

What Makes Us Inspired in the World Social Forum Process

An open letter written by global activists: another world is still necessary - and possible!

Dear friends and activist in the World Social Forum process, meeting in Porto Alegre 17th to 21st January 2017, and beyond.

This letter was initiated at two gatherings at the Norwegian Social Forum, held in October 2016 in Oslo. During these meetings activists from different parts of the world discussed the World Social Forum, and decided that we would like to take the initiative for a broad and open discussion about the World Social Forum process.

We are all are part of this unique process. And in order to move ahead in the coming years, input on the future of the World Social Forum from each of us is necessary. We would therefore like to share with you our concerns and proposal for follow up.

The world in which we build alternatives is quite different from what it was when the World Social Forum first met in 2001. The corporate and financial global exploitation denouncing democratic control has only grown stronger. Neo-liberal globalization continues, and the activists and movements engaged with the World Social Forum are still fighting for another world in an even more challenging and brutal reality.

Still today, we face the same struggles everywhere. The fight to mitigate climate change is global in its nature. The struggles for the right to food, nature, human rights, peace, housing, gender equality, organizational freedom and many more, are also global. Struggles may appear local, national or regional. But we know that more often than not, these struggles are linked around the globe. And it is the same interests, corporations and structures attacking local people and resources, everywhere from Norway to Brazil.

The state of the world today tells us that the need for, and relevance of, bringing together, mobilizing, and energizing the counter-movements to neo-liberal globalization is greater than ever. It is long overdue that we whom relate to the World Social Forum reflect on what we do with this new global reality – what we have reached together, what we have not reached, and the way ahead.

We need to evaluate and consider how this counter-hegemonic process can be facilitated and strengthened in the struggles ahead. Within the vision and expectations of the World Social Forum, and within the diversity of interconnected movements and struggles on different levels.

We are inspired by the multitude of national, regional and thematic forums, as well as other initiatives and networks that has been born out of the World Social Forum, and still is a part of the World Social Forum process. In this we find hope for the future of the struggle for a just world.

A- Concerns that we would like to share with all of you meeting

1. We believe, that there is first a need to discuss and evaluate the relevance and impact of the World Social Forum in general, given these worsening global realities. We refer here to the World Social Forum, not as a series of global events, but as a permanent and horizontal process of intercommunication, between participants who are seeking and building alternatives to today's expanding realities of neo-liberal globalization.

2. We acknowledge the importance of discussing structures and administrative practices in the World Social Forum, the International Council, and other facilitating organs, and expect that they be focusing on ways ahead for the global process.
3. Following the 2016 WSF in Montreal, many of us have had our own evaluation of the event. However, instead of discussing only the last World Social Forum or upcoming World Social Forum event, we think it is necessary to move the focus of discussions to the relevance of the World Social Forum as a global process.
4. In this perspective, we feel there is a need to exchange experiences about how to develop the vision and practice of the World Social Forum, as much as possible, at all levels where this process exists. Essential in the discussion we propose are the local, regional and thematic processes that act under the World Social Forum charter of principles. They need to be further involved in this discussion, which should not be limited to International Council members, large organizations or facilitating organs.

B- Our proposal for this discussion:

1. We would like to propose an exchange both on the relevance and future of the World Social Forum itself in today's new global reality, and how to make it more visible, accessible and attractive to many more citizens of this world.
Each group or movement acting under the World Social Forum charter can contribute in this exchange, including the organizing committee of each social forum, young volunteers, local, regional and thematic forums, as well as initiatives and networks that have been born out of the World Social Forum process.
2. Coming strategic meetings related to the World Social Forum should focus on this discussion. Most important on how to engage broader interest and participation in the discussion, and the facilitation of platforms to bring the discussion further. Input should be collected and elaborated into concrete ideas and proposals to develop the ways forward.
3. Finally as a consequence of this discussion process, strategic meetings should be set up to focus on these concrete ideas and plans, and thereafter develop the structures deemed relevant to implement shared tasks and plans.

We hope that by sharing this brief letter with you, we can contribute to the reflections on the World Social Forum process so that it may gain the necessary focus for the future. We like to underline that the meeting in Porto Alegre is not the final destination for this letter, but the starting point. And we hope that these questions can bring forth new ideas, and that the answers and plans will come through broad and open discussions.

Another world is still necessary - and possible!

Norwegian Social Forum and concerned friends of the World Social Forum