

THE CONTOURS OF SOLIDARITY AND DIVISION AMONG GLOBAL MOVEMENTS

**Christopher Chase-Dunn, Christine Petit, Richard Niemeyer,
Robert A. Hanneman and Ellen Reese**

Abstract

This is a study of the contours of solidarity and division among the transnational social movements that represent the progressive forces of contemporary global civil society. We examine the relative sizes of these movements, their growth or decline over time, and the structure of links and disconnection among them. We also identify movements that serve as bridges between otherwise disconnected movements. Our research is based on network studies of web page linkages between movement organizations in 2004 and 2006, and on inter-movement participation of individuals who attended the 2005 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. Both the web and survey analyses of transnational social movements show that the network of movements is multi-centric and does not have large factions. It is a robust structure, and cannot be easily coordinated by a single hierarchy. Thus, the discourse about diversity, tolerance and horizontal forms of organization that has been an important feature of the Social Forum process is quite appropriate to the network structure of the movement of movements.

This article examines the organizational space that is represented by participants in the Porto Alegre World Social Forum of 2005 and the movements in which the progressive elements of global civil society participate. In this study we seek to understand the structure of connections among progressive transnational movements. For this purpose we analyze both the results obtained from a survey of participants in the WSF05 in Porto Alegre and materials published on the World Wide Web. We examine the contours of the social movement connections found among World Social Forum (WSF) participants, and examine whether patterns of participation at WSF05 are consistent with the web presence of social movements.

There is a large scholarly literature on networks or coalitions within and between social movements (e.g. Carroll and Ratner 1996; Krinsky and Reese 2006; Obach 2004; Reese, Petit, and Meyer forthcoming; Rose 2000; Van Dyke 2003). Our study is theoretically motivated by this literature as well as by the world-systems analysis of world revolutions (Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein 1989; Boswell and Chase-Dunn 2000) and Antonio Gramsci's analysis of ideological hegemony, counter-hegemonic

movements and the formation of historical blocks [see also Carroll and Ratner 1996; Carroll 2006a, 2006b].

Social movement organizations may be integrated both informally and formally. Informally, they are connected by the voluntary choices of individual persons to be active participants in multiple movements. Such linkages enable learning and influence to pass among movement organizations, even when there may be limited official interaction or leadership coordination. In the descriptive analysis below, we assess the extent and pattern of informal linkage by surveying attendees at the WSF. At the formal level, organizations may provide legitimacy and support to one another, and strategically collaborate in joint action. The extent of formal cooperation among movements within “the movement” may be limited by, and reflective of, the informal connections.

The extent and pattern of linkages among the memberships and among the organizational leaderships of social movement organizations may be highly consequential. Some forms of connection [e.g. “small world” networks (Watts 2003)] allow the rapid spread of information and influence; other forms of connection (e.g. division into “factions” by region, gender, or issue area) may inhibit communication and make coordinated action more difficult. The way in which social movement organizations are linked also suggest that some forms of pan-movement governance may be more effective than others. For example, hierarchies and corporatist arrangements may work well for a field of organizations that is clustered by function (e.g. ecological movements, women’s movement, labor movements, etc.). If there are more horizontal linkages among movement organizations and movement participants, hierarchical coordination may be ineffective.

The World Social Forum Survey

We used previous studies by Starr (2000), Fisher and Ponniah (2003) and Petit (2004) to construct a list of social movements that we believed would be represented at the 2005 World Social Forum. The movements that we studied are listed in Table 1.

We asked participants which of these movements they strongly identified with, and with which were they actively involved. Our survey focused on the social characteristics of participants, their political activism, and their political views. Our six-page survey asked participants’ opinions on a set of questions designed to capture the main political divisions within the global justice movement described in previous research (Byrd 2005; Brecher, Costello, and Smith 2002; Starr 2000; Fisher and Ponniah 2003; Teivainen 2004). We collected a total of 639 surveys in three languages: English, Spanish, and Portuguese. [Our project web page contains our 2005 survey instrument. See <http://www.irows.ucr.edu/research/tsmstudy.htm>]

- ☐ Alternative media/culture
- ☐ Anarchist
- ☐ Anti-corporate
- ☐ Anti-globalization
- ☐ Alternative Globalization/Global Justice
- ☐ Human Rights/Antiracism
- ☐ Communist
- ☐ Environmental
- ☐ Fair Trade/Trade Justice
- ☐ Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer Rights
- ☐ Health/HIV
- ☐ Indigenous
- ☐ Labor
- ☐ National Sovereignty/National Liberation
- ☐ Peace/Anti-war
- ☐ Food Rights/Slow Food
- ☐ Socialist
- ☐ Women's/Feminist
- ☐ Other(s), Please list _____

Table 1: List of Movements in the 2005 WSF Survey

Although we were unable to survey all linguistic groups, we sought to ensure that we had a broad sample of WSF participants; we conducted our survey at a wide variety of venues, including the registration line, the opening march, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's speech (which drew tens of thousands), various kinds of thematic workshops, solidarity tents at multiple locations, outdoor concerts, and the youth camp. Our survey of attendees at the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre is not a perfectly representative sample, though we tried to make it as representative as possible given the limitations of collecting responses during the meetings.

Background Characteristics of WSF05 Participants

An earlier survey of the 2001 WSF participants by Fundacao Perseu Abramo (FPA) found that most attendees were from South America followed by Western Europe; fifty-five percent were Brazilian (Schönleitner 2003:137). The Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analyses' (IBASE) carried out a survey of the 2005 WSF attendees. The IBASE survey, which employed a stratified sample based on information from the WSF's

registration database, estimated an even higher proportion of respondents were Brazilian (80%). In our 2005 sample, which showed an almost identical composition to FPA's results, most respondents were from South America (69%), followed by Western Europe (10%) and North America (8%); fifty-five percent were Brazilian. Only 7% of all respondents were from Asia and less than 2% were from Africa.

Similar to the results obtained by FPA (Schönleitner 2003) and IBASE (2005), we found that 50% had at least 16 years of education and that 57% were students, mostly in universities. We found that nearly 51% of those with educational degrees were trained in the social sciences. We also found that there were slightly more men than women among our respondents.

The FPA and IBASE surveys found that most WSF participants identify as being left of center in their political orientation and are politically active. For example, FPA found that 81% of their respondents identified as leftists, extreme leftists, or center leftists (Schönleitner 2003: 129). We also found that most of our respondents expressed leftist views. In contrast to claims that the WSF has been co-opted by moderate forces, the majority of WSF participants that we surveyed expressed a desire to abolish and replace capitalism. Our survey also found that 66% of respondents participated in at least two protests in the past year, with nearly one-third participating in five or more protests. Most respondents claimed that they actively participated in at least two social movements.

Participation in Social Movements at the World Social Forum

The size distribution of the eighteen movements in terms of number of participants who say they are actively involved is shown in Table 2. The size distribution of movement selections in Table 2 shows that the highest percentages of selections were made of human rights (12%), environmental (11%), alternative media/culture (10%) and peace (9%). Some activists refuse to participate in the World Social Forum (or hold counter-events) and some others (those advocating armed struggle) are excluded by the WSF Charter. These factors might account for the small numbers of some of the movements (e.g. anarchists and communists). It is said that anarchists do not fill out questionnaires, but we had very few refusals and 20 of our respondents indicated that they are actively involved anarchists.

We also analyzed the responses to the question about strong "identification with movements" to compare these with the "actively involved" question shown in Table 2. More than twice as many people indicate "identification" as opposed to "active involvement", but the relative percentages are very similar, and the network results (below) on the identification matrix are also very similar to those found for active involvement. The UCINET QAP routine for correlating two network matrices produces a Pearson's r correlation coefficient of .909 between the identification and active

involvement matrices. [All network calculations employed the UCINET 6.130 software package (Borgatti, Everett & Freeman 2002).

	number of selections	% of total selections
alternative media/culture	133	10%
Anarchist	20	2%
anti-corporate	43	3%
anti-globalization	68	5%
global justice	81	6%
Human rights	161	12%
Communist	32	2%
Environmental	142	11%
fair trade	67	5%
queer rights	37	3%
Health/HIV	52	4%
Indigenous	48	4%
Labor	72	6%
national liberation	38	3%
Peace	113	9%
slow food	38	3%
Socialist	87	7%
Feminist	66	5%
Total Responses	1298	100%
Number of Respondents	560	

Table 2: Total Numbers and Percentages of Movements Selected as Actively Involved.

Table 3 shows the extent to which survey respondents indicated that they were actively involved in multiple movements.

Number of Movements	Frequency	%
None	112	20.0
1.00	130	23.2
2.00	96	17.1
3.00	89	15.9
4.00	41	7.3
5.00	35	6.3
6.00	16	2.9
7.00	18	3.2
8.00	11	2.0
9.00	3	.5
10.00	2	.4
11.00	3	.5
12.00	1	.2
13.00	1	.2
14.00	2	.4
Total	560	100.0

Table 3: Number of Movements in which Each Respondent Indicated Actively Involvement

While fully 20% of respondents reported that they were not actively involved in any movement, the median response was two; there is a strong tendency for WSF participants to forge links among social movements by co-participation. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that they are actively involved in two or more movements. The distribution of participation is exponential. This suggests that there is a good deal of variation in the degree of activism among WSF participants, a very common finding in all research on social movement and voluntary organizational participation. Those respondents who are involved in multiple movements may be more likely to be synergists who see the broad connections between different movements and who are more likely to play an active role in facilitating coalitions and collective action within the larger “movement of movements.”

Patterns of Linkage among the Social Movements

We employed two different approaches to analyzing the structure of connections among the movements at the WSF05: bivariate correlations and formal network analysis. First we examined the Spearman's rank-order correlations among the pairs of movements in which respondents said they are actively involved. These correlations tell us how frequently the participants in one movement had similar profiles of participation in other movements. That is, are participants in one particular movement (e.g. anarchism) more likely (positive correlation) or less likely (negative correlation) to participate in another particular movement (e.g. environmentalism). The correlations among movements are based on the patterns of choices of those 418 respondents who say that they are involved in two or more movements.

Of the 153 unique correlations ($18 \times 17/2$) there are only seven that are negative, and these are small and not statistically significant. That is, there is an overwhelming tendency for solidarity; participation in one movement almost always makes participation in any other more likely – albeit to highly varying degrees. Seventy-eight of the correlations are positive and statistically significant at the .01 level. The correlations are not high. The largest correlation is .488 between the anti-globalization and the anti-corporate movements. The other rather significant positive correlations (above .3) are anti-corporate/alternative globalization; anti-corporate/peace; and queer rights/health-HIV.

We worried that the presence of respondents who had not checked any of the movements might be lowering the correlations and reducing significance levels, and that some of these might be from incomplete questionnaires rather than real responses to the questions. Indeed 20% (112) of the respondents checked none of the movements as ones in which they were actively involved. But our fears were allayed by the fact that respondents were far more likely to have checked at least some movements with which they strongly identified (see question above on pp. 3-4). Only 1.3% (8) of the

questionnaires had no movements selected as strongly identified. This means that almost all of the 112 respondents who checked no movements as those in which they were actively involved were actually reporting a real situation and our results for the involvement matrix should be accurate.

These findings are consistent with other research that suggests that cross-movement coalitions tend to develop around overlapping goals and common threats (Krinsky and Reese 2006; Obach 2004; Rose 2000; Van Dyke 2003). It is likely that overlapping goals and common grievances help to draw individual activists into multiple movements. For example, the anti-globalization and alternative globalization movement focuses greatly on opposing the practices of multinational corporations, while many queer activists are concerned about addressing the high rates of HIV among gay men and improving access to health care. While the aims of anti-corporate and peace movements seem quite distinct, many activists view them as interconnected; many believe, for example, that the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are mainly benefiting corporate interests (namely, the multinational oil corporations and government contractors involved in rebuilding these countries). Indeed, as Obach's (2004: 24) research on coalitions between environmental and labor organizations suggests, brokers who build cross-movement coalitions "typically occupy a position that bridges the divide between the distinct groups allowing them to communicate with both sides and frame issues in ways that resonate with both constituencies." Obach (2004: 213) found that "those who played an active role in forming inter-movement coalitions expressed strong interest in the issues of both sides." Those involved in multiple movements are thus well positioned to help foster greater collaboration among other participants in those movements.

Table 4 shows the frequency of co-participation in the 18 social movements among WSF survey respondents.

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
		Alt	Ana	Ant	Ant	Glo	Hum	Com	Env	Fai	Que	Hea	Ind	Lab	Nat	Pea	Slo	Soc	Fem
1	Alt. Media	133	11	14	21	27	45	7	46	19	11	16	21	18	15	35	18	20	19
2	Anarchist	11	20	8	9	8	5	6	7	2	7	6	5	3	2	7	4	5	6
3	Anti-Corporate	14	8	43	29	24	21	9	15	13	6	7	10	13	6	27	9	7	10
4	Anti-Globalization	21	9	29	68	29	34	16	21	22	9	11	14	19	10	33	16	18	14
5	Global Justice	27	8	24	29	81	38	10	29	27	9	9	12	20	14	35	12	17	16
6	Human Rights	45	5	21	34	38	161	8	54	34	16	26	24	29	19	62	19	29	37
7	Communist	7	6	9	16	10	8	32	10	5	7	4	7	10	6	11	3	14	7
8	Environmental	46	7	15	21	29	54	10	142	28	13	27	26	18	15	37	23	24	22
9	Fair Trade	19	2	13	22	27	34	5	28	67	9	11	16	16	9	32	13	14	11
10	Queer Rights	11	7	6	9	9	16	7	13	9	37	16	7	6	6	14	4	12	13
11	Health/HIV	16	6	7	11	9	26	4	27	11	16	52	13	8	4	17	11	8	13
12	Indigenous	21	5	10	14	12	24	7	26	16	7	13	48	15	9	15	11	8	12
13	Labor	18	3	13	19	20	29	10	18	16	6	8	15	72	12	25	9	19	15
14	Nat. Liberation	15	2	6	10	14	19	6	15	9	6	4	9	12	38	14	6	11	12
15	Peace	35	7	27	33	35	62	11	37	32	14	17	15	25	14	113	18	20	24
16	Slow Food	18	4	9	16	12	19	3	23	13	4	11	11	9	6	18	38	4	10
17	Socialist	20	5	7	18	17	29	14	24	14	12	8	8	19	11	20	4	87	13
18	Feminist	19	6	10	14	16	37	7	22	11	13	13	12	15	12	24	10	13	66

Table 4: Numbers of Linkages among Movements Based on Those who say they are Active Involved in Two or more Movements

The average number of links (i.e. persons who participate in both movements) per movement pair is 16. It is apparent that not all movements are equally linked. But Table 4 confirms the results of the correlational analysis discussed above. Just as we found that there are no negative correlations, Table 4 shows that all the movements have at least some links with all the other movements. The smallest number of links is two, between the anarchists and the national liberationists. There are no zero cells in Table 4.

Another way of examining the pattern of linkages is to choose a “cut-off” point that defines strong versus less strong ties between movement pairs. We selected a tie strength cut-off of one-standard deviation above the mean to define a “strong” linkage. Using this cutoff, we display the “strong ties” among the movements in Figure 1.

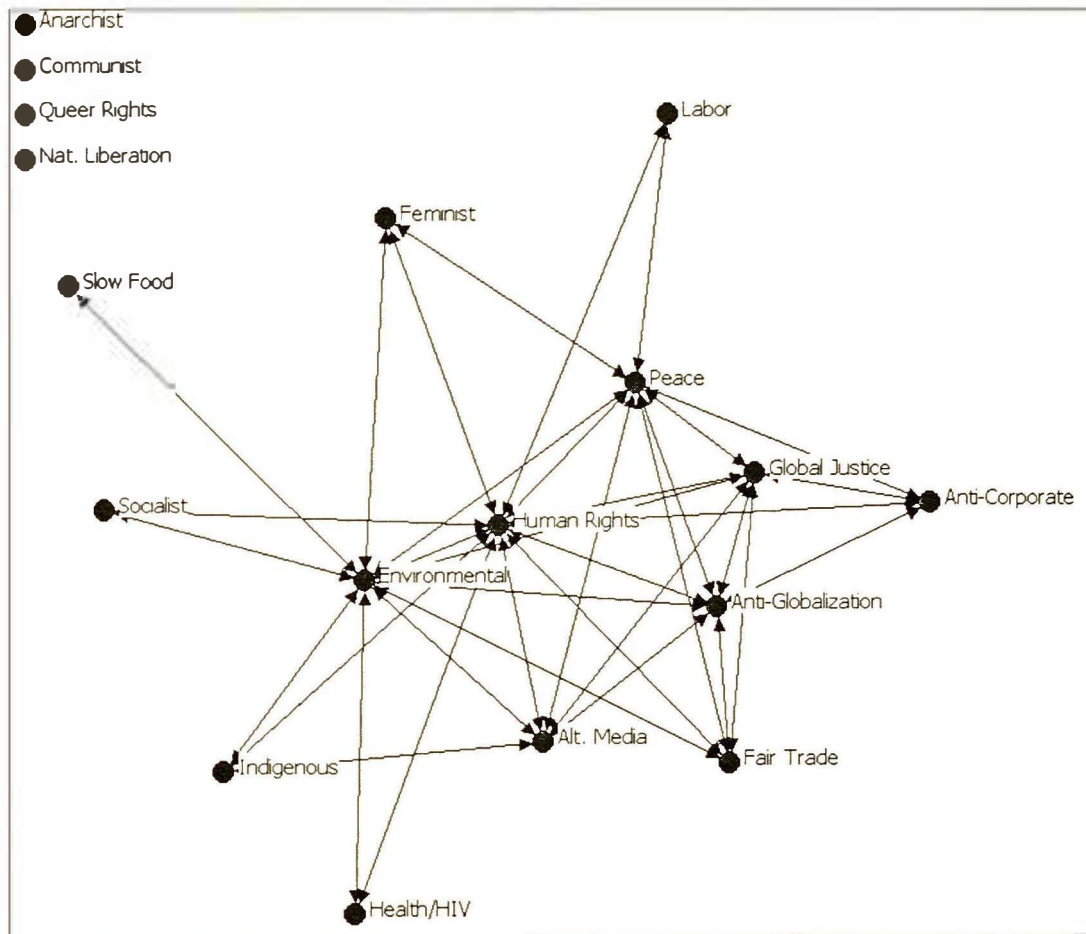


Figure 1: The network of WSF movement linkages.

Even with this rather high cutoff all of the movements are connected by only one degree of separation, except for the Anarchist, Communist, and Queer Rights movements

movements. They are not included in the network graph because they fall below the dichotomization point in terms of movement connections using the one standard deviation above the mean cut-off.

Figure 1 shows the centrality of Human Rights and Environmental movements in the network of transnational social movements represented at the World Social Forum. It also indicates that the Peace, Alternative Media, Anti-Globalization and Global Justice movements are quite central. These six movements are “hubs” or an “inner circle”. But the overall structure is multicentric. The pattern is not very hierarchical. No single movement is the most “inclusive” or a “peak organization” for all of the others.

A somewhat more precise way of examining the network pattern is to divide the movements into “core” and “periphery”. A network “core” is a set of nodes possessing a high density of connections amongst themselves, while a network “periphery” is characterized as possessing few interconnections. Nodes in the periphery are linked to nodes in the core, but not strongly linked to one another.

Table 5 shows the “coreness” of the social movements calculated by the UCINET routine of “multiplicative coreness” (Borgatti et al. 2002).

	coreness
human rights	.44
Peace	.36
Environmental	.35
alternative media/culture	.30
global justice	.27
anti-globalization	.25
fair trade	.23
Labor	.20
Feminist	.20
Socialist	.19
anti-corporate	.18
Indigenous	.17
health/HIV	.16
slow food	.15
national liberation	.13
queer rights	.12
Communist	.10
Anarchist	.07

Table 5: Multiplicative Coreness in the Network of Movements

The mean level of multiplicative coreness for the social movements is .22, with a standard deviation of .09. Based upon a cutting point of one standard deviation above the mean, Human Rights, Environmental, and Peace movements represent the core, while one standard deviation below the mean indicates that the Anarchist, Communist, and Queer Rights movements are the periphery. This said, there is a rather even distribution of scores with no radical breaks between core and non-core groups. Although prior

research indicates that most WSF participants identify as leftists, relatively few of those of our respondents who are involved in multiple movements, are actively involved in the anarchist or communist movements.

Another way to look at the network structure is to examine what would happen if a node were removed. This approach allows us to see the extent to which the network is “robust” to the defection of a particular movement, and to identify which movements act most frequently as “bridges” and “brokers” in the network. A lambda grouping identifies those nodes in a network that, if removed, would result in the largest decomposition of its structure (Hanneman and Riddle 2005). In other words, these are the nodes possessing the largest number of connections with other nodes in the network. Figure 2 displays a cluster analysis of the similarities among the movements in the roles that they play in preventing factionalization of the movement of movements.

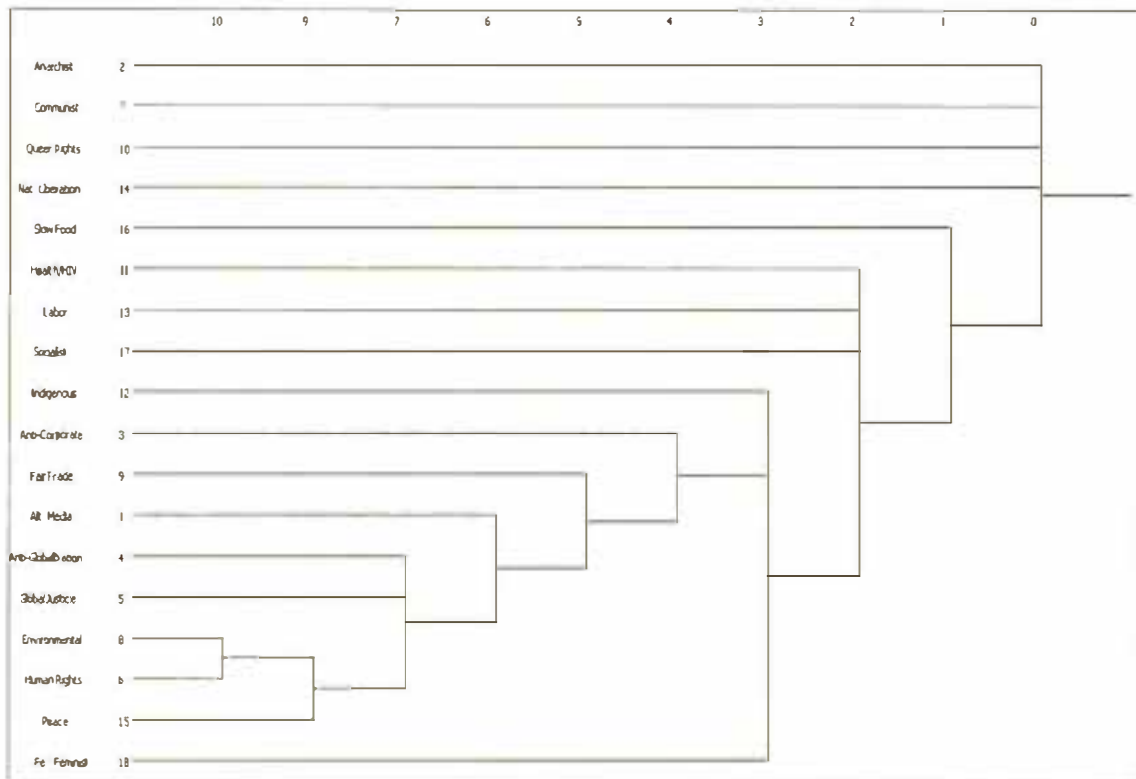


Figure 2: Lambda Grouping for the Movement Network (dichotomized at one standard deviation above the mean)

At the one standard deviation dichotomization point, the most important and most similar nodes in the network of movements are the Environmental, Human Rights, and

Peace groups. This is not surprising given the broad reach of these movements. Arguably, many of the issues addressed by other movements could be understood as a subset of human rights, while the impacts of environmental degradation, such as global warming and pollution, affect everyone.

Next most critical in holding the movement of movements together are the Anti-globalization and Global Justice movements. Near the top of Figure 2 we see that many of the other social movements play lesser roles in connecting the graph.

Web Pages and Social Movements

To what extent does the World Social Forum provide a window to understand the participation of the broader global constituencies of the movements? That is, are the patterns of commitment and observed at WSF likely to generalize to the much larger number of global citizens who were not able to attend? One way of getting at this question is to compare the pattern of involvement of WSF participants to the prominence of movement organizations in cyberspace.

Christine Petit (2004) conducted a Google search engine project to study networks among social movements as represented by texts available on the World Wide Web in 2004. She has recently replicated her study in order to make it possible to ascertain change over time and so that we can compare the results with our survey evidence from the World Social Forum of 2005. Table 6 shows counts of the web hits of the Google search engine for each of the social movement in 2004 and 2006, and compares these to the reported active involvement of WSF survey participants in 2005. For Table 6 we combined the fair trade movement and trade justice movement web hits to make the Petit study comparable with the WSF survey, and we did the same with national liberation and sovereignty movements.

The comparison between web hits and reported movement involvements at the WSF show that the relative sizes are rather similar for ten of the sixteen movements that are compared. The Spearman rank-order correlation between the web presence of movements in 2004 and 2006 is .93. The rankings of movement involvement among WSF participants are positively associated with web presence, with rank order correlations between WSF and 2004 and 2006 web presence equal to .48 and .38, respectively. This result suggests that there is quite a bit of consistency between the size distribution of reported movement involvements at the WSF and the size distribution of movement pages on the Internet.

The correspondence, however, is far from perfect. Six of the movements display substantial differences between web hits and numbers of reported active involvements at the World Social Forum. Human rights, global justice, indigenous rights and fair trade are better represented at the WSF than on the web. Labor, peace and feminism are significantly less represented at the WSF than on the web.

	July 2004		WSF 2005	July 2006		% change in hits from 2004 to 2006
	Web hits	%	% movement selections	Web hits	%	
Anarchist	25,100	1.7%	1.5%	395,000	1.5%	0.0%
anti-corporate	1,780	.1%	3.0%	15,100	.05%	-0.1%
anti-globalization	30,300	2%	5.0%	291,000	1%	-1.0%
Global justice	11,500	.8%	6.0%	112,000	.4%	-0.4%
Human rights	36,500	2.5%	12.0%	362,000	1.4%	-1.1%
Communist	40,000	2.7%	2.0%	425,000	1.6%	-1.1%
environmental	146,000	10%	11.0%	2,820,000	11%	1.0%
fair trade/trade justice	14,830	1%	5.0%	159,200	.6%	-0.4%
gay rights	37,100	2.5%	3.0%	1,830,000	7%	5.5%
Indigenous	8,090	.5%	4.0%	120,000	.5%	0.0%
Labor	400,000	27%	6.0%	6,220,000	24%	-3.0%
national liberation/sovereignty	21,610	1.5%	3.0%	87,600	.3%	-1.2%
Peace/anti-war	382,000	26%	9.0%	7,950,000	31%	5.0%
Slow food	10,500	.7%	3.0%	199,000	.8%	0.1%
Socialist	52,000	3.5%	7.0%	952,000	4%	0.5%
women's/feminist	266,000	18%	5.0%	3,940,000	15%	-3.0%
Total	1,483,310			25,877,900		

[Petit included civil rights movements in her web study but we took it out of Table 6 because this term was not used in the WSF study. And she did not include health/HIV or alternative media in her study so these do not appear in Table 6.]

Table 6: Internet Hits in 2004 and 2006 Compared with Movement Sizes Obtained from Survey Questionnaires at the World Social Forum in 2005.

Movement size as indicated by web hits changes somewhat between 2004 and 2006. Looking at the change scores for the web hits (the last column in Table 6), we see that the biggest increases in percentage of total web hits are for gay rights (5.5%) and the peace movement (5%). Both the gay rights and the peace movements were addressing especially salient public issues in the period from 2004 to 2006; international peace protests emerged in response to the U.S. war in Iraq, while the global HIV crisis and the international spread of same-sex marriage challenges drew attention to the rights of gays and lesbians. The percentage of total web hits for the women's movement and the labor movement declined by 3%, but the percentage of hits for the rest of the movements (other than gay rights, peace, women's and labor) stayed about the same while the total numbers

of hits increased dramatically between 2004 and 2006. The general stability of the relative sizes despite the rapid growth over the two year period and the fairly good match with the WSF survey data increases our confidence that we are measuring something significant about the discursive space of transnational movements with the web page counts.

Conclusions

Our research has important implications for the future of the global movement of movements. The multi-centric structure of the network implies a robust set of linkages that are not easily dismembered by disagreements or dirty tricks. The network is held together by multiple overlapping connections and there are no relatively autonomous large factions in the network. For this reason, the coalitions that come out of the World Social Forum process should be resistant to splits. The non-hierarchical structure may make it difficult for effective collective action because there are multiple leadership groups at the core. This is one reason why the discourse about embracing diversity and horizontal leadership that has been so prevalent in the World Social Forum process is important and must be taken seriously (e.g., see Byrd 2005; Smith et al. 2007). Della Porta (2005) found, in focus groups with members of the Florence Social Forum, that the development of “tolerant identities” has been an important source of political unity within the global justice movement. Such identities are “characterized by inclusiveness and positive emphasis upon diversity and cross-fertilization,” that has been forged through collaboration on campaigns for “concrete” goals, an emphasis on dialogue and participatory decision-making processes rather than unity around ultimate goals, and identification with multiple movements, organizations, and social categories (della Porta 2005: 187). Experimentation with new organizing strategies and organizational forms are not just ways of exhibiting distance with regard to earlier world revolutionary efforts. These new forms are necessary because of the multi-centric nature of the movement of movements.

Our network analysis of transnational social movements shows that the movement of movements is multicentric and does not have large factions. It is a robust structure, but it cannot be easily coordinated by a single hierarchy. Thus the emphasis on diversity, tolerating political differences, and horizontal forms of organization that has been an important feature of the World Social Forum process is quite appropriate to the context of the network structure of the movement of movements.

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