serving restrictive state policies on social security, health, and education in the name of "national competitiveness" in the global economy. Among the negative consequences of "global," "disorganized" capitalism and its major partner, political neoliberalism, are the growth of unemployment and poverty, the worsening of the biosphere and the deterioration of the quality of life of gross masses of the world's population. However, "global neoliberalism" is contested by new social and political forces taking advantage of global interconnectedness to constructing "another world" with social justice and sustainable environment.

The expansion of economic, social, cultural and political interactions across national frontiers challenges the hegemonic idea of nation that has been nourishing the division of the world in national states throughout two centuries. In Western societies, the combination of liberal democracies and national states has framed present understandings of sovereignty, citizenship and rights that still inform political struggles around the world.

Nation states not only map the political division of the planet but still retain authority on political, economic, administrative and legal matters at the internal and external levels. However, in the last fifty years they have been progressively sharing power with mixed private/public structures of governance. The term "global governance" usually refers to varied multilateral entities – international organizations, private firms and associations – as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the new International Criminal Court (ICC). Though global governance institutions lack legitimate means of coercion within national territories, they issue regulations and exert control over domestic policies. Increasingly, rules made by and through global governance institutions become more difficult to be evaded (Buchanan and Keohane 2006). A recent example is the enforcement on the Greek government by the European Union and the IMF to curtail state budget in order to receive financial assistance in the aftermath of deep economic crisis.

As mechanisms, forms and actors of global politics are continuously changing, the nature of the interconnection between governments and global governance institutions is growing in complexity. Global governance interventions not only include widely known actions from the IMF, but also those like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria for people in Africa and Asia (Ibid.).

The overlapping powers of global governance show the increasing transnationalization of world politics, which until recently was predominantly international. This process started with the progressive substitution of the global economy for the liberal world market that signals the shift from the post-war Bretton

Woods "compromise of embedded liberalism" to the loose system of disembedded markets of global neoliberalism. Briefly stated, after World War II the Bretton Woods system reconciled market and society through multilateral trade and domestic interventionism, seeking to reach a balance between cross-country commercial exchange and national welfare. After the 1970's, the incremental superseding of international economy by global production and trade marked the crisis of the post-war order and the emergence of a new global political structure characterized as a "nébuleuse" of dispersed powers or "governance without government" (Cox 1992, Rosenau 1999, Ruggie 1982, 2004). Unlike government, governance lacks of a binding decision-making structure. Instead, it entails the use of control mechanisms by the institutions of the global economy or the organized and coordinated activities of networked associations for the solution of some specific problems that states and the inter-state system fail to resolve. Despite their internal norms and procedures for transparency and efficiency (like those of environmental or human rights NGOs) or indirect legitimacy (like in the case of international institutions) global governance regimes suffer from democratic deficit. As a form of government – in its modern sense, attached to a state – democracy requires official bodies of representatives accountable and removable by the majority of a bounded community or demos, and the protection of individuals and minority rights. In this sense, it usually involves political participation through vote and electoral selection, as well as majority rule (Nye 2001, Urbinati 2003). Certainly, the latter attributes are absent in transnational authoritative regimes when compared to actual forms of democratic governments.

Moreover, if we refer to democracy as a political practice that entails the formation and expression of opinions to influence decision-making and exercise

control over administrative and judicial actions from representative authorities, global governance still lacks of important democratic mechanisms. Notwithstanding the proliferation of transnational networks of non-state actors calling for transparency and accountability in governmental and multilateral institutions, these emergent transnational publics do not have proper democratic institutional arrangements for steering their demands.

In brief, the decline of the capacity of national states to effectively govern issues that extend beyond their territories and the intensification of unaccountable global governance institutions that manage various areas of transnational activity, show that globalization defies in practice and theory the fundamental principles of Westphalian liberal democracy. In terms of sovereignty, nation states no longer hold the supremacy of legal and political authority over the people of their territories, as they have to share it with transnational, international and regional institutions of power. Correspondingly, self-governance is increasingly confronted by problems that neither national governments nor the international system can solve by their own, like pollution, infectious deceases or transnational crime. The diminishing efficacy of sovereign territoriality and the growing expansion of the "communities of fate" across national borders, have also implications for the principles of consent, legitimacy and accountability, since the correspondence between rulers and ruled are disrupted by the existence of global governance (Held 1995, McGrew 1997).

Thus, as mentioned earlier, globalization confronts the Westphalian premises of the theories of publicity. The increasing transnationalization of public opinion calls for a reconstruction of the principles of 'normative legitimacy' and 'political efficacy'

for recovering their critical democratic functions of ensuring both the participation of all affected transnational parties and the translation and capacity of new transnational public powers (Fraser 2007).

Transnational publicity has evolved in association with the flows of public opinion generated in communicative interaction among groups acting across national and international borders. The latter have usually been connected with transnational social movements and NGOs spreading in numbers and scope of influence since the eighties. Of course, their aims, composition, sites, and forms of communication have been changing considerably since then. For instance, whereas earlier transnational actors sought primarily to influence national governments and international forums and institutions, their current counterparts direct their interventions not only to national and international institutions, but also to transnational political arenas. Examples of the former are those feminist and human rights movements and NGOs that started to organize networks around the meetings of the United Nations in the late seventies and early eighties, while the latter are generally associated with the global justice movement or alternative globalization movement beginning in 1999 with the massive protest against the summit of the WEF that took place in Seattle that year.

It is not surprising, then, that these practices of political activism across borders have been termed 'transnational' or 'global' just recently. New twenty-first century transnational publics not only define themselves as 'global', but also contest the legitimacy of decisions taken by global governance institutions dealing with multilevel and multidimensional expressions of economic, environmental, social and political issues. Moreover, as those converging in the meetings of the World Social

Forum show, they seek to democratize the formation of public opinion and the processes of decision-making, by practicing new public arenas of debate on a world scale.

Originally organized as a counter-summit to the WEF, the WSF aimed to provide forums for the construction of alternative strategies to respond to the forces of neoliberal economic globalization. To quote the WSF's mission statement: "The World Social Forum will be a new international arena for the creation and exchange of social and economic projects that promote human rights, social justice and sustainable development. It will take place […] during the same period as the World Economic Forum, which happens in Davos, Switzerland, at the end of January. Since 1971, The World Economic Forum has played a key role in formulating economic policies throughout the world […] The World Social Forum will provide a space for building economic alternatives, for exchanging experiences and for strengthening South-North alliances between NGOs, unions and social movements..." (WSF's manifesto 2001).

In the beginning, the World Social Forum was organized by Brazilian unions and NGOs, and the Brazil's Workers Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT) which provided conference facilities and funded much of the forum. They planned the event together with activists connected to the French publication *Le Monde Diplomatique* and the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens (ATTAC). In June 2001 —after the first meeting held in January of the same year in Porto Alegre— the Brazilian Organizing Committee created the International Council to take decisions on the international aspects of the WSF. Since then, both

organizations have been at the center of initiative and decision-making within the Forum.[1]

Since its first edition in 2001, the meetings of the WSF have varied considerably in terms of content, location and number of participants. As Boaventura de Souza Santos points out, "in practice, the WSF is a set of forums (global, regional, thematic and local) that are organized according to the Charter of Principles" (Santos 2005, 44). Currently, it includes regional forums like the European Social Forum and the Social Forum of the Americas. There are also thematic forums like the Forum on Democracy, Human Rights, War and Drug Trade, held in Cartagena, Colombia in 2003, and all the forums that have been meeting parallel to the WSF, like the World Parliamentary Forum and the Forum of Sexual Diversity. In the last years, the main editions of the forum took place in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2007, in the Brazilian city of Belem in 2009 and, in Dakar, Senegal, in 2011. There were also decentralized, "polycentric" events of the forum in 2006 and 2010.

The endurance and multiplication of the meetings of the WSF increase complexity to the analysis of transnational publicity. In terms of the basic commonality among people needed to grow shared values and interests for creating legitimate demands and public opinion, WSF's participants seem to replace citizenship for new types of collective identification. In addition, requests for accountable responses spread out to an array of local, national and supranational institutions without sovereign powers. But, above all, they exercise innovative forms of political communication that combine inner consent and external dispute in order to

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[1] This has been the case of all WSF's meetings held in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Other social forums, like the Mumbai WSF, had their own organizing committees.

deepen discursive struggles for justice and democracy at the transnational level. In other words, WSF's practices defy existing theories of democracy on key matters of publicity such as the formation of collective identity, forms of communication and the creation of legitimacy for the institutional allocation of their demands.

The World Social Forum's processes of Collective Identification

Several articles of the WSF's Charter of Principles invite people to reflect on alternatives to all types of domination in open and plural fora. For instance, article 9 asserts that "the World Social Forum will always be a forum open to pluralism and to the diversity of activities and ways of engaging of the organizations and movements that decide to participate in it, as well as the diversity of genders, ethnicities, cultures, generations and physical capacities, providing they abide by this Charter of Principles."

In fact, by the multiplication of forums in different regions of the planet the WSF's encounters not only have succeeded in increasing the number of participants but also in gathering heterogeneous publics from different countries, ethnicities, races, genders, languages and political views. With its appeal to debate alternative ways for fighting all expressions of domination by means of argumentation and mutual understanding, it has nurtured the emergence of an array of forums, new thematic networks and alliances between movements and organizations.

Thus, the WSF has proved its ability to gather and connect a wide range of groups and individuals willing to understand and recognize each other. As a participant states,

> The WSF has been a heady experience for its many participants. Imagine a gathering with tens of thousands of people (100,000 in 2003) successfully communicating across barriers of language, political orientation and issue emphasis […] The Forum provides participants a chance to discuss strategies and programs for collective action […] (they) also celebrate the great diversity among the people and groups the Forum brings together. They proclaim their respect for the varying opinions expressed and for the many cultures visibly present, and they defend the right of all to differ with one another (Hammond 2005, 2- 3).

In seminars, workshops and other types of activities, WSF's activists get involved in processes of communication based on mutual respect, thus creating a sense of belonging and interpersonal bonds of confidence that matches Habermas's idea of communicative solidarity.

Besides, following the organizers call for "the free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action", participants create networks at local, regional and world levels and organize new meetings, forums and marches. Since 2001, the WSF has encouraged the creation of new forums around the world, countless networks of social movements on particular topics and goals, and transnational coordination for organizing anti-war and anti-corporate protests, among other public demonstrations. By promoting cooperation among different transnational struggles against global capitalism, the WSF has reinforced solidarity among participants in a way that resembles Mouffe's idea on the creation of solidarity through the articulation of social practices.

The Practices of Communication of the WSF

Two apparently contradictory principles of communication are at the core of the Forum's guidelines for participation: on the one hand, open and horizontal debate for internal exchanges among movements, organizations and individuals across the world; on the other, vertical and antagonistic contestation against exclusive neoliberal powers and discourses. As article 1 states, "the World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Humankind and between it and the Earth".

Articles 4, 10 and 11 reinforce the main ideal of fighting the injustices of undemocratic globalization by means of democratic practices of global public dispute. Indeed, the WSF proposes to fight the hierarchical and restrictive mechanisms of neoliberal global politics via inclusive and equal participation in democratic debates. Complementary, it suggests the replacement of the system of global governance with "democratic international systems at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples". Likewise, the articles emphasize the forum's willingness to ensure equality and solidarity as well as respect for human rights, as opposed to all forms of domination, exclusion and social inequality.

In brief, the charter highlights that the main goal of the WSF is to offer a space of public debate for a transnational civil society struggling against hegemonic

neoliberal globalization. Furthermore, it stresses openness, plurality, mutual recognition and consent in contrast to elitist and authoritarian political interactions of global governance powers. These characteristics are complemented by important regulations on internal decision-making establishing that participants have the right to deliberate on declarations or actions only in the name of a single group or groups, but not "on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body". Thus, the forum explicitly rejects the role of a representative political body and instead promotes deliberation and consensus-building among activists for making declarations and proposals by themselves. Taken together, these principles show that the WSF stands as an informal public sphere for ensuring voice and legitimacy to the opinions of transnational publics claiming accountability from the institutions of global power.

To warrant efficacy to these rules, the forum provides an infrastructure that includes conferences, workshops, testimonies, seminars and press conferences.[2] In addition, there are music, dance, theater and other "celebration" activities: participants hold discussions, cultural events, rallies, exhibitions, and other forms of self-expression on issues ranging from the environment to women's movement, and from economic policy to alternative social orders.

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[2] The WSF Methodology provides a set of distinctions among types of presentations. **Conferences** aim to highlight, and to echo, the most worked-out proposals by civil society on WSF themes. **Workshops** are intended to allow groups, coalitions, networks to meet, exchange experiences, interlink, plan and define strategies, always in view of their present and future action. **Testimonies** are opportunities for individuals with a distinguished record of activity on behalf of freedom and human dignity to share their experiences, analyses and views. The purpose of **seminars** is to identify, develop and explore in depth specific themes that have not yet come to be embodied in clear proposals or social subjects, as well as to permit related public debate and the socialization of strategic thinking from a WSF perspective. Finally, **press conferences** are designed to provide an integrated account of activities, particularly the conferences and sets of proposals (world social forum website: http://www.worldsocialforum.org).

Other mechanisms to improve inclusiveness and parity of participation are the consultation of topics for programming the events, and the translation of languages. Topics, as well as methodologies for their selection, have changed since the first World Social Forum. While in the first three Forums held in Porto Alegre there were official programs under the exclusive responsibility of the organizing committee, the fourth WSF in Mumbai in 2004 significantly reduced official plenaries. After this experience, the International Committee of the WSF decided to eliminate the official program altogether. Instead, it initiated a `thematic consultation,' asking past participants to propose the main themes for the Forum.

The simultaneous translation of speakers of different tongues is a challenging task for the organizers of the forums. An observer of the WSF's meetings states, "Breathing life into these worthy principles requires that people have the means to communicate with and understand each other in ways that are egalitarian and democratic" (Boéri and Hodkinson 2005). At the WSF in Porto Alegre, the official languages were Portuguese, Spanish, English, and French. By the time of the WSF held in Mumbai in 2004, the spectrum of 'official languages' broadened to 13, to reflect the ethnic diversity of India and the Asian continent, a development that increased the number of participants from those language groups.[3]

Besides direct interaction at the forums, other important channels of communication include printed papers, programs, declarations, web sites, digital

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[3] This achievement has been partly reached with the help of Babels, an international network of volunteer interpreters and translators that was born out of the Social Forum process, starting at the first European Social Forum in Florence 2002. Since then, a main part of simultaneous and consecutive interpretation as well as document translation has been provided by Babels (Ibid.).

forums, e-mails, and other resources provided by the Internet. The WSF has its own website with links to other social forums. There is also a multiplicity of NGOs and networks throughout the net, publishing comments and papers, advertising events, establishing Internet forums for discussion and so on, all of which are related to the main encounters of the WSF and other regional forums. Networks[4] contribute significantly to the exchange of information and ideas. There are different types of networks surrounding the meetings and the "process" of the World Social Forum: networks of associations, of social movements, of volunteers for facilitating different tasks, among others. Some existed before the WSF, while others emerged as its result. Digital "alternative media" like Ciranda, Indymedia and Terra, also contribute to ensure the permanent exchange of information among participants.

In addition, in order to provide initiatives and demands with more visibility in a broader public sphere, external communication is carried out through specific interventions like the video conference between participants at the first WSF in Porto Alegre and representatives from the World Economic Forum taking place at the same time in Davos, Switzerland. Other example is the Global Day of Action that took place simultaneously in over 80 different countries in January 2008. Moreover, the dissemination of forums across the globe is a strategy not only directed to generate more inclusion and promote articulation among different publics, but also to expand discursive struggles against economic and political neoliberalism.

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[4]The growing practice of networking among transnational social movements and NGOs has been attracting the attention of scholars who are trying to understand the organizational, cultural, and political meaning of these new practices. For example, Castells defines networks as a "decentered form of organization and intervention, characteristic of the new social movements, mirroring, and counteracting, the networking logic of domination in the information society" (Castells 1997, 362).

The addressees of the WSF

The meetings of the WSF are set up to attract the attention of local, national, international, and transnational institutions of power. But there is no a priori assumption about which is the primary addressee. Rather, one theme under discussion is the comparative effectiveness of national and transnational political institutions. Another pits those who believe in legal reform and representative democracy for achieving social justice against those proposing to replace capitalism by a socialist world. Each side encompasses a wide variety of positions, among which the more salient concern the choice between confronting or reforming the institutions of neoliberal globalization (like the World Bank, IMF and WTO), as well as the choice between revitalizing national sovereignty and state power or invigorating transnational sovereignty and transnational institutions of governance (IRC 2002, Santos, 2004a).

Debates on the institutional frame of transnational politics go together with discussions on how and to whom address demands. While exchanging experiences and arguments about common matters and decisions that affect their lives, participants are producing a communicative legitimacy that reflects the "all affected" principle that is at the core of Habermas's theory of publicity. Besides, while articulating different types of demands around specific claims and building political allegiances for defying neoliberal discourses, they get involved in hegemonic discursive struggles, as the alternative way for generating legitimacy envisioned by Mouffe.

What is more, as part of these legitimizing processes, activists creatively direct their claims to local, national, international and transnational institutions of

power according to their alleged responsibility in the problems involved. In this way they contribute to make global governance powers more visible, thus creating public consciousness about their blame for most of the troubles suffered by the world population. Additionally, by working to deconstruct hegemonic neoliberal meanings of social life, participants put into practice one of the main goals of the forum, which is opposing the dominant neoliberal sense of politics through horizontal and plural debate.

However, these alternative practices of creating legitimacy and targeting public opinion raise some questions that remain a puzzle for all theories of publicity. Assuming the WSF is succeeding in increasing the legitimacy of the public opinion is generating, how are its publics able to steering power from national states, international institutions and intergovernmental networks where they actually place their demands? Which are the conceptual tools that best capture these novel practices and offer imaginative solutions to render transnational public opinion more accountable?

Actually, no scholars have arrived to comprehensive answers to the problems of legitimacy/accountability experienced by transnational public spheres. This is not surprising, given the lack of decision-making institutions for tackling with problems transnational public spheres expose. In absence of normative theory that sheds light on the problem, the analysis will finish with a diagnosis of the practices of WSF's activists for addressing their demands as well as their main arguments on the matter.

Summarizing, I have introduced the WSF as a paradigmatic case of the challenges transnational publicity poses to critical democratic theory. Taking

Habermas's theory of discourse ethics and Mouffe's theory of 'agonistic pluralism', I have shown the Forum's deliberative and agonistic features using three key notions of public sphere theories: collective identification, forms of communication and addressees. In so doing, I am arguing in favor of a combination of deliberative and agonistic theories for reconstructing the critical function of publicity, explaining that these two apparently contradictory viewpoints can be reconciled within the existing transnational constellation.

Indeed, the WSF combines inner agreement and external dissent to deepening discursive struggles for justice and democracy, showing that deliberative and agonistic theories are not mutually exclusive, at least to explain post- national political practices. In first place, collective identification among activists relies on two sources of solidarity: on one hand, deliberative communication through plural and equal debate; on the other hand, agonistic articulation of equivalent struggles. In second place, while openness, transparency, mutual recognition and consent govern communication among participants, antagonistic discourses are directed against hegemonic global powers. Finally, while debating and rehearsing innovative ways for claiming accountability from a myriad of powers, WSF's activists seek to produce legitimate demands by applying the "all affected" principle, as well as the articulation of hegemonic discourses.

In the chapters that follow I shall develop in length the ideas exposed above:

Chapter 2 focuses on the construction of transnational political identities, analyzing WSF's practices of engagement and articulation among groups through Habermas's and Mouffe's approaches to the concept of solidarity. After explaining Habermas's

notion of communicative solidarity and Mouffe's concept of chain of equivalences, the chapter examines the characteristics of WSF's collective identification in light of both perspectives of solidarity.

Chapter 3 analyzes the forms of communication of the WSF using the same analytical approach of the previous chapter. First, I explain Habermas's account of discourse ethics and Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism for illuminating the forum's internal and external features of communication, respectively. In the final section, I demonstrate that far from contradicting each other, together these two perspectives enlighten the WSF's combination of horizontal and plural debate with vertical discursive confrontation as a way to strengthening transnational public opinion against global neoliberal political hegemony.

Chapter 4 examines WSF's alternatives for the exercise and allocation of power without sovereign transnational addressees. The analysis is divided in two separate but correlating parts. First, I explicate the WSF's creation of legitimacy by way of deliberative processes of opinion formation and agonistic articulation of hegemonic practices. Second, I identify WSF's different strategies to democratizing transnational politics.

Chapter 5 offers a comprehensive account of the agonistic and deliberative features of WSF's transnational publicity, explaining the interrelation between its practices of communication, creation of solidarity and generation of legitimate public opinion. Finally I reflect on the problems and prospects transnational publics face for ensuring political accountability to their opinions and demands.

Chapter 2

The World Social Forum and the Creation of Collective Identities. Constructing Solidarity through Debate and Counter-hegemonic Articulation

This chapter focuses on the formation of transnational political identities, analyzing WSF's practices of engagement and articulation among groups through Habermas's and Mouffe's approaches to the concept of solidarity. While Habermas's account of communicative solidarity grasps the collective identification created through shared participation in debate, Mouffe's 'logic of equivalences' informs the alternative pillar of solidarity developed from the articulation of different struggles.

To this end, I develop Habermas and Mouffe's concepts on the making of solidarity, which are embedded in their theories about the construction of individual and collective identities. While both concur in their discursive and contingent character – rejecting the notion of preconstituted identities – their approaches differ: whereas Habermas emphasizes the intersubjective formation of identity, Mouffe stresses its antagonistic structuring.

The chapter is divided into three sections, each comprising two subsections. In the first section, I explain Habermas's theory of communicative rationality, particularly his conceptualization about the communicative constitution of individual and collective identities, and the construction of solidarity.

In the second section, I develop Mouffe's notions of agonistic identity formation, and the constitution of solidarity through the articulation of chains of equivalences.

Finally, in the third section, I analyze the communicative and agonistic features of the creation of bonds of mutual trust and cooperation among WSF's participants.

Habermas on Communicative action and Solidarity

In Habermas's political theory solidarity fulfills a critical role in the consolidation of democratic practices, as it enables social integration through the formation and stabilization of individual and collective identities. For him, "solidarity concerns the welfare of consociates who are intimately linked in an intersubjectively shared form of life – and thus also to the maintenance of the integrity of this form of life itself" (Habermas, 1990a: 244). In contrast to traditional representations of solidarity that emphasize its emotional and affective aspects, Habermas highlights the intersubjective characteristic of the creation of solidarity through social practices of communicative action. The latter takes form discursively in every social action directed to reaching understanding, and serves to the transmission and renewal of cultural knowledge, the creation of social integration and solidarity, and the formation of personal identities.[5] As he states,

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[5] "Under the functional aspect of *mutual understanding*, communicative action serves to transmit and renew cultural knowledge; under the aspect of *coordinating action*, it serves social integration and the establishment of solidarity; finally, under the aspect of *socialization*, communicative action serves the formation of personal identities" (Habermas 1987a, 137. Italics in the original).

> …communicative action is not only a process of reaching understanding; in coming to an understanding about something in the world, actors are at the same time taking part in interactions through which they develop, confirm, and renew their memberships in social groups and their own identities. Communicative actions are not only processes of interpretation in which cultural knowledge is 'tested against the world'; they are at the same time, processes of social integration and socialization (Habermas 1987a, 139).

The fundamental premise of the theory of communicative action is that social actions directed to reaching understanding are based on the intersubjective formation of human rationality, that is, on the potential for rationality that is present in the basic structures of language. Thus, the structures of communicative action and communicative rationality are primarily the same: the basic presuppositions of language. As Habermas says, his conception of communicative rationality contrasts with the model of the isolated, autonomous subject, characteristic of cognitive-instrumental rationality,

> The phenomena in need of explication are no longer, in and of themselves, the knowledge and mastery of an objective nature, but the intersubjectivity of possible understanding and agreement – at both the interpersonal and intrapsychic levels. The focus of investigation thereby shifts from cognitive-instrumental rationality to communicative rationality. And what is paradigmatic for the latter is not the relation of a solitary subject to something in the objective world that can be represented and manipulated, but the intersubjective relation that speaking and acting subjects take up when they come to an understanding with one another about something (Habermas 1984, 392).

Therefore, rationality is not a purely individual cognitive attribute, but the result of communicative interaction. It "has less to do with the possession of knowledge than with how speaking and acting subjects acquire and use knowledge" (Ibid, 8). "Reaching an understanding" is at the core of Habermas's concept of communicative

rationality. As he asserts, "language is a medium of communication that serves understanding, whereas actors in coming to an understanding with one another so as to coordinate their actions, pursue their particular aims" (Ibid: 101).

In everyday communicative practices actors continually raise validity claims on facts, norms and experiences, which they try to justify or validate by appealing to arguments that can be accepted or challenged by their interlocutors. In speech acts directed to reaching understanding, speakers undertake an obligation to provide reasons for validating their claims, while hearers may either accept the proffered reasons or challenge them on the basis of better reasons. In this way, speakers do not just say something – expressing a state of affairs – but most importantly, they perform an action by saying something, attaching a mode to a sentence, such as a statement, promise, avowal, command or the like. The illocutionary force of a given utterance lies in the coordinating effect of the warranty undertaken by a speaker when submitting her expression to the critical examination of a hearer, which is implicit in validity claims.[6] In Habermas's words,

> ...a speaker can rationally motivate a hearer to accept his speech act offer because – on the basis of an internal connection between validity, validity claim, and redemption of a validity-claim – he can assume the warranty [Gewähr] for providing, if necessary, convincing reasons that would stand up to a hearer's criticism of the validity-claim. Thus, a speaker owes the binding (or bonding: bindende) force of his illocutionary act not to the validity of what is said but to the coordinating effect of the warranty that he

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[6]Habermas regards the speech act as "the elementary unit of speech – i.e., as the smallest (verbal) utterance sequence which is comprehensible and acceptable to at least one other competent actor within a communications context". He distinguishes locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts: "through *locutionary acts* the speaker expresses *states of affairs*; she says something. Through *illocutionary acts,* the speaker performs an action by saying something. The illocutionary role establishes the mode of a sentence (Mp) employed as a statement, promise, command, avowal, or the like […] finally, through *perlocutionary acts,* the speaker produces an effect upon the hearer" (Habermas 1976, 155; 1998b, 122).

offers: namely to redeem, if necessary, the validity-claim raised with his speech act (1984, 302).

Hence, the illocutionary force of an utterance has the effect of establishing interpersonal relations on the basis of reasons: as participants in communicative interaction undertake reciprocal obligations for justifying their beliefs and intentions to each other, they get involved in cooperative relationships of commitment and responsibility. Coming to an understanding involves cooperative processes of interpretation, in which linguistic interaction is primarily a matter of raising and responding to validity claims about something. It is a process operating simultaneously at the intersubjetive and objective levels,

> By creating an intersubjective relationship between speaker and hearer, the speech act simultaneously stands in an objective relation to the world. If we conceive of "communication" [*Verständigung*] as the inherent telos of language, we cannot but acknowledge the equiprimordiality of representation, communication, and action. As representation and as communicative act, a linguistic utterance points in both directions at once: toward the world and toward the addressee (Habermas 2003, 3).

The interdependence between representation (or cognition), communication, and action, is embedded in the concept of reaching an understanding, which is "a rationally motivated agreement among participants that is measured against criticizable validity claims". Habermas states that "...validity claims […] characterize different categories of a knowledge embodied in symbolic expressions. These expressions can be more closely analyzed in two ways – with respect with to how they can be defended and with respect to how actors relate through them to something in a world" (1984, 75). In speaking, subjects implicitly make claims concerning the

validity of what they say, imply or presuppose, regarding the truth of what they say in relation to the objective world, the normative rightness of the speech act in relation to a given context, and claims to the truthfulness of the manifest expressions of the intentions and feelings of the speakers. These three pretensions of validity correspond, in turn, to three types of object domain or 'worlds', described as objective, social (or intersubjective) and subjective. The objective world refers to the totality of all entities about which true statements are possible; the social world entails the totality of all legitimately regulated interpersonal relations, and the subjective world names the totality of experiences of the speaker to which she has privileged access. (Ibid, 100).

By reaching an understanding, communicative actors refer simultaneously to the three types of validity claims – and corresponding worlds – mentioned above. Thus, in order to achieve an agreement they "relativize their utterances against the possibility that their validity will be contested by other actors". In so doing, "they no longer refer directly to something in the objective, social or subjective worlds," but instead they "integrate the three worlds-concepts […] into a system and presuppose this system in common as a framework of interpretation within which they can reach an understanding" (Ibid, 98- 99).

In everyday communicative practices these processes of mutual interpretation remain implicit. 'Naive' communicative action entails rudimentary practices of argumentation, in which participants start from the horizon of a lifeworld constituted by "culturally transmitted and linguistically organized stock of interpretive patterns". Habermas asserts that "this lifeworld background serves as a source of

situation definitions that are presupposed by participants as unproblematic".[7] However, if mutual interpretation fails they are confronted with the alternatives of switching to strategic action, breaking of communication altogether, or resorting to a discursive examination of the problematic validity claims. In the latter case, which Habermas calls discourse, certain idealizing suppositions that are already operative in rudimentary argumentation – such as sharing the common aim of reaching agreement in relation to the validity of the disputed validity claim or the inclusion of every competent party in the discussion – become formalized.

In contrast to other forms of settling disputed claims, as manipulation, coercion or brute force, coming to an understanding offers the possibility of criticizing, defending or revising contested claims. As stated by Habermas,

> A communicatively achieved agreement has a rational basis; it cannot be imposed by either party, whether instrumentally through intervention in the situation directly, or strategically through exerting influence on the decisions of one party on the basis of a calculation of success. Agreement can indeed objectively be obtained by force; but what comes to pass *manifestly* through outside influence or the use of violence cannot subjectively count as an agreement. Agreement rests on common *convictions*. The speech act of one person succeeds only if the other accepts the offer contained in it by taking (however implicitly) a 'yes' or 'no' position on a validity claim that is in principle criticizable (1998b, 120).

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[7]As Max Pensky points out, "Habermas argues for a model of the lifeworld as *both* the unproblematic horizon or background against which any form of social action must bear meaning *and* the reservoir of symbolically structured meanings, situation interpretations, and explanations that generate the sources of possible disagreements as well as materials for their solution [...] The lifeworld thus cannot be restricted to cultural interpretations, but must include in symbolically accessible form the level of social institutions and personality structures as well. Hence the lifeworld is in a dynamic process of self-unfolding in which all three aspects (culture, society, and personality) are in constant and tense interaction" (2008, 23).

The distinction between strategic action and communicative action plays a key role in Habermas's social theory and corresponds to his differentiation between cognitive-instrumental rationality and communicative rationality. For him, knowledge is important to rationality, not for its content, but for its capacity to enable the realization of a purpose. Since action, as well as speech and human cognition, involve the attempt to do something, they all entail the use and application of knowledge. However, given that knowledge is susceptible to criticism, any rational action must be capable to be defended against it. Therefore, an expression (and the goal-directed action contained in it) "satisfies the precondition for rationality if and insofar as it embodies fallible knowledge and therewith has a relation to the objective world (that is, a relation to the facts) and is open to objective judgment" (Habermas 1984, 9). Thus, any social action in which actors coordinate their individual purposes with a particular aim, entails a certain relation with the world, and certain types of claims to validity.

Habermas's characterization of social action focuses on two main aspects: on one side, the means of coordination of goal-directed actions; on the other, the relations to the world and related claims to validity involved in speech acts. Concerning the former, he distinguishes two orientations of social action: one, corresponding to the coordination of action through interest positions, and the other in relation to the coordination of action through normative agreement. The former relates to the model of action oriented toward success, according to which the actions of actors are primarily oriented to attaining and end. Within this model, Habermas differentiates between instrumental action and strategic action. While instrumental action follows technical rules and assesses the efficiency of an intervention into a complex of

circumstances and events in the world, strategic action follows rules of rational choice and assesses the efficacy of influencing the decisions of a rational opponent. Instead, in communicative action, "the actions of the agents involved are coordinated not through egocentric calculations of success but through acts of reaching understanding" (Habermas 1984, 285-286; 1998b, 117-118).

In this way, Habermas describes strategic and communicative actions as prototypes of actions oriented to success and actions oriented to reaching understanding, respectively. While strategic actors coordinate their plans of action with one another by way of a reciprocal exertion of influence, participants in communicative action coordinate their actions by means of cooperative processes of interpretation. He asserts that in the case of strategic action, "coordination of the subjects' actions depends on the extent to which their egocentric utility calculations mesh". Rather, in communicative action "actors are prepared to harmonize their plans of action through internal means, committing themselves to pursuing their goals only on the condition of an agreement […] about definitions of the situation and prospective outcomes" (1990b, 133-134).

In relation to the use of language as a means of interaction, these two types of social action also differ from each other significantly. Whereas in strategic action, actors employ language as one of several media through which they can influence one another, in communicative action speakers and hearers use language as a medium of 'uncurtailed' communication. Because strategic actors are only interested in the outcomes of their actions, they use language in an instrumental way, namely, not elucidated or communicatively employed. In consequence, speech acts presuppose a

one-sided relation to the world of existing states of affairs and claims to validity of truth and efficacy. In contrast, as communicative actors seek to reach agreement through cooperative processes of interpretation, they need to relate simultaneously to the objective, intersubjective and subjective worlds, combining validity claims of truth, rightness and sincerity. Thus, while in strategic action language is considered unilaterally, in communicative action language attains a high level of complexity (Habermas 1984, 95).

By differentiating communicative action and strategic action as two polarized forms of social action, Habermas calls attention to two different principles of social integration that prevail in modern societies. These are, on the one hand, the mechanism of linguistic communication oriented to validity claims, and on the other, the mechanisms of delinguistified media of communication – e.g., money – that in principle are presented as independent of the intentions of actors. While the former shapes social integration in the context of the lifeworld and has the function of social reproduction, the latter is typical of the systemic integration that is produced through the functional imperatives of the interconnected systems of economy and bureaucratic administration, whose primary function is the material reproduction of society.

The separation of lifeworld and system – and corresponding functions of social and material reproduction – is the outcome of two processes that take place simultaneously: the increasing rationalization of society and the growing complexity of social organizations. In Habermas's words "...system and lifeworld are differentiated in the sense that the complexity of the one and the rationality of the other grow. But it is not only qua system and qua lifeworld that they are

differentiated; they get differentiated from one another at the same time" (1987a: 153).

Briefly stated, the process of societal rationalization is based on "the potential for rationality found in the validity basis of speech" of actions directed to reaching understanding present in the lifeworld. In the transition to modernity a specialization of knowledge resulting from a differentiation of value spheres and structures of consciousness, accompanies the gradual process of detachment of members of society from traditional values, beliefs, and representations that become progressively unhelpful for understanding reality and solving problems. In this way, new differentiated systems of knowledge and institutions take shape along the lines of the validity claims raised in communicative action: science, in relation to truth claims; professional intellectual treatment of questions of ethics and political theory and jurisprudence, according to rightness claims; and the institutionalization of artistic activities, in relation to authenticity and sincerity claims.

Consequently, a progressively linguistified lifeworld develops into distinct and self-organized spheres of knowledge that release social action from traditional values and norms. Insofar as the institutionalization and professionalization of science, law, and aesthetics grow in complexity, they exceed the capacities of communicative action, which "becomes loaded with expectations of consensus and risks of disagreement that make great demands on reaching understanding as the mechanism for coordinating action" (Habermas 1984, 340-341). To the extent that complex societies are overloaded with demands of validity that increase the threat of

dissent, new institutions and mechanisms emerge for relieving social actors from the burden placed on communicative action.

In highly differentiated societies, social, economic, political and legal institutions develop new paradigms of interpretation of reality, internal procedures, and mechanisms of integration, which intensify their level of complexity and autonomy, connecting one another via delinguistified media of communication like money and power. As a result, new complex subsystems of increasing internal differentiation consolidate and objectify into norm-free structures, emancipating themselves from the lifeworld in which they were previously anchored. The process of uncoupling of system and lifeworld shows the contradictory character of the rationalization of societal communicative practices,

> The contradiction arises between, on the one hand, a rationalization of everyday communication that is tied to the structures of intersubjectivity of the lifeworld, in which language counts as the genuine and irreplaceable medium of reaching understanding, and, on the other hand, the growing complexity of subsystems of purposive-rational action, in which actions are coordinated through steering media such as money and power. Thus, there is a competition *not between the types of action* oriented to understanding and to success, *but between principles of societal integration*—between the mechanism of linguistic communication that is oriented to validity claims—a mechanism that emerges in increasing purity from the rationalization of the lifeworld—and those de-linguistified steering media through which systems of success-oriented action are differentiated out (Ibid, 342; cursive in the original).

Hence, the rationalization of modernity takes place across two processes that are at once complementary and counteractive: the communicative rationalization of everyday communicative action, and the formation of subsystems of purposive-rational economic and bureaucratic systems. These two levels of the rationalization

process of modernity are opposed, but interconnected. Although the systemic imperatives of economic and bureaucratic interventions constrain the lifeworld to the point of "colonizing" it – eroding the communicative potential of action directed to reaching understanding – they are institutionalized by private and public law, which link them with everyday communicative practices. By regulating the relations of economic exchange and the organization of the political systems, law does not only prevent the potential for conflict among divergent interests, but also makes possible the establishment of markets and governmental bodies (Habermas 1987a, 185-186; 1998a, 36-37). In order to control the risk of dissension built in communicative action, the legal system emerges as a mechanism for allowing communication to continue with the tasks of social integration without compromising itself. In this sense, " the particular accomplishment of the positivization of the legal order consists in *displacing* problems of justification, that is, in relieving the technical administration of the law of such problems over broad expanses – but not in doing away with it" (1984, 261).

Although lifeworld and system can exert mutual influence upon one another, the "paradox" of modernity marks the predominance of the subordination of communicatively structured contexts of action to the systemic constrains of economic and political systems. For instance, in developed capitalist societies the intensification of the roles of consumer and client of the state, which arose with the emergence of the social-welfare state and mass democracy, led to a domestication of the world of labor

and the neutralization of political struggles.[8] "The negative side effects of institutionalizing an alienated mode of having a say in matters of public interest are passed off onto the client role in much the same way as the burdens of normalizing alienated labor are passed off onto the consumer role" (Habermas 1987a, 350).

In contemporary democratic societies, lifeworlds and systems form the social context of two interrelated logics of action and social integration that are in constant tension. While the emancipatory potential of rationality inherent in communicative action serves as a possibility for the democratization of social life, it is continually threatened by purposive-rational action from bureaucratic and administrative systems, which distort or suppress consensual processes of opinion-formation and decision-making.

Habermas claims that the solution to this problem lies on the "unifying force" of language oriented to reaching understanding, namely, on the solidarity function of communicative action that serves as a mechanism for reinforcing democratic practices. The practice of giving and taking reasons produces binding and bonding effects as participants undertake reciprocal obligations for the justification of their beliefs and intentions, project legitimate expectations of one another, recognize each other symmetrically and include each other despite their differences, in ways

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[8] "In the social-welfare state, the roles provided by the occupational system become, so to speak, normalized […] the burdens resulting from the character of heteronomously determined work are made at least subjectively bearable – If not through 'humanizing' the work place, through providing monetary rewards and legally guaranteed securities […] This new equilibrium between normalized occupational roles and up-graded consumer roles is ….the result of a welfare arrangement that comes about under the legitimation conditions of democracy […] The establishment of basic political rights in the framework of mass democracy means, on the one hand, a universalization of the role of citizen and, on the other hand […] a cleansing of political participation from any participatory content […] For this neutralization of the generalized role of citizen, the welfare state also pays in the coin of use values, that come to citizens as clients of welfare-state bureaucracies. 'Clients' are customers who enjoy the rewards of the welfare-state bureaucracies" (Ibid, 349-350).

they cannot simply manipulate for their own reasons. Within the communicative process of reaching understanding speakers and hearers enter into learning processes of thematization of new experiences and problems that challenge their own intuitions and convictions. Insofar as social actors become involved in diversified intersubjective relationships, they socialize one another and individuate themselves into ongoing practices of communicative solidarity. As stated by Pensky, "these acts of ongoing inclusion, transmitted from basic linguistic competence through the affects and attitudes of persons, through political institutions and ultimately into the ethos of a democratic form of social life, can be summarized as *solidarity"* (2008, ix).

Communicative Solidarity and Collective Identities

The coordinated action of language directed to reaching understanding shapes individual and group identities and creates social integration and solidarity. The processes of socialization, creation of solidarity and formation of identities cannot be considered separately, as they take part simultaneously and reciprocally influence one another. Within communicative action individual and collective identities are interwoven, because they are co-originally created and maintained.

According to Habermas, "the ego […] does not "belong" to me. Rather, this ego always retains an intersubjective core, because the process of individuation from which it emerges runs through the network of linguistically mediated interactions" (Habermas 1992b, 170). Subjects capable of language and action constitute themselves as individuals as they grow in a particular speech community that introduces them in an intersubjectively social lifeworld. The socializing interaction of

language directed to reaching understanding imposes the intersubjectivity that serves as a platform for processes of socialization and, simultaneously, forces the individuation of subjects through the use of the system of personal pronouns. Habermas asserts that "when ego carries out a speech act and alter takes up a position with regard to it, the two parties enter into an interpersonal relationship […] whoever has been trained in this system has learned how, in the performative attitude, to take up and transform into one another the perspectives of the first, second and third persons" (1987b, 296-297).

In other words, in learning to speak a language all subjects acquire basic structures and fundamental rules about the meaning of utterances in contexts of interaction. Through speech acts like "I promise you I will come" or "I advise you to stop that", speakers learn how to apply and switch between the perspectives of the first (I, we), second (you, they), and third (she, he, it, they) persons. In Habermas's words, "she must say 'I' to herself, and address the other, who equally can say 'I' to himself, as 'you'. At the same time the two delimit themselves as 'we' from all outsiders (from 'him' and 'them') who are merely potential participants in conversation" (2002, 61).

By using the system of personal pronouns speakers become aware of their own existence through confrontation with the reactions of others to oneself. Self-consciousness, Habermas asserts, "Forms itself on the path from without to within, through the symbolically mediated relationship to a partner in interaction" (1992b, 177). This means that in everyday linguistic exchanges persons not only acquire the basic pragmatic presuppositions of communication, such as capacities for role-

reversal and commitments to reciprocity, but also identify themselves and others as part of a same culture, society or group. Since the individuation of subjects – that is, the formation of their inner sense of self – depends on the external recognition of others, personal identity is "constitutively insecure and chronically fragile". Furthermore, as this process evolves, subjects become entangled in denser networks of reciprocal dependencies and explicit needs of protection, increasing the vulnerability of both individual and collective identities (Habermas 1990b, 199). Thus, in order to protect the integrity of personal identities it is important to preserve at the same time the web of ties of mutual recognition through which individuals survive as members of a community. According to Habermas, these two complementary aspects correspond to the principles of justice and solidarity, respectively. As he asserts, "justice concerns the equal freedoms of unique and self-determining individuals, while solidarity concerns the welfare of consociates who are intimately linked in an intersubjectively shared form of life – and thus also to the maintenance of the integrity of this form of life itself" (1990a, 243-244; 1990b, 200).

Habermas's idea on the relationship between personal autonomy and collective welfare takes distance from traditional conceptions of solidarity – characteristic of premodern societies – in which individual liberties are subjected to the security and permanence of the community. Above all, it differs from those perspectives that either stress the primacy of individual rights over collective ones – like classical liberalism – or subsume questions of justice to the interests of particular identities, like communitarianism. Instead, he regards solidarity – or reciprocity among intersubjectively associated persons – as the necessary complement of justice, that is, equal respect and equal rights for the individual. As indicated by Regh,

> ...individuals only possess their autonomy, are only able to make rights claims and enter into contracts, in virtue of their prior mutual recognition of one another. Such 'relations of mutual recognition' involve both a concern for one another's welfare as individuals and a reliance on a social network within which such recognition alone makes sense. Therefore, protecting individual freedom must also include the protection of individual welfare and the broader social bonds that make up the lifeworld (in Pensky 2008, 179).

However, the ongoing rationalization of lifeworlds and the resulting expansion of world perspectives extend the spaces of communicative interaction and mutual recognition, intensifying the vulnerability of identities. Insofar as societies become more diversified and lifeworlds more differentiated, individuals become more deprived of a shared ethos with which to solve their domestic and global practical conflicts in a consensual way (Habermas 2001b, 39). In order to converge, justice and solidarity need to transcend the boundaries of social lifeworlds – like the family or the nation. Therefore, in communicative communities solidarity among strangers can only be reached by surmounting the values of the communities of belonging. In this sense, the integration of differences requires a greater willingness to argue on the part of social actors, a condition already available in societies in which discourse is institutionalized in law and representative democracy.

That is, the limits of particular lifeworlds can only be expanded through discourse, which is a reflexive form of communicative action aimed at solving problematic validity claims. In Habermas's words, "discourse or argumentation is a more exacting type of communication, going beyond any particular form of life" (1990b, 202).

Social actors are able to engage in argumentative practices insofar as they are linguistically competent. The normative structures of mutual recognition and validity claims – that are present in all speech communities and, thus, are universal to the use of language – allow individuals to distinguish the validity of utterances with respect to truth, normativity and sincerity. While the system of personal pronouns prepares them in the practices of self-knowledge and recognition of others as responsible persons for their actions, the system of performative verbs enables them to identify different world attitudes embedded in the process of giving and taking of reasons, present in validity claims. As explained by Pensky,

> Acquisition of communicative competence involves a process in which subjects became capable of navigating the justificatory practices and requirements of distinct modes of discourse: the expectation of different kinds of reasons in the transition to different kinds of topics. The capacity to assume an objectivating attitude, a norm-conforming attitude, or an expressive attitude in relation to other speakers and hearers is interwoven [...] with the mastery of the system of personal pronouns. This mastery, in turn, is only to be had through the performative adaptation to the reversibility of subject positions: what it is like to be an I, in its relation to what it is like to be a you or a he/she/they (2008, 191).

Argumentative practices of communication are a key resource for the emergence of new transnational solidarities among persons and groups feeling that their lives and interests are affected by decisions they cannot influence and criticize with their own values and beliefs. As Habermas claims, the basic tools of language directed to reaching understanding are a primary resource to compensate for different forms of vulnerability caused by the increasing rationalization of social lifeworlds. All those who choose deliberation as a way to solve their differences and to agree on interpretations about decisions that affect them, need to resort to argumentation in

order to clarify and justify their perspectives on different matters. In the absence of a shared ethos, plural groups count on the procedures of discourse alone.

One of the distinctive attributes of communicative solidarity is the formation of relationships of commitment among participants in deliberative practices, which take place either in encounters of present persons – in assemblies, forums, and the like – or in more abstract forms, like certain audiences virtually linked by public media. As it is a solidarity based on the communicative practices of the actors themselves, rather than on affection, similarity or a particular ethos, it facilitates the expansion of inclusive relationships among social actors beyond their own identity groups or political communities.

Communicative solidarity can be created in any space of social participation in which people engage in argumentations on matters of common concern, and thereby get involved in relations of mutual recognition and compromise. Since it is created and reproduced through discourse, communicative solidarity and the collective identities that eventually result from it, are formed mainly in public interaction within public spheres, which, in turn, are social spaces constituted in communicative action. Habermas describes the public sphere as,

> A network for communicating information and points of view (i.e., opinions expressing affirmative or negative attitudes) […] Unlike success-oriented actors who mutually observe each other as one observes something in the objective world, persons acting communicatively encounter each other in a *situation* they at the same time constitute with their cooperatively negotiated interpretations [...] Every encounter in which actors do not just observe each other but take a second-person attitude, reciprocally attributing communicative freedom to each other, unfolds in a linguistically constituted public space (1998a, 360-361).

Albeit the very existence of public spheres does not assure the creation of solidarity, the practices of mutual recognition and commitment established around the activities of exchanging information and arguments in public debate, encourage the making of new interpretations for confronting conventional ones, reinforcing a sense of 'us' that opens the possibility for the emergence of new identities. As I shall explain below, public spaces such as the World Social Forum, promote the formation of communicative bonds between individuals and groups who only share the concern for certain issues and the willingness to discuss and agree upon ideas on the basis of equal treatment and respect.

Mouffe on Agonistic Pluralism and Solidarity

In Mouffe's view, solidarity has an agonistic nature, since it presupposes the formation of a 'we-identity' between rivals or adversaries (Mouffe 1995). According to her, the formation of commonality is the result of political articulations created in the context of antagonistic relationships. Mouffe's account of solidarity is inscribed within her perspective about the contingent formation of identities, which is at the core of her model of agonistic pluralism and agonistic democracy. She says,

> To be capable of thinking politics today […] it is indispensable to develop a theory of the subject as a decentred, detotalized agent, a subject constructed at the point of intersection of a multiplicity of subject positions between which there exists no a priori or necessary relation and whose articulation is the result of hegemonic practices. Consequently, no identity is ever definitively established, there always being a certain degree of openness and ambiguity in the way the different subject positions are articulated (Mouffe 1993: 12).

Identity is a key concept in Mouffe's political theory. According to her, there are no 'natural' and 'original' identities, since every identity is the result of a constituting process involving a multiplicity of discourses and power struggles. Mouffe's thesis of the decentered subject builds upon her opposition to essentialist theories that regard identity as fixed entities, such as an individual's social class, gender or ethnicity: "...neither the totality nor the fragments possess any kind of fixed identity, prior to the contingent and pragmatic form of their articulation" (ibid: 7). She points out to two types of essentialist versions of political identity: on the one hand, an essentialism of the totality, which considers the category of subject as a unified and unifying essence, as a whole consistent with itself; on the other, an essentialism of the elements that emphasizes the fragmentation of the social and "refuses to give the fragments any kind of relational identity"(Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 103-104; Mouffe 1997: 25).

For her, identities – and social practices in general – are not fixed and homogeneous but relational, as they are the effect of their relationship with other identities in a process of constant movement of overdetermination and displacement of a diversity of discourses. That is, identities are open, incomplete, and politically negotiable because they are constitutively subverted and exceeded by the presence of other identities: "Society and social agents lack any essence, and their regularities merely consist of the relative and precarious forms of fixation which accompany the establishment of a certain order" (Laclau and Mouffe, 98).

Identities are discursively constructed, since they acquire a particular meaning within a discursive structure of contingent signifying elements.[9] In Mouffe's account, discourse is a structured totality resulting from an articulatory practice. Key notions of discourse are the concepts of 'articulation', 'moments' and 'elements': while articulation is "any practice establishing a relation among elements such as their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice", moments are "the differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse"; besides, an element is "any difference that is not discursively articulated", since it is a floating signifier "incapable of being wholly articulated to a discursive chain" (Ibid, 105; 113). In other words, discourses are social constructions about the meaning of objects and human practices that are contingent and subjected to constant shifts and displacements, and thus, never fully completed. Rather, discourses exist temporarily and are historically situated, as the result of the articulation of certain elements within a system of differential entities. Discourses are contingent because the elements that form a particular articulation acquire a new meaning that lacks of a final suture. Instead, there are only partial fixations of privileged signifiers that secure the meaning of a signifying chain: "Any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a center. We will call the privileged discursive points of this partial fixation, *nodal points*" (Ibid, 112).

For Mouffe, nodal points are signifiers or reference points that bind together a given chain of signification. This partial fixation enables the formation of the

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[9]Discourse is not reduced to speech and writing. Rather, it expands to any kind of signifying relation: "synonymy, metonymy, metaphor are not forms of thought that add a second sense to a primary, constitutive literality of social relations; instead, they are part of the primary terrain itself in which the social is constituted" (Laclau and Mouffe, 110).

identities of social agents within a discursive structure. Nevertheless, individual and collective identities are only temporarily stabilized, never fully sutured, since they are exposed to a plurality of discourses. According to Mouffe,

> There is thus a double movement. On the one hand, there is a movement of decentering that prevents the fixing of a set of positions around a preconstituted point; on the other hand, and as a result of this essential nonfixity, there is an opposite movement: the institution of nodal points, partial fixations that limit the flux of the signified under the signifier. But this dialectical movement is possible only because fixity is not given beforehand, because no center of subjectivity precedes the subject's identifications. For that reason we have to conceive the history of the subject as the history of his or her identifications, and there is no concealed identity to be rescued beyond the latter" (Mouffe 1992, 28).

In other words, the discursive production of identity always involves a dual process of stabilization and destabilization of differences: although identities are temporarily fixed by the construction of nodal points, they are always exposed to the effects of exclusions. Thus, an identity is constructed as difference, e.g., constituted by an 'other', an outside that prevents it from being a full identity. For Mouffe, 'otherness' implies the presence of exclusion, since social relations are relations of power and antagonism. She says, "...power should not be conceived as an external relation taking place between two pre-constituted identities, but rather as constituting the identities themselves […] Because if the "constitutive outside" is present within the inside, as its always real possibility, in that case the inside itself becomes a purely contingent and reversible arrangement" (Mouffe 1997, 25).

The concept of 'constitutive outside' reveals the dual constitution of an identity, the presence of an outside that defines its condition of possibility, but at the same time destabilizes it. It is a difference (e.g., 'them') that determines the inside

(e.g., 'us'), but also puts it into question: "The existence of the other becomes condition of possibility of my identity since, without the other, I could not have an identity. Therefore, every identity is irremediably destabilized by its exterior and the interior appears as something always contingent" (Ibid, 26).

Since any identity is constructed on the basis of a hierarchical difference – e.g., black and white, man and woman – it can become the locus of an antagonism. For Mouffe, antagonism "constitutes the limits of every objectivity, which is revealed as partial and precarious *objectification* [it] is the 'experience' of the limit of the social" (Laclau and Mouffe, 125).[10] Antagonism introduces negativity into discursive fields, showing the impossibility of society of fully constituting itself in a transparent way. It is conceived as the limit of the social because it subverts its meaning and constitution as an objective reality. Within a system of differences, this subversion is discursively constructed by means of the dissolution of each differential position into a chain of equivalence opposing an external threat. Namely, the relation of equivalence presupposes that the content of each differential position is equivalent to the others in terms of their common differentiation from an antagonistic other. In this sense, the latter operates as the 'identical something' underlying all differences within the chain of equivalence (ibid, 127). The concepts of antagonism and equivalence presuppose one another. As Thomassen explains it,

> ...antagonism both makes meaning possible (because it provides the condition of possibility for the differences to coalesce into a totality) and impossible (because it denotes a point where the relations of difference, which are constitutive of meaning, are subverted by equivalence) […]

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[10] For Mouffe, antagonism reveals the impossibility of final closure of any identity, thus, of any objectivity.

antagonism is the flipside of equivalence: it is constituted by and constitutes equivalence, because the equivalent signifiers are equivalent insofar as they are all opposed in the same way to the antagonistic Other (2005, 297).

Antagonism divides the social space into opposing camps of equivalences. However, since both sides of the antagonistic relation are necessary in order to create a single space of representation, antagonism is not equated with radical exclusion (Laclau in Thomassen, 298). That is, each side of the antagonistic relation constitutes the very condition for the existence of its antagonist. The discursive construction of antagonism rests upon the relative closure of a political space that constructs a totality allowing for the division of that space (Laclau and Mouffe, 132).

According to Mouffe, political spaces take shape through two opposite logics, the logic of equivalence and the logic of difference: while the logic of equivalence is a logic of the simplification of political space, the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity. The former works by condensing meaning around the two poles of the antagonistic division of the discursive field, thereby reducing the number of positions and differences through their overdetermination by signifiers that combine meanings together. In contrast, the logic of difference expands the number of positions and differences by breaking existing chains of equivalences, and incorporating disarticulated elements within political spaces (Ibid, 130; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000).

The formation of a chain of equivalences shows that these two logics are opposite, but not mutually exclusive: although the chain constitutes a totality of differences against something that is excluded, the process of dissolution of

differences is never complete. Therefore, the totality represented by a given chain of equivalences is a failed totality. Laclau says, "This totality is an object which is both impossible and necessary. Impossible, because the tension between equivalence and difference is ultimately insurmountable; necessary, because without some kind of closure, however precarious it might be, there would be no signification and no identity" (Laclau 2005, 70).

Since neither equivalence nor difference manage to constitute a fully sutured space, political spaces − as well as identities − are constitutively precarious and submitted to processes of disarticulation and rearticulation. In contrast to premodern societies or totalitarian political regimes, in which antagonisms emerge clearly around a defined enemy − dividing the political space into two antagonistic camps − in complex democratic societies, the multiplication of political struggles expands the points of antagonism, thus diminishing the establishment of unified chains of equivalences. Instead of the clear-cut 'politics of frontiers' characteristic of the former type of political spaces, the conditions of contemporary political arenas widen the field of articulatory practices and transform frontiers into something ambiguous and unstable, subjected to constant displacements. As stated by Laclau and Mouffe, "it is this ambiguity which makes possible articulation as a practice instituting nodal points which partially fix the meaning of the social in an organized system of differences" (135). These conditions of ambiguity and fragility of democratic practices of contestation open up the possibilities of hegemonic practices that create a given order and fix the meaning of social institutions, partially stabilizing society. Every social order is the expression of a particular structure of power relations, the result of sedimented hegemonic practices associated with the common sense that at a given

moment is accepted as the 'natural order'. However, as this hegemonic order is the product of a precarious articulation of contingent practices predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities, it can be challenged by counter-hegemonic practices that seek to disarticulate it for establishing another form of hegemony. In this sense, 'hegemony' is understood as a form of politics involving the articulation of antagonistic practices that are possible on account of the availability of a proliferation of floating signifiers and a social field crisscrossed by antagonisms,

> ...in order to speak of hegemony, the articulatory moment is not sufficient. It is also necessary that the articulation should take place through a confrontation with antagonistic articulatory practices — in other words, that hegemony should emerge in a field crisscrossed by antagonisms and therefore suppose phenomena of equivalence and frontier effects […] the two conditions of a hegemonic articulation are the presence of antagonistic forces and the instability of the frontiers which separate them. Only the presence of a vast area of floating elements and the possibility of their articulation to opposite camps — which implies a constant redefinition of the latter — is what constitutes the terrain permitting us to define a practice as hegemonic. Without equivalence and without frontiers, it is impossible to speak strictly of hegemony (Ibid, 135-136).

To sum up, hegemonic practices emerge due to the impossibility of establishing in a definitive way the signification of any struggle. They presuppose the political construction of discourses on the basis of temporary fixations of meaning which take place through the creation of chains of equivalences with totalizing effects. That is, hegemonic discourses tend to weaken antagonisms within a discursive field by representing their articulated elements as equivalent signifiers in a chain antagonistically opposed to another chain of equivalences, for example, the opposition between anti-capitalist movements and transnational economic corporations.

Hegemonic articulations manage to create a sense of unity – of solidarity – through the equivalential bond of some differences vis-a-vis an opposing discourse.

Articulatory Practices, Agonistic Solidarity, and Collective Identification

In Laclau and Mouffe's perspective, the emergence of multiple antagonisms and the formation of new political identities are due to the process of dissemination and institutionalization of democratic discourses that began with the French Revolution. By placing the values of equality and liberty at the center of social life, it produced a decisive modification in the political imaginary of Western societies. According to them, the 'democratic revolution' "would provide the discursive conditions which made it possible to propose the different forms of inequality as illegitimate and anti-natural, and thus make them equivalent as forms of oppression" (Ibid., 155). That is, insofar as the principles of equality and liberty were universalized through the expansion of the democratic discourse, their subversive power spread into wider domains, for example, from struggles for equality in the public space of citizenship to struggles for equality in the private sphere. In other words, democratic discourses nurture the radicalization of social resistance by acting as a 'fermenting agent' upon the different forms of political action against subordination.

Egalitarian discourses and discourses on rights play an important role in the emergence of antagonisms and the reconstruction of collective identities, as they facilitate the transformation of relations of subordination into relations of oppression. This distinction sheds light on the contingency of politics and political identities: although relations of subordination can create different forms of resistance, not all of

them become politicized. Rather, "only in certain cases […] forms of resistance take on a political character and become struggles directed towards putting an end to relations of subordination as such" (Ibid., 152-153). While a relation of subordination presupposes the subjection of an agent to the decisions of another, relations of oppression refer to "those relations of subordination which have transformed themselves into sites of antagonisms". Laclau and Mouffe assert,

> ...only to the extent that the positive differential character of the subordinated subject position is subverted that the antagonism can emerge. 'Serf', 'slave', and so on, do not designate in themselves antagonistic positions; it is only in the terms of a different discursive formation […] that the differential positivity of these categories can be subverted and the subordination constructed as oppression (Ibid, 155).

For instance, though women have engaged in many forms of resistance against male authority throughout centuries, it was only with the emergence of a feminist movement based on the liberal democratic demand for equality, that the relation of subordination was transformed into a relation of oppression.

In brief, relations of subordination become relations of oppression through the politicizing effects of the displacement of some democratic discourses towards others.

Besides, political struggles against subordination vary according to particular political conditions and historical contexts: "The discursive interventions that are central to the formation of identity are not [...] random phenomena. They must operate within the field of political forces that prevail in a particular historical conjuncture. Those forces may be highly unstable [...] or they may be highly stabilized" (Smith

1998, 65). For example, the new social movements of the 1960s and 1970s were the expression of forms of resistance to the processes of commodification, bureaucratization and increasing homogenization of social life characteristic of Welfare-state intervention. Thus, these struggles can be understood as the outcome of both the transformation of social relations occurred during the apogee of the Welfare State and the displacement of the liberal-democratic imaginary into varied areas of social life, ranging from habitat and consumption to social security and sexual relations (Laclau and Mouffe, 165).

The displacement of the democratic imaginary into wider areas of social life and political contexts destabilizes political identities, reinforcing the multiplication of subject positions of a single agent. Depending on political conjunctures, this process results either in the formation of new chains of equivalences or in the creation of isolated systems of differences. The identity of an individual or group is a product of condensation of subject positions: an individual or a group can be the bearer of multiple identities, such as 'woman', 'black', lesbian, worker, and so on. The term subject positions applies to the multiplicity of positionalities in which individuals and groups are involved within "an essentially unstable discursive structure […] submitted to a variety of articulatory practices that constantly subvert and transform it" (Mouffe 1993, 78). Identities are constituted by an ensemble of subject positions, in which each subject position remains open to the constitutive effects of new articulations. Insofar as identities are not preconstituted, there are not necessary links between subject positions, such as a homogeneous entity 'woman' facing another homogeneous entity 'man'. Instead, the identity 'woman' is constituted by a multiplicity of social relations in which sexual difference is always constructed in very diverse ways and

where the struggles against the subordination of women acquire particular and differential forms (Ibid).

As a result of the 'demonstration effect' of democratic struggles and the corresponding displacement of the social logics characteristic of certain spheres towards other spheres, there is not a unique space of constitution of the political, but a proliferation of political spaces, and a plurality of political subjects. Indeed, the possibilities for the creation of equivalential identities decrease to the extent that plurality expands. Besides, the displacement of democratic discourses from some struggles to other struggles, does not secure by itself the transformation of the identities in question. That is, some groups can demand their rights to equality with other groups, but if the demands of these groups are different or incompatible among themselves, the formation of a chain of equivalence becomes impossible. This problem is constitutive of the tension between the logics of equality and liberty that characterizes liberal-democratic societies: while equality restricts liberty, liberty subverts equality. These logics are potentially irreconcilable, as they correspond to the liberal and the democratic traditions, which provide a different way of conceiving the relationship between particular interests and general interests. Indeed, whereas the former stresses the defense of human rights and the respect of individual liberty, the latter emphasizes equality among the members of a political community.

According to Mouffe, the specificity of liberal democracy lies in the historical contingent articulation of liberal and democratic principles, as "the tension between its two components can only be temporarily stabilized through pragmatic negotiations between political forces which always establish the hegemony of one of

them" (Mouffe 2000a, 5). For her, the consolidation of democratic struggles is accomplished through the articulation of the demands for equality and the demands for autonomy, such that the defense of the interests of some groups is not made to the detriment of the interests of others groups. In order to achieve it, she proposes the 'principle of democratic equivalence', which entails "the construction of a new 'common sense' which changes the identity of the different groups, in such a way that the demands of each group are articulated equivalentially with those of the others —in Marx's words, 'that the free development of each should be the condition for the free development of all'" (Laclau and Mouffe, 183).

The principle of democratic equivalence is directed to solve the potential incompatibility among disparate democratic demands (for example, anti-capitalism, anti-sexism and anti-racism) by respecting the differential specificity of each demand. As it entails the hegemonic articulation of given interests, and not only a mere alliance between them, it modifies the identity of the forces engaging in that alliance, producing a universalizing effect. As Howarth points out, the principle involves "the logic of hegemony—the political practice of linking different demands and identities into a common project that recognizes and respects difference—which in turn presupposes the move from a closed system of social relations, in which all identities and interests are fixed..." (2008, 187).

In short, Mouffe contends that the democratization of political struggles against subordination requires the combination of unity and autonomy without sacrificing the latter at the expense of the former. Unity is conceived as the hegemonic articulation of different struggles, which takes shape through the formation of chains

of equivalences against opposing discourses. The formation of the chain of equivalences implies a double movement: on the one hand, the preservation of the autonomy of each of the identities that constitute it; on the other hand, their partial dissolution into a new identity that represents them as a whole.

Thus, the chain of equivalences presupposes the formation of solidarity between groups facing a same antagonistic force which gives them existence but at the same time threatens them. Therefore, solidarity is constructed on the basis of conflict, through the identification of a common antagonist. In terms of democratic politics, the solidaristic chain of equivalences implies the combination of the principles of equality and difference in order to modify those discourses endangering the very existence of democratic forms of social coexistence. For Mouffe, political struggles become truly democratic the more they articulate with other struggles: "the progressive character of a struggle does not depend of its place of origin […] but rather on its link to other struggles. The longer the chain of equivalences set up between the defense of the rights of one group and those of other groups, the deeper will be the democratization process and the more difficult it will be to neutralize certain struggles […] The concept of solidarity can be used to form such a chain of democratic equivalences" (2000b, 309).

As stated earlier, this notion of solidarity is embedded in her model of "agonistic pluralism", according to which democratic politics should allow for the expression of differences and conflicts between divergent positions sharing a common symbolic space. For agonistic pluralism, "one of the main tasks of democratic politics consists in defusing the potential antagonism that exists in social relations" (Mouffe

2005, 19). In Mouffe's perspective, democratic politics can domesticate conflict by transforming antagonism into agonism, enemies into adversaries. For her, 'adversaries' are neither enemies nor competitors but legitimate opponents, as they regard themselves "as belonging to the same political association, as sharing a common symbolic space within which the conflict takes place" (Ibid, 20). The category of adversary corresponds to her conceptualization of 'agonism' as a different form of antagonism: while the former is a struggle between adversaries recognizing the legitimacy of their opponents, the latter is a struggle between enemies who do not share any political space.

In brief, Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism reconciles the principles of solidarity and autonomy as a way of taming antagonistic relations. In this sense, agonism is a form of politics that seeks to deepen democratic articulation among adversarial demands through the visibility of differences. In her perspective, adversaries are those individuals or groups whose demands or subjectivities are equivalent – as they share certain values or principles - but differ in their interpretation, or about the institutions they wish to implement. Thus, they are involved in hegemonic confrontations over the meaning of those values and institutions. On the other hand, enemies (antagonists), are those who remain outside because they have different values and beliefs. As the common political space is created on the basis of exclusion, there is an ever present possibility for the emergence of new antagonisms and the realignment of political struggles. As Howarth indicates,

> The politics of 'agonistic pluralism' calls in short for a plurality of passionate subjects to exercise voice, make demands and be heard, within a shared symbolic order [...] However, the sharing and openness of a 'common symbolic space' does not eliminate the exclusionary dynamics of politics, nor does it circumvent the need for an 'outside' that partly constitutes such an order. This is because the construction of any ethico-political order depends upon the creation of certain limits that exclude certain practices, beliefs and values, or the particular way they are held or practiced (2008, 178).

Agonistic pluralism creates a form of solidarity that binds adversaries who share a common space while excluding antagonists. The central idea is that the expression of dissent promotes unity and reduces practices of assimilation or cooptation. Political forces engage in strategies of collaboration, or review their own values and political tools, insofar as they do not suppress the manifestation of disagreements.

Mouffe argues that a pressing challenge for democratic politics is the political disaffection arising from the increasing irrelevance of the political public sphere, which takes place in most current liberal democratic societies. Due to the expansion of the technification of politics resulting from neoliberal hegemony, "political decisions are increasingly taken to be of a technical nature and better resolved by judges or technocrats as bearers of a supposed impartiality" (Mouffe 2002a).

In her view, a vigorous democratic life needs a vibrant, 'agonistic' public sphere. If a fertile dispute between political positions were missing, the democratic process could be undermined and replaced by an antagonistic confrontation based on non-negotiable issues emerging from essentialist constructions of collective identities. Accordingly, the articulation of democratic identities requires agonistic public spaces

for the mobilization of passions, collective identification and the confrontation of hegemonic projects.

Deliberation and Agonism in the WSF. The Formation of Solidarity and Collective Identities.

This section analyzes the WSF's solidaristic formation of collective identities through the examination of its practices and regulations. It focuses on those attributes that help to understand the combination of communicative and agonistic forms of creation of solidarity and collective identities. In order to prove that both dimensions are equally important, the analysis is divided in two subsections: while the first part contrasts the Forum's antagonistic features with Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism, the latter compares the Forum's deliberative characteristics with Habermas's theory of discourse ethics.

The WSF's agonistic Solidarity

The WSF's appeal to oppose neoliberal capitalism unites a plurality of individuals, organizations and movements gathering in its encounters. Since its beginning in 2001, the WSF calls social movements, NGOs, networks, intellectuals, activists and organizations in general, for organizing against neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism. The Forum was initially planned as a counter-event of the World Economic Forum, regarded as an undemocratic, unaccountable meeting where governmental officials and business representatives

gather to discuss global economic strategies and policies. Thus, the latter symbolizes the antagonistic frontier established with neoliberal capitalism, defined as the opposing 'other'. In addition, its slogan "another world is possible" unites a diversity of horizons of meaning of different political struggles.[11] Together with the antagonistic objectives of fighting neoliberalism, capitalism, imperialism, and all forms of oppression and domination, the slogan gathers different 'floating' signifiers, ranging from struggles against gender or race oppression to struggles against labor exploitation or capitalist corporatism.

In this way, the WSF opens up an agonistic space for fighting common antagonists, and contesting the meaning and forms of such struggles. In local, thematic, national, and regional forums, participants voice their different forms of understanding the nature of these struggles, and even their agreements and disagreements in relation to the same forum. In terms of Mouffe, they are adversaries in a common discursive space, as they oppose to neoliberal globalization, but differ with respect to its characterization and the political strategies for combating it. Among the various examples of conflicts arising within the forums, are those concerning the organization of the meetings. A well-known case of virulent disputes is the encounter that took place in Nairobi, India, in 2004, which was the first social forum held outside Porto Alegre, Brazil. In Nairobi, 200 associations participating in the forum's

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[11]In relation to the meaning and the reasons of this slogan's success among anti-neoliberal activists, Gilbert states: "...the most famous and widely circulated, 'Another World is Possible', while positing no concrete alternative to neoliberalism, conveys a brilliant understanding of the first necessary function of any counter-hegemonic discourse: to reject the ideological assertion that 'there is no alternative' to hegemonic discourses and practices. In this case, it is quite clear that it is the hegemony of neoliberalism and the consequent erosion of democratic institutions and their capacities which is being rejected" (2005, 222).

organization, become involved in an agonistic confrontation on decisions about

financing, participants, and other organizational topics,

> The main area of conflict revolved around the identities of actors involved
> in the organization of the WSF, and the process of negotiating those
> identities. For the first time in Indian politics, a wide range of people came
> together to organize a joint activity: social movements, mass organizations
> linked to the communist parties, large NGOs and small grassroots
> organizations, peasants, Dalits, trade unions, women's organizations and
> indigenous groups […] Representatives of large NGOs, the crucial link to
> the international funding of the event, were often resented by grassroots
> groups and activists, who accused them of lacking political perspicacity and
> adopting a technocratic approach to social change. For their part, NGOs
> voiced concerns about corruption, clientelism and nepotism, which they
> argued was facilitated by actors who camouflaged their true party
> affiliations behind unions and research centers. Social movements, with a
> substantial grassroots following, sought to resist the dirigisme and
> vanguardism of some and the technocratic, apolitical approach of others.
> Women's organizations launched frequent accusations of paternalism
> against some of the key figures in the process. Dalits accused organizers of
> denying them a role in the process and thereby maintaining the unfair
> tradition of upper-class, high-caste politics. Furthermore, the limited
> attendance of the Adivasis and peasants at the WSF […] gave rise to a
> parallel forum: Mumbai Resistance (Caruso in Glasius and Timms 2006,
> 202).

The Forum's political objectives and methods provoke ongoing debates between so-

called 'horizontalists' and 'verticalists'. While the former regard the forum as an open

space for helping groups and movements to connect, organize and spread

mobilization, the latter criticize the lack of an agenda for concrete alternatives and

programs of actions against global neoliberalism. Among the leading voices favoring

'openness' is Chico Whitaker, one of WSF's founders. He states,

> The WSF is not intended to be 'the movement of movements', or a new
> 'world party', with old style leaders and a new 'pensée unique' to replace the
> dominant one. Change will not come that way, but by the action of all of
> society itself, acting through its myriad social movements, by creating new

economic and social realities, and pressuring political parties and governments. The World Social Forum opens up the possibility for these new political players to gain mutual strength, in new networks, in an effort to realize common objectives worldwide. If it just becomes a political movement, then this potential for action will be lost (2005, 29).

In contrast, Immanuel Wallerstein says:

What [...] will determine the ability of the open space to serve the objective of transforming the world in a direction that is democratic and egalitarian is whether and how the World Social Forum can develop means to yoke together an open space and real, concrete political activity […] the key to a solution is to encourage and make institutional space for multiple political alliances and activities within the WSF, without making any one of them an activity of the WSF itself. The open space should be a space not only for the interchange of views and analyses by its participants but for an exchange concerning the fruitfulness of alternative modes of political action in the world system (2004, 636).

These disputes on the content and significance of the World Social Forum match with Mouffe's notion of agonistic pluralism as a form of politics that entails a hegemonic confrontation between adversaries over the meaning of common struggles, shared values, and the institutions and mechanisms for achieving a common purpose. Within the forums, internal agonistic confrontation and external antagonistic struggles are carried out by means of peaceful democratic mechanisms for strengthening and creating "new national and international links among organizations and movements of society, that – in both public and private life – will increase the capacity for non-violent social resistance to the process of dehumanization the world is undergoing and to the violence used by the State" (art. 13 of the WSF's charter of principles). In a way that also resembles Mouffe's ideas, the WSF encourages democratic practices to

domesticate conflict between its members, and discourage the use of violence against external antagonists.

By calling to fight neoliberal globalization through the debate of democratic alternatives to all forms of oppression, the WSF enables the creation of a chain of equivalences between a multiplicity of identities that demand global social justice from different subject positions. For instance, the Forum's Charter of Principles provides a set of values that not only serves as the common denominator for a variety of individual and collective subjects, but at the same time promotes the democratic debate over their differences. That is, the chain is constituted through the identification of a common discursive space composed of values that are opposed to those of the system that excludes all identities alike, such as 'globalization in solidarity' vs.' merchandized globalization'; 'human rights' vs. 'dehumanization', 'participative democracy' vs. 'authoritarian democracy', and so on. By sharing these 'anti-systemic' values and settle their actual or potential disagreements by democratic means, participants put into practice the principle of democratic equivalence. As pointed out by Boaventura de Souza Santos, the combination of the struggles for the principle of equality and for the principle of recognition of difference, is one of the salient features of the WSF, as it encourages cooperation between political struggles through a network politics based on horizontality and the combination of solidarity and autonomy (2008, 266).

Besides, the articulation of actions is another key attribute of the movements that integrate the forums. It is regarded as one of the Forum's greatest achievements, since the encounters have been successful for "bringing groups and movements

together that might not even have been aware of each other, generating linkages, facilitating networks to grow, and spreading mobilization outside the immediate social forum space..." (Funke 2008, 462). Moreover, several articles of the WSF's Charter emphasize different mechanisms for stimulating interconnection among activists and associations, such as the "free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action" or "creating links among organizations and movements". In practice, the articulation of actions takes place through different modalities, among which the most prominent are the formation of new networks, the strengthening of existing ones, and the creation of forums in different parts of the planet.

While networking is a long-lasting practice of global social justice movements, the WSF contributes to the intensification of transnational networks of activists by allowing people to share their experiences of oppression and resistance to neoliberal ideas and policies, as well as enabling them to organize meetings, mobilizations and other joint activities across the world. Apart from facilitating collaboration at the transnational level, networks are characterized by their open and flexible regulations of inclusion, which not only help the integration of activists to different networking associations, but also allow them to give expression to their different subject positions. Della Porta comments, "our surveys indicate that activists in globalization mobilizations are rooted in a very dense network of associations, ranging from Catholics to ecologists, from social volunteers to trade unionists, from human rights supporters to women's liberationists, often with multiple memberships

in associations of various types" (2005, 80).[12] Indeed, an outstanding feature of the

encounters is the practice of shifting and changing identities. As Anand says,

> Those participating in the event frequently take advantage of the space it provides to shift and change their identities to assume those that are expedient at a given moment. One delegate moved between participating as a press representative, representing a Venezuelan NGO, and taking part as a US university student from Nepal. Depending on the meeting space, she spoke as a woman, as US student, as a minority, as a researcher, as Nepali citizen and as a media artist […] Personal identities are mobile, fluid and changing, sometimes existing simultaneously [...] Underlying the WSF was this ethic of movement — between venues and spaces where specialized discourses were being played out, participants frequently shifted and moved between different identities and ideological positions (Anand 2004a, 143-144).

Therefore, networks, meetings, mobilizations, and the proliferation of social forums

around the globe, not only provide opportunities for exchanging experiences and

coordinating actions, but also facilitate the exchanging of identities.

By stimulating the constitution of an antagonistic commonality and the expression of

differences, the WSF promotes the formation of solidaristic chains of equivalences

that create new types of identification.

The WSF's Communicative Solidarity

As stated at the beginning of this section, the WSF was created in opposition to the

WEF, since the latter is "widely perceived as one of the key institutions through which

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[12] She adds the following interesting figures: "while 97.6% of demonstrators interviewed at the protest against the G8 in Genoa in July 2001 stated they were or had been members of at least one association, 80.9% said at least two, 61% at least three, 38.1% at least four, 22.8% at least five, and 12.6% six or more" (Ibid.).

the neoliberal 'Washington Consensus' has been formulated and implemented"
(Gilbert 2005, 221). It also symbolizes a form of meeting characterized by the
shortage of debate and the lack of democratic decision-making on issues that affect
the majority of the world's populations. As Whitaker states,

> The participants of Davos aim to maintain and increase the domination of
> the capital - which they control - over the human beings of the whole
> world, as well as the expansion of their private business. The Porto Alegre
> participants [...] want to move forward in their proposals to build another
> world, centered on human beings and respectful of nature […] This
> difference in objectives and contents lead to a difference in method, too: the
> main activity developed in Davos consists of conferences and debates on
> previously defined issues, to which the organizers invite great intellectual
> representatives of the neoliberal "unique-monolithic thought", the most
> powerful nations' political leaders and great multinationals' owners or
> executives (2002, 15).

In contrast to the strategic rationality predominant in the meetings of the WEF, the
WSF promotes the use of communicative rationality as a means to encourage
reflection and the democratic debate of ideas, the formulation of proposals and the
coordination of actions. In a way resembling Habermas's ideas, the forum appeals to
the logic of communicative action to counter-balance the logic of purposive-rational
action prevailing in neoliberal bureaucratic-political systems. Following the
experiences of democratic participation of the movements for global social justice, the
WSF is defined as an open space for reflection and "transparent circulation of the
results of that reflection", as well as the promotion of mutual understanding among
participants. Through workshops, seminars, conferences and other organizational
forms, it seeks to create the conditions for various individuals and groups to reaching
an understanding about the meaning of the practices of domination and oppression
that affect them all, albeit in different ways. Besides, the call for open debate and

mutual understanding is complemented by the principles of horizontality and transparency enshrined in the Charter of Principles of the Forum. They are aimed at facilitating a greater inclusion of voices, as well as a responsible exchange of reasons and beliefs. Thus, the WSF seeks to ensure the pluralistic debate of ideas through regulations that resonate with Habermas's presuppositions of discourse.

Actually, these principles are practiced by the majority of the Forum's activists. To begin, communicative competence enables them the transmission of experiences and the exchanging of reasons. In this way, they increase their capacities for role reversal and respect for differences. Similarly, horizontality is a prominent feature of the movements for global social justice. By emphasizing the value of horizontal relations, they seek to reduce the formation of leaderships and hierarchies, as well as to enhance the participation of larger number of activists,

> The main institution of the social forums is the regularly held assembly, but there are nonetheless some adjustments aimed at avoiding the flaws of past "assemblyism"—such as the presence of a powerful (although semi-hidden) leadership, based on control of organizational power and rhetorical skills. The organizational statutes of the new global associations and Social Forums limit the delegation of power in various ways. The rotating of chairs at meetings prevents leadership from becoming consolidated. Leaders are very often replaced by spokespersons to inhibit centralization […] Frequent *consultations* are usually considered necessary in order to avoid hierarchy and delegation (Della Porta 2005, 81).

Despite the multiplicity of languages and cultures, deliberation is a frequent practice among Forums' participants. Paradoxical as it may seem, these conditions reinforce the use of debate for reaching understanding, as I will explain in detail in the next chapter. As maintained by Doerr,

> Participating in the Europe-wide meetings seems to foster a process of *learning through translation*, a practice in which activists *build an expertise on EU politics*, *transnational solidarity ties* and *movement allies*. Since activists in the European Assemblies did not know much of each other, were only weakly connected to each other, were separated through geographic distance and had formerly been so due to high travel costs, they had many incentives to listen and learn from activists in other countries [...] activists may come to consider deliberative discussion processes to be particularly beneficial when they work together in a context with little other than ideal incentives (Doerr 2009a, 17; cursive in the original).

Another characteristic is the respect for the Forums' principles and likely regulations. Indeed, most participants reject their violation and the use of strategic exclusionary actions. For example, the programmatic documents known as the 'Porto Alegre Manifesto' (2005) and 'Proposals of the Bamako Appeal' (2006) raised many criticisms, as they not only ignored the prohibition of making statements on behalf of the forum, but also the call for horizontal consultation: "By and large [...] there is considerable wariness at the Forums of any attempts to create programmatic alternatives, a process that is seen as exclusionary and hierarchical with a few writing the program and the others following it […] In general, this reluctance to follow a programmatic alternative is commonly expressed within the WSF process" (J. Smith 2004, 23-24).

The practices of horizontality and respect for individual and collective differences, the exchanging of reasons in search of truth and knowledge, and the compliance to the Forum's regulations, correspond to the attributes of Habermas's theory on discursive communication.

In brief, both the principles of the Forum and the procedures of argumentation implemented, reflect Habermas's theory about the three types of

validity claims implicit in expressions directed at reaching understanding, namely, truth, normativity and truthfulness. In the process of publicizing their experiences, openly voicing their demands, stating and listening to their respective opinions, and trying to convince others, dialogical partners recognize each other and develop a sense of commonality. Thus, while reinforcing the discursive community for 'another world', they create bonds of communicative solidarity.

Finally, the respect for differences in the public sphere of common interests directed to achieve global social justice, shows the willingness of WSF's participants to acknowledge other experiences and recognize different values and beliefs, thus, resembling Habermas's conception about the combination of the principles of justice and solidarity, namely, the respect for individual rights within a community of intersubjectively connected persons.

Conclusions

The chapter demonstrates that the WSF creates a sense of 'togetherness' by means of debate and articulation of projects and actions that enable mutual commitment and the formation of chains of equivalences. The regulations and experience of the forums, also suggest ways of combining the principles of justice and solidarity that reflect both the theories of Mouffe and Habermas, which despite their similarity, differ in their underlying assumptions. As mentioned earlier, Habermas and Mouffe agree on the equiprimordiality of these principles. However, whereas for Habermas the convergence of justice and solidarity is intersubjectively achieved through discourse,

for Mouffe their combination is permanently threatened by conflicts over power, and therefore, it can only be attained in presence of a common enemy.

Though the WSF "helps to maximize what unites and minimize what divides, [celebrating] communication rather than disputes over power", as Santos states (2008, 254), there are hegemonic democratic disputes over the meaning and organization of the Forum, confirming Mouffe's assertions about the inevitability of power relations and the threat of antagonistic discourses. Similarly, the analysis demonstrates that strategic forms of action jeopardize communicative actions within the Forum's political community, corroborating Habermas's claims about the continuous threat of success-oriented actions on communicative processes of opinion formation and decision-making.

Finally, Forum's participants combine agonistic and communicative ways of exchanging subject positions, which consolidate their ties of solidarity: the openness and diversity of forums enable them to perform different roles according to their individual and collective identities, as well as to employing their communicative competences for reversing roles and committing themselves to relations of reciprocity.

Chapter 3

The World Social Forum Practices of Communication. Fighting Global Neoliberalism through Deliberative and Agonistic Publicity.

The present chapter analyzes the forms of communication of the World Social Forum through Habermas´s theory of deliberative democracy and Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism. While the former enlightens the internal communication of the forum, based on open, horizontal and inclusive debate, the latter informs the Forum´s external communication with neoliberal antagonists through the confrontation of counter-hegemonic discourses.

The chapter consists of three sections. The first section explains the main aspects of Habermas's account of deliberative democracy, emphasizing his approach to publicity. The second section presents Mouffe´s perspective of publicity and her theory of agonistic democracy.

Finally, the third section discusses the forms of communication of the WSF along two sub-sections: the first provides an interpretation of the deliberative characteristics of the Forum´s internal communication through Habermas's discourse theory, while the latter offers a characterization of the agonistic forms of its external communication through Mouffe's theory of agonistic democracy.

On Habermas's discursive Publicity

Publicity is at the core of Habermas's discursive theory of democracy. For him, the public use of reason is a fundamental component of democratic debates on issues of common concern. Together with the principles of inclusiveness, equal right to participation and reasoned justification of preferences, it enables the creation of "a deliberative space for the mobilization of the best available contributions for the most relevant topics" (Habermas, 1999a: 332).

By giving a preferential place to the discursive participation of members of a particular political community in the continuous project of collective self-government, deliberative democracy places democratic procedures in the very structures of reason, namely, the ability and need of persons to mutually coordinate their social lives through ongoing discursive practices (Pensky 2008, 90).

As explained in the previous chapter, Habermas contends that the ideal presuppositions of sincerity, rightness, and truthfulness are implicit in every communicative practice, including political and legal practices. He asserts,

> Deliberation is a demanding form of communication, though it grows out of inconspicuous daily routines of asking for and giving reasons. In the course of everyday practices, actors are always already exposed to a space of reasons. They cannot but mutually raise validity claims for their utterances and claim that what they say should be assumed—and, if necessary, could be proved—to be true or right or sincere, and at any rate rational. An implicit reference to rational discourse—or the competition for better reasons—is built into communicative action as an omnipresent alternative to routine behavior (Habermas 2006, 413).

The idea of a public debate based on the cooperative search for common understanding through the expansion of opportunities for participation, the inclusion of excluded voices, and argumentation as a form of political justification of preferences, "replaces the image of public debate as a marketplace of ideas between elites in which interests and understandings compete for domination" (Chambers 1995, 247). Habermas argues that the cooperative search for solutions to political problems replaces both the aggregation of private preferences associated with the traditional liberal paradigm of democracy and the collective self-determination of an ethically integrated nation, connected to communitarian approaches to democracy. As he says, "the deliberative model is interested more in the epistemic function of discourse and negotiation than in rational choice or political ethos" (Habermas 2006, 413). Thus, deliberative democracy bases the legitimacy of legal and political orders on a discursive process of opinion and will formation, which in turn presupposes publicity and transparency for the deliberative process, inclusion and equal opportunity for participation, and a justified presumption for reasonable outcomes (Ibid.). Moreover, public opinion produces reasonable outcomes as long as deliberation fills the conditions of free communication and personal autonomy, which are usually guaranteed by the rights to participation and communication characteristic of modern Western democracies.

In line with his distinction between communicative lifeworlds and strategic systems, Habermas maintains that "a radical democratic change in the process of legitimation aims at a new balance between the forces of societal integration so that the social-integrative power of solidarity […] can prevail over the powers of the other two control resources, e.g., money and administrative power, and therewith

successfully assert the practically oriented demands of the lifeworld" (Habermas 1992, 444). However, since post-traditional societies are highly plural and functionally differentiated, the solidarity-generating energies of communicative action located in the lifeworlds "do not directly carry over into democratic procedures for the settling of competing interests and powers claims on the political level" (Ibid.).

Thus, in order to preserve lifeworlds from the encroachment of system imperatives, as well as to ensure mechanisms for channeling the social integrative power of communicative action, Habermas proposes a "two-track" model of democracy aimed at allowing the interplay between non-organized flows of public communication and constitutionally instituted formation of the political will (Ibid., 451). In other terms, given the large scale and heterogeneity of mass societies, and the complexity of actual political-bureaucratic systems, contemporary forms of democratic self-government need to be based on a division of labor between informal public spheres of opinion and will formation and official institutions of decision-making. Namely, while autonomous collective actors and inclusive public spheres can exert influence on parliamentary and judiciary institutions by generating public opinion on relevant social problems, the latter take decisions that in turn are transformed into policies implemented by the executive agencies of governments.

Habermas's account of deliberative politics is set within a constitutional order that protects personal and political liberties in complex, differentiated societies. The process of lawmaking takes place under the legitimating conditions of a deliberative politics that is bound to the demanding communicative presuppositions of political arenas that do not coincide with the institutionalized will-formation in

parliamentary bodies, but rather include the political public sphere as well as its cultural context and social basis (Habermas 1998a: 274).

Thus, public communication takes the place of "the sovereignty of the people", as it is "sufficiently abstract to bridge the gap between the normative idea of self-legislation and the stubborn facts of complex societies" (Habermas 1999a, 333). Hence, popular sovereignty is no longer personified in "the people", but desubstantialized, subjectless, and anonymous: it is "sublimated into the elusive interactions between culturally mobilized public spheres and a will-formation institutionalized according to the rule of law", (Habermas 1998a, 486). As he puts it,

> ...sovereignty turned into a flow of communication comes to the fore in the power of public discourses that uncover topics of relevance to all of society, interpret values, contribute to the resolution of problems, generate good reasons, and debunk bad ones. Of course, these opinions must be given shape in the form of decisions by democratically constituted decision-making bodies. The responsibility for practical consequential decisions must be based in an institution. Discourses do not govern. They generate a communicative power that cannot take the place of administration but can only influence it. This influence is limited to the procurement and withdrawal of legitimation. Communicative power cannot supply a substitute for the systematic inner logic of public bureaucracies. Rather, it achieves an impact on this logic 'in a siegelike manner' (Habermas 1992a, 452).

Accordingly, the political public sphere operates as an intermediary structure between the political system and the private sectors of the lifeworld and functional systems. Habermas regards it as an ongoing process of public opinion formation that serves for detecting and identifying problems. In this sense, it functions "as a warning system with sensors that, though unspecialized, are sensitive throughout society". As Cohen points out, "by displacing the principal locus of participation from formal politics to

the informal public sphere, Habermas suggests a way that the public can come into politics, without requiring small-scale states or large, long meetings" (1999, 389)

In order to deepening the democratic interaction with the political system and make it more accountable to public demands, the public sphere must generate reasonable outcomes to capture the attention of decision-making bodies. Therefore, topics and problems should be "convincingly and influentially" thematized, furnished with possible solutions, and dramatized. However, the political public sphere fulfills these functions insofar as it meets some conditions concerning who and how deliberate, that is, norms of inclusion and rules of argumentation for public debate.

Regarding inclusion, communication should take place "among all those who are potentially affected", namely, "anyone whose interests are touched by the foreseeable consequences of a general practice regulated by the norms at issue" (Habermas 1998a, 365,107). This principle, which is at the core of the Habermasian idea of universal discourse, poses two relevant issues for democratic publicity, which are mutually dependent: on the one hand, the scope of the space of political contest and resulting degree of inclusion; on the other, the feasibility of the outcome of debates depending on the number of actors involved in the issues at hand. As Pensky says, "...public spheres...display the characteristic tension between context-immanence and context-transcendence, that is, between justificatory practices aimed at the here-and-now of particular audiences in particular contexts and a contextually unbounded audience of all those capable of discourse"(2008, 93-94).

Since in contemporary plural societies actors cannot literally gather to deliberate as a whole in any forum or particular body, the process of discourse itself is

inevitably dispersed across a variety of forums: face-to-face interactions at home and work, larger meetings in the various informal voluntary associations and different levels of organization throughout civil society, the dissemination of information and arguments through the public media and the complex network of institutions, agencies, and decision-making bodies. According to Habermas, public spheres,

> Stand open, in principle, for potential dialogue partners who are present as bystanders or could come on the scene and join those present. That is, special measures would be required to prevent a third party from entering such a linguistically constituted space. Founded in communicative action, this spatial structure of simple and episodic encounters can be expanded and rendered more permanent in an abstract form for a larger public of present persons.[…] These public spheres still cling to the concrete locales where an audience is physically gathered. The more they detach themselves from the public's physical presence and extend to the virtual presence of scattered readers, listeners, or viewers linked by public media, the clearer becomes the abstraction that enters when the spatial structure of simple interactions is expanded into a public sphere (Habermas 1998a, 361).

Thus, to the extent that public spheres generalize, the contents of communication become more informative and detached from particular spaces of interaction, requiring a higher degree of explanation through specialized vocabularies and codes. As a result, communication has an 'intellectualizing' effect. In other words, by providing more information and a variety of interpretations, the processes of opinion formation tend to transform the preferences and attitudes of participants. In the "network of conversations" of the broader public sphere,

> We see that people do in fact change their minds; they do find new arguments, positions, and perspectives more convincing than old ones; they are swayed by argumentation. This process goes on over time, however […] not only is this process gradual, but it is fragmentary and partial. One reevaluates fragments of one's world view by bringing them into line with

cogent argument; one does not reassess one's entire view of life, or at least very rarely (Chambers 1995, 249).

Since discourses are open-ended and fallible, conclusions and agreements reached by means of discourse are always open to revision. Therefore, discourse is predominantly oriented to the construction of collective interpretations, more than to the making of democratic decisions: "discourses potentially underpin and justify institutional democratic arrangements, they are not an alternative to such arrangements" (Ibid, 250).

Habermas characterizes the function of the public sphere as a "context of discovery", in contrast to the function reserved for the publics of parliamentary bodies, predominantly structured as "contexts of justification". In his view, forms of communication differ if public spheres are formal or informal: while the former are related to the processes of will-formation and decision-making that take place in parliaments and similar institutions through predetermined procedures, the latter refer to the unregulated processes of formation of public opinion that occur in forums, meetings, virtual networks and similar spaces, for the purpose of settling relevant problems and issues in a particular political community. As the informal public sphere is unregulated and has an anarchic structure – due to its composition of overlapping, subcultural publics having fluid, temporal, social and substantive boundaries – "it is better suited for 'the struggles over needs' and their interpretation" (Habermas, 1998a 307, 314). Actually, informal public spheres form a complex network of overlapping international, national, regional, local and subcultural arenas that differentiate themselves according to functional specifications, thematic foci, policy field, and so

on, such as artistic and religious publics, feminist or 'alternative' publics, publics concerned with health-care issues or environmental policy (Ibid, 373-374).

By placing new topics in the political agenda and critically informing law-making and administrative policies, informal public spheres preserve and reinforce the utopian energies of collective projects throughout society. Moreover, the principle of "all affected" helps to expand the spaces of public communication to all potentially involved, thus reinforcing the emergence of multiple public spaces and the legitimation of practices of democratic deliberation. However, while public spheres multiply and diversify, and decision-making institutions grow in number and complexity, the tension between facticity and validity deepens. If this tension characterizes contemporary national societies, it becomes more critical insofar as public communication transcends national boundaries, a problem to which I will return to in more detail in the next chapter.

As mentioned above, an important topic concerning democratic publicity refers to the rules of argumentation for public debate. For Habermas, the four most important features of the process of argumentation are:

> (i) that nobody who could make a relevant contribution may be excluded; (ii) that all participants are granted an equal opportunity to make contributions; (iii) that the participants must mean what they say; and (iv) that communication must be freed from external and internal coercion so that the 'yes' or 'no' stances that participants adopt on criticizable validity claims are motivated solely by the rational force of the better reasons (1998: 44).

According to him, these rules pertain to the very structures of argumentation, that is, they are not externally imposed to the practices of exchanging of reasons embedded in argumentation. As Chambers asserts,

> Equal respect and impartiality are implied by the structure of rational argumentation. If […] we are interested in convincing with reason then we should deal with our interlocutor as someone who could be convinced with reason, that is, as a rational autonomous agent. If we hold out any hope of success in this endeavor, then we must also be willing to make our arguments appeal to the other's point of view (1995, 240).

Since participants "engage in argumentation with the intention of convincing one another of the validity claims that proponents raise for their statements and are ready to defend against opponents", the practices of argumentation are a cooperative enterprise that unites them from the outset. While inclusivity secures unrestricted access to discourse to anyone capable of reasoning, reciprocity "guarantees equal consideration of the claims of each participant". Besides, discussants are obliged to enter into 'yes' or 'no' positions in order to agree or deny assertions and/or objections from their opponents, necessarily avoiding the use of external – e.g., threats and bribes – or internal coercion – e.g., psychological pressure or rhetorical manipulation.

Habermas's approach is condensed in his notion of "ideal speech situation". The latter takes place, at least in part, whenever one starts to argue in order to convince others rather than simply commanding, negotiating or suggesting a compromise. In an ideal deliberative process, one seeks agreement when it is possible and maintains mutual respect when it is not. Mutual respect is a form of agreeing to disagree, but demands more than tolerance. In addition to mutual respect, participants in public discourse should demonstrate their readiness for dialogue. For Habermas,

dialogue implies a discourse in which claims and assertions are backed by reasoned, understandable arguments.

The normative standards of dialogue, civility, and mutual respect combine to promote a positive value on consensus-seeking speech. Public discourse should produce a gradual consensus over time. People are encouraged to think in terms of the collective good rather than their private good, and search for areas of agreement in an atmosphere of mutual respect (Ferree et.al. 2002, 302ff). Although argumentative exchange presupposes certain constitutive rules, it does not establish in advance what, how, when and where will be said in discourse.[13] Moreover, "what counts as a good or a bad argument can itself become a topic for discussion" (Habermas 1998a, 43-44; Goodnight 2003, 125).

As discourses are historical and context-dependent, so are topics, actors and spaces of public debate. Issues are unlimited and can be re-examined when information or participants change. The boundary between private and public matters varies according to historical circumstances and perceived social contexts. Habermas states,

> The threshold separating the private sphere from the public is not marked by a fixed set of issues or relationships but by *different conditions of communication.* Certainly these conditions lead to differences in the

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[13] Habermas asserts, "I would note that the content of the universal presuppositions of argumentation is by no means 'normative' in the moral sense. For inclusivity only signifies that access to discourse is unrestricted; it does not imply the universality of binding norms of action. The equal distribution of communicative freedom and the requirement of truthfulness *in* discourse have the status of *argumentative* duties and rights, not of *moral* duties and rights. So too, the absence of coercion refers to the process of argumentation itself, not to interpersonal relations *outside* of this practice. These constitutive rules of the language game of argumentation govern the exchange of arguments and of 'yes' or 'no' responses; they have the epistemic force of enabling conditions for the justification of statements but do not have any *immediate* practical effects in motivating actions and interactions outside of discourse" (1998a, 44-45, italics in the original).

accessibility of the two spheres, safeguarding the intimacy of the one sphere and the publicity of the other. However, they do not seal off the private from the public but only channel the flow of topics from the one sphere into the other. For the public sphere draws its impulses from the private handling of social problems that resonate in life histories (Ibid, 366; italics in the original).

In other words, individuals bring to the public sphere interests, values and identities that have been formed in their lifeworlds. The public use of reason shapes opinion and will through the mobilization of reasons and arguments based on "actual sources of motivation and volition" (Regh 1998, xxviii). Together with the cognitive bases of communicative action, they operate as conditions that enable the interactions and interpretations of social actors in public debate.[14]

According to Habermas, public deliberation has a cognitive potential and an integrative force, as not only enables rational opinion and will formation, but also generates a sense of solidarity through the discursive production of intersubjectively shared reasons. That is, the exchange of reasons in terms accepted by others, promotes the formation of bonds of solidarity inasmuch as it obliges participants to take the place of others.

Summing up, Habermas´s perspective of publicity emphasizes open, inclusive, transparent, and fair debate as means for the formation of opinion and

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[14]Habermas says, "As soon as we conceive intentional social relations as communicatively mediated [...] we are no longer dealing with disembodied, omniscient beings who exist beyond the empirical realm and are capable of context-free action, so to speak. Rather, we are concerned with finite, embodied actors who are socialized in concrete forms of life, situated in historical time and social space, and caught up in networks of communicative action. In fallibly interpreting a given situation, such actors must draw from resources supplied by their lifeworld and not under their control. This does not deny the contingency of given traditions and forms of life any more than it does the pluralism of existing subcultures, worldviews, and interest positions. On the other hand, actors are not simply *at the mercy* of their lifeworld. For the lifeworld can in turn reproduce itself only through communicative action, and that means through processes of reaching understanding that depend on the actors' responding with yes or no to criticizable validity claims" (1998a, 321).

collective will. For him, public deliberation aims at solving social problems by the justification of opinions. The exchange of arguments rests on the presuppositions of rational communication, which transcends cultural differences because they are inscribed in the very structures of language. Though public dialogue is historically and culturally situated, the "constrains" of the conditions "imposed" on participants by their particular lifeworlds do not prevent the production of knowledge, the formation of opinions, and the making of decisions. The presuppositions of sincerity, rightness and truthfulness of argumentation enable the exchange of reasons, because they are implicit in every communicative practice. However, as actors have the option of acting strategically, these norms operate to the extent they choose to deliberate.

Publicity plays a crucial role in democratic politics, both in the formally organized processes of political decision-making, as in the informal processes of opinion and will formation of the public sphere. Since the latter are open and unregulated, they are best suited as "sensors" and "warning systems". In fact, the public sphere is an open-ended space of debate for the discovery and identification of social problems, for proposing solutions to common issues and concerns, and for the mobilization of public opinion aimed at influencing the decisions of formal political systems.

On Mouffe´s agonistic Publicity

The notion of publicity plays an important role in Mouffe´s theory of democratic politics. At the center of her conception of the public sphere is her distinction between "politics" and the "political". The "political" is the dimension of antagonism inherent

in human relations, which can take many forms and emerge in different types of social relations. "Politics" indicates the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions that seek to establish a certain order and to organize human coexistence in conditions that are always potentially conflictive, because they are affected by the dimension of the "political."

As stated in chapter 2, Mouffe regards politics as a permanent demarcating of the "Us/Them" relationship that is constitutive of collective identities. She points out that the crucial issue in democratic politics is how to establish this 'Us/Them' distinction in a way that is compatible with pluralism. According to 'agonistic pluralism,' the aim of democratic politics is to construct the 'them' in such a way that it is no longer perceived as an enemy to be destroyed, but somebody whose ideas we are going to struggle, but whose right to defend those ideas we will not put into question. This distinction is directly related to Mouffe´s differentiation between two types of antagonism: on the one hand, "proper" antagonism, which refers to the conflictive condition of all human relations (the political) and, on the other, "agonism", which designates a form of antagonism "tamed" in the process of discursive struggles between opponents who have something in common.[15] She places the notion of adversary in the context of relations between social agents who share the same symbolic space, but differ in the ways they want to organize it. By contrast, enemies are those who do not share any common ground and are therefore excluded

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[15] Norval explains Mouffe´s distinction as follows: "Antagonism (proper) would occur in the constitution of the political field as such; it would accompany the institution of *any* political regime, including also (but not exclusively) that of democracy, while the agonism could be reserved to capture those moments of antagonism occurring *within* the already constituted terrain of the democratic regime. In the former case there is no shared common symbolic space since it is precisely a symbolic space that is being instituted, while in the latter one assumes the existence of such a space and proceeds to analyze the relations that obtain between democratic citizens" (2007, 159)

from the political community, as they are the bearers of the antagonistic discourses that serve to its constitution (Mouffe 2000a, 13; 2005a, 20-21).

For agonistic pluralism, the enemy is the antagonistic "constitutive outside" that is represented by those practices and arguments that shape and simultaneously threaten the symbolic universe and the identity of the members of the political community. In Smith´s words, "Every social formation is destabilized by its "constitutive outside": the antagonistic otherness that simultaneously operates as its defining principle and lethal enemy" (Smith 1998, 123).

Although the inevitability of conflict threatens the stability of the common symbolic space – since the emergence of non-negotiable differences between adversaries is an ever-present possibility – the logic of equivalence tends to neutralize the occurrence of internal antagonisms by creating a discursive unity opposed to the hegemonic discourses of the antagonistic force. In this way, hegemonizing discourses achieve a "unification-effect by representing its articulated elements as equivalent signifiers in a chain that stands antagonistically opposed to another chain of signifiers […] Each of the articulated elements retains some degree of specificity, but in this moment, the sense that all of them stand together in solidarity against the enemy bloc comes to the fore" (Ibid, 174).

The category of ´enemy´ plays an important role in the perspective of agonistic pluralism, since it allows to distinguishing different types of existing antagonisms, that is, the various forms in which the political relationship between 'us´ and ´them' is presented. As stated by Wenman, for Mouffe, "´the category of the 'enemy' does not disappear. Instead, it is displaced and remains pertinent with respect

to those who do not accept the democratic 'rules of the game' and who thereby ´exclude themselves from the political community'" (2003, 182). In other words, the definition of a common external enemy holds the bonds between adversaries within a given political space. However, due to the contingent character of the construction of democratic identities, the terms of definition of the enemy are constantly renegotiated. As a result, the political community is continually recreated.

According to Mouffe, conflict should be channeled into democratic commitments, rather than denied or sublimated. She asserts, "...the idea of pluralism implies the permanence of antagonism [...] conflict and division are not to be seen as either disturbances that, unfortunately, cannot be completely eliminated or as empirical impediments that render impossible the full realization of a good constituted by a harmony that we cannot reach..." (1997, 26). Thus, democratic politics requires a public space for the legitimate opposition among adversaries.

The public space is itself the site and object of contestation, as it is marked by antagonisms that are its condition of existence and will inevitably involve exclusions and hierarchies. If, in addition, the political subject is not unitary but plural and the bearer of multiple identities, the combination of these features result in multiple, fragmented and contingent political agents, occupying different political spaces. For this reason, Mouffe rejects "the idea of a unique constitutive space of the constitution of the political" and conceives instead a multiplicity of public spheres for the articulation of different subject positions (Mouffe 1993, 20). She states,

> The public space is the battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation [...]. According to the agonistic approach, public spaces are always plural and the agonistic

confrontation takes place in a multiplicity of discursive surfaces. I also want to insist on a second important point. While there is no underlying principle of unity, no predetermined *centre* to this diversity of spaces, there always exist diverse forms of articulation among them […] Public spaces are always striated and hegemonically structured. A given hegemony results from a specific articulation of a diversity of spaces and this means that the hegemonic struggle also consists in the attempt to create a different form of articulation among public spaces (Mouffe 2005b, 158).

Thus, public spaces are fundamental political terrains for the hegemonic dispute of demands, the politicization of existing social spaces, and the creation of new political identities. As Mouffe says, politics is about public activity and identity formation (1996, 6).

As argued in the previous chapter, articulation is a key concept in Mouffe´s theory of agonistic democracy. Inextricably linked to the concept of hegemony, articulation is the political practice that ensures an unstable equilibrium in the context of contingent social relations marked by the presence of conflict. While enabling the sedimentation of social values and practices that make possible the permanence of a hegemonic order in certain historical moments, it facilitates in turn the construction of counter-hegemonic projects aspiring to create a new hegemony.

Articulation refers to the unity of differences without removing the specificity of their constituent elements. In this sense, it involves a special form of relationship between the universal and the particular, which is discursively produced by means of chains of equivalence that establish a new identity around 'nodal points' that link different 'floating signifiers'. In this way the resulting hegemonic articulation establishes a certain fixation of meaning representing the ´totality´ without removing the particularity of the social elements that compose it. However, since it is a process

of condensation and displacement of meaning, rather than a simple relation between fully constituted elements, it involves the modification of the singularity of each one of them (Howarth 2010, 36).

The articulation of collective identities enables the creation of a common symbolic space through the transformation of each collective identity belonging to a given chain of equivalence. However, the emergence of the new identity does not eliminate the particularity of its constituent identities, since each one of them preserves within themselves the traces of past articulations. Social identity is not an attribute that is acquired in a definitive way; instead, it is constantly subjected to processes of "de-identification" and "re-identification".

In Mouffe´s theory of democracy, the logic of articulation enables the construction of public spaces in which social actors assume the roles of adversaries who discuss their differences and arrive at temporary agreements about the nature of the democratic struggle against the common antagonistic force. The public sphere is a space for discussion, in which "the democratic debate is conceived as a real confrontation. Adversaries do fight – even fiercely – but according to a shared set of rules, and their positions, despite being ultimately irreconcilable, are accepted as legitimate perspectives" (Mouffe 2005a, 52.)

For her, consensus is a form of articulation, as it provides "a common symbolic space among opponents who are considered as ´legitimate enemies" (Ibid.). Even though a public sphere can generate some degree of consensus, she conceives it as a 'conflictual consensus' (Mouffe 2000a, 103), a temporary settlement in a wider context of conflict and hostility. She states,

> ...while a pluralist democracy certainly requires a certain amount of consensus on the political principles that need to be shared by all its members, it is clear that those principles can only exist through competing interpretations that are bound to be in conflict. In other words, we will always be dealing with a "conflictual consensus" and this explains why a pluralist democracy needs to allow dissensus on the interpretation of its constitutive principles. It is precisely the tension between consensus on the principles and dissensus on their interpretation that constitutes the agonistic dynamics of the pluralist democracy (Mouffe 1997, 24)

Every consensus exists as a temporary result of a provisional hegemony, as a stabilization of power, and it always entails some form of exclusion. Indeed, the notion of ´conflictual consensus´ is related to her concept of pluralism, according to which there is no substantive idea of the common good, but a diversity of perspectives about the ´good life´, corresponding to the multiplicity of existing social identities.

Since conflictual consensus entails the choice of certain alternatives and the exclusion of others, it results from a temporary stabilization of conflict between competing interpretations. In other words, given the diversity of perspectives about the nature of the common good, consensus among members of the political community is permeated by power struggles and the ongoing delimitation of the boundaries of the common space. In this sense, democratic debate always involves political decisions about the legitimacy of demands and the delimitation of the frontier between adversaries and enemies. Mouffe asserts,

> I do not believe that a democratic pluralist politics should consider as legitimate all the demands formulated in a given society. The pluralism that I advocate requires discriminating between demands which are to be accepted as part of the agonistic debate and those which are to be excluded. A democratic society cannot treat those who put its basic institutions into question as legitimate adversaries. The agonistic approach does not pretend to encompass all differences and to overcome all forms of exclusions. But exclusions are envisaged in political and not in moral terms. Some demands

are excluded, not because they are declared to be ´evil´, but because they challenge the institutions constitutive of the democratic political association (2005a, 120-121).

Thus, Mouffe's agonistic pluralism is not a "total", fully inclusive pluralism, in which all differences are equally accepted. On the contrary, agonistic democracy must enable to distinguish differences that "exist but should not exist" from those that "do not exist but should exist", since the former are constructed as relations of subordination, while the latter emerge as result of the non-recognition of such subordinate relationships (Worsham and Olson 1999, 198-199). That is, politics contributes to the radicalization of democracy inasmuch as it helps to visualize power relations and thus, the legitimacy (or illegitimacy) of particular collective identities.[16] For Mouffe, only the expression of dissent allows for the identification between those willing to dispute the interpretation of the ethical-political values of equality and freedom and those who deny these principles and are therefore excluded from the common public space. In this way, democratic politics involves simultaneous practices of inclusion and exclusion: by accepting certain differences and rejecting others, agonistic pluralists define who are part of the "demos" and who are outside. Therefore, the limits of the political community of adversaries are never definitive.

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[16]As explained in Chapter 2, this identification allows for the articulation of democratic chains of equivalence by combining the principles of unity and autonomy. Smith asserts, "The subordinated agent only becomes radicalized when she finds a compelling political discourse that gives an effective account for her condition, provides her with the critical tools that she needs to join with others in constructing an alternative world, and shows her how the entire subordinating structure might be overthrown through collective struggle. It is precisely a radicalized interpretation of the principles of liberty and equality that can interrupt relations of subordination in this manner. Radical democratic discourse thereby creates the discursive conditions in which even the most normalized forms of subjection can be viewed as illegitimate and the elimination of subordination can be imagined (1998, 8).

In this sense, the demos is not a homogeneous space formed by "essential" or "pre-constituted" identities, but a heterogeneous common space composed of overlapping political identities linked together by collective public action. Correspondingly, the political commitment to the values of equality and respect for differences is not based on a substantive idea of the common good, but on the common public concern about certain issues (Mouffe 1993, 67-69; Howarth 2008, 178). Howarth points out that the "ethos of agonistic respect",

> ...informs the proper relationship that ought to pertain between the different demands and subjectivities that make up an equivalential chain. More precisely, it means that the autonomy and difference of each component should be respected and valued in the construction and operation of any political coalition. Similarly, it speaks to the way in which antagonisms *between* different groups and coalitions ought to be played out: that there should be an acceptance of the common rules of the game, an acceptance of defeat in the political process and an expectation that conflict and contestation are an ongoing and 'infinite' prospect. Finally, such an ethos ought also to inform the democratic subjects who conduct radical democratic politics, permeating the way they hold their beliefs and demands, as well as the different ways they interact with each other in different public spaces (Ibid, 187; italics in the original).

Additionally, Mouffe argues that the articulation of political identities and the allegiance to democratic values is reinforced by passions, which she defines as "everything that has to do with the affective dimension which is mobilized in the creation of collective identity". According to her, passions play a crucial role in the construction of identities, as they provide the affective component of the process of collective identification. Passion is a 'libidinal investment', an attachment to a subject, person or concept that involves intense emotional energies (Miessen 2010, 111). Affections are intertwined with values and beliefs derived from particular forms of life and common practices. In this way, the values of justice and democracy that are

part of the reference system of liberal democracy, nurture the allegiance of social actors to the principles of freedom and equality for all. Namely, the bond between members of the demos is reinforced by their passionate commitment to democratic institutions.

However, passions encourage political action in different directions, as they cut across antagonistic political relations. Mouffe says, "passion is a double-edged sword: associative and dissociative" (2001, 24). On the one hand, it binds members of the political community around common practices and discourses, constituting the 'we' of the space formed by adversaries; on the other, it helps to define the antagonistic 'they' identified as the enemy. As in the case of conflict – in which the affective dimension plays a decisive role – passions are ineradicable, as they are inscribed in social practices. She argues that passions should not be removed from the public space and relegated to the private sphere, as the absence of agonistic channels for the expression of grievances tends to create the conditions for the emergence of non-negotiable antagonisms. Mouffe states,

> If [an] adversarial configuration is missing, passions cannot be given a democratic outlet and the agonistic dynamics of pluralism are hindered. The danger arises that the democratic confrontation will therefore be replaced by a confrontation between essentialist forms of identification or non-negotiable moral values. When political frontiers become blurred […] one witnesses the growth of other types of collective identities around nationalist, religious or ethnic forms of identification. Antagonism can take many forms and it is illusory to believe that they could be ever eradicated (Mouffe 2005a, 30).

From the perspective of agonistic pluralism, passions must be mobilized for democratic purposes: the transformation of antagonism into agonism requires the

provision of channels for the expression of collective passions on various topics, enabling the creation of forms of collective identification around democratic objectives.

Summarizing, Mouffe´s agonistic conception of publicity emphasizes the conflictual nature of political practices. As "every form of communication, including persuasion, negotiation, and dialogue, is necessarily intertwined with power relations" (Smith 1998, 184), the arrangements that result from debate are contingent and open to new alternatives. Moreover, because conflict is always present, political articulations constructed around the establishment of boundaries between opposing political camps, are also unstable. According to agonistic pluralism, the aim of democratic politics is to defuse the potential for hostility that exists in human relations by transforming antagonism into agonism, enemies into adversaries. A democratic way of life requires a public sphere that allows for the expression of conflicts by democratic means. Thus, an agonistic public space is a place for the discursive confrontation between adversaries, and the creation of political identities through the mobilization of passions and the articulation of hegemonic projects.

The WSF. Combining Deliberation and Agonism in a Transnational Public Sphere: Deliberation at the World Social Forum

As anticipated in chapter 1, many characteristics of the WSF's publicity resemble Habermas's theory of deliberative democracy. Indeed, among its most salient features are its call to the "democratic debate of ideas" (article 1), its commitment to openness to a "diversity of genders, ethnicities, cultures, generations and physical capacities"

(article 9), and its engagement with "reflection and the transparent circulation of the results of that reflection" (article 11). Moreover, by stressing the use of debate and condemning "all forms of domination and subjection of one person by another" (article 10), the Forum promotes rational argumentation and discourages all forms of violence as a means for political persuasion. These principles bear a close resemblance to the attributes of argumentation related to inclusiveness, equal opportunity of participation, transparency, and non-coercive communication, which are at the heart of Habermas's theory of public communication.

To begin with, the idea of the Forum as an open space for debate and exchanging of experiences has a strong similarity with Habermas´s concept of informal public sphere. Indeed, the Charter of Principles defines the forum as a (public) space for the formation of opinions, but not for the making of decisions "on behalf of the forum". As Whitaker says, "the participants of the WSF can make whatever final declarations they wish — and these are most welcome. But they will never be declarations of the Forum as a Forum. As a space common to all, it does not 'speak', or rather, it 'speaks' a lot through its very existence" (2004: 114). Among Forum´s organizers, the prevailing thought is that the absence of statements on behalf of the Forum not only preserves its continuity, but also increases the possibilities for its enrichment with new experiences and new actors: "The Forum works as a 'factory of ideas' or an *incubator,* from which new initiatives, aiming at the construction of another world […] can emerge" (ibid.: 113).

Unlike a formal public sphere that is aimed at decision-making and structured by procedures – as parliamentary bodies – an informal public sphere

"develops more or less spontaneously" and "has the advantage of a medium of unrestricted communication". In this sense, it is better suited as a context of discovery and problematization: "new problem situations can be perceived more sensitively, discourses aimed at achieving self-understanding can be conducted more widely and expressively, collective identities and need interpretations can be articulated with fewer compulsions than is the case in procedurally regulated public spheres" (Habermas, 1996: 307-308; 314). Since informal public spheres are open to continuous flows of new publics and topics that resist "organization as a whole", they are "wild" and "anarchic".

Though the WSF sets out some principles for guiding participation, it neither establishes specific rules for debate, nor for consensus building. As it is not conceived as a representative institution, but rather as a public space for the ongoing problematization and discovery of alternatives, the forum does not establish procedures for discussing and taking decisions on behalf of all of its participants. Instead, it encourages the autonomous organization of social actors for discussing and arriving at decisions with respect to whatever action they decide to engage with, as long as they abide to the forum´s principles. By leaving these matters into the hands of current and potential participants, it promotes the formation of new identities, as well as the articulation of multiple actors within the "boundless" space of transnational struggles against global neoliberalism.

In other words, the principles of the Forum are aimed at ensuring the necessary conditions for the development of deliberative practices that pose as its starting point the willingness of participants to solve their internal differences through

communication instead of strategic action or coercion. Furthermore, the rejection of violence is emphasized in its Charter of principles in two ways: on the one hand, restricting participation to military organizations (article 9) and, on the other, promoting articulation between actors as a way to "increase the capacity for non-violent social resistance" (art. 13).

Since the notion of "open space" is intended to ensure the inclusion of all those who consider themselves affected by neoliberal globalization, it resonates with the Habermasian ideal of "complete inclusiveness" which is based on the egalitarian exchange of views in the community of "all concerned". Moreover, the "methodology" of open space – as it is usually identified by WSF´s participants – is also intended to facilitate the convergence of a wide range of actors in a non-hierarchical, horizontal manner that emphasizes mutual understanding (Ponniah 2007, 3). Indeed, it is part of the "ethos of openness" prevalent among contemporary social movements, according to which reflection, free circulation of information and consensus are integral part of their networked political practices (Stephansen 2011, 154).

By promoting heterogeneity, autonomy, mutual respect and inclusivity, while at the same time forbidding any type of coercion and violence, the WSF offers a plural, non- coercive and non-conclusive ´global´ space of deliberation,

> The Forum opens from time to time in different parts of the world — in the events where it takes place — with one specific objective: to allow as many individuals, organizations, and movements as possible that oppose neoliberalism to get together freely, listen to each other, learn from the experiences and struggles of others, and discuss proposals of action [...] nobody in the Forum has the power or the right to say that one action or proposal is more important than another. Nor should they have the power or

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the right to give or demand a bigger visibility to their proposals, 'usurping'
for their own particular objectives a space that belongs to everybody
(Whitaker 2004, 113-115).

The Forum´s concern about these operating rules of public debate is not only manifested in the Charter of Principles but also in the measures taken to secure them in practice. One of its biggest challenges is to guarantee the declaration stated in Article 3: "The World Social Forum is a world process. All the meetings that are held as part of this process have an international dimension".

Certainly, the process of global expansion of "seeking and building alternatives" for "another possible world" (art. 2) is directly related to the principle of inclusion that also proclaims. In order to support the multiplication of forums and encourage the incorporation of more movements and organizations engaged with the construction of "another world", WSF´s organizers regard it as a "process" and not merely as an "event". This idea is also linked to the mechanism of decentralization adopted from 2002 to enable the participation of people from around the world and expanding the articulation of social networks at the global level. Since then, this measure has led to the proliferation of forums, meetings, preparatory meetings, conferences and other related events, which nourish the idea of the Forum as a process. As stated by one of the organizers,

> The multiplication of forums, some of great magnitude and others that give it capillarity, have transformed the WSF in a worldwide process ...[it] has made it possible for people to meet much more frequently, establish ties and relations of confidence and feel the necessity to interlink their performance. It empowers the ambiance that makes the expansion of the social movements and of this new internationalism concrete (Leite 2003, 42).

Another distinctive feature of the inclusiveness of the forum is the promotion of diversity (art. 9), not only in terms of plurality of cultures and identities, but also with respect to heterogeneity of ways of participation. Like the movements for global social justice, the forum encourages pluralism as a way to fight the uniformity characteristic of totalitarian political practices or corporative economic systems. As an activist suggests, the Forum

> ... calls for 'no single way of thinking' [...] The WSF's actors include 'delegates' from NGOs, trade unions, indigenous and peasant movements, women's groups, environmental movements, Church-affiliated bodies, organizations advocating on behalf of racial/ethnic and sexual minorities, youth groups, and activist collectives as well as individual, academic, and media 'observers.' The forum itself encompasses a myriad of events — plenary sessions, conferences, public and solidarity meetings, panels, roundtables, workshops, seminars, cultural events, rallies, and marches — featuring a multinational cast of participants, predominantly from the South, communicating in many languages and espousing divergent political views. These events address many intersecting themes that are implicated in a number of social struggles and a multiplicity of specific campaigns (Cochrane 2004, 15).

The promotion of diversity in the forms of participation and the commitment to secure "the right, during such meetings, to deliberate on declarations or actions they may decide on, whether singly or in coordination with other participants" (Article 7), strengthens both the emergence of multiple social forums and similar encounters, as well as the creation of procedures for discussion and consensus-making. Since meetings are not immune to different forms of exercise of power and manipulation of some individuals or groups by others, WSF´s supporters foster respect for differences and open-mindedness: "The Social Forum model relies above all on open dialogue and discussion, as it is practiced daily by activists and associations […] Wherever

they go, members are invited to reach consensus by giving precedence to common ideas and letting difference take the place of conflict" (Pleyers 2004, 509).

Certainly, consensus is a valued political tool among Social Forum´s activists, who oppose representation and majority-rule as mechanisms for the making of decisions. Instead, they exercise alternative procedures for helping the democratic process of debate and decision-making, such as the assignation of roles of ´facilitators´, ´timekeepers´ and observers. Since participants prefer consensual democracy to settle their differences and arrive at common decisions, they use voting only in particular occasions,

> The voting procedure generally follows wide debates oriented toward consensus building, and is limited to final documents proposed at the local assembly, national forum, or global forum. Stressing respect for differing opinions, the social forums are meant to be a particular locus for the exchange of ideas where – on the basis of argumentation open to everyone's contribution – consensus is reached around values built up together (Della Porta 2005, 85).

Additionally, equal participation in assemblies is guided by the principle of horizontality, strongly supported by global justice movements.[17] To avoid the formation of leadership that might overshadow parity of participation in debates, activists resort to mechanisms such as the limited mandate of spokespersons, which are usually restricted to cover a thematic area, logistical issues or urgent decisions. Another method employed to prevent delegation is the frequent consultation of opinions among participants (Ibid.).

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[17]According to a group of activists from IBASE (one of the eight Brazilian organizations that founded the WSF), horizontalism is "the valorization of all subjects, the rejection of occasional "majorities" that cause embarrassment, the certainty that all adhesions to any campaign, any strategy or tactic are voluntary and need to be constantly negotiated" (IBASE 2006, 10).

Moreover, another feature that shows WSF´s willingness to fair debate, is the value placed on knowledge and specific competencies, understood both as a means for increasing the discursive skills of participants, and as a way of recognition of different cultural backgrounds. Indeed, a common practice in social forums is the organization of conferences and workshops with the presence of experts on various topics. However, in the Forum´s lexicon, knowledge not only refers to scientific knowledge, which is "only one form of knowledge among many others," but fundamentally to knowledge from other traditions of critical knowledge and transformative practices: peasants, popular, indigenous, urban, women´s, among others (de Souza Santos, 2008: 258).[18]

In this latter sense, knowledge is meant as a resource to capture the variety of critical discourses and practices, as well as its transformative potential: "It is [...] a question of constructing a space for affirming diversity capable of recognizing multiple identities, articulating the analytical field of politics with that of culture and advancing in the dialogue between different systems of thinking and different ways of projecting the future" (Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses (IBASE) 2006, 21-22). Thus, by combining expert knowledges with the critical knowledge of different transformative practices, the WSF aims to mobilize sufficient counter-knowledge in order to challenge the hegemonic interpretations of global social problems. At the same time, through the process of translation between knowledges, it

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[18] Similarly, Habermas argues, "In spite of asymmetrical access to expertise and limited problem-solving capacities, civil society also has the opportunity of mobilizing counterknowledge and drawing on the pertinent forms of expertise to make *its own* translations. Even though the public consists of laypersons and communicates with ordinary language, this does not necessarily imply an inability to differentiate the essential questions and reasons for decisions. This can serve as a pretext for a technocratic incapacitation of the public sphere only as long as the political initiatives of civil society fail to provide sufficient expert knowledge along with appropriate and, if necessary, multilevel translations in regard to the managerial aspects of public issues" (1998a, 372-373).

encourages mutual recognition and the creation of solidarity among multiple social actors.

Since one of the greatest challenges of transnational communication is to achieve equal participation and transparency in discussions between multiple language communities who attend the meetings, most WSF´s encounters have the support of Babels, a volunteer organization of interpreters and translators.[19]

Like the Social Forum, Babels embraces the principles of participation, deliberation, decentralization and horizontality, working with procedures to facilitate transparency of translation and interpretation in multilingual meetings. As one of its activists explains,

> Discarding traditional top-down forms of organization and adopting the now well-known motto 'another world is possible', the Social Forum and Babels are innovative and radical in the sense that they attempt to embody this 'other world' they call for. This contemporary form of resistance entails that the Social Forum and Babels organize from the bottom-up and reflect the principles of participation, deliberation, process, decentralization and horizontality established in their Charter of Principles, as opposed to representation, struggle, event, centralization and verticality (Boéri 2007, 8).

Contrary to what might be expected, the language barrier seems to promote transparency of public deliberation together with a willingness to mutual respect and recognition between persons from different cultures. Empirical research that compares

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[19]Babels began in 2002 and gathers about 20 national coordination centers. It is "a horizontal, non-hierarchical network of volunteer interpreters and translators"... "made up of activists of all tendencies and backgrounds, united in the task of transforming and opening up the Social Forums. We work to give voice to peoples of different languages and cultures. We fight for the right of all, including those who don't speak a colonial language, to contribute to the common work. We try to allow everyone to express themselves in the language of their choice. By increasing the diversity of contributions to the debate, we transform its outcome" (http://www.babels.org. Accessed August 10, 2013).

the opportunities for democratic participation between national and regional preparatory assemblies of the European Social Forum shows that language difficulties are not a decisive obstacle to democratic debate as compared to informal power structures and ´gate-keeping´ mechanisms, which are frequently rooted at the national level. Although multilingual encounters are not free of conflicts of power or problems related to the procedural slowness of the process of interpretation, they are counterbalanced by a process of intercultural socialization that occurs as a side effect of multilingual interaction (Doerr 2009b).

Finally, the principles of inclusion and horizontality are also present in the forms of circulation of information. Like the self-organized simultaneous interpretations of Babels, the formation of virtual spaces for the dissemination of information has grown considerably since the beginning of the World Social Forum. Given the scarce or biased coverage by mostly national and local mass media, participants reinforce the channels of communication provided by organizers (newsletters, 'official' websites, etc.) by establishing Internet sites aimed at documenting ideas and proposals, producing collaborative documents, and publishing their activities between forum meetings. For example, *OpenFSM* is a website emerged in 2008 with the aim of providing a virtual platform for all those groups and organizations that subscribe to the Charter of Principles.[20] Together, these communicative channels aim to supply,

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[20]The OpenFSM "operates on the basis of 'spaces': separate sections of the site which are managed by particular groups. Each space exists in an autonomous relationship to the rest of the site, and anyone can start a new space for whatever purpose they like (within the parameters of the Charter of Principles). Each space provides a set of collaborative tools, including a blog, wiki pages, and email lists" (Stephansen 2011, 148).

> ...routinized contact among the countless individuals and organizations working to address common grievances against global economic and political structures […] Isolated groups lack information and creative input needed to innovate and adapt their strategies […] Aided by the internet and an increasingly dense web of transnational citizens' networks, the Forum and its regional and local counterparts dramatize the unity among diverse local struggles and encourage coordination among activists working at local, national, and transnational levels (Smith et al. 2007, 3).

Summing up, the concept of "open space" for debate, together with the emphasis on the principles of inclusiveness, horizontality and free flow of information, show a series of coincidences between the publicity of the WSF and the Habermasian theory of public communication.[21] Indeed, while the Forum´s openness to the plurality of voices and forms of participation resembles Habermas's principle of inclusiveness, the notion of horizontality matches with his principle of equal opportunity of participation in debate. Likewise, while the Forum´s emphasis on the free flow of information and transparent exchange of ideas recalls his principle of transparency, the accent placed on debate as a form of communication – combined with the rejection to the use of violence and all forms of domination – evokes Habermas's principle of non-coercive communication.

Moreover, the refusal to convert social forums into representative organisms is similar to Habermas's idea of informal public sphere, which frees participants from

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[21]Several analyses on the WSF, observe some similarities between the "ethos" of the forum and the theory of Habermas. For instance, Wright says: "There are [...] numerous overlaps between the ethos of the open space and the assumptions of the theory of communicative action. There is a faith in language as constitutive of alternate possibilities. There is an awareness of the distorting effects of power on that language. There is an emphasis on symbolic interaction as formative of social and cultural life, not simply in the service of an instrumental decision-making. There is also an emphasis on open and free exchange in a context which is not determined by hierarchical power. There is the implicit possibility of legitimating a collectively shared ethics by submitting it to a communicative rationality. Finally, there is a commitment to a radicalized democracy based upon this form of horizontal communication" (2005, 414-15).

the burden of taking decisions in order to strengthening the unrestricted reflexive formation of public opinion.

The Agonistic External Communication of the WSF

As highlighted in the previous chapters, an outstanding feature of the WSF´s publicity is its definition as an "open meeting place for groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism". By distinguishing itself as a public space opposed to another (hegemonic) one, the WSF resembles Mouffe's idea of a political life aiming at the construction of unity through the identification of a common enemy. Indeed, the Forum identifies the globalization "commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions at the service of those corporations' interests..." as the antagonistic field of forces to be fought by means of democratic debate. At the same time, it encourages the creation of alternatives that ensure a globalization in solidarity, respect for universal human rights, the civil rights of men and women of all nations and the environment. It also links these principles to "democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples" (art. 4 of the WSF´s Charter of Principles).

Furthermore, it "prompts reflection […] on the mechanisms and instruments of domination by capital, on means and actions to resist and overcome that domination, and on the alternatives proposed to solve the problems of exclusion and social inequality that the process of capitalist globalization with its racist, sexist and

environmentally destructive dimensions is creating internationally and within countries" (Art. 11).

By setting out the criteria for distinguishing the values and practices that rejects from those that promotes, the WSF encourages the creation of a common space of supporters of global social justice in opposition to the antagonistic symbolic space of global neoliberalism.

However, even when the Forum is open to cultural diversity and differences of ideas and forms of communication, it not only denies participation to all those who use or promote violence, but also discourages the exercise of coercion as a means of imposing ideas. In this way, the WSF provides the basis for the creation of a "limited" pluralistic political community in a way reminiscent of Mouffe's notion of pluralism, according to which demands are integrated into the common democratic space as long as they do not threaten its principles of liberty and equality. In other words, the WSF fosters unity among various struggles, provided they respect differences and the established democratic "rules of the game". In effect, the democratic ethos of the forum has its greatest expression in the promotion of debate as the main tool for internal confrontation of ideas about the ways of opposing all forms of oppression. It is also manifested in the WSF´s adherence to the institutions of governance committed to social justice, and the way to fight the enemy forces: the practices of capitalist domination and the institutions of decision-making that accompany them, must be fought through struggles over meanings about the different ways of conceiving global human coexistence.

In Chapter 2, the Mouffean concept of chains of equivalence was developed in order to explain the formation of new transnational identities through different practices of articulation. This notion also contributes to understand the Forum´s forms of communication, which are intertwined with the process of formation of identities: participants reconstruct their political identities through the creation and recreation of discourses opposed to those of their enemy, represented by neoliberal capitalism. That is, the discursive struggle against antagonists encourages debate and the production of alternative discourses, reinforcing the process of identity formation within the common space.

WSF´s communication with external powers is characterized by the refutation of the dominant patterns of interpreting social realities, which suppress or make invisible alternative discourses. Among the main objections to neoliberal capitalism are the (re) commodification of social relations – like the privatization of public goods – the dismantling of social rights, and the concentration of political power in multinational corporations and the executive authorities of some countries. The WSF invites to confronting them by the use of categories such as sustainable development, participatory democracy and social justice. In fact, apart from the banner "Another World is Possible", analyzed in the previous chapter, another great slogan of the WSF is "the world is not a commodity", coined by French activist Jose Bové. As Gilbert states, "It is, the drive to commodify every aspect of social life, most vividly illustrated by the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) process, with its attempt to create as well as forcibly liberalize markets in the provision of essential services […] which the World Social Forum and the movement associated with it oppose" (2005, 222).

These slogans, as well as the values and concepts presented in the Charter of Principles, function as the common ground of the most diverse demands of social movements and organizations. By drawing the lines between the ´here´ and ´there´, e.g., participatory democracy vs. representative democracy, inclusion of differences vs. social exclusion, decentralized leadership vs. centralization of power, etc., they differentiate the 'nodal points' that articulate the chain of equivalences of the struggles for global social justice, from those that unite the chain of equivalences of neoliberal practices.[22] Paraphrasing Mouffe, they are the points of reference that gather a given chain of meaning, partially fixing the discursive structure that allows the formation of identities.

In this sense, the WSF operates as the 'totality' that provides the discursive framework constituted by certain nodal points (social justice, participatory democracy, inclusion, etc.), which bind multiple 'floating signifiers', whose diversity is expressed in a wide series of demands ranging from food sovereignty, a sustainable environment and land rights, to decent housing, universal basic income, and the sovereignty of indigenous peoples. Thus, nodal points represent the meanings that make the equivalential relation between different identities possible, as they constitute the common element with regard to their rejection of an antagonistic force.

For instance, the "Call of Social Movements" released at the end of the WSF held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2002, conveys the unity of diverse struggles against

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[22]As Phelan and Dahlberg state, the hegemonic articulation of neoliberal discourse "typically takes place via the linkage of, amongst other terms, "private property," "free markets," "individualism," "consumerism," "economic growth," "progress" and "innovation," around the empty signifier of "capitalist freedom", or the empty signifier that resonates most effectively with the particular social context in question" (2011, 22).

the exclusionary practices of global capitalism around certain nodal points, such as "diversity", "solidarity" and "opposition",

> We are diverse — women and men, adults and youth, indigenous peoples, rural and urban, workers and unemployed, homeless, the elderly, students, migrants, professionals, peoples of every creed, color and sexual orientation. The expression of this diversity is our strength and the basis of our unity. We are a global solidarity movement, united in our determination to fight against the concentration of wealth, the proliferation of poverty and inequalities, and the destruction of our earth. We are living and constructing alternative systems, and using creative ways to promote them. We are building a large alliance from our struggles and resistance against a system based on sexism, racism and violence, which privileges the interests of capital and patriarchy over the needs and aspirations of people (2003, 102).

By building networks, coalitions, alliances, campaigns and movements united by the struggle against neoliberal hegemony, WSF´s participants give shape to chains of equivalences that serve as a means of "fermentation" of counter-hegemonic discourses. Indeed, a chain of equivalences between different collective identities gathered under the banner of a common goal, ideal, demand, etc., achieves a multiplying effect to the extent that it offers a discourse that contains the floating signifiers of other political identities. Furthermore, the operation of equivalence produces displacements of meanings between demands that lead to the partial modification of the contents of the struggles involved and, eventually, to the creation of new political identities. Thus, within the Forum process, "many social issues are […] defined as interconnected, such as the ecological impact of military activity that unites both peace and environmental activists" (Cock 2007, 177). The discursive structure of the WSF comprises a series of nodal points such as justice, diversity, solidarity, democracy and inclusion, which give rise to new public spaces and networks,

> ...a tapestry of regional and local social forums and networks now live within [WSF´s] orbit. This has catalyzed a process of convergence and/or integration among transnational networks within global civil society, which is creating new alliances and coalitions previously considered impossible. This reflects a new acknowledgment between global advocacy groups and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) that many of the issues that are addressed through disparate means and approaches are linked at deeper levels, and new levels of collaboration are needed (Ramos 2007, 3).

Networks related to the process of the forum range from those promoting support for alternative local farming, like The Small and Family Farm Alliance; to those advocating alternative political economy, like The International Forum on Globalization. There are projects, campaigns and protests of resistance, others for policy, law and institutional innovation, and still others working for cultural change or shifts in narratives.[23]

As noted throughout this section, a central feature of the WSF´s external communication is opposition, defined in terms of alternatives. For instance, WSF activists practice participatory forms of democracy in contrast to the modalities of decision making "behind closed doors" typical of economic corporations and international lending institutions. They also exercise cooperative forms of production

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[23]Ramos suggests four categories for analyzing agency and advocacy through the World Social Forum process: "resistance, which signifies fast moving citizen responses to crisis and threat. This type of activity self organizes (relatively) quickly, to block, stop or protest certain changes [...] policy, law and institutional advocacy/innovation, which signifies advocacy by groups or networks for political, economic and institutional changes. This type of advocacy takes a longer time to develop and implement. [...] culture, which signifies slower moving changes in worldviews, ideologies, or epistemology. Finally [...]shifts in core narratives, myths or metaphors, many of which are unconscious systems of ordering perception, culturally specific" (2007, 6)

and marketing, defying corporate trading practices.[24] Similarly, they organize networks and campaigns to promote peace, as opposed to the militarization of conflict.

A key aspect in the making of alternatives concerns the mechanisms of information, constituted in opposition to the forms of communication of mainstream media. Indeed, since the rationale of the forum is to create global public spaces for expanding the discursive struggle against neoliberal powers, alternative media are important not only for disseminating news about the forums, but mostly for sharing ideas and transmitting knowledge. WSF activists associate alternative media with the idea of "shared communication", which means both "a method for sharing alternative media coverage of the WSF" and "collaborative processes of media production" (Stephansen 2011, 171).

> The practice of shared communication […], sharing with others, doing it in a collective manner, is something that is important not just for us to disseminate news about the Forum but […] to strengthen, globally, a counter hegemonic communication, which gives space and voice to other groups, to other news, to other voices, that are excluded from the mass media. And we believe that from the moment a group comes to the Forum and enters into contact with this kind of process of knowledge production, they can take this idea with them beyond the Forum.[25]

Thus, the concept of "shared communication" is part of the logic that permeates all practices associated to social forums: challenging dominant forms of conceiving and

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[24]As Bell says, there are many actions that put into practice alternative paradigms: "one example is the establishment of grassroots trade networks between and among producers and consumers in the Caribbean, skirting intervention by intermediary speculators and corporations [which] has increased small-scale producers' profits, reduced consumers' costs, and shifted control in marketing and pricing decisions" (2002, 7).

[25] Bia Barbosa, in interview with Hilde Stephansen, January 2009 (Stephansen 2011, 189-190).

producing social reality through the collective construction of new ways of transmission of knowledge and experience that consolidate and extend the articulation of struggles against neoliberal capitalism at the global level.

In order to build "another world" different from the current one – hegemonized by a rationality centered on individuation, rational calculation and the concentration of power – WSF actors practice an opposite rationality, which emphasizes collectivism, respect for differences, and the creation of democratic forms of legitimacy. In the words of Santos, "the WSF symbolizes a critical and democratic utopia. This utopia manifests itself as an imbalance between negative expectations (what is rejected) and positive expectations (what is proposed as alternative) […] its future is the *future of hope* in an alternative to *la pensée unique* (single thinking)." (2004b, 336, 338; italics in the original).

With the call to build a planetary society in solidarity through reflection, creativity and commitment to the values of pluralism and equality, the WSF mobilizes passions for democracy and justice, as well as feelings of hope that "another world is possible". Despite that it also reanimates feelings of indignation against exclusion and injustice, it promotes the use of pacific means to fight enemies, rather than violent mechanisms.

Thus, the communication of the Forum combines rationality and mobilization of human passions in the collective search for a better life for all. Summarizing, the World Social Forum aims at fighting neoliberal capitalism through the articulation of alternatives and the mobilization of passions, in a way that resembles Mouffe's agonistic perspective. By identifying transnational capitalism and

neoliberalism as the enemies, the Forum helps the creation of the political community constituted by the advocates of global social justice. In a way that resonates with Mouffe's theory, it encourages the creation of equivalences between different adversarial struggles, in opposition to the chain of equivalences of the neoliberal antagonistic field.

Likewise, the Forum's promotion of a pluralistic debate that excludes all those who threaten the democratic principles of interaction in the public space, recalls the Mouffean concept of "limited" pluralism.

Conclusions

This chapter shows the combination of deliberative and agonistic forms of communication of the WSF in a way that resembles both Habermas's theory of discursive democracy and Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism. This is achieved through the analytical separation between the internal and external forms of communication of the Forum: while the former are focused on horizontal and inclusive debate among participants, the latter are centered on the antagonistic discursive struggle against the neoliberal system.

Like Habermas's "ideal speech situation", which sets out the ideal conditions of argumentation that serve as a benchmark for testing existing discursive practices, the rules of the WSF´s Charter of Principles guide the deliberative democratic practices of participants. Actually, these principles mirror the values of respect for diversity, horizontality and transparency that accompany the deliberative practices of

global social movements. Social Forum participants prioritize horizontal and inclusive forms of internal communication, defying difficulties to understand diverse languages, and cultural differences. In this way, they create mechanisms for ensuring equal opportunities for debate, and the free circulation of ideas. In terms of internal communication, most participants prefer deliberation rather than strategic or elitist forms of political participation. As Chamber asserts, they "strive to be discursive rather than strategic actors" (Chambers 1995, 235).

At the same time, the external communication of the WSF converges with Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism. Indeed, through the identification of neoliberal capitalism as the enemy, the World Social Forum encourages the creation of the common symbolic space of the advocates of global social justice. The confrontation with the opposing forces consists of a discursive dispute about the meanings on the nature of social relations of production and reproduction of life, and the forms of global coexistence. In practice, external communication with transnational economic and political powers is centered on the creation of alternatives for challenging dominant discourses. In other words, WSF activists struggle against neoliberal hegemony through the creation of alternative projects. In the process, they build multiple public spaces and networks through the formation of chains of equivalences opposite to the chains of equivalences united around the neoliberal imaginary.

Chapter 4

Transnational Democracy and the World Social Forum. Alternatives to the "democratic deficit" of Global Governance

This chapter analyzes the relationship of WSF´s participants with the institutions of global governance. The first section examines their ways of disseminating alternative discourses to neoliberalism in the broader transnational public sphere. They seek to legitimize their discourses through inclusive and egalitarian debate and the articulation of hegemonic struggles. Once again, Mouffe´s agonistic approach to democracy and Habermas´s discourse theory help to explain the WSF´s mechanisms for legitimizing the idea that "another world is possible".

The second part examines the different political views that permeate the debates and actions of transnational actors.

Creating Transnational Legitimacy through Debate and Hegemonic Articulation.

Since the beginning of this century, the WSF has contributed to the global public debate on social inequalities, environmental degradation, and political injustices that affect populations throughout the world. Certainly, social forums are neither the first nor the only public arenas that place issues on the broader transnational public sphere and "reserve themselves the prerogatives to scrutinize and monitor policy choices of

international organizations" (Nanz and Steffek 2004, 322). For example, they were preceded by advocacy networks on human rights and the environment that emerged between the eighties and nineties of the twentieth century (Keck and Sikkink 1998). However, they have no precedents with regard to scale and grade of inclusion. As Smith asserts, "the WSF is undoubtedly the most globally inclusive initiative for fostering transnational civil society" (2004, 420).

Unlike public arenas of previous decades, the forum fights for a space for the voices of the excluded in the global public domain,[26] which is hegemonized by transnational corporations and multilateral institutions of trade and finance. WSF's participants criticize global governance institutions for their democratic deficit: lack of transparency, unequal procedures of decision-making and restrictive forms of participation. Moreover, they refuse their idea of global civil society associated to the notion of "good governance", according to which civil society is just "the sum total of international non-governmental organizations (INGOs)" (Scholte 2007, 36).[27] According to the approach of "good governance", participation and debate between experts guarantee efficiency and effectiveness to regulations. In fact, the role of experts – members of NGOs of different shapes, sizes and purposes, scientists,

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[26] Ruggie defines the public domain "as an institutionalized arena of discourse, contestation and action organized around the production of global public goods. It is constituted by interactions among non-state actors as well as states. It permits the direct expression and pursuit of a variety of human interests, not merely those mediated – filtered, interpreted, promoted – by states. It "exists" in transnational non-territorial spatial formations, and is anchored in norms and expectations as well as institutional networks and circuits within, across and beyond states" (2004, 519).

[27] Among critics of the notion of a global civil society, "two contradictory views have been put forward. One is that the increasing importance of NGOs globally, and the policy/governance networks they are part of, represent a project through which political and economic elites, hungry for democratic legitimacy, compete in their attempts to colonize actual and potential spaces of popular participation […] This is in contradistinction to the second view, which sees global civil society as representing grassroot self-organization of social spaces which have been colonized by the practices either of technocratic administrations or of private corporations (or an alliance of the two, promoted under the rhetoric of 'good governance')" (Löfgren & Thörn 2007, 5- 6).

professionals, among others – has grown considerably in recent decades, leading to

the institutionalization of consultation of non-state actors at the transnational level

(Biagiotti 2004, 529).

Global justice social movements hold that the consultation of experts as the

only source of legitimacy reveals the elitist and exclusionary nature of the debates

within the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank, which are among the most contested

transnational agencies, due to their intervention on economic, agricultural,

educational, environmental, and other important areas of regulations that affect the

welfare of peoples across the world.[28] As Nanz and Steffek say,

> Although the foundational legal acts of international governance are often
> subject to national ratification processes, its everyday norms and standards
> are negotiated by non-elected experts and government officials. They come
> together behind closed doors, free from the usual intrusion of mandated
> public representatives and interest groups in their decision-making
> processes. International organizations do not ensure adequate information
> to the (ordinary) interested citizen nor is there sufficient public debate
> about their policy choices. Critics who see international organizations as
> the triumph of global technocracy see them enshrining professional
> expertise at the expense of popular sovereignty (2004, 317).

In brief, social forums question the "who" and "how" of the legitimacy of

transnational powers. First, they criticize the lack of inclusiveness of the alleged

"global civil society", since this is reduced to non-state actors who lack

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[28] These institutions base their legitimacy on a state-based representation. However, there are
differences in their procedures of debate and voting. Dupuis-Déri highlights the differences between
the WTO and the WB: "Formal equality exists among the almost 150 member states, based on the
principle of "one country, one vote" and the desire to reach consensus. The WTO thus claims that "it is
NOT undemocratic: Decisions in the WTO are generally by consensus. In principle, that's even more
democratic than majority rule because no decision is taken until everyone agrees" ". In contrast, "each
of the 184 "shareholders" of the WB ´is allocated a certain number of votes linked to the size of its
shareholding." According to the WB itself, there are large gaps between members as far as their voting
power goes" (Dupuis-Déri 2007, 175-176).

communication with affected populations. Second, they question the poor quality of participation, as it is restricted to consultation and lobbying about choices and decisions that result in unpopular measures, or at best, in policies of uncertain implementation. Thus, they reject the notions of democratic participation and global civil society brought into play with the goal of lessening the legitimacy deficit of international institutions. Moreover, owing to criticisms directed at NGOs for their lack of transparency, they want to show that they are able to build a political culture based on mutual recognition, solidarity, freedom and equality.[29]

Consequently, the WSF aims to go beyond criticism by rehearsing alternative mechanisms of internal democracy, challenging in practice the assumptions of the model of participatory democracy adopted by world governance institutions: instead of representation, it promotes direct involvement, whether in person or virtually through cyberspace. Additionally, it encourages consensus rather than voting. In place of English as the main language of communication, the WSF reinforces the work of translation in order to facilitate the inclusion of people speaking different languages. It also avoids uniform statements that might hamper the process of plural debate. Therefore, it "refuses urgency and tries to avoid imposing priorities on smaller,

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[29] Due to the growth of NGOs operating in the global public domain, their role in the democratization of global governance has come under greater scrutiny. As Scholte says, "one must assess global civil society contributions to democracy in the light of the democratic credentials of the citizen groups themselves. With regard to participation, some civil society bodies make concerted efforts to include a wide range of affected people in their campaigns on global issues, but many others tend to perpetuate (sometimes quite inadvertently) inequalities of access along country, class, culture and other lines […] In very many cases, civil society associations engaged in global affairs are sites of lively open debate, but in certain other instances civil society actors can enforce notable degrees of internal censorship. Concerning transparency, many groups in global civil society do not make themselves as open to public scrutiny as democracy might demand. Similarly, important exceptions duly noted, civil society associations operating in global politics generally have poorly developed mechanisms of accountability, especially vis-à-vis subordinated social groups […] In sum, if agents of global civil society do not maintain high democratic standards themselves, they are not likely to attract the trust and support they need from the general public in order to fulfil their promise of democratization in politics at large" (2007, 27).

weaker, or less well-integrated organizations" through the idea of "process" (Biagiotti 2004, 535). Likewise, instead of privileging expert knowledge as a way of achieving the efficiency of outcomes, the Forum encourages the exchange of knowledge and information from different cultures. Finally, the WSF promotes the creation of alternative mechanisms of communication in order to counteract the lack of attention of mainstream media - which tend to favor the opinions of the institutions of global power over those generated in social forums – as well as to strengthening the coordination of participants. In this way, "the Social Forums correspond to an underlying and multifaceted critique of the deliberative democracy that seeks to establish world governance. Specifically, they seem to stem from reaction against the participatory processes offered to global civil society by governments and intergovernmental agencies and to embody an alternative proposal" (Ibid, 529).

Thus, the purpose of social forums is twofold: to legitimize their alternative proposals in the broader public sphere while discrediting the neoliberal institutions of global governance. As Biagiotti states, "the objectives are to reinforce the legitimacy of civil society by providing it with a common and coherent culture – at the regional and global levels – and thus to be able to denounce the inefficiency of existing coordination processes" (532). The forums do not aspire to become a source of legitimacy of such powers, but on the contrary, they work for challenging their principles and decision-making procedures. In this way, they want to replace the idea of legitimacy based on "membership or state recognition of expertise" (ibid) for another based on inclusive and democratic debate. Furthermore, as Teivainen suggests, they perceive the democratization of global power in "a less state-centric manner. Instead of asking that a particular Third World state be given more decision-

making power in global affairs, today's activists may ask for more power for the civil society groups that confront both governmental and corporate power all over the world" (2002, 622).[30] Rather than focusing the problem of legitimacy of world governance on the lack of representation of states, transnational actors emphasize the absence of mechanisms for ensuring the inclusion of all affected. Although transnational activists do not abandon their commitment to local or national politics, they are aware that the powers that affect them go well beyond state boundaries. Put differently, they are conscious of the global causes of the injustices of which they are victims, even when they experience them in their daily routines at the local level. Accordingly, they believe that struggles must be coordinated across state boundaries, both inside and outside national territories. Therefore, without leaving aside the state, they also appeal to international and supra-national institutions, either simultaneously, consecutively or sequentially.

In general, then, WSF's activists believe that the democratic deficit of global governance is due to the neoliberal model of democracy put into practice by transnational elites. They attempt to legitimize their criticism to global neoliberalism through the justification of reasons based on inclusive and egalitarian debate. Thus, the forums aim to become legitimate participants in transnational politics, contributing to the democratization of the emerging global civil society. They seek to "recapture the power of language" and "regain its 'civilizing' role, providing a forum for deliberative democracy" (Ezzat and Kaldor in Anheier 2007, 48). Indeed, social forums are public arenas directed to disseminate debate on issues of social justice and

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[30] Moreover, as the Charter of Principles of the WSF implies, national governments are suspected of promoting economic globalization in complicity with the interests of multinational corporations (art. 4).

democracy throughout the world. The goal is to reach the greatest number of social actors across class, gender, ethnicity, race, and nationality, in order to guarantee the inclusion of all affected people. In a way that resembles Habermas's principle of discourse, according to which "just those action norms are valid to which all possibly affected persons could agree as participants in rational discourses," (1998a, 107) the WSF strives for the inclusion of all social groups and individuals willing to discuss with their peers the injustices of global neoliberalism.

In other words, they think that an inclusive, fair, and transparent debate is a central mechanism for securing legitimacy to the opinions of affected parties. As Habermas maintains, "the source of legitimacy includes, on the one hand, the communicative presuppositions that allow the better arguments to come into play in various forms of deliberation and, on the other, procedures that secure fair bargaining conditions" (Ibid., 278- 279). Indeed, as I argued at length in chapters 2 and 3, they resort to public debate as a means of internal communication for getting to know each other, discussing, negotiating alternative proposals, and so on. Contrary to their neoliberal opponents, who employ irregular procedures of debate and decision-making, they want to improve the quality of transnational deliberation and public opinion through procedures founded on the principles of transparency, inclusiveness, and equal opportunity of participation.

WSF's publics regard global civil society as a terrain marked by inequality and power differentials, and thus, as an arena of contestation among social forces with conflicting interests and purposes, often antagonistic. They think that in order to fight global neoliberal forces, each struggle should be carried out in coordination with

parallel struggles from different places. Hence, another distinctive feature of social forums is the work of articulation. Santos points out that the Forum "presented itself from the start as an alternative, counter-hegemonic kind of globalization, based on articulation among local, national and global struggles" (2004a). According to him, the novelty of the WSF lies in its having invested in the global articulation among social actors previously engaged with national and local struggles. That is, the Forum facilitates linkages between movements that began as local struggles against social exclusion brought about or intensified by neoliberal globalization. First, they undergo a process of deglobalization through the localization of their struggles and then, they experience a process of counter-hegemonic reglobalization, which expands the scope and diversity of social practices by means of alternatives to "localized globalisms" (Ibid.).[31]

The WSF helps the multiplication of transnational struggles by encouraging the exchange of experiences and the coordination of campaigns, thematic networks, alliances and coalitions. Thus, articulation serves as the complementary pillar of debate in the creation of legitimacy: while deliberation empowers alternative public opinion through inclusive and horizontal procedures of debate, articulation expands the emerging counter-hegemonic political culture at the world level. Again, these practices resonate with Mouffe´s theory about the formation of chains of equivalence between different struggles unified by their rejection to a common enemy. Practices of articulation are "hegemonic practices" that create a given order and fix the meaning of social institutions. In turn, "every order is the temporary and precarious articulation of

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[31] Santos defines localized globalism as "the specific impact of hegemonic globalization on the local" (Ibid.).

contingent practices [...] It is always the expression of a particular structure of power relations [...] the result of sedimented hegemonic practices; it is never the manifestation of a deeper objectivity exterior to the practices that bring it into being" (Mouffe 2008). For Mouffe, legitimacy is the result of the contingent stabilization of power relations in a given social formation.

The goal of building a counter-hegemonic globalization to neoliberalism through the articulation of alternative projects echoes Mouffe´s idea regarding the role of a counter-hegemonic intervention. She says, "Every hegemonic order is susceptible of being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices which attempt to disarticulate it" and thus "to establish a different configuration of power" (Ibid.). However, the outcome of counter-hegemonic practices is neither decided beforehand nor commanded by any particular organization or political party. This notion of hegemony resonates with a generalized idea among WSF's activists, according to which the results of counter-hegemonic practices can neither be anticipated nor conducted by any particular force.[32] As Cândido Grzybowski asserts,

> The WSF promotes dialogue, but it does not prescribe the course to be followed. It does not have a "plan of action." Rather, what breathes life into the WSF is disagreement amid many agreements, perpetual alignment and realignment of coalitions and new networks, and recurrent disputes over hegemony […] this new politics presumes no a priori answers; they need to be created. It recognizes the legitimacy (and the vital democratic necessity) of conflicts and disputes. Democracy moves forward through social struggles, provided that the opposing forces respect founding ethical principles of the other's rights and their own responsibilities; this means to

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[32] It is worth mentioning that the terms "hegemony" and "hegemonic" are often used with a negative connotation, as they are associated either with the neoliberal homogenization of ideas or with the homogenizing practices of traditional left parties. For this reason, they are usually contrasted with the concepts of diversity, heterogeneity, or plurality.

recognize and respect other subjects, joining them in action, dialogue, and
sharing (2006, 9-11).

Summing up, the WSF´ ways of legitimating alternative discourses to global
neoliberalism resonate, once more, with both Mouffe's agonistic pluralism and
Habermas's deliberative democracy. While it promotes equal and inclusive debate
among the excluded of neoliberal globalization, it encourages the expansion of
counter-hegemonic transnational struggles through articulation. Thus, the WSF seeks
to delegitimize the neoliberal elitist model of democracy through the agonistic
construction of a deliberative political democratic culture at the transnational level.

However, the question of creating legitimacy at the transnational level looks
problematic, due to the lack of accountable transnational democratic political
institutions. It is important to recall that for democratic theories of publicity the
construction of legitimacy for the demands of public spheres is directed to call the
attention of institutional publics whose political function is to translate those demands
into binding decisions and thus, ensure their political efficacy (Fraser 1992 and 2007;
Habermas, 1998a). If the prevailing idea among social forum's participants is to
delegitimize the institutions of global governance and build a new democratic order,
several questions arise: is it a problem concerning the reform of the existing
institutions in order to make them more accountable? If so, what mechanisms are
proposed to that effect? Or conversely, is it a matter of replacing them for others, and
in that case, by which? On the other hand, what are the institutional addressees of
their current demands and alternative proposals?

In fact, these and other related questions are crucial topics in panels, workshops and roundtables in world, regional, and local social forums. The nature of the institutions of political power is one of the most controversial issues within the WSF, which in turn permeates debates about the political strategies of particular actions, as well as the election of political allies.

Which Institutions for an Alternative Democratic Governance? The Problematization of the Addressees within the WSF

Although global social justice actors converge in opposing global neoliberalism and the need to create a more peaceful, just, egalitarian and environmentally-sustainable world, they differ in their approaches with regard to the institutions of political power. In general, the analyses about the prevailing political perspectives among WSF's activists associate them with the differences between "reformists" or "moderates" and "radicals" or "revolutionaries", which have characterized traditional divisions among the left. Indeed, while the former believe in the gradual transformation of existing institutions through legal reform and representative democracy, the latter think that global neoliberalism and the capitalist system as a whole should be abolished and replaced with something different (Santos 2004a; Smith et al. 2007, 11). In turn, among reformists there are differences between those advocating for the democratization of the system of global governance, and those that emphasize the role of national states and the inter-state system.

As in the case of reformists, the limits of the internal differences among radicals are somewhat porous. For example, Santos identifies three trends with

reference to their perspectives on the state: on the one hand, "the old left that aspires to a kind of state socialism" and on the other, "the anti-statism of the anarchists." Third, "some newer left rather ambivalent about the role of the state in a socialist society" (Ibid, 91). Radicals are usually associated with a loose new left which revolves around anarchists, autonomists, and some members of traditional left parties.[33]

For reformists, capitalism is neither homogeneous nor the only factor of contemporary discriminations and injustices. For them, the main antagonist is political neoliberalism associated with corporate capitalism. On the other hand, the state is no longer seen as the main arena of struggle, since it has been transnationalized and has become one of the main agents of neoliberal globalization. At any rate, "they see the state as either a prototype for, or as a necessary evil through which to pass to, a cosmopolitan world order characterized by justice, equality, rationality, and peace" (Reitan 2011, 53).

A central issue is the control of states and international institutions by the transnational civil society. Therefore, the task is to reinforce a critical transnational public sphere in order to democratize them. Two examples that nourish the belief in the possibility of effective involvement of civil society are the participatory budget of

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[33] Reitan describes the split between reformers and radicals in the following way: "we can imagine them as groups encamped on other side of a river". On one side "we find liberal, social democratic NGOs and the transnational advocacy networks they (try to) lead aimed at influencing national and inter-governmental policy. Here too are traditional Marxist-Leninist parties and trade unions and the various mobilization groups they organize who deem capturing the national state - and, in recent decades, interstate bureaucracies - as a necessary step toward socializing the increasingly global means of production". On the other side, "reside the autonomists, direct-action folks, post-anarchists and post-Marxists as well as many indigenous and anarcha-feminist tendencies" (2011, 52).

Porto Alegre, Brazil, and the model of civic engagement of Kerala, India (Ponniah 2006, 221).[34]

Another strand among "moderates" is composed of Global South activists. They associate global neoliberalism with the emergence of a new imperialism led by G8 countries and implemented by the IMF, the WB and the WTO. This new imperialism takes place through a process of re-colonization carried out primarily through external debt. Consequently, they call to strengthen the ties of solidarity between the movements from the North and the South in order to free Southern countries from foreign debt, as well as to replace the IMF, the World Bank and the WTO "for a plural, polycentric governance that encompasses a variety of global actors, including regional formations, negotiating the best forms of development, of social justice" (Ibid., 262). This line of thought gained momentum in 2006 during the polycentric World Social Forum held simultaneously in Caracas (Venezuela), Bamako (Mali), and Karachi (India), thanks to the electoral successes of some Latin American progressive governments, particularly the cases of Venezuela and Bolivia.

These experiences contributed to renovate hopes in the state, either as a road to socialism or as a means for implementing progressive policies (Abramsky 2007; Curran 2007; Cuninghame 2010). In practice, these approaches combine in different

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[34] The Participatory Budget of Porto Alegre, Brazil, started in 1989. It "has evolved over the years into a two-tiered structure of fora where citizens participate as individuals and as representatives of various groups of civil society (neighborhood associations, cultural groups, special interest groups) throughout a yearly cycle. They deliberate and decide on projects for specific districts and on municipal investment priorities, and then to monitor the outcome of these projects. The process begins in March of each year, with regional assemblies in each of the city's sixteen districts" (Baiocchi 2001, 46).
 Likewise, in 1996 the government of Kerala, India, launched the People's Campaign for Decentralized Planning, an experience of decentralization of political decision-making: "all local governments were given new administrative capacities. As well, 40% of the state budget was devolved to local, self-governing institutions. These institutions were given the authority to articulate, sponsor and legislate their own development projects" (Ponniah 2006, 223).

ways as a result of new political events and ongoing debates within social forums. For example, in the "Bamako Appeal", a group of activists from the reformist camp encourages the creation of a World Parliament in the context of a multipolar world order based on peace, law and negotiation. They also call to create "the conditions for an alternative means of cooperation within each great area" and to "democratize the United Nations, increase the power of the General Assembly and democratize the Security Council in order to break the monopolies". Additionally, they summon to "construct an internationalism joining the peoples of the South and the North" and to "reinforce the protest campaigns against the current rules of operation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and to define alternative rules." [35]

Though anarchists and autonomists seem to predominate among radical activists, some Marxist militants align themselves in this camp due to their differences with left reformists. All three groups regard capitalism as the main source of injustices and discriminations in contemporary societies, but while the former reject the institutions of power, the latter argue in favor of the state as a path to socialism. For example, for Marxist revolutionaries like Alex Callinicos, the alternative is,

> To build up a movement that is powerful and focused enough to break the existing forms of state power and institute radically different and radically democratic forms of state power. In other words, there has to be a revolution which is not a party taking state power by seizing the existing state, but the oppressed and exploited – above all workers – who break the existing state and in the process of doing so create radically new and democratic forms of power in order to manage society for themselves (Callinicos 2005).

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[35] The Bamako Appeal was launched at the end of January, 2006 at Bamako, Mali, just before the opening of the polycentric World Social Forum in this city. It was issued at the end of a meeting gathering a group of about 80 anti-globalization intellectuals and political activists, including Marxist economists and organizers. The gathering, was not an official WSF activity (Cattalinoto 2007, 26).

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Radical Marxists and autonomists share the ideas of self-empowerment and collective construction of alternatives "from below". However, revolutionary Marxists do not reject the existence of institutional power. They believe in the political party as an institutional means of organizing the fight against capitalism: "for any movement towards self-organization to succeed in breaking the power of capital, there has to be a moment of concentration and centralization. You can't deal with the concentrated power of capital – the state and the multinational corporations – without the movements themselves becoming focused to confront the power of those corporations directly" (Ibid.).

At first glance, the differences between anarchists and autonomists are almost unnoticeable and therefore difficult to grasp, except for the self-perception of each social actor. In fact, autonomists embrace anarchism´s core ideas of autonomy, anti-statism and anti-authoritarianism, "without necessarily identifying as anarchists" (Curran 2007, 7). Andrej Grubacic, an anarchist scholar-activist involved with the WSF, states: "what is sometimes confusing as a characteristic of current anarchism is that its constituent individuals and groups do not usually refer to themselves as 'anarchists' […] But the three essentials running through all manifestations of anarchist ideology are definitely there. These are anti-statism, anti-capitalism and pre-figurative politics" (2004, 37). In the same vein, Epstein distinguishes between "anarchism per se" and "anarchists sensitivities". While the former brings together those that not only call themselves anarchists but are also interested in its theoretical tradition, the latter are those mostly attracted by the force of its ideas (2001, 1).

However, radical activists are also inspired by post-Marxist, post-structuralist and post-colonialist theories, as well as by different types of communal experiences, past and present. Basically, they constitute a diverse ensemble of groups and individuals characterized by their resistance to any kind of orthodox thinking and vertical organization. Radical anarchists and autonomists concur in their rejection to all forms of hierarchy and organization, to which they oppose horizontal networks and consensual ways of decision making. Because they deny the role of the state in regulating the economy, they propose, instead, local and translocal economies based on principles of self-representation and self-organization (Ponniah 2006, 259). Inspired by experiences such as the communal councils of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico[36], many envision a stateless society, based on egalitarian communities. John Holloway, one of the influential voices among WSF's radicals, says,

> The state, as an organizational form, is a way of excluding us, of negating the possibility of self-determination. Once we are excluded, we have no real control over what they do. Representative democracy reinforces and legitimates our exclusion, it does not give us control over what the state does […] the state as a form of organization separates the leaders from the movement and draws them into a process of reconciliation with capital […] our forms of organization are very different from those of the state […] The state is an organization on behalf of, what we want is the organization of self-determination, a form of organization that allows us to articulate what we want, what we decide, what we consider necessary or desirable - a council or communal organization, a commun-ism (2005 : 46-47).

Therefore, autonomists and anarchists regard all political institutions – from local, to global - as constructions of power that must be challenged, destroyed, and replaced by

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[36] Following their revolt in 1994, Zapatistas established meeting places and Autonomous Municipalities. In 2003, they replaced them for the *Juntas de Buen Gobierno* (Good Government Councils) and *Caracoles* (core Zapatista communities that actively interface with the outside world).

forms of micro-politics "consisting of autonomous but networked nodes across an ever-expanding horizontal plane" (Reitan 2011, 53).[37]

In short, reformists and radicals hold different and competing political views about the state and the institutions of global governance. While both regard global neoliberalism as the main enemy, they differ in its characterization. Whereas the former consider neoliberalism´s fusion with corporate capitalism as the main problem, the latter see neoliberalism as just another expression of capitalist social relations. Therefore, the option is to fight corporate neoliberalism or struggle against capitalism. Moreover, while reformists believe in the importance of political institutions as a means of social organization in complex societies, radical anarchists and autonomists consider them as vehicles of domination and oppression. Accordingly, moderates favor the democratization of the institutions of global governance, and eventually, their re-organization or replacement. By contrast, anarchists and autonomists refuse the possibility of reforming the state and global agencies. Instead, they propose the creation of communities of egalitarian coexistence for the exchange of resources in solidarity. In between are those who advocate a socialist and internationalist state: while the reformist version admits the construction of socialism "from above" (for example, "to seize the state" by starting from representative elections), the radical version promotes the construction of socialism "from below".

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[37] It is worth mentioning that not all anarchists and autonomists reject the role of institutions in the transition to a more just and equal society. For instance, Grubacic says, "...being in favor of a new society does not warrant ignoring people's current pain and suffering. What it does mean is that when we work to address current ills and work to make things immediately better, we do so in ways that raise our consciousness, empower our constituencies, and develop our organizations. And that, therefore, leads to a trajectory of on-going changes, culminating in new basic economic and social structures. Expanding the floor of the cage does not ignore people's short-term struggles for higher wages, an end to a war, affirmative action, better working conditions, a participatory budget, a progressive or radical tax, a shorter working week with full pay, abolishing the IMF — or whatever else — because it will recognize how people's consciousness and organizations develop through struggle (2004, 42)

The approach on the nature and functions of the institutions of political power shapes the modalities of social struggles. Reformists and radicals differ in their options for political action: while NGOs, INGOs and Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) are the major exponents of institutional action, direct actions are associated with the alter-globalization movements that flourished in the late nineties. Whereas reformists believe that neoliberalism must be fought through engagement with political institutions, radical anarchists and autonomists think that neoliberal capitalism should be combated "from outside", since any contact with them usually ends in cooptation and the trivialization of demands. Thus, while "institutional actions" are aimed at transforming the terms of the debate and influencing the decisions of political institutions through the mobilization of information, the creation of new discourses and legal and judicial mobilization, "direct actions" are aimed at both expressing discontent through civil disobedience and the construction of autonomous spaces of self-representation and self-management. Furthermore, whereas the former presuppose persuasion, negotiation, and pressure, the latter entail the manifestation of discontent through mechanisms such as street protest, occupation, blockage, street parties, and so on.

Thus, each tendency holds different and even antagonistic conceptions of power and action as well as relationships to the institutions of global governance. However, WSF activists are prone to soften their positions in order to coordinate their struggles,

> They increasingly share information, build trust, develop consensus
> declarations, and act together in coalitions when possible or in parallel
> blocs when not. They also lobby, advice, or challenge governance actors at

all levels. Further still they experiment with alternative and autonomous modes of political, economic, and social relations. They have thus developed a multi-pronged strategy entailing dynamic, loose and limited coordination across the spectrum from reform to radicalism. (Reitan 2011, 52).

The multiple challenges of globalization and the exchange of experiences and ways of thinking seem to push transnational activists to highlight their agreements rather than their discrepancies. The WSF not only helps to reinforce the solidarity among adversaries, already present in alter-globalization movements – captured by the motto "One No, Many Yesses" – but also to instill a new directionality to the struggles against neoliberal globalization. On the one hand, the Forum deepens their "globality" by expanding the communication of movements across the world and thus helping to include a larger number of affected populations. On the other, it infuses a more "proactive" character to these struggles by encouraging participants to think and implement alternatives (Pinsky 2010).[38]

As I argued in chapter 2, the WSF helps to transform the identities of social actors without overriding their particularities. An example is the articulation between NGOs and social movements for joint collective action. While NGOs keep their practices of lobbying and building of coalitions between minded organizations, they have re-adapted their political strategies in order to increase their interaction with alternative globalization movements (Nelson, 2004; Reitan, 2007; Abramsky, 2007).

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[38] As Pinsky says, the "shift 'from reactive to proactive', is epitomized in how the advent of the World Social Forum spurred the more popular use of the term, 'global justice movement' […] reflecting the recognition that in addition to organizing protest events, activists were increasingly being compelled to formulate alternatives to the currently dominant and exploitative form of globalization" (Ibid., 12; cursive in the original). In other words, the change of the term "anti-globalization movement" for "global social justice movements" or "alter-globalization movements" signals the spirit of the WSF of combining opposition to global neoliberalism and propositions for building a more egalitarian and just world order.

The latter, in turn, create new networks and alliances between grassroots movements, indigenous groups, the unemployed, and other social actors, many of which unite forces with some NGOs.

As a result of the coordination between social movements and NGOs, "hybrid" networks carry forward multi-sectoral strategies across issues and actors, combine mass mobilization and popular education with lobbying of governance institutions, and at the same time have a confrontational attitude towards the latter. Some examples of networks of this kind are Our World Is Not for Sale, Via Campesina, Jubilee South, Friends of the Earth International, the World March of Women, the global anti-war and anti-bases networks, and Climate Justice Now (Reitan 2011, 58).[39]

Thus, one of the characteristics of WSF's publics is the combination of different strategies in order to advance the common goal of fighting neoliberal globalization while creating a more democratic world order at the global, regional, national, and local levels. In this sense, networking complements the global scale of their actions. For them, struggling against global neoliberalism and building

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[39] These processes of coordination started after the wave of protests against transnational corporations that intensified the criticism to NGOs´ negotiations with the institutions of global governance, thus contributing to the delegitimation of both. Moreover, some argue that they helped the emergence of the WSF itself. However, the relationship between INGOs and social movements is not exempt of continuous tensions, such as that manifested in the criticism to NGOs for increasing the power of governance institutions through demands like the Social Clause in the WTO, the Tobin Tax on international financial transactions, among others (Abramsky 2007).

democracy at the world level involve the creation of wide, global networks and understandings for bridging local, national, and transnational social change efforts,[40]

> Many activists in the WSF process recognize that local communities must be empowered both economically and politically, but they also know that this cannot happen without a fundamental reordering of global and national political institutions. Thus, many activists engage in multiple scales of action with little concern for where formal political and territorial boundaries lie" (Smith et al. 2007, 13).

Albeit participants continue their discussions on the nature and scope of existing legal-political institutions, debate does not preclude the articulation of multilevel counter-hegemonic struggles. Social actors "...pragmatically resort to political and legal tools at every scale. Also, by mobilizing state and non-state legal orders, they exploit opportunities offered by an increasingly plural legal landscape" (Santos and Rodríguez Garavito 2005, 16). They also combine institutional and direct actions in different ways, as noted above. As Santos observes, "according to them, the concrete legal and political conditions must dictate the kind of struggle to be privileged. Conditions may actually recommend the sequential or simultaneous use of the two kinds of struggle" (2005, 55). The combination of direct and institutional actions, as well as of local, national and global scales take different forms, not only according to political opportunities, but also in relation to the identity of the institutional addressees at play, which in turn influence the configuration of alliances across a

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[40] According to Smith and Duncan, "Transnational networks are infrastructures that have helped ideas, organizational models, and inter-personal connections flow and converge across national borders. They have fostered people's ability to articulate and implement these shared aspirations and values. Such networks between social movement organizations and other actors in the global political environment have changed rapidly in recent decades, largely in response to the demands for wider solidarity" (2012, 3).

range of state and non-state publics (national, local, or international officials, scientists, NGOs, INGOs, transnational networks and coalitions, unions, etc.).

Countless experiences of struggles span political scales, topics, and ways of action, many of which preceded the Forum and others were stimulated by it. They account for the alternatives of global social justice movements on human rights, environment, trade, democratic politics and food sovereignty, among many others. For instance, the Landless Worker´s Movement of Brazil (Movimento Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra- MST)[41] – one of the organizers of the WSF – is an illustrative case of experiences initiated at the local level and then extended at the national level, with links with various transnational networks.

This movement combines the occupation of land with the legalization of settlements by means of the mobilization of local courts and international political pressure to challenge the Brazilian elitist system of land property rights. Albeit the movement is organized entirely into collective units that make decisions through debate, reflection and consensus, this fact does not preclude interaction with governmental institutions. Through the Latin American Congress of Peasant Organizations (CLOC), the MST joins with peasant movements carrying out common struggles and establishing diverse exchange experiences and training. On the worldwide level the MST participates in Via Campesina, a network that brings together diverse rural movements that struggle for food sovereignty, agrarian reform

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[41] The MST was born through a process of occupying latifundios (large landed estates) and become a national movement in 1984. Over more than two decades, the movement has led more than 2,500 land occupations, with about 370,000 families - families that today settled on 7.5 million hectares of land that they won as a result of the occupations. Through their organizing, these families continue to push for schools, credit for agricultural production and cooperatives, and access to health care. Currently, there are approximately 900 encampments holding 150,000 landless families in Brazil (Friends of the MST-What is the MST?).

and agricultural policies appropriate for small scale production (Houtzager 2005). Together with similar experiences across the world, this example confirms that "the expanding sphere of transnational communication networks means that even local social movements can reach and affect global audiences. [...] many local struggles reproduce their localness while also reaching out toward perceived universal themes so as to connect wider audiences" (Anand 2004b, 5).

Other typical examples of combination of direct and institutional actions are the campaigns organized around the summits of the WTO, the IMF and the World Bank, the G8 countries, as well as the UN. For instance, at the Ninth Ministerial Conference held in *Bali*, Indonesia, in December 2013, several transnational networks such as Our World is not for Sale (OWINFS), and the Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt (CADTM) organized street protests and parallel meetings with government officials from developing countries. They also launched the statement "WTO: Shrink or Sink!" with criticism of the functioning of the WTO and eleven recommendations for its reform. Such campaigns still characterize transnational struggles targeted to global financial institutions and international trade agreements. The example shows the articulation of transnational networks in the fight against one of the most representative institutions of corporate capitalism and neoliberal global governance.

In sum, WSF's publics concur in their opposition to capitalism and global neoliberalism, but they differ in their approaches on the nature and role of political institutions. Although the common goal is to create a just and egalitarian world, some believe that this purpose can be achieved by reforming existing institutions, while

others think that they should be replaced by an international socialist system. Still, others favor the creation of a net of small interconnected autonomous communities. Such discrepancies result in different proposals for the future, as well as in distinct ways of conceiving the struggles against neoliberalism and the relationships with actual political institutions. Nonetheless, they share the idea that economic and political globalization must be contested by strengthening counter-hegemonic transnational public spheres. Accordingly, Forum activists create new spaces for debate and articulation for exchanging ideas, experiences, creating alternatives, and coordinating projects with the aim of fighting against neoliberal policies.

However, the dilemmas posed by the multiform nature of the institutions of global governance reinforce tensions related to the choice of the addressees of struggles and the ways to carry them out. Since they prioritize unity over conflict, each action is taken according to the political circumstances and the actors involved. Paraphrasing Mouffe, the addressees and the forms of action are decided through temporary, conflictual, consensus.

Conclusions

One of the main goals of the WSF is to delegitimize the neoliberal discourses of hegemonic governance institutions. Indeed, among participants there is a widespread belief that the institutions of global governance – especially multilateral financial organizations led by the most powerful countries – are ultimately responsible for the policies that reinforce exploitation, discrimination and exclusion, as well as the environmental degradation of the planet. Furthermore, they criticize the lack of

transparency of their procedures of decision-making. Hence, they propose inclusive mechanisms of debate and collective action for creating alternatives to neoliberal globalization. In order to legitimize the voices and experiences of all those struggling for social justice, the WSF seeks to expand counter-hegemonic public arenas for debate and articulation throughout the world. Thus, the processes of legitimation of counter-hegemonic discourses resemble both Mouffe´s theory of agonistic legitimacy and Habermas´s approach of discursive legitimacy.

The purpose is to strengthen critical transnational public spheres, capable of exerting power over political institutions, and thus democratize them. However, the nature of political institutions and the ways of relating to them, are the most controversial topics among social forums' participants: are these institutions intrinsically anti-democratic and prone to the cooptation and corruption of officials and citizens? Or conversely, are they open to reform? Accordingly, is it advisable to demand, negotiate, or agree with them? Or on the contrary, should they be replaced by others? Answers to such questions are divided along the different views among radicals and reformers. In the absence of agreement on these issues, the political scale of collective actions varies with the issue in question, the actors involved, the available resources, and so on. The trans-scalar character of the struggles reflects the complexity of the global distribution of power: due to the lack of accountable institutions for their demands, transnational actors use simultaneously or sequentially different levels and dimensions of the intricate web of global governance.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

This dissertation examines the World Social Forum's features of democratic publicity through Habermas's theory of deliberative democracy and Mouffe's democratic theory of "agonistic pluralism". In particular, I argue that the combination of these theories reveals one of the main characteristics of the WSF: the merging of antagonistic and consensual practices of communication.

In this concluding chapter, I offer a comprehensive account of the agonistic and deliberative features of the WSF, explaining the interrelation between its practices of communication, creation of solidarity and formation of legitimate public opinion. I begin with a review of the main differences between the democratic theories of Habermas and Mouffe. However, the analysis also shows that both theories have important elements in common. As Keohane states, "there are many points of convergence between the projects of [Laclau and] Mouffe and Habermas: their shared commitment to broadening and deepening the modern democratic revolution, their shared belief in the necessity of building and reworking the institutions of democracy, the state and the public sphere, and so on" (1993, 165).

The chapter continues with a summary of WSF's features of publicity, which have been analyzed in length in chapters 2, 3 and 4. It concludes with a reflection on the limits and prospects of ensuring political accountability to the WSF's participants.

Combining Mouffe's Agonistic Pluralism and Habermas's Deliberative Democracy

Agonistic and deliberative theories of democracy have been traditionally regarded as antithetical, since the former stress conflict and dissent, while the latter emphasize dialogue and consensus. However, the analysis of political experiences like the World Social Forum not only shows that both perspectives are not fully incompatible, but also that they are both necessary to grasp the complexity of actual transnational publicity.

In this dissertation I have taken two prominent approaches: Habermas's theory of deliberative democracy and Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism. Habermas's concept of public sphere has informed numerous theoretical and empirical studies on democracy and political participation up to the present day. Mouffe is one of the leading scholars among theorists of agonistic democracy. Her perspective on the conflictive nature of politics inspires many researches on political identities, publicity and democratic politics. Generally these two perspectives have been used either unilaterally, or in conjunction with the purpose of theoretical contrast. In the latter case, studies tend to end up favoring one or the other. I argue, instead, that they can be reconciled for explaining transnational political phenomena. By combining theoretical and empirical analysis, I show that the democratic theories of Habermas and Mouffe contribute equally to the understanding of the WSF. Below, I compare their main theoretical underpinnings in order to highlight their diverging and converging points. While both theories seek to radicalize democracy, they differ in their normative foundations. Mouffe and Laclau explain it as follows,

...some similarities do actually exist between the conception of radical democracy we advocate and the one they defend. Like them, we criticize the aggregative model of democracy, which reduces the democratic process to the expression of those interests and preferences which are registered in a vote aiming at selecting leaders who will carry out the chosen policies. Like them, we object that this is an impoverished conception of democratic politics, which does not acknowledge the way in which political identities are not pre-given but constituted and reconstituted through debate in the public sphere. Politics, we argue, does not consist in simply registering already existing interests, but plays a crucial role in shaping political subjects […] Moreover, we agree with them on the need to take account of the many different voices that a democratic society encompasses and to widen the field of democratic struggles. There are, however, important points of divergence between our view and theirs which hinge on the theoretical framework that informs our respective conceptions (2001, xvii).

Indeed, deliberative and agonistic theories have different conceptions of radical democracy: while agonistic theories stress the conflicting nature of human relations, deliberative theories emphasize their consensual character. Likewise, whereas the former highlight the inevitability of power and the exclusiveness of political relationships, the latter underline the need of inclusive social interaction. Finally, while agonistic perspectives emphasize dissent, deliberative theories stress agreement. These opposing theoretical frameworks lead to different ways of conceiving radical democracy, publicity, and other related concepts.

Habermas and Mouffe argue for the need to deepen democracy, but they differ on how to bring this about. Habermas's perspective of deliberative democracy seeks to strengthen public and inclusive deliberation in order to generate legitimate public opinion for informing the decisions of the political system. For him, the public sphere is a communicative space for the identification of social problems, the exchange of information and reasons, and the making of proposals aimed at offering solutions to questions of common concern. Public space is constituted linguistically in

every encounter in which actors take a second-person attitude, reciprocally attributing communicative freedom to each other (Habermas 1998a, 360-361). Democratic deliberation approaches an ideal speech situation if it is public and inclusive, grants equal communication rights to participants, encourages sincerity, and defuses any kind of force other than the "forceless force" of the better argument (Habermas 1999a, 332). In his view, forms of communication differ if public spheres are formal or informal. Communication in the processes of will-formation and decision-making that take place in parliaments and similar institutions, needs to be procedurally regulated. Conversely, communication in informal public spheres is unrestrained, allowing a more expansive treatment of topics free from the pressure to decide. However, informal public spheres need to generate reasonable outcomes in order to capture the attention of strong, formal publics.

Instead, Mouffe's agonistic theory aims to channel conflict between opposing forces in order to deepening democracy. She wants to transform antagonism into agonism, which is a form of antagonism domesticated in the process of discursive struggles between adversaries who share ethico-political principles, but differ on how to carry them out.

Both Habermas and Mouffe seek to strengthen public spaces in order to correct the legitimacy deficits of liberal democratic institutions of government. However, while Habermas emphasizes the role of procedures for improving the interaction between formal and informal public spheres, Mouffe stresses the creation of new political identities, "for the extension of the democratic revolution into new areas of social life" (Mouffe 1993, 105). Contrary to Habermas, for whom law plays a

key role in democratic institutional representation, she thinks that the problems faced by existing representative democracies are due to the supremacy of law and administration over politics. In her view, the challenge is to keep political contestation alive.

Similarly, while Habermas considers the public sphere as a site for deliberation and consent, Mouffe regards it as space for the expression of dissent. According to her, "Radical and plural democracy rejects the very possibility of a non/exclusive public sphere of rational argument where a non-coercive consensus can be obtained" (Mouffe 2000a, 33). For Mouffe, the public sphere is a space for the expression of conflicting views about the nature of political institutions and the ways of organizing human coexistence. Since public spaces are crisscrossed by antagonisms, they involve exclusions and hierarchies.

As I argued in chapter 2, the principles of solidarity and justice play a key role in the formation of collective identities. Habermas and Mouffe share the idea that solidarity and justice are equally important to the creation of collective identities: while solidarity secures the unity of interests within a particular political community, justice guarantees the preservation of the autonomy of each of its members. Nevertheless, their perspectives about the combination of solidarity and justice diverge. For Habermas, these principles contribute equally to social integration: while justice ensures the freedom and integrity of individual and group identities, solidarity strengthens the network of ties of mutual recognition and common interests. The complementarity of justice and solidarity rests on the reciprocal recognition of

persons who share universal communicative competences, which enable them mutual understanding through the exchange of reasons.

Mouffe also considers that justice and solidarity are equally substantial for the construction of commonality on the basis of mutual respect; however, she argues that these principles are in constant tension due to the antagonisms that pervade social relations. In democratic societies the principles of equality and liberty are potentially irreconcilable, as they provide different ways of conceiving the relationship between particular interests and general interests. According to Mouffe, only the articulation of the struggles for autonomy and the struggles for equality enables the compatibility between justice and solidarity. As explained in chapter 2, articulation takes place through the creation of chains of equivalence between different struggles joined together by their common confrontation to the same antagonistic forces.

From the above it follows that both Habermas and Mouffe believe that the radicalization of democracy can be attained through the reconciliation of the demands for justice and the demands for equality. Moreover, they both stress the key role of public spheres in the provision of mechanisms to ensure their coexistence. They also concur in the value of the multiplication of public spaces for allowing the expression of different interests and perspectives. However, their concepts of pluralism also differ. While Habermas's pluralism concerns the expression of different viewpoints within a frame of universal moral judgments and ethical values, Mouffe's conception of pluralism rejects morality, stressing the constant struggle and renegotiation of social identity over ethical questions. Thus, they differ in their expectations about the enlargement of public spheres. Whereas for Habermas the expansion of public spheres

helps the inclusion of all potentially involved and secures greater legitimacy to public opinion, for Mouffe the multiplication of public spaces provides different sites for the ongoing confrontation of discourses among adversaries. Unlike Habermas, for whom the limits to inclusion are restricted to the use of coercion and any kind of violence, Mouffe believes that the boundaries of public spaces are defined by the exclusion of antagonists. Therefore, while Habermas promotes an "open" pluralism, Mouffe argues in favor of a "limited" pluralism.

Similarly, agonistic and deliberative public spheres are different with respect to their ways of creating solidarity. While agonistic public spaces presuppose the formation of bonds of solidarity between equivalent identities articulated vis-a-vis antagonistic discourses, deliberative public spheres entail the creation of ties of mutual recognition and commitment through the exchange of arguments. In other words, whereas agonistic solidarity is constructed through the identification of a common antagonist, communicative solidarity is created through the exchange of arguments.

Finally, Habermas and Mouffe share another important starting point: the idea that collective identities are constructed through discourses. Indeed, discourses are central to both theories, as they not only shape identities, but the entire social life. Nevertheless, they take different paths with respect to the meaning of discourse. For Habermas, discourse (or argumentation) is a reflexive form of communicative action directed to solve problematic validity claims. Instead, Mouffe sees discourse as a social construction about the meaning of objects and social relations. In both cases, collective identities are contingent upon the circumstances in which discourses take

shape. But Mouffe and Habermas differ about the causes of the contingency of political identities. For Mouffe, political identities are unstable because they are shaped through the agonistic confrontation among adversaries. Unlike her, Habermas believes that the contingency of identities is the result of the expansion of the spaces of communicative interaction and mutual recognition.

Summarizing, I distinguish their similarities and differences in the following points:

1) Mouffe and Habermas seek to improve the quality of publicity in order to radicalize liberal democracy. However, while she emphasizes agonistic articulation, he stresses consensual deliberation.

2) Habermas and Mouffe highlight the interplay of the principles of autonomy and equality in the formation of solidarity and collective identities. Nevertheless, while Mouffe's agonistic identities are the effect of the formation of chains of equivalence between antagonistic struggles, Habermas's discursive identities take shape through the exchange of argumentation.

3) Finally, they both think that collective identities are contingent. However, while Habermas considers that identities are contingent due to the increasing expansion of communicative spaces, Mouffe believes that identities are unstable because they are the product of antagonistic relationships.

Deliberation and Agonism in the World Social Forum

One remarkable feature of the WSF is its combination of opposition and consent. By setting the frontiers between the "outside" and the "inside" of public communication, the Forum simultaneously promotes opposition against global neoliberalism and consent between participants. In doing so, it mirrors two rationalities of political action present in global social justice movements: on the one hand, opposition to the institutions of global power and, on the other, willingness to horizontal dialogue among their members.[42]

The World Social Forum seeks to transform the balance of power of world politics through antagonistic discursive struggles in the global public sphere. In other words, it aims at breaking neoliberal hegemony through discursive contestation. This brings to light another key feature of the Forum, which is the promotion of democratic debate as a form of antagonistic struggle. First, the WSF aims at strengthening the common public spaces of the advocates of global social justice. Participants practice alternative forms of communication that compete with the model of participation of neoliberal institutions of global power: they oppose to restrictive and hierarchical forms of representative participation by practicing participatory democracy and horizontal debate. Second, through the exchange of experiences of social injustice, the WSF contributes to the identification of nodal points that helps to the articulation of different antagonistic struggles. Participants recreate the principles of inclusiveness,

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[42] Analyzing communication within anti-corporate movements, Polletta comments that activists, "...expected each other to provide legitimate reasons for preferring one option to another. They strove to recognize the merits of each other's reasons for favoring a particular option, even though they did not necessarily rank those reasons in the same order. The point was to make each person's reasoning understandable: the goal was not unanimity, so much as discourse. But it was a particular kind of discourse, governed by norms of openness and mutual respect" (Polletta 2002, 7).

justice, and equality through slogans such as "open space", "process", "shared communication", and "diversity". Among others, these nodal points provide common elements for the construction of chains of equivalence between different demands that share the opposition to global neoliberal capitalism. This common discursive space is constituted by values that are opposed to those of the antagonistic system that excludes all identities alike: diversity vs. homogeneity, openness vs. exclusiveness, and so on. The articulation of demands takes place via networks, alliances, coalitions, and other strategies for interlinking actions between diverse social movements and organizations.

As I argued in chapter 3, the main feature of WSF's communication with external powers is the creation of alternative discourses to confront neoliberal hegemonic ideas and practices. Activists not only develop alternative projects to solve different types of injustice, but also practice horizontal forms of communication as a way of opposing to the hierarchical mechanisms of neoliberal international agencies, as well as to the restrictive information of mainstream media.

In a way that resembles Mouffe's idea of taming antagonism by converting enemies into adversaries, the Forum seeks to transform rage and discontent with global injustice and global inequality into a collective commitment with its project of radicalizing democracy at the world level. In order to bridge differences and join forces in the fight against the antagonistic political system, the WSF provides spaces for the articulation of adversarial struggles.

On the other hand, the WSF promotes inclusive, egalitarian, transparent, and non-coercive debate of ideas. To achieve horizontal debate among participants, the

Forum fosters the creation of open spaces for the exchange of ideas on the base of mutual recognition, respect for differences, and autonomous decision-making. It also implements mechanisms such as the expansion of spaces of public debate, the consultation of topics, and the translation of languages in order to guarantee equal and inclusive exchange of information and arguments. Since 2002, the WSF takes place in a decentralized way through thematic, regional, and local social forums, which are autonomously organized on the basis of its Charter of Principles. Moreover, to improve the quality of communication among participants who speak different languages, the forums have the support of Babels, a voluntary organization of translators and interpreters.

These characteristics show numerous overlaps between the ethos of the WSF and Habermas's assumptions of public communication. In particular, they resemble his notion of informal public sphere, which emphasizes the role of unrestrictive debate (that frees participants from the pressure to take decisions) for strengthening solidarity and reflexive formation of public opinion. The WSF's Charter of Principles makes clear that it is not a representative, decision-making body, but a public space for the detection of new topics, the free exchange of ideas, and the formation of public opinion. The Charter serves as a guide to debates within the forums in a way that resonates with Habermas's "ideal speech situation", which provides the ideal conditions of argumentation that serve as a reference point for testing the quality of discursive debate. In practice, participants recreate the values of inclusion, respect for autonomy, and equal participation through multiple procedures that help to reinforce their mutual understanding and the consolidation of social ties. Thus, discursive communication joins with agonistic articulation in the building of bonds of solidarity

among social actors, strengthening the political community of global social justice advocates.

Third, the WSF aims at improving the quality of debate and the articulation of proposals with the purpose of legitimating the public opinion generated by counter-hegemonic transnational publics. Through the multiplication of social forums, it seeks to expand the participation of a vast array of social movements concerned with worldwide social injustices, echoing both Habermas's and Mouffe's theories on the processes of legitimation of public opinion. First, WSF's idea of expanding equal and inclusive debate at the global level, resonates with the Habermasian notion of the formation of legitimacy through fair and inclusive procedures of deliberation among all affected. On the other hand, its goal of strengthening cooperation between counter-hegemonic struggles to neoliberal globalization, resembles Mouffe's perspective on the creation of legitimacy through the articulation of hegemonic practices.

However, these processes of legitimation are overshadowed by disputes over the nature of global political institutions accountable to their different demands for justice. Once again, both Mouffe and Habermas help to understand the nature of these conflicts. As Mouffe observes, the common public space is constantly threatened by power struggles about its organization and the ways to place their demands on public institutions. Habermas also points to the possibility of the emergence of conflict between opposing interests, but he focuses on the threat of strategic actions that may constrain the processes of deliberation and consent. Communication within the forums shows the presence of both types of conflict. As I explained in chapter 4, the strategic actions of some groups about decisions that affect all participants, tend to

discourage participation. Similarly, disputes over the nature of global political institutions destabilize alliances and coalitions. For instance, controversies about the ways of conceiving the interaction with the antagonistic forces permeate debates between those claiming the reform of the institutions of power, and those promoting their replacement by new transnational political institutions. These cleavages crystallize in the creation of parallel spaces in regional and global forums, the recomposition of coalitions, or the disarticulation of alliances and the formation of new ones.

For all these reasons, I conclude that Habermas's and Mouffe's theories of democracy contribute equally to the analysis of the WSF, as they together help to understand its apparently contradictory characteristics. First, they help to understand the formation of transnational identities in the absence of a common cultural ethos articulated around the sense of nationhood, as it is the case of their national counterparts. Habermas's concept of communicative solidarity based on the formation of bonds of commitment through deliberation, and Mouffe's notion of agonistic solidarity created through the identification of a common enemy, compensate for this lack. In this way, their notions of collective identity formation are an important theoretical tool to understand new transnational identities. Contrary to the idea that the constitution of collective identities are based on pre-given cultural ties, they both emphasize the role of public interaction in the building of solidary identities.

Second, both theories help to elucidate the complexity of WSF's forms of communication, revealing the presence of deliberative and agonistic elements. This was made possible by the analytical division between the internal and the external

forms of communication of the Forum. The analysis demonstrates that while the former are focused on horizontal and inclusive debate among participants, the latter are centered on the antagonistic discursive struggles against neoliberal global political forces. While Mouffe's theory of agonistic pluralism sheds light on the antagonistic communication of the Forum vis-a-vis the public powers of global governance, Habermas's democratic theory illuminates the practices of deliberation of its participants.

Finally, the combination of Habermas's and Mouffe's approaches to legitimacy brings to light WSF's mechanisms for legitimizing the public opinion created through debate and articulation. Indeed, the Forum seeks to expand public arenas in order to include the voices of all affected by neoliberal globalization. At the same time, it encourages the creation of alliances, coalitions and networks with the aim of strengthening the articulation of counter-hegemonic struggles for social justice.

Together, deliberative and agonistic democratic theories help to understand the formation of new political identities, as well as the mechanisms of communication of WSF's transnational public spheres.

The World Social Forum and Transnational Publicity

The WSF has marked an important shift in the nature of transnational publicity of recent decades, not only with regard to scale and inclusion of participants, but also with respect to the ways of communicating with the institutions of power. Indeed, its predecessors from the 1980s and 1990s were more limited in scope and had a more

tolerant attitude towards international political institutions. However, controversies about the relationship with these institutions were already present in the social movements of the time. Disputes between institutionalists and autonomists revolved around the potential dangers of negotiations with international agencies for the autonomy of social movements. For instance, these controversies gave rise to parallel meetings at the summit conferences organized by the United Nations, as well as to the emergence of subsequent transnational autonomous encounters.

The World Social Forum arose as a result of the rise of alter-globalization movements in the late 1990s. As Grzybowski says "the great uprising in the streets of Seattle linked the various movements and provided a decisive thrust for the emergence of something entirely new" (2006, 8). The novelty of the WSF was to bring together diverse social actors in a meeting space "to recognize one another; to share practices, experiences, and analyses; and to articulate and organize new networks, coalitions, and campaigns" (Ibid.).

By stressing the idea of adding alternative proposals to the claims of justice, the WSF has helped to strengthen the transformative character of transnational struggles. Insofar as its call to oppose neoliberal globalization through propositions was gaining terrain among social movements and NGOs, these struggles turned more proactive.

The WSF has also contributed to show the democratic deficit of political institutions of global governance. Participants criticize their lack of representativeness and their procedures of participation, such as absence of transparency and inequitable mechanisms of decision-making. By doing so, they shed light on their lack of

legitimacy to make decisions that affect global populations. As Fraser notes, transformative struggles against global neoliberalism reveal the injustices of meta-political mis-representation,

> Just as globalization has made visible injustices of misframing, so transformative struggles against neoliberal globalization are making visible the injustice of meta-political misrepresentation. In exposing the lack of institutions where disputes about the 'who' can be democratically aired and resolved, these struggles are focusing attention on the 'how'. By demonstrating that the absence of such institutions impedes efforts to overcome injustice, they are revealing the deep internal connections between democracy and justice. The effect is to bring to light a structural feature of the current conjuncture: struggles for justice in a globalizing world cannot succeed unless they go hand in hand with struggles for *meta-political democracy*' (Fraser 2007, 85-86; cursive in the original).[43]

Due to its capacity to build new solidarities and to recreate inclusive democratic mechanisms of participation, the Forum has renewed expectations on the emancipatory potential of transnational publicity. But it also shows its limits, as the world is still politically organized on the basis of territorial nation states. In practice, transnational activists lack of accountable institutions to place their demands of global justice. However, they compensate this absence by resorting to innovative mechanisms that combine local, regional, and supranational legal and administrative resources. In this way, they show us both the potential of transnational publicity and the need of democratic institutions of governance to ensure political accountability to the WSF's participants.

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[43] According to Fraser, "meta-political misrepresentation arises when states and transnational elites monopolize the activity of frame-setting, denying voice to those who may be harmed in the process, and blocking creation of democratic arenas where the latter's claims can be vetted and redressed. The effect is to exclude the overwhelming majority of people from participation in the meta-discourses that determine the authoritative division of political space. Lacking any institutional arenas for such participation, and submitted to an undemocratic approach to the 'how', the majority is denied the chance to engage on terms of parity in decision-making about the 'who'" (Ibid, 85).

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