

## **Globalizing the social movements? Labour and the World Social Forum**

**Timothy Kerswell**<sup>1</sup>

As trade unions have come to confront new challenges, many have turned to alliances with NGOs and community groups. On a global scale, the most prominent alternative to the ‘traditional’ institutions comes in the form of the World Social Forum. This paper will examine the origins of the World Social Forum providing a short history of its foundations. Important to the organizing of the WSF are the theoretical principles of ‘open space’ and ‘horizontally networked politics’ which will be examined in this article. The article then proceeds to critically analyse the forum, its foundations, organizing principles and achievements. An evaluation of the forum is made from the perspective of labour with the conclusion that the WSF suffers from the same limitation as the global trade union movement, namely that there is no central organizing vision. As a result, it is concluded that the forum has failed to deliver on the expectations of many of its participants. *[Article copies available for a fee from The Transformative Studies Institute. E-mail address: [journal@transformativestudies.org](mailto:journal@transformativestudies.org) Website: <http://www.transformativestudies.org> ©2012 by The Transformative Studies Institute. All rights reserved.]*

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