The Ford Foundation and the World Social Forum

“Another world is possible.”
—slogan of the World Social Forum

HENRY FORD AND THE FORD MOTOR COMPANY

Born in Springwells Township (now Dearborn), Michigan, in 1863, Henry Ford founded the Ford Motor Company in 1903. Under the engineering and managerial leadership of its founder, Ford Motor pioneered the assembly-line method of mass production, paid higher-than-average wages, made cars affordable for middle-class consumers, and catalyzed the advent of the automobile culture in America and beyond. From 1908 to 1928, the company sold 17 million of its popular Model-T’s.

In 1915, Henry Ford led a privately sponsored peace trip to Europe in a failed effort to end World War I. After the United States entered the war, his company became the leading producer of ambulances, airplanes, munitions, and tanks for the U.S. military. After a financial crisis in 1921, Ford began producing higher-priced vehicles and founded subsidiaries in Europe. Opposed to trade unionism, Ford vigorously resisted organizing in his factories by the United Automobile Workers until 1941. His paternalistic attitude toward employees and controversial statements on political and social issues garnered significant antagonism. A staunch isolationist before World War II, Ford again converted his factories to war production after 1941. Retaining the leadership of the company within his family, Henry Ford retired in 1945 and died in 1947.

THE FORD FOUNDATION

Established in 1936 by Henry Ford and his son Edsel in Michigan, the Ford Foundation would become one of America’s largest and most influential philanthropic institutions. According to its charter, the Foundation was founded “to receive and administer funds for scientific, educational and charitable purposes, all for the public welfare.”¹ The mission of the Foundation was to

“strengthen democratic values, reduce poverty and injustice, promote international cooperation, and advance human achievement.”

In 1948, the Board of Trustees convened a Study Committee of independent consultants to recommend how the Ford Foundation could “most effectively and intelligently put its resources to work for human welfare.” The Committee was chaired by H. Rowan Gaither, who later served as Ford Foundation president and board chair.

Informed by “data from hundreds of interviews and conferences and from thousands of pages of written materials,” the Committee produced its 1949 Report of the Study for the Ford Foundation on Policy and Program, known as the Gaither Report. The report defined the term “human welfare,” examined the major problems besetting humanity, and proposed programs for addressing the problems. Proceeding from the conviction that “the real hope for the advancement of human welfare lies in the reaffirmation in practice of democratic principles,” the report outlined five program areas:

- The Establishment of Peace: Activities that promise significant contributions to world peace and to the establishment of a world order of law and justice.
- The Strengthening of Democracy: Activities designed to secure greater allegiance to the basic principles of freedom and democracy in the solution of the insistent problems of an ever-changing society.
- The Strengthening of the Economy: Activities designed to advance the economic well-being of people everywhere and to improve economic institutions for the better realization of democratic goals.
- Education in a Democratic Society: Activities to strengthen, expand, and improve educational facilities and methods to enable individuals more fully to realize their intellectual, civic, and spiritual potentialities; to promote greater equality of educational opportunity; and to conserve and increase knowledge and enrich our culture.
- Individual Behavior and Human Relations: Activities designed to increase knowledge of factors that influence or determine human conduct and to extend such knowledge for the maximum benefit of individuals and of society.

Lastly, the Committee defined “the organization and operating procedures most appropriate for programs of the kind proposed and for a modern foundation with resources as large as those of the Ford Foundation.” Approved by the Board, the plan “signaled the transformation of the Foundation from a local philanthropy to one of national and international scope.”

Prior to 1950, Ford engaged mainly in local philanthropic activities, giving approximately $1 million annually to Michigan nonprofits such as Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit and the Edison Institute of Dearborn. After receiving the bulk of the estates of Henry

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Ford, his wife, and Edsel, the Ford Foundation after 1950 became the largest foundation in America and undertook broader philanthropy from its new headquarters in New York City. In 1951, Ford made $30 million in grants (equivalent to $228 million in 2005 dollars). In the 1960s, Ford alone held one-third of all the assets owned by the top 33 foundations. In 2003, grants totaled $489 million with assets of $9.8 billion.

**LEAD-UP TO THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM**

**Neoliberal economics and the World Economic Forum**

In the 1980s and 1990s, the world saw a general movement toward governmental contraction, deregulation of markets, and privatization—that is, toward what has become known as neoliberal economic policy. Advances in information technologies, particularly the creation of the Internet, as well as advances in transportation technologies such as containerized shipping, increased the free flow of goods, services, capital, investment, and labor encouraged by neoliberal economics. The term “globalization” came to denote the observed increase in economic integration across national boundaries as measured in trade, finance, and labor.

Founded in 1971 as the European Management Forum by a Swiss business professor who wanted to raise standards of European business management practice, the World Economic Forum (WEF) has evolved to become the premier assembly of the world’s most powerful economic actors. Membership in the WEF is limited to 1,000 globally significant companies (most with headquarters in Europe, the United States, or Japan), each with revenues of over $1 billion. The select group of 100 WEF Strategic Partners “contribute their expertise and resources at the highest level in order to advance worldwide economic and social progress.” In 2000, the fee for becoming a WEF Strategic Partner was $250,000. The WEF’s annual meeting, held in Davos, Switzerland, in January, brings together about 2,000 business leaders, heads of state, government officials, journalists, and academics for five days of conferences, seminars, lectures, and other events. The WEF is widely perceived to be the apotheosis of neoliberal economic orthodoxy.

**The global justice movement: two approaches**

While obviously benefiting some, especially the richest individuals in the most affluent parts of the world, neoliberal economics has come to be seen by many, especially those on the political left, as having numerous severe deleterious effects. The globalization of the world economy, critics argued, served to exacerbate inequality within nations and among nations, subvert workers’ rights, promote environmental destruction, and undermine indigenous cultures.

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12 “Globalization” refers to a number of related concepts. The term is used in reference to the proliferation of supranational and international organizations such as the World Trade Organization, the European Union, and the International Criminal Court. The hegemonic consumer and cultural presence of the West, and particularly of the United States, in music, fashion, advertising, television, cinema, and so on, is another aspect of globalization. Finally, the term is sometimes used to refer to the generally benign notion of all nations as interdependent members of a “global village.”
in favor of a sterile cultural homogeneity. The global justice movement,\textsuperscript{15} by contrast, seeks to transform the global neoliberal economic system in order to promote basic human rights and economic justice, preserve and repair the environment, and protect indigenous cultures. The global justice movement also addresses a host of related issues, including debt cancellation, land reform, fair trade, income security, women’s rights, caste and social divisions, religious freedom, children’s rights, resource allocation, corruption, intellectual property, genetically modified foods, peace and warfare, health care, and access to clean water, sewage, and electricity.

As a diverse “movement of movements” that operates in the space between the state, the marketplace, and the family, the global justice movement manifests itself through the institutional forms of civil society.\textsuperscript{16} The sociologist John L. Hammond has argued that the global justice movement, in its efforts to oppose or provide alternatives to the WEF and other avatars of neoliberal economics, partakes mainly of two civil society forms: nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and direct-action social movements.\textsuperscript{17}

In recent decades, as United Nations-sponsored global summits have become more frequent and more influential, international NGOs have repeatedly organized “parallel” summits to present alternatives to the viewpoints and ideas expressed by governments. Legal scholar Steve Charnovitz has traced the phenomenon of parallel summits to the 1907 Hague Convention, when “peace leaders . . . started ‘Le Cercle Internationale,’ which welcomed conference delegates every afternoon for tea and lectures.”\textsuperscript{18} In 1974, a group of individuals and NGOs staged the Population Tribune as an alternative to the U.N.-sponsored World Population Conference in Bucharest, Romania. The U.N.-sponsored Conference on the Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1993), International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), Conference on Human Settlements (Istanbul, 1996), and World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, South Africa, 2001) were

\textsuperscript{15} The term “antiglobalization movement” is used mainly by supporters of neoliberal economics to frame the opposition negatively. In that many “antiglobalization” groups and campaigns agitate for fairer, stronger, and more consistently enforced rules of global governance, they do not consider themselves against all forms of globalization. Many activists prefer the term “alter-globalization.” The term “global justice and solidarity movement” (GJSM) was coined at the World Social Forum 2002. This case study will use the term “global justice movement” in an attempt to indicate the broad base of participation in the World Social Forum. For a more detailed discussion of the terminology debate, see Waterman, Peter, “Union Organisations, Social Movements and the Augean Stables of Global Governance,” Warwick University, Centre for the Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation, Working Paper No. 211/06, February 11, 2006.

\textsuperscript{16} The Center for Civil Society at the London School of Economics and Political Science offers the following definition of civil society:

Civil society refers to the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organisations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organisations, community groups, women’s organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, trades unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups.


all “accompanied by an unofficial conference outside the walls where NGOs working on the
conference theme from around the world met, networked, plotted common action, and pressured
the official delegates to adopt resolutions and programs to favor their causes.”19 The major U.N.
summits have thus become, among other things, sporadic events for subsets of international civil
society to organize around.

In 1998, a coalition of European and American NGOs exerted pressure on the
government of France to withdraw from the proposed Multilateral Agreement on Investment
(MAI), a finance arrangement negotiated by the member states of the Organisation for Economic
Co-operation and Development (OECD). A long-time promoter of orthodox neoliberal economic
policy, the OECD dates to 1947 and counts thirty affluent, Western-oriented nations in its
membership. The OECD’s mission is to “help its member countries to achieve sustainable
economic growth and employment and to raise the standard of living in member countries while
maintaining financial stability—all this in order to contribute to the development of the world
economy.”20 The MAI was seen by the NGOs as one part of an expanding regime of
“international investment rules which erode governments’ authority”21 in favor of unaccountable
transnational corporations.

The NGOs were surprisingly effective in derailing French commitment to the MAI. A
report to the French government recommending that it withdraw from the MAI stated:

The MAI . . . marks a stage in international economic negotiations. For the first time,
one is seeing the emergence of a “global civil society” represented by NGOs which are
often based in several states and communicate beyond their frontiers. This evolution is
doubtless irreversible. On one hand, organisations representing civil society have become
aware of the consequences of international economic negotiations. They are determined
to leave their mark on them.

Furthermore, the development of the Internet has shaken up the environment of
the negotiations. It allows the instant diffusion of the texts under discussion, whose
confidentiality becomes more and more theoretical. It permits, beyond national
boundaries, the sharing of knowledge and expertise.

On a subject which is highly technical, the representatives of civil society seemed
to us perfectly well informed, and their criticisms well argued on a legal level.22

With the withdrawal of France, the MAI collapsed. The NGOs’ MAI victory, along with
the enthusiasm generated by the series of alternative events organized around U.N. conferences,
created a sense that a newly emerging global civil society could become a real force in world
affairs.

While NGOs sought, for the most part, to do their work by influencing existing
institutions (governments, supranational organizations, corporations, the media), the other main
wing of the global justice movement, direct-action social movements, engaged in
demonstrations, strikes, marches, occupation of buildings, street theater, and other forms of civil
disobedience in order to prevent globalization summits from taking place. As political scientists
Raffaele Marchetti and Mario Pianta have pointed out, however, the diversity of reaction to

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20 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, “History.” Retrieved from
http://www.oecd.org/pages/0,3417,en_36734052_36761863_1_1_1_1_1_1_00.html.
22 Lalumière, Catherine, and Jean-Pierre Landau, Report on the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. Intermediary
report, September 1998. Translated by Caroline Dumonteil. Retrieved from
neoliberal economic realities among global social movements was as great as it was among NGOs; social movements ranged from those seeking reform, to those offering radical critiques, to those organizing alternatives, to resisters, supporters, and rejectionists. Though global social movements are the “key actors of protest within global civil society,” Marchetti and Pianta observed, at times they have cooperated with sympathetic supranational organizations and governments. Transnational networks and subnetworks of social movements also attempted to raise awareness of issues surrounding economic globalization and influence other elements of the global justice movement, including both international and national-level NGOs.

Direct-action social movements were galvanized in late 1999, when the World Trade Organization (WTO) held a ministerial meeting in Seattle, Washington. Approximately 50,000 protesters organized around two main events. In the first, thousands of demonstrators clogged the streets and sidewalks around key hotels and other buildings in an attempt to prevent WTO delegates from reaching their destinations. The second action, sponsored by the American Federation of Labor (AFL), consisted of a stadium rally and a march into downtown Seattle. Police in body armor and gas masks assaulted the street demonstrators, as well as the marchers who joined them, with pepper spray, tear gas, and rubber bullets. The chaos, beatings, rioting, and vandalism that ensued gained worldwide attention. Empowered by the street activists, delegates from the global South walked away from the table, and the WTO meeting was suspended.

The Group of Eight Summit in Genoa, Italy, in the summer of 2001 drew approximately 200,000 protesters engaged in campaigns of direct action similar to those staged in Seattle. Demonstrators clashed with police repeatedly, resulting in hundreds of arrests and injuries and the death of one protester. The Genoa riots brought further attention worldwide to the cause of global justice and to the tactic of direct action.

ATTAC, the Partido dos Trabalhadores, and the birth of the World Social Forum

In a seminal 1997 essay, “Disarming the Markets,” published in the French leftist monthly Le Monde diplomatique, the magazine’s editor, Ignacio Romanet, denounced the institutions that worked to promote neoliberal economics:

Financial globalisation is a law unto itself and it has established a separate supranatural state with its own administrative apparatus, its own spheres of influence, its own means of actions. That is to say the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). These four powerful institutions are unanimous in singing the praises of “market values,” a view faithfully echoed by most of the major organs of the media.

This artificial world state is a power with no base in society. It is answerable instead to the financial markets and the mammoth business undertakings that are its masters. The result is that the real states in the real world are becoming societies with no power base. And it is getting worse all the time.

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24 Marchetti and Pianta, “Transnational Networks in Global Social Movements,” p. 6, 8.
27 Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
In the essay, Romanet called for the creation of a “new worldwide non-governmental organisation, Action for a Tobin Tax to Assist the Citizen (ATTAC),”\(^{29}\) to promote the idea of taxing speculative currency exchange transactions in order to raise revenue that would be used to mitigate the harmful effects of neoliberal economics. Romanet’s essay provoked a “[deluge] of calls and letters”\(^{30}\) from individuals and organizations interested in seeing ATTAC become a reality. Inspired by the outpouring, Romanet and his Monde diplomatique colleagues Bernard Cassen and Susan George organized the first ATTAC meeting, attended by 3,500 farmers, trade unionists, and intellectuals, in October 1998 in Marseille, France.\(^{31}\)

In an article published in the New Left Review in 2003, ATTAC cofounder Cassen recalled how the idea for the World Social Forum was born:

In February 2000 two Brazilian friends visited me in Paris. One, Oded Grajew, was a former entrepreneur. The other, Chico Whitaker, was the secretary to the Commission on Justice and Peace of the Council of Brazilian bishops. They said they had been to Davos, and they asked, “Why don’t Le Monde diplomatique and ATTAC organize a counter-Davos?” I replied: “That’s already been tried, at Davos itself. But access to the place is tightly controlled, the Swiss police are murder, and to organize a counter-Davos in France doesn’t make much sense.” Then an idea suddenly occurred to me, and I said: “We need a symbolic rupture with everything Davos stands for. That has to come from the South. Brazil has the ideal conditions for doing so, as a Third World country with gigantic urban concentrations, a wretched rural population, but also powerful social movements and friendly political bases in many cities. Why don’t we launch something in Porto Alegre, as a symbol of the alternatives to neoliberalism?”\(^{32}\)

Porto Alegre, the capital of Rio Grande do Sul State, had long been a stronghold of the left-wing Partido dos Trabalhadores (“Workers’ Party”), or PT, founded in 1980 by Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (elected president of Brazil in 2002) among others. The Porto Alegre PT emphasized “participatory democracy”; its most important accomplishment was the 1989 introduction of the Orçamento Participativo, a budgeting process that established “[p]opular assemblies in 16 city zones [to] bring together 10,000 people and 600 grassroots organizations to debate and vote on municipal expenditure priorities.”\(^{33}\) Though not members of the PT, both Grajew and Whitaker were closely associated with the party.

Cassen further described the meeting with Grajew and Whitaker:

Two years before, I had written an article on the participatory budget of the PT administration and I knew the setting fairly well. Then I added—journalistic instinct speaking—“we should call it the World Social Forum, to challenge the World Economic Forum, and hold it on the same day of the same month of the year.”

That took all of three minutes. My friends said: “You’re right. Let’s do it in Brazil.”\(^{34}\)

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\(^{29}\) Ramonet, “Disarming the Markets.” The Tobin Tax is named after Nobel Prize-winning American economist James Tobin, who first suggested it in 1971. ATTAC later changed its name to the Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens, retaining the acronym.


\(^{31}\) Cassen, “On the Attack.”

\(^{32}\) Cassen, “On the Attack.”


\(^{34}\) Cassen, “On the Attack.”
Several factors played important roles in prompting Grajew and Whitaker to agree with Cassen that Brazil should play host to the World Social Forum.

First, the left-wing government of Porto Alegre could be depended upon to be sympathetic to the idea of hosting a WEF alternative event.

Second, Brazil was home to a vigorous and diverse civil society that had, only eight years before, hosted a highly successful parallel event to a U.N. global summit. Brazil’s civil society, especially as expressed through the Catholic Church, has roots that reach back to the beginning of the twentieth century, but it was the theology of liberation, developed over the course of four Latin American conferences (Rio de Janeiro, 1955; Medellin, 1968; Puebla, 1979; and Santo Domingos, 1992), that spurred Catholic groups to become active in Brazilian civil society.³⁵ A strong tradition of labor unionism (from which in part the PT derived); the movement in the 1970s for amnesty for prisoners of the military regime; an extensive network of women’s groups; the movement in the 1980s to protect populations affected by dam construction projects; the movement to protect the rights both of extractive workers (i.e., workers on rubber plantations) and of the “peoples of the forest”; the landless rural workers movement; and the mid-1980s campaigns to eliminate the Electoral College and institute direct elections, and to draft a new constitution: these movements, their constituent groups, and the related social trends served to strengthen networks of association and boost the confidence of civil society.³⁶ The 1992 U.N. Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro (popularly known as Earth Summit and as Rio ’92) prompted international civil society, with Brazilian civil society groups taking the lead, to organize a parallel summit, the Global Citizens’ Forum (also known as Eco ’92). The two-year process of organizing the Global Citizens’ Forum, and the staging of the parallel event over 12 days in June 1992, galvanized Brazilian civil society, and indeed international civil society, to an unprecedented degree. Notwithstanding the 1974 Bucharest Population Tribune, it was Eco ’92 that inaugurated the series of civil society gatherings held in parallel to the U.N. summits of the 1990s. In the estimation of Brazilian sociologist Silvana de Paula, Eco ’92 provided Brazilian civil society a “political apprenticeship” that bestowed it with “a clearer understanding that the globalization process is related to all, and therefore demands reflexive practice and participation by all,” as well as prepared it to attend to “the dialogue, the exposure to differences, the plural inclusion of themes and social actors, and criticisms of the idea of consensus” that hosting the World Social Forum would entail.³⁷

The fact that Brazil was home to Grajew and Whitaker played a role in their decision-making too, of course. Whitaker recalled his and Grajew’s next steps in putting together the first World Social Forum:

Once back in Brazil, we started to find out what organizations were willing to accept this challenge and take on this huge task. On February 28, there was a meeting in Sao Paulo of delegates from 8 organizations that . . . signed a “Cooperation Agreement” to hold the World Social Forum, the first edition of which [was to be] held in Porto Alegre from January 25 to 30, 2001:

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Brazilian Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (ABONG); Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens (ATTAC); Brazilian Justice & Peace Commission (CBJP); Brazilian Business Association for Citizenship (CIVES); Central Trade Union Federation (CUT); Brazilian Institute for Social and Economic Studies (IBASE); Center for Global Justice (CJG); Landless Rural Workers Movement (MST).

In March these organizations sent a delegation to Porto Alegre to consult [with PT members and government officials] Olivio Dutra and Raul Pont on the state and municipal governments’ willingness to host the Forum, on the understanding that the event would not be promoted by these governments, but by the civil society organizations that embraced the proposal. Once the governor and mayor had given their consent, work was begun as quickly as possible to organize and actually realize this new world meeting. This included inviting other civil society organizations to set up a Brazilian Committee in Support of the Forum.

At Cassen’s suggestion, a delegation from the organizations travelled in late June to Geneva where a large part of the organizations linking up around the world in demonstrations against neo-liberalism would be meeting in an alternative “summit” parallel to the UN’s “Copenhagen +5” Summit. Room was made for us to present our proposal, which was very well received. Miguel Rossetto, Deputy Governor of Rio Grande do Sul State, also travelled to Geneva to confirm that the state would host the Forum.38

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2001

Lisa Jordan earned a master’s degree in Development Studies from the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague, Netherlands, and has consulted for numerous foundations in the fields of development and environment. She has directed the U.S. component of the Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment (GLOBE), an environmental exchange program for parliamentarians; acted as a legislative assistant to Congressman Jim Scheuer of the 8th district in New York; directed the multilateral development bank program of BothEnds, a non-profit in the Netherlands; and directed the Bank Information Center, a non-profit in Washington D.C. She has published articles in Dutch, English and Spanish on changes in the field of development, on nongovernmental organizations, and on the multilateral development banks. With Peter van Tuijl, she edited the book NGO Accountability: Politics, Principles and Innovations (Earthscan, 2006). In 2000, she was hired by the Ford Foundation to develop the Strengthening Global Civil Society portfolio. She is currently (spring 2008) the Deputy Director of the Global and Civil Society Unit at the Foundation.

The goals of the Strengthening Global Civil Society portfolio were to promote civic engagement in global governance and to strengthen global civil society so that it could more effectively play three roles:

- to improve global governance at a time when the balance between representative and direct democracy was changing in favor of nonstate actors, both civil society and business

The Ford Foundation and the World Social Forum

- to identify needs and problems that tended to be ignored by states and markets, and give voice to issues that required a global public policy, and
- to create a shared set of global norms and values.\(^{39}\)

The Strengthening Global Civil Society portfolio attempted to achieve its goals primarily by identifying and supporting networks and coalitions of civil society groups. Jordan believed that networks and coalitions, because they combined different kinds of configurations—descriptive associations, epistemic communities, social movements, NGOs, public intellectuals, academic leaders—could have broader reach than could any individual organization, no matter how large or international in character it was.\(^{40}\)

As the officer in charge of the Strengthening Global Civil Society portfolio, Lisa Jordan was the point person within Ford for the World Social Forum. In an interview, she explained how Ford came to be involved with the Forum:

For something like twenty years Ford has been looking at governance arrangements in Brazil and trying to strengthen civil society there. Brazil is one of the countries where we have a global office, and back in 2000, we had a Governance and Civil Society portfolio there.

When our Brazilian grantees came back from Paris and started to assemble the first national council to organize the first World Social Forum, they eventually came to Ford and asked for support. Of the eight initial organizations involved in the council, six were Ford grantees, so it made sense for Ford to give money to that effort. At that time no one knew exactly what the Forum was going to be. It was going to be a conversation about social issues in an era of globalization. The program officer in Brazil, Liz Leeds, saw her grantees convening around an idea. That’s pretty unusual wherever you are in the world. It strengthens civil society to have that kind of glue among grantees. So Ford’s support of the first Forum came out of the Brazil field office.

That first grant did not have anything to do with global civil society or globalization at all. The purpose behind that very first grant was to thicken the density of association of civil society in Brazil. It had a national purpose, not a global purpose.\(^{41}\)

The initial grant, in the amount of $20,000, was awarded to ABONG\(^{42}\) because it housed the Forum secretariat.

The first World Social Forum brought together both wings of the global justice movement: the international NGOs that engaged with established institutions, and the mass social movements that expressed themselves mainly via direct action. Forum conferences, panels, seminars, workshops, and cultural events were organized around four “thematic areas”:
- Production of Wealth and Social Reproduction
- Access to Wealth and Sustainability
- Asserting Civil Society and the Public Realm
- Political Power and Ethics in the New Society

In one of the few reports of the Forum to penetrate the U.S. media, Naomi Klein wrote in *The Nation* of her experience in attending it:

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\(^{39}\) Jordan, Lisa, personal correspondence with Barry Varela, February 21, 2008.

\(^{40}\) Jordan, Lisa, interview conducted by Barry Varela, April 17, 2008.

\(^{41}\) Jordan, Lisa, interview conducted by Barry Varela, December 20, 2007.

The organizers had no idea how many people would be drawn to this Davos for activists. Atila Roque, a coordinator of IBase, a Brazilian policy institute and a member of the organizing committee, explains that for months they thought they were planning a gathering of 2,000 people. Then, suddenly, there were 10,000, more at some events, representing 1,000 groups, from 120 countries. Most of these delegates had no idea what they were getting into: a model UN? A giant teach-in? An activist political convention? A party?

The result was a strange hybrid of all of the above, along with—at the opening ceremony at least—a little bit of Vegas floor show mixed in. . . .

In workshops and on panels, globalization was defined as a mass transfer of wealth and knowledge from public to private—through the patenting of life and seeds, the privatization of water and the concentrated ownership of agricultural lands. Having this conversation in Brazil meant that these issues were not presented as shocking new inventions of a hitherto unheard-of phenomenon called “globalization”—as is often the case in the West—but as part of the continuum of colonization, centralization and loss of self-determination that began more than five centuries ago. . . .

The forum accommodated an extraordinary range of views, and it was precisely this diversity that made conflicts inevitable. By bringing together groups with such different ideas about power—unions, political parties, NGOs, anarchist street protesters and agrarian reformers—the World Social Forum only made visible the tensions that are always just under the surface of these fragile coalitions. . . .

Despite the moments of open revolt, the World Social Forum ended on as euphoric a note as it began. There was cheering and chanting, the loudest of which came when the organizing committee announced that Porto Alegre would host the forum again next year.43

Jordan described the reception, at Ford and elsewhere, to the World Social Forum 2001:

The first Forum was wildly successful, beyond what the organizers had ever thought it could be. It obviously touched a nerve, not just in Brazil but globally. It was possible to think of the World Social Forum as a place where people could discuss how the economic patterns of globalization impacted them in their daily lives and find a way to make that impact not a negative but a positive one.

I was brand-new at the Foundation. My job was managing the Strengthening Global Civil Society portfolio. The French and Brazilians who had organized the first Forum decided, “Well, we need to have more international players involved in helping us figure out what to do with this thing.” And so they asked for some support to help create an International Council that would bring in a diversity of voices. That was when I got involved, with the creation of an International Council to try and steer the Forum process to greater ends and to widen the diversity of voices involved in understanding what the Forum would be about—what it would be and what it wouldn’t be.

At Ford, I was the funnel through which many program officers became involved in the Forum. I became the person who actually made the grant and did the interface with the grantee, ABONG, and then with the whole International Council.44

The initial grant in support of the World Social Forum had a national purpose rather than an international one. How did the perceived outcome of the first Forum affect Ford’s future involvement with the WSF?

WORLD SOCIAL FORUMS 2002 AND 2003

Like the first Forum, the World Social Forums 2002 and 2003 were held in Porto Alegre. Even more successful than the 2001 Forum in terms of attendance, the second and third Forums attracted over 50,000 and approximately 100,000 participants respectively. The themes of World Social Forum 2002 were the same as those of the first Forum. (For one participant’s impressions of the second World Social Forum, see Exhibit A, “Excerpts from: The World Social Forum II, ‘Another World Is Possible.’”) In 2003 the themes changed to:

- Democratic, Sustainable Development
- Principles and Values, Human Rights, Diversity and Equality
- Media, Culture, and Alternatives to Commodification and Homogenization
- Political Power, Civil Society, and Democracy
- Democratic World Order, Combating Militarization, and Promoting Peace

Jordan described how Ford’s interest in the Forum evolved as the Forum itself evolved:

I wasn’t the only program officer at Ford who supported the Forum. Many different arms of the Foundation found the Forum to be a very useful space. One grant, of half a million dollars, came from several different units within the Foundation—from Media, Arts, and Culture, from Knowledge, Freedom, and Creativity, from the Mexico office, from Community Resource Development, and from the Peace and Social Justice Vice President. Lots of different people at Ford looked at the Forum, because it was an open space where many different kinds of communities could come together and many different issues could be addressed.

Ford supported all sorts of different pieces of the Forum because it was a forum—not a political project, not an advocacy project. It was a forum, where you could thicken the density of association across borders, and that’s very powerful. It was the first time that global civil society had ever met on its own, without attaching itself to a UN summit.

The UN summits of the ’90s were fabulous because they opened up space to talk about social issues on a global scale. And that was very, very important. But the states set the agenda, so the states chose to have one on environment and sustainable development, the states chose to have one on social issues, the states chose to have one on women. Those were state decisions, and having the states define the agenda in some ways put responsibility on the states, which is always good. But it also isolated different components of global civil society. The World Social Forum does not silo different issues, the different thematics, that civil society groups organize around, nor does it favor NGOs over social movements. When states are involved, you’ll find that NGOs are empowered in the space. When states are not involved, all sorts of different associations
can be empowered. Those are important aspects of why decoupling a gathering of global civil society from a state-driven agenda is valuable.\textsuperscript{45}

Jordan’s unit at Ford gave $40,000 to ABONG to support the 2002 Forum.\textsuperscript{46} The $500,000 grant, from multiple units at Ford but funneled through Jordan’s Civil Society portfolio, came in 2003.\textsuperscript{47} Jordan described the uses to which the 2003 grant was put:

Ford decided not to support the actual activities of creating a Forum, but rather to do three other things to help support it. First, we supported the International Council, so that there would be a kind of global steering committee surrounding the Forum. Second, we provided funds to create a knowledge center owned by the organizing committee. They would create a library of all of the kinds of materials that were coming out of the Forum, and coming out of academia about the Forum, and so on. That was a big piece. The third piece of the grant was to undertake some discussions about the communications strategies used at the Forum. One of the things that the Forum was not doing well was figuring out its relationship with the Fourth Estate, meaning the international media. They were just terrible at that—couldn’t have been worse, actually. Nationally, in Brazil, the media was fabulous, but that was it.

Indeed, the first several Forums received scant press coverage in the United States. According to Klein, “[of] 1,500 journalists registered [at the 2001 Forum], maybe ten were American, and more than half of those were from Independent Media Centers.”\textsuperscript{48} The \textit{Washington Post} published a single article on the 2001 Forum, as did \textit{Newsweek}. The \textit{New York Times} declined to cover it. The 2002 Forum merited an article in the \textit{Times}, but none in the \textit{Post} or in the major newsmagazines. In 2003 the Forum scored an article in the \textit{Times}, the \textit{Post}, and \textit{Newsweek}. National Public Radio broadcast two stories and CNN one story on the first Forum; NPR and CNN each did two stories on the second Forum; and NPR broadcast one story on the third Forum. Otherwise, the major broadcast media failed to mention the first three Forums; nor did \textit{USA Today}, \textit{Time} magazine, or \textit{U.S. News & World Report}.\textsuperscript{49}

In 2003 Ford’s Brazil field office made a grant of $30,000 to the Brazilian Consumer Defense Institute to produce “a multimedia public information campaign at the World Social Forum and the Pan-Amazonian Social Forum.”\textsuperscript{50} Jordan explained that Forum organizers themselves were at least partly responsible for the lack of press:

The Forum organizers hadn’t decided whether they wanted to have a press presence. They hadn’t decided whether they wanted to get a message out, and if they did, what kind of message it would be. If they did want to get a message out, they would have to figure out how to do that without becoming a political project. That was a difficult thing for them to do. If they had a message, they would automatically have to leave somebody out, and then they wouldn’t have been a forum anymore.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{45} Jordan interview, December 20, 2007.
\textsuperscript{48} Klein, “World Social Forum—A Fete for the End of History.”
\textsuperscript{49} According to LexisNexis and other web searches on the phrase “World Social Forum.”
\textsuperscript{51} Jordan interview, December 20, 2007.
Ford not only gave money to ABONG and financed the participation of hundreds of individual grantees, but sent a number of program officers (the number varied, from three to about ten) from various units within the Foundation each year to participate in the Forum itself. Jordan described her typical day at the Forum:

Ford went as part of a larger coalition of funders that organized U.S.-based foundations to participate in the Forum. We’d start every morning with a collective process of organizing our calendars. Representatives from about forty foundations would gather in a room, and someone would say something like, “I’m following this track on the Internet and communications this morning, so I’ll be going to these two panels. Is anybody else interested in what’s going to be happening there?” And then somebody from another foundation would say, “I’m going to be covering the environmental track for the day.” And so on. We would each follow a track, depending on what sets of interests the foundations had. We’d usually find a “buddy” to go with. That would go on all day. Then toward five or six o’clock there was usually a some sort of party with a critical mass of grantees, and I’d go and have a drink with everybody. In the evenings there would be a dinner where, say, five grantees would be talking about environmental justice in Peru, and I’d go there and it would just go on.52

Attending workshops with her grantees gave Jordan a unique opportunity to see them operate within the networks in which they actually did their work. “You don’t get that by meeting one-on-one in your office,” Jordan reflected. “Attending the Forum was a great opportunity for many program officers at Ford to understand the trends in the fields they supported, to look for emerging leaders, and to connect with existing leaders.”53

After the Forum ended, Ford did both internal and external follow-up debriefing. Jordan explained:

Every year, we would invite all Ford program staff who had not participated in the Forum to a meeting so that they would understand what the Forum is, how it works, what happened, and what sorts of outcomes grantees themselves might identify from the Forum process. The coalition of funders that participated would hold a similar briefing for foundations that had not participated.54

The process of debriefing funders that had not attended the WSF paid dividends in June 2007, when the first United States Social Forum (USSF) was held in Atlanta. Because the foundation world had been prepped on the concept of a social forum, the organizers of the USSF were able to find seed money for it.55

**WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2004**

Although attendance at the World Social Forums 2002 and 2003 was impressive, most participants came from Latin America, North America, or Europe; over 80% were from Brazil itself.56 In an effort to broaden and diversify participation in the Forum, the International

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52 Jordan interview, April 17, 2008.
53 Jordan interview, April 17, 2008.
54 Jordan interview, April 17, 2008.
55 Jordan interview, April 17, 2008.
The Ford Foundation and the World Social Forum

Council, made up of over 100 organizations from around the world (including the eight founding NGOs), decided to move it out of Brazil for 2004, to Mumbai, India. The move precipitated significant changes in who organized the Forum. The eight NGOs that had organized the previous three Forums ceded their role to the Indian Organizing Committee (IOC), which was made up of 45 individuals each of whom was a member of a group that belonged to the Forum’s India General Council, which in turn was made up of 135 organizations and social movements.57

The Forum’s Charter of Principles (see Exhibit B) had banned “party representatives” and “military organizations” from participating in the Forum. As sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein observed, during the first three Forums that principle had been

. . . hard to enforce since both parties and guerilla movements came anyway, through front organizations. And it was controversial since many participants saw no reason to bar party structures (as long as any one of them was not in a controlling position). And guerilla organizations included the Zapatistas as well, who claim to be a military organization, even if their military action has been virtually nil, and of course most participants were highly sympathetic to the Zapatistas, even considering them a model movement.

When the Forum moved from Brazil to India, from a country in which most movements had more or less supported the Partidos dos Trabalhadores (PT) and therefore didn’t need the actual formal presence of the PT to a country in which the movements were divided among many parties and where the parties were key mass organizations, the Indian organizing committee dropped the provision about parties. Still, the proscription against violence led to a split among the Indians. A small Maoist movement organized around a counter-Forum, called Mumbai Resistance-2004, on grounds across the road from the WSF. And they denounced the WSF as a combination of Trotskyites, Social-Democrats, reformist mass organizations, NGOs financed by transnationals—in short, a stalking-horse for quietism and counter-revolution. They specifically attacked the concept of the open forum (merely a talk show, they said), the slogan (not “another world,” but socialism as the objective, they said), and the financing of the WSF (the fact that some money had come in the past from the Ford Foundation).58

The Indian Maoist groups’ objection to the World Social Forum on the grounds that it had taken money from the Ford Foundation was echoed within the IOC itself. Certain members of the IOC represented non-Maoist communist organizations, and while these organizations did not reject the Forum principle of nonviolence (and therefore chose not to align themselves with Mumbai Resistance-2004), they did object strenuously to accepting money from Ford and other organizations with ties to multinational corporations. Despite the fact that other groups with representation in the IOC had no objection to accepting such money, in the end the IOC decided to reject funding from Ford and several other foundations.

Jordan recalled how Ford handled the situation with the IOC:

When the IOC took the position not to accept money from certain kinds of funders, it put others who were regular grantees of the Ford Foundation in an awkward position. There was some consternation within civil society around that decision.

Of course, there was a conversation at Ford about what to do, because we had so many grantees involved. Every single one of our colleagues in the Ford India office was planning to attend the Forum, and every single one of our Indian civic grantees—housing grantees, human rights grantees—was going too. I don’t think there was one that wasn’t. Everybody went to the Forum, it was a huge, huge deal. So there was a discussion inside Ford—mainly among myself, the vice president, and the India office. The India office was in a tight spot, because if a grantee’s entire staff was planning to go, Ford wanted to be supportive. The India office was being hammered with requests. And of course, the India office had the same rationale that the Brazil office had had, which was to thicken the density of association within the country. But on the other hand, the India office understood even better than I did about the fragility of the IOC. If the purpose of the thickening of the density of association was furthered better by a lack of funding from Ford, then why would you jeopardize that by insisting on making a grant?

Ultimately we felt we should respect the decision of the IOC both in principle and in practice. It was part of the national organizing committee’s dialogue and part of thickening the density of association in India itself. It was part of an important dialogue in making sure that Indian civil society, which is fractured every way to Sunday, could come together around a bigger idea. If we had started to grant through the back door, we would have jeopardized that fragile coming together, and no one thought that was a good thing to do. So we chose not to fund it across the board. If you had a grant from Ford for general support and you used some of that to go to the Forum, that was your decision. But no grants were made that were specifically oriented toward the Forum itself. We chose to respect the decision of the IOC and not throw our weight around and not to fund through the back door.59

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**Did Ford do the right thing in deciding not to give any of its grantees money specifically earmarked for the World Social Forum 2004?**

**Was Ford’s desire to “thicken the density of association” in India sufficient reason to deny money to (for example) a Brazilian NGO that had asked for money to attend the Forum?**

When asked to reflect on why the Forum organizers in Brazil had been happy to receive Ford money while those in India found Ford’s involvement objectionable, Jordan said:

There are three things to think about when comparing the situation in Brazil with the one in India. First, the difference in civil society between Brazil and India. In Brazil, you have a relatively young civil society. Outside of the church arena, civil society in Brazil has been recognized nationally, legally, for only about thirty years. It’s very vibrant, it’s an absolutely fantastic place to be if you’re a social movement or you’re an NGO or an activist—it’s very directed toward improving the state, improving state services for people across the board. But it’s also very young. Now, Indian civil society is culturally much more diverse than Brazilian civil society. It has deep roots in revolutionary politics, which Brazilian civil society does not. If you look at where the splits occur in India, they occur around which faction of communism you adhere to—not communism, broad swath, but which faction of communism. Which faction of Gandhism do you adhere to?

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The Ford Foundation and the World Social Forum

The fragmentation of civil society is vast, especially as compared to Brazil. Both countries have incredibly vibrant civil societies, but those societies are very different from each other.

The second thing to understand about India is that its social movements are much stronger than Indian NGOs. These are mass movements. There are not 10,000 people. These are a million people—huge, huge movements. So the fabric of social movements in India had a lot to do with the IOC and who came to the Forum.

The third thing to think about is that the role Ford has played in each country is different. The Ford that is understood in Brazil is quite different from the Ford that is understood in India. The way that Ford interfaces at the national level in each of those countries is different. The India office is the oldest and biggest Ford office outside of the United States. Ford was there shortly after independence. When India was taking back its state from colonialism, anybody who was potentially a colonial or Western power had to play by the state’s rules. It was as simple as that. Every single grant we’ve ever made in India has been approved by the government. That’s not the case in other countries in which we work. So Ford’s work in India can be more closely associated with an elite agenda than it would ever be in Brazil. That’s a huge difference. And there was some activity that Ford was involved in vis a vis the state that some actors in civil society felt had prevented India from becoming a communist state. Some groups felt that Ford had played a role in shaping the country in a way they didn’t appreciate.60

Ford and anticommunism

Indeed, Ford’s work in India in the 1950s was openly and avowedly anticommunist. While the Foundation’s motivation to invest in Indian rural development sprang from a variety of impulses, one reason was the desire to stave off communist revolution by reducing discontent among the poor. A similar philanthropic effort in China, Ford President Paul Hoffman wrote in 1955, “would have [resulted in] a China completely immunized against the appeal of the Communists. India, in my opinion, is today what China was in 1945.”61

On the cultural front, in 1952 Ford gave American publisher James Laughlin $500,000 to launch Intercultural Publications, Inc. (IPI), which funded translations, international art exhibits, journals such as Perspectives U.S.A., and other activities in Europe and Asia in an effort to rebut communist ideas. Laughlin wrote that his aim at IPI was not “so much to defeat the leftist intellectuals in dialectical combat as to lure them away from their positions by aesthetic and rational persuasion.”62

Despite IPI’s efforts, in 1953 communists won elections in Kerala, India, alarming anticommunists at Ford and within the U.S. government. In response, Laughlin, in coordination with the State Department, set up a “Books for India” program to counter the literature distributed by Indian communists. In 1955, Ford gave IPI a $500,000 grant to set up the Southern Languages Book Trust (SLBT). The mission of the SLBT was to “not only translate Western books but also intensify the revitalization of traditional indigenous values—a potential spiritual and intellectual force which may prove an even stronger barrier to the acceptance of

60 Jordan interview, December 20, 2007.
Communism by Hindus and Moslems than imported Western ideals.”63 By 1968, over 500 titles had been published and about 2.5 million books had been sold.64 Whatever else can be said about Ford’s involvement in India in the 1950s and ’60s, the perception of today’s Indian communist groups that the Foundation worked to prevent their forebears from coming to power has a basis in history.

Furthermore, Ford’s support of the Green Revolution of the 1960s has been interpreted by some on the Indian far left to be a deliberate effort to replace “institutional change (i.e., redistribution of land and other rural assets)” with “technological change (improved seeds, chemical fertilisers, and pesticides) in small, already irrigated pockets.” As one Indian leftist intellectual recently put it, after the Green Revolution, “Talk of land reform, tenancy reform, abolition of usury, and so on were more or less dropped from official agenda (never to return).”65

In 1967 Ramparts magazine revealed that the Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF), a liberal anticommunist arts organization with dozens of employees and offices in 35 countries, had accepted C.I.A. funding.66 That Ford had also funded the CCF, and assumed full funding of the organization after the C.I.A.’s involvement was exposed, further eroded the Foundation’s reputation among leftists worldwide.

In the early 1970s, Ford’s strategy in India shifted away from providing technical assistance for agricultural and rural development programs and toward promoting “asset-building and community development,” in large part by financing indigenous NGOs. This shift in strategy has been interpreted by some Indian leftists as an effort to “set up tiny well-publicised safety nets to catch a handful from among the masses of people thrown out by market forces.”67 The belief that the Ford Foundation, and Western funders in general, are in the business of propping up the global status quo is what led the communist groups within the IOC to reject such funding for the Forum. (For an example of how a typical contemporary Indian far-leftist group views NGOs and their funders, see Exhibit C, “Struggle Against Imperialism Is Neither Fun Nor Picnic! It Is a Life and Death Practice!”)

A coalition of Brazilian trade unionists who declined to participate in the 2002 World Social Forum argued, in an open letter to their colleagues who had chosen to participate, that the very concept of “civil society” was nugatory. Pointing out that the WSF organizing committee included the Brazilian Association of Employers for Citizens (CIVES, also translated as the Brazilian Business Association for Citizenship), the trade unionists asked, “How . . . is it possible to include in the same category of ‘civil society’ both the exploited and the exploiters, the bosses and the workers, the oppressors and the oppressed . . . ?” The trade unionists charged that NGOs “both practice and promote ‘volunteerism’ and other forms of precarious and unregulated labor,” and that “all the jobs ‘created’ by the NGOs, in fact, replace jobs in the public enterprises and services.” NGOs, the trade unionists argued, claim to want to change the world, but they do so “without questioning the fundamental relations of production, without challenging the private ownership of the major means of production.”68

67 Research Unit for Political Economy, “Appendix I: Ford Foundation—A Case Study of the Aims of Foreign Funding.”
68 International Liaison Committee for a Workers International, “Is It Possible to Put a Human Face on Globalization and War?” Open letter to the trade unionists and activists participating in the WSF 2002 in Porto
Symbolic reassurance

Four decades ago, the political scientist Murray Edelman observed drily that the American political system often provided the illusion of countervailing power without actually delivering it:

Our political institutions constitute, among other things, a device for providing symbolic reassurance to threatened groups, and the device works admirably for most issues. In the United States instances of direct extragovernmental mass action on political issues are much harder to find than examples of quiescence. We routinely institutionalize our symbolic reassurances in the form of constitutional or regulatory guarantees and in the creation of administrative organizations.

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Leftist critics of civil society have charged that it too provides mainly symbolic reassurance. They argue that jubilees like the World Social Forum provide leaders of well-funded, elite organizations an opportunity to gather together, exchange contacts, talk about changing the world, and report back to their constituents inspirational tales of solidarity and connection—accomplishing little except redirecting, institutionalizing, and dissipating popular resistance. Thus are the casualties of neoliberal economics reassured that someone, somewhere, is planning to do something, sometime.

And not only leftist critics—orthodox neoliberal institutions such as the World Bank have drawn attention to the conciliatory function of civil society summits. In their letter to their colleagues, the dissenting Brazilian trade unionists quoted the World Bank’s Development Report 2000/2001 as evidence of how the world’s power brokers viewed gatherings such as the World Social Forum:

It is appropriate for financial institutions to use their means . . . to develop an open and regular dialogue with the organisations of civil society, in particular those that represent the poor. Social fragmentation can be mitigated by bringing groups together in formal and informal forums and channelling their energies into political processes instead of open conflict.

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Is it inevitable that big Western foundations with long, sometimes checkered histories like Ford will run into problems when trying to support global civil society?

Is there something problematic about any private foundation’s using money that has its origins—and has otherwise been invested—in large-scale capitalist enterprises to promote a movement that opposes neoliberal economics? Can the problem be resolved? How?

Are Western-funded NGOs too invested in current power arrangements to oppose neoliberal economics effectively?


Is “civil society,” as the dissenting Brazilian trade unionists charge, a meaningless concept vis-à-vis resistance to neoliberal economics if the category includes associations of employers and financiers as well as workers and subsistence farmers?

Can philanthropic support of civil society organizations serve to abet unintentionally the devolution of the state as promoted by neoliberal economics?

To what extent does the World Social Forum provide mere “symbolic reassurance”?

What might the Ford Foundation do to support strong and diverse civil societies when its own presence may at times cause fragmentation?

How might Ford find out whether and to what extent its support of the World Social Forum was achieving the goals of the Strengthening Global Civil Society portfolio?

The World Social Forum 2004 attracted about 115,000 participants, more than had attended Porto Alegre the year before. The themes at the Mumbai Forum were:

- Imperialist Globalization
- Militarism and Peace
- Communalism, Religious Sectarianism, and Fundamentalism
- Racism and Casteism
- Labour and the World of Work
- Exclusions and Discrimination
- Patriarchy

Relative to the first three Forums, the Mumbai Forum reflected the Indian emphasis on large popular movements over NGOs. Rather than a preponderance of Brazilians, participants at the Mumbai Forum were mostly from Asia, with about 80% from India. Attendees included “labour leaders, social movements, aid workers, left-leaning politicians, NGOs, women’s rights activists, farmers, Indian tribals and Dalits, Tibetan monks, sweatshop workers, alternative media journalists, economists, social theorists, poets, authors, actors, students, street children, the homeless, peace activists, Indigenous Peoples, and environmentalists, among many, many others.”

WORLD SOCIAL FORUM 2005-2008

After Mumbai, the Forum returned to Porto Alegre for 2005. With the move back to Brazil, the Indian communist groups that had objected to accepting Ford money no longer held sway in the

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Forum’s national organizing committee. Nevertheless, the Foundation chose not to resume funding the Forum. Since 2003, the Foundation has provided neither direct funding to the Forum nor indirect funding through earmarks to other grantees. Rather, the Foundation has advised its grantees that want to participate in the Forum to build the expense into their general travel budgets.75

Though Ford no longer funds the Forum directly, the Foundation has tried to support the Forum in other ways. Jordan recounted an example of how she lent her expertise to Forum organizers after Mumbai:

Ford was never at the table when the Forum’s national organizing committees met—not in India, and not in Brazil. When funders are in the room, inevitably it will skew the decision-making process. So Ford was not at the meeting of the Indian Organizing Committee when it decided to say no to Ford, and I haven’t participated in International Council meetings for the same reason.

After India said no, a year and a half later I accepted an invitation to attend one of the International Council meetings as an observer. I went to the financial committee and urged them to think about creative funding mechanisms that had nothing to do with large Western foundations. I worked with the financial committee to help them think through all of the different ways in which one could raise money without compromising values that may be present within the International Council. That was something that came out of the India folks’ saying no. Ultimately ABONG got another funder to hire a consultant who went around the world and gathered all sorts of ideas about how to raise money for Forums—ideas that didn’t have anything to do with universities or Western foundations or corporations.76

After the 2005 Forum in Porto Alegre, the International Council planned a “polycentric” 2006 Forum that was to take place successively in Bamako, Mali; Caracas, Venezuela; and Karachi, Pakistan.77 The 2007 Forum was held in Nairobi, Kenya. In 2008, rather than assemble in a particular location or locations, participants in the Forum commemorated a “Global Day of Action” through activities and events of their own devising. The 2009 Forum will be held in Belem, in the Amazonia region of Brazil. In addition to the annual World Social Forum, numerous regional social forums, including the first United States Social Forum, held in Atlanta in June 2007, have been conducted since 2001.

Through research grants to the United Nations Research Institute on Social Development (UNRISD) and to the National Association of Brazilian NGOs (ABONG), Ford performed a formal evaluation of the outcomes of all global civil society meetings, including the World Social Forums. (See Exhibit D, “Excerpt from ‘Research Findings on Global Meetings: UNRISD and ABONG.’”) In a memo to her colleagues at Ford summarizing the results of the research, Jordan wrote:

The value of global gatherings for specific social movements is quite high (in particular those movements which have found their political space limited at the national level, like the women’s movement). Global meetings are also critical to the process of strengthening

75 Jordan interview, December 20, 2007.
77 The Pakistani Forum was delayed for two months due to effects of the October 2005 Kashmir earthquake.
civil society at national and global levels, and as an interlocutor for governments and inter-governmental agencies.\(^\text{78}\)

Reflecting on the positives and negatives of the World Social Forum, and on the ups and downs of Ford’s experience with it, Jordan said:

One disappointment is that the Forum and the press still don’t have a relationship that’s meaningful. That’s a problem, because it means that all this incredible stuff that happens at the Forum doesn’t get covered globally. Because of that, a lot of people in the Forum feel that its impact has been weak. Personally I don’t believe that’s true, but a lot of the big NGOs from the global South who have big reputations around the UN and the WTO are disappointed with the Forum because it hasn’t provided a platform for voice—for their voice, to be specific.\(^\text{79}\)

Nevertheless, Jordan concurred with the research findings:

If you ask me, as the Global Civil Society Program officer of the Ford Foundation, if the Forum meets goals that I have in my portfolio, the answer is “Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes.” Over and over and over again, it does. It allows people to have a conversation about global governance, and not just about “What are we going to do about the environment?” or “What are we going to do about the poor?” or “What are we going to do about the Internet?” It allows people to see that all of these issues require governance arrangements, and those governance arrangements should not privilege one set of folks who are marginalized by globalization over another set. The Forum provides an opportunity for different kinds of social activists, and people with different kinds of social concerns, to meet one another and understand one another’s issues in a much stronger way. It’s the only place I know where that can happen, where you get that overlap of issues.

The other thing the Forum does is provide space for different strains of different movements to come together and understand each other in a much more solid way. So coming out of the Forum you have stronger campaigns and movements. For example, the movement focusing on Water for Life—a campaign that came straight out of the Social Forum—was created by people understanding that water is an issue whether you’re trying to protect a river or trying to build pipes to impoverished communities. You never get that kind of association outside the Forum.

On the other hand, not all Forums are created equal. Not all Forums have the same kinds of outcomes in terms of strengthening civil society either nationally or globally. In Kenya this year [2007], the Forum did not provide the same kinds of opportunities to thicken densities of association in Africa as it has in other places. It did provide an opportunity for African social movements to come together, and so there was a benefit there between East and West Africa at the farmer level, at the street-vendor level, and at the homeless level. But not among the African NGO power brokers.\(^\text{80}\)

Asked to reflect on how Ford works to support a strong and diverse civil society when its own presence can cause fragmentation, Jordan said:

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\(^{79}\) Jordan interview, December 20, 2007.

\(^{80}\) Jordan interview, December 20, 2007.
I don’t think it’s inevitable, by any means, that global civil society will have to reject Western funding. One of Ford’s strategies is to seed domestic, culturally imbedded philanthropy from country to country. So for example we support the Dalit Fund, in which Dalits sit on the board and Dalits make decisions about where the grants go. We have a Brazil human rights fund and a South Asian women’s fund with similar structures. People who are suffering from the problem they’re trying to address make decisions about where the money goes. The institutional wisdom at Ford has been: Get the money as close to the source of the problem as possible; find people who suffer from that problem and put them in charge of doling out the grants. And that makes perfect sense. That has been a longstanding, thirty-year approach that Ford has taken to strengthening civil society wherever it is.

There are many, many manifestations of global civil society—there are future manifestations that we haven’t even seen yet—that may ask Ford or others who have a global presence to support the seeding of those ideas. And I can imagine that Ford will continue to do so.  

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Exhibit A

Excerpts from:
*The World Social Forum II, “Another World Is Possible”*

A brief report by Rogate Mshana
February 15, 2002

*Glimpses of some conclusions from events*
It is neither fair nor possible to try to summarize the over 800 events which took place at the World Social Forum. I will try to give glimpses of some topics.

*The Peoples’ Debt Tribunal*
The Jubilee South Brazil Campaign joined with the American Association of Jurists, the committee for the Third World Debt Cancellation, organized this event; the Ecological Debt Creditor’s Alliance, Ustawi and the World march of women, among many others. The Tribunal was convened in order to determine and rule upon the responsibility of banks and transnational corporations, governments in the North, the IMF, the World Bank and other international financial institutions for the crime of illegitimately indebting the countries and peoples of the South. Based on documentary evidence and testimonies by men and women from Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Pacific, the Popular Jury came up with a VERDICT. More than 1,000 people attended the Tribunal from many organizations. Presiding over the proceedings was Dumiso Ndzebeza, a real judge in South Africa. To his right sat world acclaimed Egyptian writer Nawal El Sadawi, who has been fighting the Islamic Fundamentalist oppression of women, joined by a Senator from Philippines, a member of Parliament from India and a representative from Argentina’s Movement of the Mothers of the Disappeared. Later the governor of Rio Grande do Sul, Olivio Dutra, entered the “courtroom.” Dutra told the audience that it was the developed countries that owed them money instead. “It should be paid to us so that we can eradicate poverty, misery and child labor among our people,” he said. The slogan at the Tribunal was “Don’t Owe, Won’t Pay.”

*Trade and Its Effects on Women*
It was concluded in the above seminar that international trade agreements are affecting women throughout the world, especially those in developing countries, but the true extent of their impact is not known because there is a lack of hard data. A representative of the International Gender and Trade Network made this conclusion. There was a call to study carefully the international trade agreements if lobbying work is to be successful.

*Food Sovereignty*
“Food sovereignty is the right of people to protect and to determine what food we eat, who produces it and how we produce it. It is important now because under the free market regime we are losing the local agricultural network and we are losing under the impact of importing cheap foods,” said one of the farmers of Via Campesina. Some of the slogans were “Eat local,” “Not all cows are British.” “McDonald’s is junk. Food is local, global food doesn’t exist,” said one of the Via Campesina’s farmers. It was observed that the mad cows are not English mad cows. They are neoliberal mad cows.
At the end calls were made against the over 25,000 industrial fishing fleet which exhaust marine fish stocks leading to hunger for fishing communities. There were calls against food dumping due to subsidies of farmers in the North. For more than 1.4 billion people who save their own seeds from harvest to harvest, the patenting of seeds poses a dangerous threat to their livelihood and their access to food. If things continue it will become illegal to use saved seeds without paying a fee. This worry was shared by Via Campesina. A call was made thus, “We have to demand that the governments start protecting our own agriculture and our own food producing capacity. We have to develop sustainable agriculture which feeds local communities.”

**Financing for Development**

. . . [M]any organizations which attended the World Social Forum were disappointed that the agenda of the UN Summit on Financing for Development does not address issues such as capital controls or neoliberal economic policies. The United States government was accused in particular for exerting pressure on the summit organizers to change their original agenda, which initially mentioned the need for capital controls. One of the big problems with the Monterrey summit is the presence the World Bank and the IMF as powerful institutions which have a big voice and no ears. Henk-Jan Brokeman, special adviser to the UN Secretary General, addressed the seminar saying that although there were some draw backs with the conceptual basis of the upcoming summit on Financing for Development in Mexico, NGOs should not reject the event as another exercise in “neoliberal globalization.” They should suggest an alternative agenda and text for debate by the participants in the summit. It was also emphasized that the agenda should systematically include gender related concerns because too often under the pretext of “market efficiency” the concerns of women and the very poor are neglected. It was concluded that the unfair international financial and trading system is being maintained through raw power, and mass movements are the only way to change current realities. The unjust global economic system is systematically sucking out resources worth hundreds of billions of dollars from the countries of the South and handing it to those in the North. This is done through operations of predatory and speculative global capital, siphoning of profits by multinationals and protectionist trade measures adopted by developed nations. Asking developed nations for more international aid of a few billions of dollars is only a palliative and cannot solve the problem of finding finances to match the development needs of developing countries.

**Water for the Common Good Conference**

Delegates from all over the world shouted a resounding “NO” to the privatization and commercialization of water resources under the neo-liberal economic policies many of their governments have adopted.

“We will resist the commodification of water acting from the grassroots to the international level,” declared well-known Indian anti-dam activist Medha Patkar. Water is a basic human right and cannot be turned into a product for sale. It was concluded that there was need now for a world wide recognition to establish common control over water resources. The conference delegates discussed a “treaty Initiative on the Water Commons” which demands that the intrinsic value of Water as a common resource be protected by all political commercial and social institutions. According to the draft treaty, a World Water Parliament should be established by citizens organizations to ensure that every human being has access to water in quantity and quality sufficient to meet basic social and economic needs. The participants of the WSF conference also called for designating March 14 as an annual day of global action against the privatization of water.
Environment
At the preparation for the Rio+10, a report was brought to the attention of the participants showing that environment is in decline. People perceive the global environment as having worsened since 1992. This conclusion was revealed by a 25-nation public survey. For instance 83% of those polled in Argentina complained that their country’s environmental quality has deteriorated over the last 10 years. South Korea was 81%, Russia 73%, Turkey 71%, Brazil and Italy 69% and Mexico 62%. The experts say they look to the upcoming WSSD to produce, “time-bound commitments” on key environmental issues, including climate change, energy, water and poverty eradication.

Health, Medicines and HIV/AIDs Conference
The Conference on Health, Medicines and AIDS was unanimous in breaking the patent rule on drugs to save peoples lives. The slogan was “Break a rule, save a life.” In the developing world, Brazil and Cuba have developed drug cocktails similar to those produced by transnational corporations in Europe and the U.S. but have encountered difficulties in hitting international markets due to legal restrictions and or political pressure. Mario Schaffer from Grupo pela Vida said, “We are told that patents protect the consumer, ensuring that drugs have undergone intensive efficacy tests, but this is not necessarily true, it is to protect the business of the multinational pharmaceutical companies that hold western governments to ransom.” The OXFAM reiterated in the conference that it will support any country that broke the patent rules for AIDS drugs.

The March
At least 20,000 WSF delegates and friends marched through downtown Porto Alegre Monday evening protesting against the proposed formation of a free trade area for all the Americas. This was a colorful march with music, drama, art and poetry. . . .

General Observations
Being in Porto Alegre was an energizer for me. It was an arena of inspiration, a place of new knowledge that is down to earth. One could learn from grassroots to academic rooms. You could feel that many people want another world which is better than this one. You could see that people have alternatives and are looking for space to implement them. What I concluded was that, the powers ruling the world have not learnt much from the people and unless they do so we are out for disaster. Watching the Via Campesinas, indigenous people and the various professionals bent to articulate alternative theories and actions, I saw an answer to Margaret Thatcher’s TINA—“There is no alternative.” The people at the Social World Forum are replying that there are thousands of them. . . . Susan George advised us to know well our adversary when she said, “Our adversary is still ‘Davos’ and everything Davos stands for, whether meeting in the mountains or on the banks of the Hudson. Homodavosiensis wants all the resources, all the wealth, all the power and all the freedom to extend his ascendancy across time and space. This means we too must be world-spanners and history-inventors, right now. As we say in French, l’histoire ne repasse pas les plats—History doesn’t offer second helpings, so we’d better deal with what’s on our plate now, which is world poverty, inequality, exploitation and hopelessness.” How? she asked.

The great Chinese general Sun Tzu said 2,400 years ago, “Do not do what you would most like to do. Do what your adversary would least like you to do.” In Porto Alegre, people from all over the world will be trying to determine what the adversary least wants and how to deliver it. . . .
Closing
The World Social Forum ended Tuesday 6th February with unbridled samba dancing, a 4,000-person uninhibited conga line and unrestrained hope for a better world. Chanting “Here another world is possible if we want it,” some 6,000 delegates of the more than 60,000 people who came to Porto Alegre stretched a morning closing ceremony into the afternoon before dispersing in tears, hugs and promises to return to Porto Alegre for the third WSF before the venue changes in 2004. The closing ceremony was youth-oriented with two groups of young rappers pounding out original poems about the coming new world and the problems of the old one. Three youths read a message from Nobel Literature Prize Winner Jose Saramago who blamed economic globalization for violations of human rights around the world, and for the daily deaths of thousands from diseases “that are curable for some but not for others.” An Indian from Colombia who said multinational corporations were grabbing native lands, called for silence and played a haunting call on a conch shell which he said was traditional for closing meetings.

Given the hugeness of the Forum, this is a very little glimpse of it. It was an excellent arena for analysis, reflection, networking and an occasion for celebrating pain and gain with all people looking for another world.

Exhibit B

World Social Forum Charter of Principles

The committee of Brazilian organizations that conceived of, and organized, the first World Social Forum, held in Porto Alegre from January 25th to 30th, 2001, after evaluating the results of that Forum and the expectations it raised, consider it necessary and legitimate to draw up a Charter of Principles to guide the continued pursuit of that initiative. While the principles contained in this Charter—to be respected by all those who wish to take part in the process and to organize new editions of the World Social Forum—are a consolidation of the decisions that presided over the holding of the Porto Alegre Forum and ensured its success, they extend the reach of those decisions and define orientations that flow from their logic.

1. 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.

2. The World Social Forum at Porto Alegre was an event localized in time and place. From now on, in the certainty proclaimed at Porto Alegre that “another world is possible,” it becomes a permanent process of seeking and building alternatives, which cannot be reduced to the events supporting it.

3. The World Social Forum is a world process. All the meetings that are held as part of this process have an international dimension.

4. The alternatives proposed at the World Social Forum stand in opposition to a process of globalization commanded by the large multinational corporations and by the governments and international institutions at the service of those corporations interests, with the complicity of national governments. They are designed to ensure that globalization in solidarity will prevail as a new stage in world history. This will respect universal human rights, and those of all citizens—men and women—of all nations and the environment and will rest on democratic international systems and institutions at the service of social justice, equality and the sovereignty of peoples.

5. The World Social Forum brings together and interlinks only organizations and movements of civil society from all the countries in the world, but it does not intend to be a body representing world civil society.

6. The meetings of the World Social Forum do not deliberate on behalf of the World Social Forum as a body. No-one, therefore, will be authorized, on behalf of any of the editions of the Forum, to express positions claiming to be those of all its participants. The participants in the Forum shall not be called on to take decisions as a body, whether by vote or acclamation, on declarations or proposals for action that would commit all, or the majority, of them and that propose to be taken as establishing positions of the Forum as a body. It thus does not constitute a
locus of power to be disputed by the participants in its meetings, nor does it intend to constitute the only option for interrelation and action by the organizations and movements that participate in it.

7. Nonetheless, organizations or groups of organizations that participate in the Forums meetings must be assured the right, during such meetings, to deliberate on declarations or actions they may decide on, whether singly or in coordination with other participants. The World Social Forum undertakes to circulate such decisions widely by the means at its disposal, without directing, hierarchizing, censuring or restricting them, but as deliberations of the organizations or groups of organizations that made the decisions.

8. The World Social Forum is a plural, diversified, non-confessional, non-governmental and non-party context that, in a decentralized fashion, interrelates organizations and movements engaged in concrete action at levels from the local to the international to build another world.

9. 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. Neither party representations nor military organizations shall participate in the Forum. Government leaders and members of legislatures who accept the commitments of this Charter may be invited to participate in a personal capacity.

10. The World Social Forum is opposed to all totalitarian and reductionist views of economy, development and history and to the use of violence as a means of social control by the State. It upholds respect for Human Rights, the practices of real democracy, participatory democracy, peaceful relations, in equality and solidarity, among people, ethnicities, genders and peoples, and condemns all forms of domination and all subjection of one person by another.

11. As a forum for debate, the World Social Forum is a movement of ideas that prompts reflection, and the transparent circulation of the results of that 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.

12. As a framework for the exchange of experiences, the World Social Forum encourages understanding and mutual recognition among its participant organizations and movements, and places special value on the exchange among them, particularly on all that society is building to centre economic activity and political action on meeting the needs of people and respecting nature, in the present and for future generations.

13. As a context for interrelations, the World Social Forum seeks to strengthen and create 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, and reinforce the humanizing measures being taken by the action of these movements and organizations.

14. The World Social Forum is a process that encourages its participant organizations and movements to situate their actions, from the local level to the national level and seeking active
participation in international contexts, as issues of planetary citizenship, and to introduce onto
the global agenda the change-inducing practices that they are experimenting in building a new
world in solidarity.

Approved and adopted in São Paulo, on April 9, 2001, by the organizations that make up the
World Social Forum Organizing Committee, approved with modifications by the World Social

Exhibit C

Struggle Against Imperialism Is Neither Fun Nor Picnic! It Is a Life and Death Practice!

The sources of funding to NGOs, their spending patterns, and their style of functioning are another important concern. Imperialist agencies and governments, religious organisations and MNCs provide funds to them, directly or indirectly. There is a lot of debate on the objectives of this funding. Some people are even indulging in misleading arguments about whether revolutionary organisations are not also getting funds from people’s “enemies.”

It is possible to argue that Indian people tend to innocently suspect everything that is foreign. But after the bitter experience of 200 years of colonial rule, exploitation, oppression and violence, they should recognise that charity is a weapon in the armoury of imperialists. Even if there is no conspiracy in the charity, and even if it is real philanthropy, they know that after all, it is only a one-day free meal scheme of the rich, who exploit them all through the year. The lower rung employees and local managers of NGOs may not be aware of the pros and cons of the funds and the real objectives of funding. They may innocently believe that it is social service. But the funding agencies have clear-cut aims. They fund research studies that assess the struggling consciousness of the people of this country, to amass data to suppress their movements. They fund to tame all those who participated in struggles and then came out. They fund education, health, minor irrigation, agriculture, etc, to silence people who may otherwise question the government on the abdication of its responsibilities. They fund to create an illusion that problems can be solved with tinkering, reforms, and charity and to divert people from the idea of transforming the system. They fund publicity campaigns that pretend to be progressive but are aimed at blunting the struggling spirit.

These funds are a vicious circle. What forces of globalisation do with the right hand, NGOs do with the left hand. There may be one or two NGOs which do not have this kind of funding and collect donations from individuals and working masses in imperialist countries. But that is only an exception. Ninety-eight per cent of NGOs get their funds from imperialist governments, religious organisations, and MNCs.

The question is also not about funding alone. What are the perspectives of funding agencies and funded organisations? Those funding NGOs do so to divert people from struggles and inculcate “service” in place of struggle, and to create an atmosphere where people will not question the state or seek to radically transform the system. NGOs are toeing this line. It may be true that some revolutionaries are collecting levies from the enemies also. But those funds have not blunted the struggling perspective. There is no occasion when revolutionary practice was abandoned because of funds. Instances of changed life-style due to funding are also few and far between. But in the case of NGOs, it is everyone’s knowledge how wastefully and conspicuously they spend. The life-styles of NGO managers clearly demonstrate that there is no relation between funds and serving the people. Organising a programme against globalisation depending on these NGOs is either ridiculous or deceptive.

Exhibit D

Excerpt from:
“Research Findings on Global Meetings: UNRISD and ABONG”

Ford Foundation Inter-Office Memorandum by Lisa Jordan
June 4, 2007

Dear Colleagues,

In the early part of this decade and most of the last the United Nations held a number of Summits on global issues. At the time the Foundation was spending upwards of $5 to $10 million on Summits with support to the NGO parallel conferences, hosting governments, national level dialogues, organizing, and support to prepcoms or preparatory meetings. Furthermore, civil society itself began to tread into the global political arena without governments and had created the World Social Forum. The World Economic Forum began to be seen as a key global dialogue that was shaping the global market place and Ford was wondering how it might engage in that process. Program Officers and Foundation Officers, apart from the political crisis which ensued from support to the World Conference Against Racism and Xenophobia (WCAR), began to feel overwhelmed and a bit of fatigue with these meetings. Program Officers began to question the value of these large global meetings both to the issues that were highlighted and to civil society.

Recognizing the need to take stock Ford made two research grants: one to the United Nations Research Institute on Social Development (UNRISD) and one to the National Association of Brazilian NGOs (ABONG)—host of the global secretariat of the WSF.

The objectives of the ABONG grant were to develop and implement a learning and evaluation plan for the World Social Forum. The Forum has consistently attracted participation from hundreds of Ford grantees, with significant representation in national and international governing boards. Three key questions were reviewed: What outcomes has the forum generated and what results can we expect from future Forums? How has the way in which the forum is organized contributed to outcomes? Moving forward, what governance structure can the Forum adopt to be more transparent and participatory, without losing clear impacts and outcomes? ABONG began to track all academic research underway about the Forum and to build a public database. Currently there are roughly 200 research projects in the database. The database became a tool for informing decision making at the International Council of the World Social Forum. Specific research was commissioned to survey participants and to review the financial structure of the Forum (both undertaken through IBASE with research support from University of Queensland, University of Paris, France Telecom R&D division, and Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul). A separate effort was undertaken by the Alliance for Independent Publishers in conjunction with ABONG to assess the outcomes of each theme of the 2005 World Social Forum. Researchers at the London School of Economics also reviewed the Forums. The entire Program Division of the Foundation through the offices of the Vice Presidents supported this grant. Some program officers and field offices also participated.
The research results of these grants show the following: The value of global gatherings for specific social movements is quite high (in particular those movements which have found their political space limited at the national level, like the women’s movement). Global meetings are also critical to the process of strengthening civil society at national and global levels, and as an interlocutor for governments and inter-governmental agencies.

**Research Findings on Global Meetings**

[...]

**B. ABONG**

This research has looked at the impact of the Forum on civil society; on global governance; and on social organizing. It found the following:

1. **The WSF has attracted increasing numbers of participants and is growing as a tool for social organizing.** It has had a significant and lasting impact on forms of social organizing. Participation grew from 20,000 people in 2001 to 155,000 in 2005. The idea of the Forum is also spreading. A conservative estimate notes that 109 regional, thematic, national and local Social Forums took place in 2004. These numbers do not include local Forums in Greece and Italy as there were too many to track. Social Forums have also launched business forums, Judges forums, parliamentary forums and social and economic forums run by municipalities (Lyons, France for example), and local authorities’ forums. Regional and global forum numbers are stabilizing while participation within those forums continues to grow. National, local and thematic forums continue to proliferate. The concept of the Forum appears to have widespread appeal and has touched the collective imagination.

2. **The Forum is one of very few global gatherings that are accessible to the ordinary person, leading some scholars to argue that it has taken globalization debates out of elite circles.** Research shows that the general public participates along with marginalized communities (Dalits in India for example). NGO and political party professionals constituted only 29% of participants in 2005. However, the actual experience of participants varies, with many reporting insufficient ability to be able to engage in activities and debates.

3. **The impacts of the Forum on civil society can be researched in terms of the consolidation of networks; cross-sector dialogues; the launch of new social movements; the birth of new social ideas; the launch of global social campaigns e.g. Make Poverty History/One Campaign; the questioning of traditional social frames used by activists; and the exploration of new multi-sector coalitions.** Taken one by one:
   
   a. Significant network consolidation has occurred in the fields of migration, education, natural resources (particularly pertaining to water), health, women’s rights (Feminist Dialogues), and open source/space resulting in some thematic forums being dedicated solely to these issues.
b. Cross-sector dialogues within civil society on peace, citizenship, democracy and globalization sprang directly from the Forums.

c. The World Assembly of Social Movements was born in the Forum and opens up the possibility to consolidate marginalized voices everywhere and demand full citizenship rights for all groups. In practice, researchers have traced the Social Forum to revitalizing track-two diplomacy between Pakistan and India. In a U.S. context it has resulted in African-Americans linking with Hispanics to create a U.S. Social Forum (U.S. Social Forum, 2006).

d. New ideas e.g. solidarity economies and economies based upon sharing – attracted thousands of participants at the Forums. Each has become a field in its own right over the past five years.

e. The Make Poverty History campaign and the Water for Life campaign were launched at a World Social Forum. The latter campaign was born through the consolidation of environmental justice networks. Both campaigns have had significant impacts on global governance (see below).

f. The Social Forums provide an opportunity broaden support for traditional movements (such as the feminist movement) to a wider array of actors.

g. The Forum has also had significant impacts on certain national movements.

4. The Forum has impacted participation and agendas in the World Economic Forum and in some UN gatherings like the World Water Forum. In the former, the topics taken under consideration in 2003 shifted to embrace a number of topics highlighted in the Social Forum the previous year. Furthermore, the WEF invited a number of NGOs to participate in an effort to counter the accusation that it was a closed arena of elites—a criticism emanating from the World Social Forum. Over the course of 2004/05 the World Water Forum adopted an agenda based on the idea of water as a resource fundamental to life rather than a commodity. The Forums have had less direct impact on the G8 governments and international institutions, though many scholars trace civil society organizing around these regimes to significant breakthroughs in relationships which occurred at the Forums. The Forums have not been accessible to the press in spite of a large media presence.