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Barbara Klugman

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Parallel or Integrated 'Other Worlds': Possibilities for Alliance-building for Sexual and Reproductive Rights

By Barbara Klugman¹

Abstract

The author proposes that the paradigms within which struggles for reproductive and sexual rights are waged fail to engage with those dimensions of sexuality and reproduction that are inscribed into the broader organization of social and economic life nationally and globally. In the case of reproductive rights she argues that the possibility of delivering quality reproductive health services is determined not only by ideological struggles regarding people's right to control their sexual and reproductive selves but also by the extent of the state's commitment to delivery of services as well as global factors influencing state capacity, such as debt, or the impact of international trade agreements and corporate policies on costs of health commodities. Yet reproductive rights activism does not seek alliances with others concerned with questions of state capacity and accountability for provision of services to the public. This is evident in the presentation of parallel events at the WSF, rather than the inclusion of health services including sexual and reproductive health services as part of the discussion on the dominant themes of the WSF regarding both citizenship and globalization. In relation to sexual rights, the author argues that the dominance of identity politics as the paradigm of mobilization leads to failure to recognize that many of the impacts of discrimination on the basis of sexual or gender diversity are also experienced, albeit in different ways, by other marginalized groups, whether immigrants, poor people or different ethnic groups. The use of an essentialist identity paradigm prevents the development of alliances around the more fundamental problem of lack of access to the benefits of full citizenship for all of those who do not fit the hegemonic norm. She proposes that an effort to rethink these challenges would contribute towards the development of alliances at the World Social Forum and beyond to challenge those factors that ultimately undermine both sexual and reproductive rights.

Keywords: Gender, Reproductive, Sexual

Introduction

A fair amount has been said, and a lot of organizing has been undertaken, to try to ensure that women's voices are heard across the different themes of the World Social Forum (WSF). A review of the programs of the WSF each year shows an increasing range of events on gender-related issues, and the increased involvement of organizations

¹ Barbara Klugman is a Senior Program Officer on Sexuality and Reproductive Health at the Ford Foundation in New York. Previously, she directed the Women's Health Project at the School of Public Health, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. She draws on a history of political activism, research and capacity building around social justice, including on the intersections between gender, race and class in shaping sexual and reproductive rights and health.

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concerned with women's rights in different themes of the WSF (Duddy, 2004). This has been fostered partly by the achievement of inclusion of women on the International Coordinating Council of the WSF, concerted efforts amongst networks of feminist organizations to organize events at the WSF (Duddy, 2004a), and by the growing role of the WSF in the imagination of social movements, including women's and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) movements, globally. However, as Haralanova (2005) notes, with only 25 out of 570 events/workshops on the first day of the 2005 Forum relating directly to women's rights, there is a long way to go for these issues to get onto the agenda. In addition, there remains contestation as to the relative strategic value of organizing autonomous women's spaces versus taking feminism into all the themes of the WSF (Alvarez, 2003). León (2002) argues the need for "focusing on the linkage among gender relations and racism, homophobia, classism and all forms of discrimination, locating the different contexts in which women's overall proposals are developed, and the multiple range of perspectives and priorities inherent in each of the inter-relationships that they produce". This paper begs the question of what doing so would mean in practice. It explores this challenge in relation to one dimension of the feminist project – that of sexual and reproductive rights.

In this paper I explore the question of whether the attention to sexual and reproductive rights in separate events or in parallel to other issues is the best mechanism for building their currency within the WSF. More importantly, are these separate or parallel approaches the best options for winning attention to sexual and reproductive rights as part of the discourse and concern of the dominant symbolic refrain of the WSF – challenging the inequities of economic globalization? As long as sexual and reproductive rights remain parallel rather than integrated issues, conversation only goes as far as recognizing a diversity of issues and movements, but these events neither theorize nor work out strategies to embed sexual and reproductive rights within broader concerns of the WSF. In this paper I will suggest that the dominant discourses and ways of approaching sexuality and reproduction limit their impact at the Forum and beyond, and do not contribute to giving substantive content to the currently symbolic "transversal" themes of the WSF, which by Porto Alegre in 2005, included gender, diversities, struggle against patriarchal capitalism, struggle against racism and other types of exclusion based on ancestry, social emancipation and political dimensions of struggles² (World Social Forum, 2005), all of which are pertinent to sexual and reproductive rights.

I want to explore two specific ways of seeing in relation to sexual and reproductive rights which I will argue limit the ability of activists working on these issues to win support for their agenda as part of the broader agendas for alternative forms of globalization. In relation to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), I will look at how it is addressed as a stand-alone or "vertical" issue separated from other questions of state and corporate responsibility and globalization. In relation to sexual rights, I will look at the notion of LGBT identities as the framing concept for this struggle to the exclusion of other dimensions of marginalization which have similar impacts. I will then propose an alternative approach to understanding and hence strategizing to promote

² The terminology changes over time. At the WSF in Caracas in 2006 the transversal themes were only diversities and gender. In Bamako, in contrast, instead of transversal themes, patriarchy and women were addressed in their own theme: "Alliance between patriarchy and neoliberalism and marginalization of women's struggles" and there was no reference to diversity (World Social Forum, 2005).

sexual and reproductive rights in the context of the WSF and beyond, using the notion of citizenship as its basis.

But first, a note on terminology. In the paper I use “SRHR” to refer to the movement and claims that originated from a focus primarily on women’s call for control over their reproductive capacity and their advocacy for provision of reproductive health services. Many activists have brought a broader more inclusive notion of sexuality and sexual health into this frame, hence “*sexual and reproductive health and rights*.” But for the purposes of this paper, SRHR refers to work for sexual and reproductive health and rights that stems from the focus on women’s bodies. The term “sexual rights” is used to refer the right of all people³ to “have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination and violence” (United Nations, 1995, para. 96). Exercising of this right requires equal relationships between partners⁴ “in matters of sexual relations and reproduction, including full respect for the integrity of the person ... mutual respect, consent and shared responsibility for sexual behaviour and its consequences” (ibid., para 96). Much contemporary global mobilization around sexual rights is being undertaken and framed by organizations of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender/transsexual (LGBT) people brought together into a single, if fractured, movement, who are focusing predominantly on sexuality and human rights, rather than on the more specific questions of health services. Their focus is on one component of sexual rights – sexual identity. Thus references to sexual diversity, identity or LGBT in the paper refer to this movement. References to “sexual and reproductive rights movements” incorporate both movements.

Citizenship is supposed to confer upon us those rights and responsibilities that enable us to live to our full potential. Recasting Nancy Fraser’s (1997) work, I’d like to suggest that full citizenship requires three broad elements: distribution of *resources* enabling everyone to live a decent life (employment, education, housing, health care); *recognition* of everyone as human beings in all their diversity; and mechanisms and opportunities for participation of all people in political decision-making so that all people can gain *representation*. But we all know that many people in society do not enjoy these full benefits of citizenship. In addition to factors such as class, ethnicity, so-called “race,” and immigration status, citizenship is framed by normative notions of sexuality and gender. This framing makes a great many of us into lesser citizens, with lesser claims to resources, to recognition and to representation. This paper will explore how SRHR and LGBT strategies address these dimensions of citizenship.

Methodology

The paper is written drawing on a number of sources. Firstly, I participated in the WSFs in Mumbai in 2004 and Porto Alegre in 2005, and the Feminist Dialogues that preceded them, and have incorporated both information and insights from these events. Additional information is drawn from reviews of the programs of the WSFs, excluding that of Karachi as it had not taken place when the first draft of the paper was written, and subsequently its program website, www.wsf2006karachi.org, in a stunning show of the

³ The United Nations text, the Platform of Action from the Fourth World Conference on Women and Development, applies these human rights only to women whereas I have applied it to all people.

⁴ The United Nations text says “men and women”. My use of the term “partners” instead aims to address the lack of inclusivity of this document.

linkages between globalization and sexuality, had been taken over by an enterprise offering access to pornography sites, Indian singles matchmaking and the like.⁵ I also searched the web and contacted various global institutions engaged with the WSF to identify and access relevant literature. As questions arose from the literature, my reflections on my own experience, or the programs, I wrote to various key players in the sexual and reproductive rights movement some of whom had participated in the WSF, and some of whom had chosen not to, to try to gain deeper insights⁶.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

The sexual and reproductive health and rights paradigm

Women's organizations across the globe have taken on the issue of the need for women to control their own bodies, sexuality and reproductive capacity, whether through self-help initiatives, establishment of health services, legal or 'underground' abortion services, or engagement in advocacy for new policies and for their implementation. This work challenged those fostering population control because of its targeting of groups and removal of individual control over reproductive decision-making; they also challenged the limited infrastructure established for implementation of population control in the form of donor or government-funded contraceptive-only services usually running parallel to national health services (de Jong, 2000). The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) (United Nations, 1994) marked a significant shift in so far as many of the activists from national struggles in both north and south built close relationships with government delegations and some strategized their way into these delegations. Through concerted action they managed to achieve consensus on a language of reproductive rights and health, including sexual health (Brenner, 2004; Chen, 1995; deJong, 2000). This language was deeply significant for a number of reasons. It reinforced that reproductive choices should be those of an individual rather than a state⁷ (whilst reminding of the importance of thinking about the future in making such personal decisions). It recognized that the ability to exercise such choices required fundamental shifts in social and sexual cultures so that women could exercise greater control over sexual and reproductive decision-making. It also understood sexual and reproductive health as incorporating far more than contraceptive and maternal services including "abortion as specified in paragraph 8.25, including prevention of abortion and the management of the consequences of abortion; treatment of reproductive tract infections; sexually transmitted diseases and other reproductive health conditions; and information, education and counselling, as appropriate, on human sexuality, reproductive health and

⁵ As of 2 November 2006.

⁶ This explains the nature of the "personal communications" listed in the references.

⁷ Some might characterize this as a western perspective since it does not offer the alternative option of reproduction being the business of the family or community, as is the case in some cultures. From my perspective, one needs first to acknowledge that in every culture through time, women have managed their own reproductive capacity, through use of herbs, douches and abortion in addition to daily negotiation of sexual and reproductive actions with their sexual partners. Secondly, one might imagine an ideal context of gender equality, where couples and even families and communities might reflect, as equals, on their present and future desires and capacities to have children. But this is not the context anywhere in the world. As long as controlling women's bodies is part of broader social controls over women's lives, I would contend that the right of women to make reproductive decisions over their bodies remains a legitimate objective and one which is central to securing gender equality.

responsible parenthood” (United Nations, 1994, para. 7.6). Over the next six years additional gains were made in international consensus documents in specifying the content of sexual and reproductive health and rights⁸ particularly in relation to training of health providers to address the consequences of unsafe abortions, and in relation to HIV/AIDS. Most significantly, all of these services were conceptualised as being delivered through the primary health-care system, but more on this later. This dimension of the United Nations consensus agreements provided a very strong motivation for mobilisation at the national level for better services, and for continuing transnational NGO collaboration advocating to UN and bilateral agencies to promote gender equality and reproductive rights within reproductive health services. An enormous amount of activist energy went into advocacy for policy change, training of health workers, and developing models of comprehensive reproductive health care. Some of it has been successful, with many activists having enabled policy changes and changes in service provision since 1994. From this perspective, relative to many of the issues on the table at the WSF, one might describe the SRHR movement as a “mature” movement. It has developed a shared discourse between academics, activists and many policy-makers and civil society groups have a sophisticated range of strategies to draw upon. This may explain why many SRHR networks have not chosen to give priority to the WSF – they are making policy inroads and, given very little capacity, are choosing to focus there rather than in the more sweeping and radical issues that are the focus of the WSF. For example, Saira Shameem (2006), the Executive Director of ARROW, describes how the South Asian Women’s Health and Rights Advocacy Partnership has been systematically working on how to promote SRHR within discussions on the Millennium Development goals and is currently preparing to convene the first “Regional Government-NGO Task Force on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights,” to take place in the first quarter of 2007.

Nevertheless, most of the work of the SRHR movement is framed in fairly narrow terms, ignoring the claim for embedding sexual and reproductive health within a primary health care system, and ignoring the increasingly embattled nature of public health services. The ICPD call for “integration of services” came to be articulated in narrow terms, not for integration of sexual and reproductive health care into primary health care, but rather limited to mean integration of “family planning” and HIV/AIDS services (see for example Becker and Leitman 1997; International Planned Parenthood Association 2002; World Health Organization 2005). The impetus for this has increased as large amounts of money have been made available for HIV/AIDS services, *also* in a vertical manner, not integrated into existing public health care systems. The broader question of the right to health and to health care have decreasing currency. Efforts to implement an integrated SRHR agenda have taken place over a period in which the impacts of structural adjustment in developing countries have become fully apparent

⁸ The ICPD and follow-up documents do not include the language of “sexual rights” but the inclusion of ‘a safe and satisfying sex life’; the assertion of people’s right to sexual and reproductive decision-making “free of coercion, discrimination and violence”; the promotion of mutual respect in sexual relations, as well as the inclusion in the Program of Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women that “The human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality...” (United Nations, 1995: para 96) have all led sexual and reproductive health and rights activists to reference these documents as incorporating sexual rights. This is despite their failure to win support for text against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

(Brenner, 2004). Over a period of twenty years, access to health services has declined as populations have been made to pay for services and governments have decentralized services so that there is decreasing accountability of national governments for local health care (Ravindran & de Pinho, 2005).

As is frequently the case, international consensus documents contain contradictions. While promoting the importance of health care, other aspects of the ICPD reflected these broader dynamics of globalisation. In the language of the ICPD, “Governments should seek to make basic health-care services more sustainable financially, while ensuring equitable access, by integrating reproductive health services, including maternal and child health and family-planning services, and by making appropriate use of community-based services, social marketing and cost-recovery schemes, with a view to increasing the range and quality of services available” (United Nations, 1994, para. 8.8). Linked to this, “Provision of reproductive health-care services should not be confined to the public sector but should involve the private sector and non-governmental organizations” (ibid., para. 7.26). Brenner (2004) notes that this approach reinforces neo-liberal notions of the state in advocating the role of NGOs and the private sector in running services. In addition, it takes on board one of the dominant trends of contemporary globalisation, which Ong (2006) describes as neo-liberalism shifting “the ethics of citizenship, from a stress on equal access to rights and claims on the state to a focus on individual obligation to maximize self-interest ... without state support” (p. 10).

It is for this reason that the SRHR movement needs to maintain an approach to this field that promotes the right to full citizenship for all. Using the Fraser discourse, in relation to SRHR, as regards *recognition* of all as full citizens, it would mean promotion of women’s equality and the right of women, adolescents, and people with non-conforming genders and sexualities to respectful services that understand their specific needs; as regards *resources* for citizenship, it would mean the promotion of state responsibility for delivery of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and health information services; and as regards *representation*, it would mean advocating for the representation of a diversity of citizens on the community, provincial and national bodies that make decisions about health care.

SRHR at the World Social Forum

A few organizations host small workshops and seminars on sexual and reproductive health and rights at each WSF. Not surprisingly, the majority of these frame SRHR topics as “stand-alone” issues. These include workshops looking at experiences in different parts of the world, as well as workshops on specific issues, whether on youth concerns, new reproductive technologies, or abortion. Some are run by national organizations about experiences on a national level, some by regional or international NGOs or networks offering insights into experiences in different parts of the world. While two people interviewed for this paper noted the major increase in comparison to previous WSFs in events on abortion at the WSF in Caracas (Garrido, 2006; Mtetwa, 2006), a review of the Bamako program shows no abortion-specific events and very few SRHR events. The situation was exacerbated in Bamako by the separation of all “women-related” events into a separate theme. Indeed, the AWOMI President whose session linked SRHR to broader economic questions said, “I must say that we felt marginalized from the main forum central issues in Bamako” (Fall, 2006). Thus the presence of SRHR

even as a stand-alone issue, and how it has been located in the WSFs, is context-dependent.⁹

Reviews on gender in relation to the WSF tend to bemoan the failure of other sectors to take on gender issues (Obando, 2005) but not to critique the SRHR movement itself, as a key part of the women's rights movement, for its very narrow strategies and limited engagement with the broader challenges of the WSF. In addition, as noted above, one has to take account of the fact that many SRHR activists have not seen the WSF as a strategic priority. In particular, very few African SRHR activists and organizations have been involved with the WSF thus far. Whether this is because of a strategic decision on priorities, or because these activists have not seen WSF issues as relevant to the SRHR is not clear. When SRHR activists have engaged the WSF, by and large it has been through stand-alone, topic-specific SRHR events.

Beyond these events is the question of to what extent SRHR was taken up within events addressing broader themes of the WSF—SRHR people on the panels on national debt, on the WTO, on monitoring of government provision of social services including health. They are almost invisible; and similarly people in other sectors do not include SRHR in their analyses and demands. There are a few exceptions which may be markers of movement in this direction and are therefore worth noting.

Firstly, of course, there is the role played by HIV/AIDS activists in challenging the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) for limiting access to anti-retroviral drugs. Their approach has framed the right to health as taking precedence over patents and the enormous financial profits of the pharmaceutical sector (Hardy, 2006). This work has paved the way for broader global activism on inequitable economic relations. But other SRHR activists have not followed suit, building into these struggles the challenges regarding patents on and costs of female condoms, for example.

There were some events in which the linkages were noted. For example, one of the International Gender and Trade Network events at the 2005 WSF, held in conjunction with *Articulaci3n Feminista Marcosur (AFM)*, *Articula3o de Mulheres Brasileiras* and *ActionAID* was called 'Beijing+10 Meets WTO+10: The Impact of Trade Liberalization on Women's Human Rights'. Members of the network from different regions reported on regional preparatory conferences. One problem identified in Latin America was how structural adjustment was undercutting the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action in relation to both reproductive rights and HIV/AIDS. A Central Asian member identified the negative impacts of the transition to market economies on public health systems. These issues were raised alongside references to loss of jobs in the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, lack of unionization in new jobs in the service sector, and the feminization of poverty, amongst others (Sampson, 2005). These kinds of cross-sectoral discussions were partly nurtured through the establishment of a collaborative process among major feminist organizations from different sectors which began in 2003 in frustration at the lack of presence of feminist concerns at the WSF. This group then organized pre-WSF meetings in 2004 and 2005, known as the *Feminist Dialogues*, which sought to gain deeper insights into how globalization, militarization and fundamentalisms played out on women's lives and bodies and how feminist groupings working on these

⁹ See Aurelie Latoures article in this issue concerning this practice as gender institutionalization or gender marginalization.

issues might engage each other (Feminist Dialogues Coordinating Group, 2006).¹⁰ Some of their lead participants, such as AFM, DAWN, INFORM (Sri Lanka), International Gender and Trade Network, Isis International and the National Network of Autonomous Women's Groups (India) can be identified as having played critical roles to insert women's rights, reproductive rights and sexual rights into the WSF's processes and agendas.

One initiative in Caracas that synthesized a variety of concerns was the "International Court of Women against Patriarchal Violence of Neoliberalism" which proposed opportunities for change based on a model that connected economic domination with sexism. Themes included economic equality, reproductive and productive work, sexual violence as well as reproductive rights including the right to abortion (León, 2006). It was coordinated by el Grupo de Estudios de América Latina del Instituto de Filosofía de La Habana – GALFISA, the World March of Women, la Red Latinoamericana Mujeres Transformando la Economía –REMTE–, Mujeres de la CLOC – Vía Campesina, and LGBT South-South Dialogue and various other Latin American Organizations.

There are a few groups working to engage the global "right to health" movement. For example the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network and the Associação Brasileira De Gays, Lésbicas e Transgêneros both participated in the World Social Forum on Health held as part of the WSF in Port Alegre in 2005 (World Social Forum on Health, 2005). The Women's Global Network on Reproductive Rights has also worked consistently to incorporate SRHR into the concerns of the People's Health Movement which is a key player in the World Social Forum on Health. The Forum's primary goal is to promote the establishment or strengthening of public health services. The "Final Declaration of the 1st World Social Forum for Health" includes recognition of the negative impacts of "different kinds of religious fundamentalism, which restrict full sexual and reproductive rights and sexual orientation rights; and the persistence of institutionalized racism, which excludes and discriminates black and native populations" (World Social Forum on Health, 2005a). The Declaration notes that "the human right to health includes sexual and reproductive rights, taking into account the specific needs of races/ethnicities, life cycle, sexual orientation and people with special needs." It recognizes "the importance of participating in efforts to reduce maternal mortality and to combat the effects on women's health caused by unsafe abortions, which affects mainly young, poor, black and indigenous women. We point to the need to build strategies to address the specific needs of adolescents and young people in the area of sexual and reproductive health" (ibid., 2005a). This kind of inclusion is certainly a positive sign of recognition by SRHR groups and right to health movements of the need to be mutually supportive.

¹⁰ The first Feminist Dialogues produced four preparatory concept papers, on the intersection of globalization and fundamentalisms; challenging the local-global divide; reproductive rights and sexual rights (Feminist Dialogues Coordinating Group 2006). This illustrates their effort to bring together issues that at the WSF are generally kept separate. Significantly this group was one of the few in the Bamako event that tabled the key regional issue of female genital mutilation, "The FDs would therefore give impetus to the campaign against discriminative beliefs and practices that continue to marginalize women such as excision, early and forced marriage and sacrifice. It is necessary to enhance women's awareness, develop systems enabling quick information flows between leaders and the local level and revisit strategies that have been used for the past 20 years to combat the damaging traditional practices that persist" (Feminist Dialogues 2006a).

According to Gigi Francisco of DAWN, the focused effort by feminist organizations to bring more women's rights issues into the WSF began with a reproductive rights question—abortion. She described how women held a rally at the 2002 WSF about the impacts of USAID efforts to cut funding to groups working on abortion (Cabrera-Balleza, 2004). Sonia Correa of DAWN describes how *Articulación Feminista Marcosur* (AFM) organized a "whistle demonstration," where women with whistles whistled loudly to protest against patriarchy and fundamentalism (Correa, 2006). The rally aimed to challenge the lack of attention to women's issues by the WSF Organizing Committee. She argued that this event helped to focus women's groups' energies on bringing their issues into the WSF (Cabrera-Balleza, 2004). The significance of this framing was the linkage of abortion to broader global ideological trends—a particularly Latin American form of analysis, which distinguishes it from the other "stand-alone" presentations of SRHR issues or even the inclusion of SRHR in parallel with other issues as with the WSF on Health. Building upon this initiative, the AFM developed a "brand" to build consciousness about the problems of fundamentalism, which in their presentations they link directly to loss of women's rights, including their reproductive rights, and, explicitly, abortion. Their approach is incremental and challenges the notion that change takes place, in the WSF context, only through talking on platforms. In 2003 they had a hot air balloon flying above the WSF with the campaign slogan (Correa, 2006). In 2004 in Mumbai they internationalized what had been predominantly a Latin American campaign (Francisco, 2006). They distributed scarves and other media in the image of a mouth with the slogan "Campaign against fundamentalisms – your mouth against fundamentalism" (*Articulación Feminista Marcosur*, no date). In response to my question as to whether the many people who marched covered with this paraphernalia actually understood the intentions of the mouth, its critique of all forms of fundamentalism – including economic and religious fundamentalisms that deny women's agency and sexual and reproductive rights – one of the architects of this initiative, Lucy Garrido, explained that "we accumulate empathy [of the participants] which allows us all to have symbols in common; then learning is much easier because people are much more likely to have an opportunity to feel part of the whole" (Garrido, 2006). This strategy recognizes that while the feminist groups are increasingly engaging with the organizers of the WSF, and hosting panels to discuss the interrelationships between movements, another critical step is to shift the energy or feeling of groups, and the "mouth" strategy operates at that level.¹¹

One of AFM's key partners, DAWN, has offered a series of events with other organizations, identifying "the linkages between fundamentalism and unequal globalization as overarching frames to understand the intersections between economic inequities and patriarchal motivations – particularly in the name of religion – for the oppression of women, sexual minorities and other groups" (Correa, 2006). DAWN has used these platforms to articulate the need to rethink the social contract, thereby linking

¹¹ The organizers spell out the purpose of the campaign as follows: "The campaign 'Against Fundamentalisms, the People are Fundamental,' amplifies voices that firmly oppose the practices, discourses, and discriminatory representations that place people in oppressive or vulnerable positions. We believe in the possibility of developing, in a symbolic way and a political way, the potential of human beings, as individuals, and as men and women, who will not create nor maintain these oppressive practices" (*Articulación Feminista Marcosur*, no date; Translated by Laurie Prendergast).

into the question of the responsibilities of the state and the meanings of citizenship. SRHR are woven through this entire analysis identifying the reasons for state failures to protect sexual and reproductive rights through law and through provision of appropriate and comprehensive health services. Presenting this argument in its most practical implications, in a talk on a DAWN panel in Bamako, its general coordinator Bene Madunagu (2006) asked, “How can the poor, especially the majority of women in the African communities afford the cost of privatised sexual health and reproductive health needs? How can such services be accessed as of right when global economic policies have undermined state responsibility in the provision of such basic needs?”

Similarly AWOMI President Yassine Fall has spelt out the consequences of global economic decisions on sexual and reproductive health, “Women would like to ask how can they access reproductive health services when they have to pay user fees when they are hungry? How can HIV positive women be asked to support cost recovery when they suffer from malaria? In the village of Guerew in Senegal pregnant women are asked to buy a mosquito net for two dollars as a condition for benefiting from prenatal care. If they refuse they will be denied care and suffer the risk of joining the long lists of women who die when giving birth” (Fall, 2005). The AWOMI workshop in Bamako aimed:

- To have an intergenerational dialogue on leadership and ways to better define what reproductive health and rights policies and strategies [are needed], in the context of poverty reduction strategies where little attention is given to gender equality by Governments, International Financial and Trade Institutions and Corporations;
- to set up organizing mechanisms for challenging and monitoring the existing funding and support system for communities, women, youth and adolescents infected and affected by HIV/AIDS that benefit the strong much more than those who need it (AWOMI, 2006).

This is the most far-reaching effort at the WSF to shape practical strategies for addressing these intersections.

SRHR – a matter of citizenship and state responsibility

Aside from the AWOMI event, most of those WSF events that do begin to link SRHR to broader questions of globalization remain at the point of naming and shaming; they are aiming at most to build recognition of how SRHR are affected by diverse dimensions of globalization, but are not yet institutionalizing alliances or shaping strategies to strengthen attention to SRHR within movements, within struggles for effective health systems or struggles for global economic accountability.

To my mind, the issue of the lack of state responsibility for provision of high quality comprehensive services is a critical issue for all those concerned with social justice and specifically the right to health. Therefore it should be the priority issue for those working on reproductive rights. Questions arise at the level of the state and global institutions: how do governments decide on budget priorities at national, provincial and local levels?; how do they decide on what donor funds to take and for what purposes?; to what extent do they let donor agendas, particularly those of the World Bank and IMF determine the priorities and functioning of public health systems? What could be done to build stronger alliances among developing country governments to strengthen their negotiations both with these institutions and with global corporations and the WTO, since

these directly affect key health commodities, such as drugs and contraception? Yet few SRHR activists are taking on questions of state or multilaterals' or corporate accountability (Murthy and Klugman 2004), and similarly this issue is not on the agendas of most of the donors which support the NGO-based reproductive rights movement. They remain focused on important work in the NGO sector – strengthening understanding of gender inequities and how they impact on reproductive rights; broadening the range of services available; and on advocacy for changes in policy, for example to link family planning and HIV/AIDS programs, or strengthen access to safe abortions. This work is critical. But it is not enough given the overarching context of the failure of states to take responsibility for providing quality health services to the people. A few NGO services will not solve the problems of whole populations. And the oft-described goal of developing pilots or demonstration projects to show how quality comprehensive services could be delivered becomes meaningless if there is not the capacity, funds or interest to learn from those demonstration projects. For scale-up to happen, there have to be existing good public health services to learn new things from the pilot projects. In the absence of already well functioning health systems, what is there to scale up?

Some of these issues have become the focus of sexual and reproductive rights advocacy groups and donors in their efforts to influence the shaping of the Millennium Development Goals through the work of the Millennium Development Project (see, for example, UN Millennium Project, 2005a and 2005b). In addition, the public positions of the hegemonic groups in the SRHR movement acknowledge that sexual and reproductive rights require addressing poverty and that “investments in health and education cannot be sacrificed in the name of the free market” (Countdown 2015, 2004, p. 4). However, at both the global and national levels, few SRHR groups have sought to build their own knowledge and strategic capacity on these issues¹² and few have sought to join up with those from other sectors who are engaging in or monitoring the implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers – the papers delineating how funds liberated through debt relief would be used for national development – or the uptake of the Millennium Development Goals at the national level, let alone joining forces with groups conducting national and international advocacy on global economic issues. Their lack of engagement with the WSF is an indication of this. Some have chosen not to engage the WSF because they have created opportunities for effective advocacy with governments already, as discussed above. But those interventions alone cannot address how the broader global paradigms undermine the ability of states to deliver quality SRHR services. To address the broader paradigm would require recognizing that many of the problems facing SRHR are similar to those facing education or other social services, and alliances need to be built with others struggling to promote a notion of citizenship which holds the state accountable for the provision of services to the people, and holds global corporations accountable for establishing responsible pricing frameworks to service poor people. This approach is fully in synch with the broad theme of the WSF in questioning the processes

¹² The Asia Pacific Research and Resource Centre on Women, the University of the Witwatersrand School of Public Health in South Africa and Cedes in Argentina all offer training on this issue as part of the Initiative for Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Health Reforms. Modules in their training manual include promoting understanding of the implications of the various components of health sector reform for SRHR services and building capacity to design plans of action in order to take demands for SRHR further within the context of Health Sector Reforms (Budlender 2005). This was taken forward in a workshop at WSF 2007 by the People's Health Movement – a hopeful sign? (World Social Forum 2007a)

through which the drive for profit is undermining the possibility of social justice for the poor – of full citizenship for the poor – in that they do not reap any of the rewards of their labour as long as governments do not provide, free and accessibly, good quality education, health care, water, sanitation and electricity; as well as social safety nets such as support for the elderly or for orphans. This approach is not only demanding redistribution of *resources* towards the poor, but *recognition* of their capacity for self-determination, and their right to *representation* in decision-making. Since this discourse of representation has been taken over by International Financial Institutions, and institutionalized through local government control over local resources, it becomes all the more important for SRHR activists to link up with those monitoring local government expenditure to bring in a gender and SRHR analysis. Analyses have shown that local governments too may well choose to ignore SRHR in their financial allocations because of their acceptance of patriarchal values (Murthy and Klugman, 2004). SRHR cannot be separated out from this, and failure to build bridges means that none of these movements are strong enough to make a real impact. That said, one cannot suggest that everyone working on other social service issues would welcome reproductive rights activists. Brenner (2004) points out that certain feminist demands such as on domestic violence or for access to contraception are palatable within most social justice movements, because they do not fundamentally challenge the traditional heterosexual family. But an issue like abortion tends to be far more controversial because it is associated alternatively with women's ability to manage their reproductive capacity despite men's control over sexual decision-making, or with "women's ability to separate (hetero)sexuality from procreation and to claim sexual pleasure for its own sake" (p. 33). But the skills and capacities SRHR activists could offer to collective action might enable them to build bonds that would open spaces for conversations about the contested dimensions of SRHR – from the role of women in family and sexual life to questions of abortion. In the context of growing fundamentalisms at national levels and in the global terrain, building bases for such conversations is increasingly critical to the SRHR movement. The WSF could provide fertile ground on which to sow such seeds.

Sexual rights

Sexual rights as sexual identity or "LGBT"

While the language of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the ICPD Program is broad, the reproductive rights struggles described above tend to focus on health services. Their attention to sexuality tends to be limited to work on sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS prevention and the terrain of youth "sexuality education." That said, whereas at the time of the ICPD those activists in the SRHR movement who were explicitly calling for an end to discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation were few (Klugman, 2000), by now most of the groups who would associate themselves with the concept of SRHR are also making public calls for ending such discrimination (Countdown 2015, 2004), and some, though few, are incorporating it into their work on HIV/AIDS and stigma. The real strides in relation to that dimension of sexual rights, however, have been made not by the SRHR movement but by people organizing specifically on this issue, usually on the basis of their own experience. There has been a burgeoning of groups organizing as lesbian, gay and bisexual. More recently people have begun to organize around gender diversities and a "T" for transgender, and

sometimes transsexual, has been added to the “LGB.”¹³ There are also groups self-defining on the basis of linked identities, such as black lesbians or transgender youth.

These framings have their own complexities, particularly when thinking about the process of globalization. All over the world individuals have a huge diversity of sexual practices without necessarily associating these with a specific sexual self-definition or notion of sexual identity (Katyal, 2002). One cannot assume that all societies do as the U.S. in “prioritizing sex or gender over other dimensions of cultural reality or in isolating sex and gender from their cultural milieu” (Juang, 2006, p. 256). For example, in some contexts there are groupings with their own cultural and political histories, such as the hijras and kothis of India which do not fit in to western constructs, even those framed within the LGBT movement, of gender or sexual identity (Gupta, 2005). Indeed even within the U.S. there has been substantial discussion and in some cases mobilization against pigeonholing of diverse sexual practices in favor of the deconstruction of all such categories – most notably by queer studies theorists such as Judith Butler (1990) but also by activists (Cohen, 2001; Mertus, 2006). Nevertheless U.S.-based international NGOs such as the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Watch have exported essentialist concepts of sexual identity as the basis for organization and advocacy and have won tremendous support from people in various parts of the world who have experienced discrimination or marginalization because of their sexual or gender expression. People have recognized some of themselves in these concepts and used this to establish networks for both solidarity and community (Katyal, 2002). It is not yet clear to what extent the meanings of LGBT are being appropriated and reshaped through this globalizing process.

In addition to the LGBT movement, the AIDS epidemic has in some ways fostered the recognition of sexual diversity. The public health framing of the concept of “men who have sex with men” (MSM) has forced many countries, in their AIDS policies or programming, to recognize diverse sexualities at the policy level. But this too has created contradictions, particularly when MSM is assumed to confer sexual identity as opposed to sexual practice. Michael Tan (2006) describes how AIDS prevention services may be told they need to have a gay club or space in order to draw on funds for MSM work; yet the very men they are targeting do not self-define as gay; are frequently also in relationships with women, and would not want that sort of public location. Moreover, regarding MSM, “that label is so problematic: the ‘sex’ just over-sexualizes everything and the ‘men’, well, we have transgenders who said ‘oh, we’re not men’” (Tan, 2006). Inevitably, given the recent nature of these changes, one finds policy contradictions arising. For example, in India, while sodomy remains illegal, the AIDS policy specifically addresses MSM and aims for participation of MSM in AIDS activities.

In Latin America, as we shall see from events at the WSF, there has propagation of concepts like “sexual diversity” that incorporate but broaden LGBT. The “sexual diversity” concept is less concerned with specific sexual and gender identities as with the rights of all people to enjoy citizenship and participate in democratic processes, irrespective of how near or far from the social norm their performance of gender or sexuality is located. This has opened more spaces for alliance building with other groups concerned with non-recognition and lack of citizenship rights.

¹³ In the U.S. context one may at times see a Q for queer or an I for intersex added to the list, although there remains contention about the appropriateness of framing these in one box.

How do these issues play in the global space of the WSF?

Sexual rights at the World Social Forum

In comparison to SRHR, from a review of WSF programs, there appears to have been a much greater focus on the WSF as a site for intervention by sexuality activists. They have organized stand alone events on such topics as homophobia, lesbian health, and LGBT alliance building. The vast majority of these events have been organized by Latin American groups which is not surprising given the location of the WSF and the greater degree of mobilization around sexual and gender diversity there than in other parts of the global south. Nevertheless when the WSF was held in Mumbai, many Indian groups took the initiative. This in itself is an achievement – that over the years of the WSF, activists have made such progress in getting these issues onto the agenda at all; although they were barely on the agenda in Bamako. Significantly, the 2007 WSF in Kenya included a workshop with speakers from five African LGBT groups, although it was organized by a network of European NGOs (World Social Forum 2007) and African organizations and individuals for LGBT rights from many countries developed a shared platform as ‘LGBTI Human Rights Defenders’ to put out a press statement a few days after the WSF, suggesting that the WSF provided a critical opportunity for cross-continental organizing and solidarity (MRZine 2007).

By the 2004 Mumbai WSF, there were also a number of spaces where sexual diversity was addressed not only as an LGBT question. For example there was a plenary event titled “A dialogue between various movements on sexuality issues,” organized by Rainbow Planet, INP+/SWAM Chennai, Alliance for Bright Citizens-Pakistan, Global Network of Sexworkers Living with AIDS, Sangram/VAMP/Muskaan, Sangli and WINS, Tirupati, SexWorkers forum Kerala/FIRM/Faathil – Kerala, Alternative Law Forum, Bangalore (World Social Forum, 2004). As the organizations indicate, this considered sexual orientation, sex work, and HIV/AIDS questions in one panel. Gigi Francisco of DAWN, and a member of the WSF International Council described how this plenary:

was a product of the intense lobbying by feminist networks including DAWN toward the India Organizing Committee through its Indian feminist members – who were our feminist colleagues – and through the wider Asia Solidarity Network that supported the work of the India Organizing Committee. This was an instance when the major left political parties and social movements that comprised the India Organizing Committee, I feel, bowed to feminist pressures for the WSF to take the issue of sexual diversity up front! The fact that the theme of Fundamentalism was included with Neo-Liberalism and War was also very much through the efforts of feminists who were fed up with the neo-conservative and fascist reactions from all sides of the WSF to our call for abortion and sexual diversity. Prior to this, at the Asia Social Forum held in Hyderabad, India, there was also a string of events on sexual diversity (Francisco, 2006).

Perhaps even more significant, there were platforms where sexual diversity was incorporated as one of a number of issues of discrimination. There was, for example, a panel, “Diverse Alternatives for Global Changes,” organized by the Latin American Information Agency (ALAI) and other networks: Women Transforming the Economy Network, World March of Women, Women Via Campesina – CLOC [an organization of peasants] and LGBT South-South Dialogue (World Social Forum, 2004). This group has hosted similar events at subsequent WSFs.

The biggest and most publicized of the plenary events that addressed a range of forms of discrimination was the “Dialogue Between Movements: Breaking Barriers and Building Bridges,” organized by the National Network of Autonomous Women’s Groups, DAWN, AFM, and the Women’s International Coalition for Economic Justice – the same alliance that organized the Feminist Dialogues mentioned earlier. The Dialogue between Movements was a panel with two representatives each from the women’s movement, the LBGT movement, the Dalit/race movement, and the labor movement. The format was that one member of the women’s movement team presented the major ways of seeing and priorities of the women’s movement. One member of each of the other movements then asked questions of her, and the second member of the women’s movement team then had a chance to reply. Each movement was interrogated in this way. The questioners tended to identify areas of weakness, such as that the women’s movement could give greater attention and incorporate into their own priorities, some of the issues facing women workers. Similarly the women’s movement representatives proposed key issues which should be given greater priority in the labor movement. The structure of this dialogue enabled an interrogation of the extent to which each movement takes account of the others’ concerns, rather than moving on to identify possible shared sources of oppression and hence shared strategies and targets for action. Nevertheless it was highly significant symbolically in legitimizing the issues presented by the LGBT representatives. The women’s movement representatives, of course, included SRHR as one of their central concerns. These dialogues have continued at subsequent WSFs.

Another significant breakthrough was within the Assembly of Social Movements at the WSF in 2005. Its “Call From Social Movements For Mobilizations Against The War, Neoliberalism, Exploitation And Exclusion: Another World Is Possible” explicitly addressed LGBT questions in this way:

We recognize diversity in sexual orientation as an expression of an alternative world...Movements commit to participate in the struggle against exclusion based on identity, gender and homophobia. We will unite our voices against all forms of mercantilization of the body of women and GLBT (World Social Forum, 2005a).

Neither SRHR nor HIV/AIDS are mentioned. This position was further consolidated in the “Call from the Social Movements Assembly” at the Polycentric Social Forum at Caracas (VI Foro Social Mundial, 2006). That said, these are small victories in an enormous political space that is otherwise uneven, to say the least, in its receptivity to these issues.

By no means do all cross-movement discussions include sexual diversity. The First World Dignity Forum was organized by the National Conference of Dalit Organisations and allied organizations and launched at WSF 2004 in Mumbai and has participated in each of the subsequent WSFs, including in Karachi in 2006, while also engaging with other global spaces. Its website describes it as “a forum against casteism, racism, discrimination and exclusions based on caste, class, race, color, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, ability/disability” (World Dignity Forum, 2006). But nowhere in the rest of its materials, nor in the descriptions of its partners, or speakers on its platforms, is there mention of sexual orientation or diversity. References to sexuality are in relation to women – “Control over women’s labor, body and sexuality, under the garb of a discourse of dignity and honor, is central to patriarchal endeavors, ensuring appropriation of power” (ibid.). This is a significant initiative in its own right, but the question of sexuality remains on the margins with a number of organizations having unsuccessfully tried to engage the World Dignity Forum on this issue (Menon, 2006). As Gandhi and Shah (2006) note, “There is no one voice of a movement. There are numerous voices and push and pull factors, which determine the acceptance of various issues” (p. 75). They describe how in one of the Dialogues between Movements “the sexuality rights activist was quick to point out to the activist from the Dalit movement that many transgendered people in India were lower caste, but they [the Dalit movement], like society, have discriminated and neglected them” (ibid., 75).

Significantly in 2005, LGBT South-South Dialogue and Red Latinoamericana Mujeres Transformando la Economía (REMTE) pushed for the WSF’s International Council to adopt an “Equality Policy” (Mtetwa, 2006). The policy argues that, “The principle of equality that sustains all the utopias, political perspectives, struggles, the alternative models of economic and social relations ... is inseparable from diversities...” and that the WSF leadership need to move beyond accepting this in principle, to establishing mechanisms for promoting it in the conference space itself and in the content of events. In relation to the space it suggests that, “people should seek to reject certain practices such as male chauvinism, racism and homophobia through explicit messages (for example, put up signs with phrases such as “area free of sexist violence”; “homophobia is not acceptable here”). And the same time, the expression of diversity and equality should be celebrated and stimulated” (REMTE and the World March of Women, 2005). In relation to content it argues that the consideration of parallel forms of discrimination does not lead to a cumulative change. It argues that “equality cannot consist in putting themes and views next to each other, with the result of a simple sum; it is more about interlinking, combining perspectives of analysis, and integrating, in political terms, the ‘partial’ causes so that they mutually enrich one another, so as to build a common perspective, in order, for example, for feminism become one of the pillars of the view for another world, and a commitment of everyone” (ibid., 2005). Reflecting on their efforts within the WSF, Mtetwa (2006) comments, “This is a process. I think although we have made strides and can actually see good advances in the social movements’ processes worldwide, we still have a lot to go. The challenges are for our ‘specific movement’, on one part, to strengthen the linkages of the issues and on the other part, for the broader social movements to integrate into their struggles, sexual rights and respect for diversity issues.”

Embedding sexual rights within movements for global justice

While the language of “diversity” used by many sexual rights activists at the WSF opens more opportunities for alliance-building than does “LGBT,” it remains associated with sexuality, rather than the multiple forms of diversity that are used to justify discrimination, such as race, immigration status or disability. Here too, as with SRHR, I think we need to reconsider our strategies. The decision to seek redress for discrimination by creating essentialist concepts of identity raises diverse challenges. As with reproductive rights, it is clearly important that people articulate their own experiences of oppression, and their own solutions. The development of the LGBT movement has been a huge step forward in naming and enabling people to organize themselves against discrimination, and to mobilize support. This continues to be a critical strategy. That said, the resort to “identity” inevitably sets one up in relation to other identities (Hollinger, 2004). Obando, (2005), for example, recognizing that holding separate events is not moving this movement forward, argues that at the WSF “spaces are assigned for each excluded group to debate their problems, but the ‘general’ topics such as neoliberal globalization, for example, do not address transvestites’ poverty or their lack of access to the formal labor market” (p. 3). The implication of this critique, while important in terms of recognizing a link between gender, sexuality and economics, is that the specific exclusions faced by each marginalized group need to be named and given a platform in discussions of economic justice. While it would be important to understand the specificity of exclusion experienced by different groups, it would be impossible, and, I would argue, unhelpful strategically to get into a naming dynamic – which would one leave out? Indigenous people? Transgender people? Women? Immigrants? Minority ethnicities? Disabled people? Lesbians? I would argue that we would do much better to analyse the ways in which dehumanization or, in Fraser’s terms, lack of recognition, of diverse groups of people are interwoven with issues of inequitable distribution of economic resources. This is because, in general, anyone who does not match the dominant norm – in international terms usually those who are male, white, heterosexual and from the west – in language, color, sexual or gender expression, family organization, or any other attributes or forms of social organization will have less social and personal recognition and less access to resources. Hence the difficulty of focusing on discrimination against specific identities, in this case LGBT, when trying to address broader challenges of globalization, discrimination and economic justice. As long as our priority goes to describing ever-smaller groups in relation to the benefits experienced by the dominant group we fail to envision a new society in which identities do not determine a hierarchy of citizenships. Indeed the very process of defining each group of necessity requires differentiating it from others (Katyay, 2002; Hollinger, 2004; Premdas, 2006), rather than identifying the shared dimensions of subordination. For example, while those engaged in marriage equality struggles on behalf of lesbians and homosexuals may well win their right to marry – the social recognition of their love relationships – in certain jurisdictions, in so doing they may further reinforce the non-normativity of those who do not want to marry (Meeks, 2001), or of those, in other categories of non-conformity, such as transgender people, who are still far from being able to enter into public discourses about their right to most of the resources of citizenship, let alone marriage. Indeed, those seeking recognition within current gender norms may succeed in being added in as citizens but will not have contributed towards creating a new notion of citizenship (Avila,

1999, p. 7). They would not have challenged the current norm in which those who are not married are excluded from social recognition and equitable distribution of resources (whether pensions or health care). When people's only goal is to build their own group, and, more problematically, when being that group becomes more important than being and acting in solidarity with everyone who is marginalized, then identity-specific organization offers little possibilities for promoting social justice and full citizenship for all. This is not only a challenge for LGBT groups; but for all groups concerned with human rights and development, many of which are avoiding incorporating sexual diversity into their own agendas. As long as this remains the case, LGBT groups will have to both organize themselves and challenge the broader human rights and development terrain to be fully inclusive in their analyses and strategies. The concept of recognition specifically allows us to see potential for collaboration across discrete identity groups, because of a shared experience of being shamed or devalued in society (Klugman, 2007). More radically, rather than giving or removing rights on the basis of diverse identities, it raises the possibility of developing a vision for a full citizenship which recognizes all people as having equal value (Fraser, 2001) and equal claims on a new form of citizenship, stripped of its current exclusions, whether based on sexuality, race or anything else (Klugman, 2007).

In taking this position, I want to make clear that I am not arguing against working on group-specific issues. The specificity of discrimination often demands that organizations work towards short-term, group-specific gains. Paisley Currah (2003) describes how such practicalities as the need for identity cards are critical for the daily lives of transgender people, and therefore provide a basis for organising even while such groups are imagining and struggling for an alternative more inclusive world. This holds for all groups of people suffering specific exclusions which need to be challenged in the short term, and who may need to organize together in order to build self-esteem and solidarity. That said, the bases for such organization should be locally determined and solidarity across countries needs to be responsive to local forms of social, economic and political organization.¹⁴

However, the opportunities offered by the WSF raise broader organizational and strategic questions. If it provided only a space for networking between LGBT groups, that would be an important but somewhat limited achievement. The trends towards engaging with other networks working on sexuality is a very exciting step forward, as are the efforts to open discussions with movements addressing other dimensions of discrimination. What has not yet moved forward in any substantive way is a linkage between claims for sexual rights and the broader economic claims of the WSF. As the sexual rights field develops, greater effort is going in to understanding the links between sexuality and broader development issues (Armas, 2006). The challenge to both sexual diversity activists and economic justice activists would be to recognize how groups suffering social discrimination end up being particularly marginalized in the global economy. Identifying how lack of recognition of a range of groups links to inequitable

¹⁴ Gupta (2005) describes how the category of "gay" has provided a meaning and space for middle class homosexuals in India who self-identify with this western construct; but it has also allowed this grouping to denigrate the working class and more effeminate "kothis." In this process those whose class or historical cultural positioning locates them on the margins of society can be further marginalized as those defined as "gay" are legitimized.

distribution of resources would be a first step towards building solidarity between movements, and ultimately shaping a shared agenda for economic and social justice.

The vision of full citizenship also begs the question of the third of Fraser's concepts, representation. For how is society to be reoriented towards a more inclusive paradigm if those most excluded have no political platform. We see, from country to country, a wide range of subordinated groups not represented in the existing political systems. Included amongst these we see the lack of recognition of people with non-conforming sexualities or genders as legitimate political constituencies and being publicly non-heterosexual as a disqualifier for political office in many jurisdictions (Richardson, 1998). Yet the ability to participate in the political life of the community, the state and the nation, to represent these and to be represented, is crucial. The WSF provides a space for exploring some of the ideological and practical implications of representation, as evidenced by the efforts of sexual diversity organizations to influence both representation and organization of the space itself as friendly towards all people. This is one of the areas in which the WSF is making some progress, as the International Council somewhat slowly becomes more diverse. However, in reviewing challenges for the WSF in Nairobi, Onyango Oloo (2006), National Coordinator of the Kenya Social Forum notes the enormous difficulties they faced in securing women's representation and in making the space safe for women. It goes without saying that if this remains the case for women, it will be that much harder for people who publicly display any form of sexual or gender non-conformity.

Conclusion

In this paper I have tried to draw out a few of the reasons why issues of sexual and reproductive rights remain at the margins of the major themes of the WSF. I've suggested that sexual and reproductive health and rights activists tend to focus on the specificities of strengthening the quality of sexual and reproductive health services or on advocacy for policy change. Some of this can be done successfully without taking on broader questions of globalization; hence the WSF does not provide a strong lure. In so doing, they too are engaged in the politics of recognition as they try to build policy makers' and health workers' ability to see women as agents in their own right, with the right to make decisions for themselves regarding sexuality and reproduction. But by and large, they do not engage in advocacy to address the broader economic and political factors at the global and national level that are undermining the possibility of quality public services (including sexual and reproductive health services), an approach that would enable them to find common cause with NGOs and social movements in other sectors and to build a stronger base for mobilization. Similarly, until LGBT and even sexual diversity activists can move beyond essentialist understandings of identity to analyzing the ways in which their marginalization and that of other groups works for transnational and national economic systems and cultural hegemonies, they are unlikely to be able to achieve more than small policy advances for some groups, in the process excluding others.

Corpuz (2002) poses the challenge for the feminist movement in the WSF to not only work in their traditional areas of expertise, such as violence against women, but to move into issues pertaining to the global economy. This paper has attempted to deepen this proposal by suggesting that it is not only that feminists need to enter into movements

taking on other dimensions of globalization, but that they need to be able to show how sexuality and reproduction shape national and transnational notions of citizenship and exclusion. They need to draw parallels with other dimensions of exclusion and marginalization, such as ethnicity and class and in so doing build alliances which promote a) a *recognition* of all people as equal human beings; b) the right of all those people to fair distribution of global and national *resources* to enable them to live decent lives; and c) mechanisms for the participation and *representation* of all these people in political decision-making at local, national and global levels.

While this paper has focused on citizenship because the state remains the most important vehicle for ensuring social justice, the argument applies as much to those without citizenship. The movement of people across national boundaries in search of economic opportunities or to avoid various types of discrimination and persecution increases the differentials determining access to resources, recognition and representation, and indeed large numbers of people, “foreigners” and “aliens,” have no claims on citizenship at all. The importance of a shared set of values and vision across national boundaries cannot be overemphasized given that many of the forces leading to conservative positions at national levels are organized transnationally – including transnational economic institutions and politico-religious transnational movements (Brenner, 2004). Participants in these tend to see themselves enjoying transnational citizenship, whether as the global economic elites who move with freedom and employment from place to place or as those “that seek to reterritorialize nation-states currently divided by political borders as a transnational community rooted in a great religion” (Ong, 2006, p. 6).¹⁵ Progressive civil society, in contrast, has tended to mobilize on specific issues at specific focal moments, but is very far from establishing deep-rooted transnational networks that might invoke action at national, regional and international levels on an ongoing basis. One of the sites for global solidarity between movements should be in relation to both the global corporations and the UN structures which are responsible for regulating – criminalizing or enabling – the movement of people, whether for political, economic or social purposes. We need to work together to understand how these levels of exclusion work and what could be done about them across the specificities of each group’s concerns and to collectively envision alternative kinds of global relations and alternative kinds of citizenship.

The WSF offers a space in which to at least explore the possibilities of developing a shared vision; the possibilities of bringing together diverse movements to be able to mobilize enough constituencies to have an impact on transnational issues. While the WSF itself does not provide a single political perspective, it does provide the opportunity to insert new issues into debates, and to form wide-ranging linkages between networks.

¹⁵ This process pertains to conservative movements within a number of global religions and is particularly complex since their claims at times cohere with those struggling against the injustices of globalization. Yet by and large they tend to propose remedies that reinforce women’s subordination and propose the strengthening of patriarchal forces in the home and in public life. Yuval-Davis (2001) suggests that the phenomenon of people experiencing themselves as being positioned not only in relation to the state and the resources of citizenship it offers or denies, but also in relation to other positionings, such as membership in a transnational religion, require us to think in terms of “transversal citizenship politics” operating at many levels rather than only at the national level.

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