

# Methodological guidelines for WSF – Nairobi 2007 (proposal for debate)

## *Introduction*

In its short history, WSF, beyond the imaginary it arises, the mobilization that it is capable of generating in different parts of the world and together a huge diversity of social actors has been revealing as a fundamental space for the emergence of a new political culture. Large part of its potential stands on its own character as open space, founded on the respect by diversity and plurality among us. What gives vitality to WSF as a fabric of ideas and proposals in opposition to the capitalist neoliberal dominance is to acknowledge the principles and ethical values of liberty of choices and opinions, equality within difference, solidarity and interdependence, of participation and co-responsibility, non-violence, sharing and preservation of common goods of life and nature. Disputes, divergences, confrontation, consensus and dissension are part of WSF ambiance and conditions for generating a new political culture.

WSF has been a methodological laboratory since its first edition, in Porto Alegre, in 2001. It is a persistent quest of the “how to do” in order to give visibility to ideas and proposals of “another worlds”. Literally, on the previous editions until now, we have never repeated the same format. And we are learning very much on this constant innovation, looking the best forms for knowing and recognizing each other, exchanging experiences and confronting views, analysis and proposals, interlinking, building networks and coalitions, define campaigns, always with the same desire of thinking to action, without any protagonist *a priori* or exclusion. Rescuing the memory of this collective learning is a task to be pursued urgently by us.

This methodological note is inspired on the previous process, but intends above all to answer to the challenges that we are facing now, particularly the WSF in Nairobi, in January 2007. In March, during the IC meeting, as consequence of a proposal from the Methodology and Content Commissions which had gathered before, we have adopted as general methodological guideline for building WSF 2007 program as an expression of struggles and proposals in which we are engaged. This is the why we decided to launch a website for an world consultation – already in place – in order to give to us a preliminary frame of the great sets of citizenship actions that mobilize us. This initiative will lead us to advance into a new step, from organizing the program around themes to making this organization around actions and struggles for implementing alternatives. On Methodology and Content commissions last meeting, held in Rome, on July 7 and 8, together with members of the African Social Forum Council and the WSF Organizing Committee – Nairobi 2007, we debated some guidelines in order to complete this process in a good way and in time. Present note aims to systematize the methodological aspects debated and their implication, but it is fundamental that this note be seen as a subsidy. We are talking about a methodological proposal under construction, which needs to be corrected, increased, and improved. A new meeting of the Methodology and Content commissions is scheduled for the beginning of next September, in Nairobi. Anyways, some of the aspects of this proposal, due to the implications for the whole set of WSF process, can only be decided on the IC meeting, in October, which is the adequate space for that.

WSF in Nairobi is a fundamental moment in political and historical terms. We have the opportunity to consolidate WSF roots in the African continent, cradle of the humanity, making it even more inclusive of the people’s, culture and actors diversity. In Africa and from Africa the different fields of citizenship in action on building other worlds can emerge better. This will give a new dynamic to the WSF itself. Due to the forms of dominance, exclusion and devastation that neoliberal globalization imposes today to African people’s and countries, for the world citizenship this WSF is a committed and radical way to demonstrate the character and reach of its struggles.

## Proposal's presuppositions

1. The main goal is to give visibility and to strength the alternative proposals on the construction of other worlds; proposals that are, in some way, bases of concrete struggles. In this sense, it is a matter of passing from thematic terrains, as during the WSF 2005, to terrains of campaigns, actions and struggles in which we are engaged. The definition of those terrains will be made according to the aims of those actions, campaigns and struggles, taken her as concrete and live expression of effective alternatives to neoliberal capitalist globalization that we have been implementing. Given WSF character, the basic criteria of grouping de citizen struggles in order to form the terrains is the world dimension of their aims. This will be done take into account the essential local dynamic, the specificity of actors engaged in it and the forms for those struggles.

2. During definition of the terrains, it is essential to assure the conditions to incorporate the diversity of actors and plurality of perspectives, on the frame of the Charter of Principles that we adopt. In this way, each terrain must allow that dialog, confrontation and exchange be a practice of the encounter inter diverse actions, campaigns and struggles with common strategic goals, unleashing a process of wide convergences and divergences. It is not a matter of searching a least common denominator among the members of the terrain, which limits and excludes in some way. On the contrary: it is a matter of identifying challenges in confronting and exchanging, renewing themselves and strengthening mutually on this search of the maximum possibilities for each action, campaign or struggle, which can or cannot lead to make decisions on larger joint actions. The terrains are collective constructions that are taking dimensions and forms of their own participants.

3. In term of methodology, the big challenge is giving more emphasis to the WSF process, without losing sight of the importance of the event itself. Constructing spaces of campaigns, actions and struggles has meaning if it starts now, during WSF 2007 preparation. It will be expressed on the physical architecture, on program and on the event dynamic itself, in Nairobi, in January 2007, as a practical space of meeting, exchange, confrontation and, also, interlinking and collective planning of WSF process continuity. It will must to give us base for developing the WSF process during all the 2007 year, deepening, mapping and mobilizing even more campaigns, actions and struggles. ON the horizon, we have the WSF 2008 and after. It will make possible to build a world map of struggles and goals, according to the active citizenship that is engaged on the process.

4. Here it is fundamental to reassure the self management principle as base of activities organization and development within WSF. This principle has been decanted and consolidated as defining WSF character as open space itself. This is the why it is essential to make everything respecting this methodological and political principle. WSF participants are those who will define how WSF will looks like. The campaigns, actions and struggles terrains to be decided – and that will continue being under construction – are not impositions, but references and incentive in order to facilitate the encounter, interlinking and the process of aggregating activities. As many nuclei or aggregations within each terrain as necessary can be formed. Independent activities can also be developed. What we are intend to achieve with the terrains is giving the possibility of overcoming fragmentation and dispersion, due fundamentally to the lack of mutual recognition and dialogue than to the lack of will to meet, exchange, confront, interlink and acting jointly while respecting diversity. In this way, assured the principle of self management, in which each participant can register its activity on the terrain that it belongs to without losing its own identity. But, at the same time, it will be unleashed an active facilitating process in order that various possibilities of aggregations registered under a terrain can have the opportunity of being formed, always according its aims. The initial layout of the terrains will have as base the consultation that it is being carried out.

5. We also have been learning that each WSF has its specificity, due mainly to the local movements and organizations, essential in the WSF final organization. This is the why we have defined that

each WSF Organizing Committee to the coalition of actors formed as its local concrete support – in this case, the WSF Organizing Committee of Nairobi 2007 and the African Social Forum Council – can and must to define and develop activities that give a local flavor and, at the same time, bring to the whole set of participants their visions, concerns, demands and struggles. Those activities includes big conferences about African issues of world dimension, African personalities testimonies, round tables of dialogue and controversy among movements and participant’s organizations and people responsible institutionally by political parties, governs and multilateral organizations, as well as other kinds of expression, always intending to affirm an African perspective about other worlds. These activities, whose principle is the co-management among WSF organizers and participants, need to be valorized without competing with self organized activities, within the terrains. This is the why it is absolutely necessary to avoid simultaneity of those two types of activities. See below what is the proposition to solve that issue:

### ***Practical criteria***

#### **1. Consultation**

The consultation already launched is the base for the definition and distribution of campaigns, actions and struggles terrains on the WSF territory. Wider and diverse is the consultation (extended up to August 30, 2006) about who we are and what we do in world level, bigger will be the chances to define a set of consistent and legitimate terrains. It is essential to make a joint effort for a successful consultation. On the joint meeting of the Methodology and Content commissions with African Social Forum Council and Nairobi Organizing Committee, held in Rome, in July, an Working Group (WG) in charge of defining criteria and proposing the terrains based on the results of consultation was formed. The WG will meet on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2006 and will present its proposal for evaluation and definition by the Methodology and Content commissions, on September 4 and 5, 2006, both meetings in Nairobi.

#### **2. Registration**

Activities registration will start on the end of September 2006 and will last up to **XXXX**. Organizations and movements will do registration through the website, through form to be decided, and will indicate the terrain in which each proposed activity can be better placed. Special tools will be developed in order that those actors registering activities can know right away what are the other activities placed under the same terrain or in others. Following, the process of dialog in order to aggregate activities or interlinking activities start.

#### **3. Architecture of WSF program in Nairobi**

The proposal is that in 2007, during WSF, the terrains in which the WSF territory will be organized achieve consistency and emerge as true working fields, giving bases to the process along 2007, but having in mind also 2008 and after. Those terrains will be necessarily different, not only due to its goals, but also due to the size (number of activities and size of each one, nuclei/ set of aggregated activities etc.) The WSF territory will look for attending those specificities.

As basic criteria for program architecture, it is proposed that the full four days of activities in Nairobi (21 to 24) be divided in two parts: the first to take place on the first three days and the second, on the last day.

- On the first three days all the self organized activities will be held, on their respective venues, as well as the co-managed activities
- These three days will be divided in four (4) collective working sessions; the first three sessions will be dedicated to the self organized activities, on the correspondent terrains. The fourth and last every day session will be used for the co-managed activities. According what

was mentioned before, these activities would be large conferences about African issues with world dimension, testimonies of African personalities which are heritage of the humankind, round tables of dialog and controversy among movements and multilateral organizations, as well as other types of expression. On programming these activities, it must be searched a way in which each issue be complementary to the others, without overlapping themselves.

- The work will be carried out also by terrains and in self-organized manner during the fourth day. However, this day will be entirely open to participants, who will be able to expose their proposals to give continuity to campaigns, actions and struggles, to interlink themselves around future activities and to define their working plans for 2007 and the future.
- The morning of the fourth day will be dedicated to the presentation of diversity, with convergences and divergences that were raised, both through the diagnosis and through the alternative proposals being constructed, as well as actions, types of work and struggles and social actors behind them. The aim is to increase interlinks and possible aggregations.
- The afternoon of the fourth day will be dedicated to planning based on the convergences and interlinks built, always having in mind the actions and mobilizations with a world level impact, letting as clear as possible the goal of each action or set of actions. This planning can include proposals of approaching to new themes and the expansion of the process to areas of the world not reached so far. Participants would be invited also to reflect on that day – and to make proposition – about how the WSF could be organized in 2008, as well as in 2009. On this perspective, the different IC commissions could meet on this day also, in order to program the development of their own activities of support to the whole process.
- In this way, by the end of the WSF event we will have a big map of proposals of actions and new initiatives, we will have defined the process in which each terrain and, in its interior, each nuclei formed think to follow in order to empower its mobilization and struggle. We will have defined also conditions to enlarge the active mapping of campaigns, actions and struggles around each terrain, join activities, planning and organizations for the process continuity.

#### 4. Systematization and memory

It is essential to create practical mechanisms that allow us to register the process and feed it on the way to the future. Given the size that WSF normally acquires, it will be impossible to visualize everything, even within each terrain to be built. Systematization and memory of the work along its development is essential to allow that dialogue, exchange, confrontation and interlink, that is, the aggregation, happen and are used to strength the process in its continuity and give consistency to our diversity. The Methodology and Content commissions, with the Organizing Committee, must thing strategically in that activity. This is important also for our incidence on the public debate.

#### ***Implications of this proposal for the WSF continuity***

It is possible to have a notion of possible developments of the adoption of the above proposal in the WSF process and its future. This is not a matter for the Methodology and Content commission but it does need to be explicated so the International Council can also evaluate and deliberate about it. Our intention with the ideas that are following is only to facilitate and deep our reflection, extracting from the proposal for Nairobi 2007 the perspectives that it opens for the future of the WSF process.

We have already started a debate on how to proceed concerning 2008: if we must to continue with annual events, or if we must to carry out WSF events every two years or if we must intercalate a year with a global event and the other with polycentric/descentralized events or other possible format. From the proposal for WSF 2007 in Nairobi - which brings about terrains of campaigns, actions and struggles organized according its aims and having one day, the last one, to make an

evaluation of the interlinks, proposals and build a plan for the continuity - we can arrive, naturally, to a innovating and audacious solution concerning WSF in 2008, with developments at least for 2009. This is due to the fact that, with this proposal, the process of WSF itself became essential for the good success of the event.

If 8, 10 or 12 terrains are defined on the process towards Nairobi; if these terrains of campaigns, actions and struggles for aims achieve enough adhesion and internal diversity in terms of actors who hold them; if their plans point towards the empowerment of the same proposals that come out from their struggles and if they advance on the construction of new proposals based on the convergences and divergences, bringing to mobilization more and new actors then the possible format for the WSF 2008 we will start to be drawn.

A hypothesis could be, for instance, that WSF 2008 would be organized around terrains of the campaigns, actions and struggles, as much as viable. Forums would be carried out in continents, countries or cities where the movements and organizations who adhere to it consider that it presents the best political conditions to express the character of their proposals and struggles, as well as the effective possibility of carrying on the event and the opportunity of large local mobilization but with world dimension. The advantage of a WSF with multiple venues and in many regions of the world, if compared to the dynamics of the polycentric 2006, is the fact that each venue be more global and less regional due to the meaning of the struggle and to the participants, even if it takes place in a specific region. Each venue will be born and will develop with a global vocation of the WSF itself. In this sense, many simultaneous events, as many as the terrains that we organize and make viable, instead of dispersing efforts will give us the exact dimension of our world dimension, of our capacity of building and deepening proposals, as well as of the struggles that we are carrying concretely in order to build other worlds. In this way, a WSF as a citizen network that is able to embrace the whole world at the same time is being drafted.

For this reason and for creating a big echo and provoke a huge political impact, it is desirable that the different venues for WSF 2008 have some sort of simultaneity, let's say, on the end of January, in memoriam of the world citizenship calendar, with some sort of coincidence and as a counterpoint to Davos. Beside the mobilization and the event itself, by giving visibility to the process of exchange, confrontation and interlink around proposals WSF 2008 would be a moment of evaluation and planning for the whole year, up to 2009 at least. WSF 2009, in its turn, would be then a unique event, again on the end of January, having as a center the map of the citizenship in action, in the extension that we reach till there. This real map, a true report of the world citizenship, would have as base the terrains of campaigns, actions and struggles on building other worlds, systematized, memorized and visualized in order to allow to think news audacious possible tasks.

*August 08, 2006*