
Reviewer: N. Eduardo Bustos Nájera, Political Science, Universidad de Chile, Santiago de Chile, Chile

We know what you're against, but what are you for? This is the initial question formulated since the World Social Forum (WSF), which introduces this book on the significance of the WSF process. This book is conceived as a great tool for a non-activist reader interested in understanding the WSF process as a public space for a global and democratic resistance.

This book analyzes the causes and motivations that result in the creation of the WSF in 2001 in Porto Alegre, Brazil and the following Social Forums. The WSF is the culmination of political actions for human rights, labor rights, social justice, and ecological preservation. It is resistance against global neoliberalism.

WSF is the answer to social dissatisfaction accumulated around the world. It converged on a democratic and public space of speeches with a common end. The political diversity of WSF participants can be described as internal tension, resulting in struggles. This book analyzes debates within the WSF about: type of organizations (vertical vs. horizontal), strategies (global vs. local), tactics (reform, transformation or abolishment of international institutions), and geographic views (north vs. south).

The authors incorporate a survey conducted by the University of California – Riverside during the 2005 WSF in Porto Alegre. It shows the participants views and political tendencies, and some ideas about the type of organization and strategies of the WSF. The results of this survey allow the authors to conclude that the WSF offers a new form of political organization where a diversity of actors converge to construct an open and inclusive global space for promoting social justice and human rights and speaking out against neoliberal capitalism.

This is one of the most important books to read to learn about the history of WSF, the perception of its participants, and actual debates taking place at the forums. Institutions of government can adopt Arendt’s conceptualization of public spaces, as the social forums do.
The survey the authors incorporated provides an understanding of the general perception of the WSF participants. The survey is not detailed enough to examine internal demands about the organization and strategies, so would be useful to include qualitative research that provides more depth beyond the general points of view.

Academics or other readers interested in social movements and global justice will find an excellent intellectual platform in this book, allowing them to develop new interest and probably new research about the WSF process.