

latin american society

## The success and failure of the World Social Forum in the past 20 years from the perspective of open space\*

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Abstract: Since its establishment, the World Social Forum has fought against neoliberal globalization with the attitude of "another globalization" and grown into an important force in changing globalization. It has also provided a vivid footnote to the concept of open space. In the process of opening up Under the concept of space, the World Social Forum takes changing (replacing) globalization as the theme, with left-wing democrats as the main force, with bottom-up resistance as the method, with the characteristics of pluralistic and inclusive political culture, and with modern communication technology as the means, it has become The benchmark of the global democratic movement. However, it is precisely because of its open space concept and practice that the World Social Forum has fallen into multiple tortures such as the dispute over the breadth of "openness", the structural differentiation of "space", and the confusion of "alternative" actions. ÿ Even so, in the face of global changes, the "another kind of globalization" and "another world" insisted by the World Social Forum still represent a broad consensus and new possibilities. Currently, globalization is blowing against the wind, and multiple crises are intertwined and superimposed. Populism is making waves. Reviewing the successes and failures of the World Social Forum over the past 20 years has its own meaning and value. Keywords: World Social Forum Open Space "Reforming Globalization" New Freedom Socialist globalization and a community with a shared future for mankind

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"Changing globalization", the World Social Forum was founded by the Brazilian Workers' Party. It aims to change globalization and oppose capitalism. It has adopted different forms of struggle and sought new directions and possibilities by discussing alternatives. Its loudest slogan is "Another world is possible" (1)

2001-2005: Brazil's start-up shows its prominence. The early

struggles of the World Social Forum were concentrated in Porto Alegre, Brazil, where the first three World Social Forums were held. This southern Brazilian city The port city took the lead in raising the banner of "changing globalization". Although the World Social Forum left for India in 2004, it returned to the base camp of Porto Alegre after a year. From January 25 to 30, 2001, the first World Social Forum The social forum attracted more than 10,000 anti-globalization people from 117 countries (regions) around the world. The participants had a heated discussion on opposing neoliberal globalization. The three major economic organizations criticized neoliberalism in promoting globalization. unfair and unreasonable behavior in the process. The first World Social Forum was a complete success. After the meeting, it was decided to establish the International Council of the World Social Forum. It discussed and formulated the "World Social Forum Charter of Principles" (World Social Forum Charter of Principles) The Second World Social Forum held on January 31, 2002 attracted 131 countries (regions), more than 5,000 organizations, and 15,000 representatives from around the world, 40% of whom were women representatives. This forum will be "another "This kind of globalization is possible" has been confirmed as the long-term theme of the forum. This is a powerful response to the "no alternative" (TINA) proposed by Western politicians but neoliberal globalization. The first session was held from January 23 to 28, 2003. The three sessions of the World Social Forum were attended by nearly 100,000 people from 156 countries (regions). Under the shadow of the Iraq War, the forum combined the "anti-imperialist and anti-war" issues with opposition to neoliberal globalization and called for the promotion of a A more reasonable world political and economic order. It is worth mentioning that this time the organizational management work is carried out by the International Council. The Council has no hierarchy, no leaders and coordinators. All decisions are made through joint discussions and initiatives, starting from a certain To a certain extent, this is the prototype of the open space

organizational form of the World Social Forum. On January 16, 2004, the World Social Forum was held in Mumbai, India. This was the first time it was held outside Brazil, its birthplace. People from different countries and More than 100,000 people of different races, different nationalities, different religious beliefs and even different political ideas gathered together, forming a rolling wave of enthusiasm that the world could not ignore. The forum attributed the focus of opposition to globalization to the level of opposition to imperialism, an

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Combined with the opposition to the US invasion of Iraq, a new meaning was written on the banner of the World Social Forum. As the first attempt to move away from the origin of Brazil, Mumbai witnessed the World Social Forum's strategy of globalization from "anti" to "reform" Evolution. The forum moved to India, which also rapidly expanded its influence in Asia. In 2005, the World Social Forum returned to Porto Alegre, Brazil. The number of participants reached a record-breaking 150,000. The crowd chanted slogans and strongly demanded that the United States and Israel immediately withdraw troops from Iraq and the Palestinian territories, and burned the portrait of US President Bush. After the forum, the "Porto Alegre Declaration" leading to "another world" was issued. In fair trade, environmental protection, global democracy, A united and powerful voice has been issued on issues such as the reform of international institutions, highlighting the characteristics of the World Social Forum that can break and build, and combine break and build.

(2) 2006-2010: Moving to Asia and Africa to expand influence In January

2006, the Sixth World Social Forum opened. This time there was no longer a central venue, but in Bamako, the capital of Mali, and Caracas, the capital of Venezuela. and Karachi, the capital of Pakistan, set up three branch venues, igniting the flames of opposition to capitalist globalization in Asia, Africa and Latin America at the same time. It can be said that since then, the World Social Forum has officially started the path of expansion in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The participation of the forum The number of people has increased exponentially, the scale of opening up has continued to expand, the organizational structure has become increasingly perfect, the forum topics have become more "down-to-earth", and the forum has continued to speak out for local issues in the process of traveling to many places. "Bama" published at the African Branch of the Sixth World Social Forum The Science and Technology Initiative has aroused people's attention to African issues. Under the baton of neoliberalism, those African "recipient countries" that accepted economic structural adjustment plans carried out economic reforms oriented toward marketization and privatization. However, the World Bank and international The "prescription" of the IMF did not solve the actual economic problems of African countries. On the contrary, the implementation of structural adjustment has brought new contradictions and difficulties to African countries. ÿ Increase in foreign debt, unemployment rate, widening gap between rich and poor, ecological environment Destruction and other negative consequences have pushed Africa into the ranks of "re-globalization". In January 2007, the seventh annual meeting of the World Social Forum was held in Nairobi, the capital of Kenya. This was the first time that the World Social Forum was held entirely in an African country. The Forum The theme is "People's Struggle, People's Choice". More than 66,000 people from more than 1,400 organizations from 110 countries (regions) held heated discussions on nearly 3,000 sub-topics at the Moi International Stadium in Nairobi. Participants called for the establishment of As an international organization that "promotes equitable development and respects cultural, natural and gender diversity" and "implements democratic management of globalization", some representatives put forward the clear slogan "Debt is poverty, debt is slavery, and refusal to repay debt is justice." ÿ In 2008 In January, the 8th World Social Forum arrived as scheduled together with the World Economic Forum, but this forum was celebrated with the

ÿ Shu Yunguo: «The negative impact of economic globalization on African countries from the perspective of structural adjustment», published in «Journal of Shanghai Normal University» (Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition), Issue 3, 2004, page 71. Lu Xia: «The Seventh World Social Forum Review»,

ÿ published in "Marxism Research", Issue 5, 2007, Page 108.

Action), without a clear location, trying a new decentralized organizational experience through the global platform link designed by the International Council. During January 21-26, 2008, protests from 80 countries Participants organized more than 700 events and held them all over the world. In 2009, the World Social Forum was held in Belem, Brazil, with as many as 100,000 participants. The theme of the forum was "Building a Different World", which pointed directly at Capitalism has put forward slogans such as "Socialism is an alternative" and "Another world is necessary" in its criticism and reflection. 2010 is the 10th anniversary of the World Social Forum. The forum is titled "10 Years Later: Building a Different World" With the theme of "Challenges and Suggestions", a large-scale reflective event was held. Representatives of social movement organizations, left-wing political parties and trade unions from nearly 40 countries around the world discussed the current global socio-economic development issues. Participants summarized the World Social Forum Based on the experience and lessons learned since its establishment, it is believed that solving global problems requires broad public participation. Social movement organizations should strengthen ties with left-wing parties in various countries and take unified international actions. The forum is held in a decentralized manner, except for Porto Alegre. In addition, it has also been held in the northern Brazilian city of Salvador, Benin in Africa, Madrid and Barcelona in Spain. Each sub-forum has an independent organizational structure, which marks that the World Social Forum, a regional organization originally based mainly in Brazil, has become more A vast world stage

(3) 2011-2015: Expanding issues globally. The 21st century has

entered its second decade, and the World Social Forum has also started its second decade. It has moved from Asia, Africa and Latin America to the world. As it becomes increasingly globalized, it has attracted a large number of loyal people. participants, and has a mature organizational mechanism. In 2011, the World Social Forum was held in Dakar, Senegal, on the African continent. This was the first time that the World Social Forum held an event in a country with a Muslim majority. The World Social Forum is committed to In order to promote global religious diversity, various Christian organizations and some religiously inclined groups are very active in the World Social Forum. This forum is a focus on religious organizations and their demands.

Response. From January 23 to 29, 2012, the World Social Forum returned to Porto Alegre. More than 40,000 social movement activists participated in this meeting to discuss solutions to the global economic crisis. These people included Spanish " He is a member of the "Angry" movement and the "Occupy Wall Street" movement in the United States. The forum focused on the theme of "Capitalist Crisis: Social and Environmental Justice" and conducted extensive discussions on the underlying causes of the international financial crisis. Participants all believed that the causes of the international financial crisis were The root cause lies in the capitalist system, and developing countries should strive to seek to establish a new development model. From March 26 to 30, 2013, the World Social Forum was held in Tunisia. This was the first time the forum came to the Arab world. Since the "Arab Crisis" was triggered in 2011 After the "Spring", Tunisia was called the most successful country in democratic transition by European and American media. However, during the forum, there were still workers going on hunger strikes for low wages and high unemployment.

The theme of this forum was "Global Square" Innovation builds a spatial model that meets personalized organizational requirements and ensures participation











They exist as non-interventional "international support agencies", mainly to play the necessary coordination role. For example, the 2016 World Social Forum established a non-profit board of directors, standing committees and working groups. These three types of "working groups" organize and coordinate work. ¶ Recruit volunteers and allow these conscious change makers to voluntarily participate in activities, play a core supporting role, ensure the "bottom-up" operation direction of the forum, and prevent the erosion of the open space of the forum by the hierarchy.

(4) Cultivating a social soil of diversity and inclusiveness.

The document of the Second World Social Forum pointed out: "Diversity is our strength, and the expression of diversity is the basis of our unity." ¶ The World Social Forum claims that its political culture is an open one Space: "A place where people from a wide range of currents of thought and action can meet and interact without feeling obliged to agree with the organizers or with some or other idea or directive." ¶ Providing a rich perspective that sparks the imagination of people and organizations around the world: the concept of 'open space' is 'incubating' movements that challenge empires and celebrate diversity and diversity. ¶ World Society The forum attracts a wide range of citizen groups from the bottom up, mobilizes various social networks, and works to solve different issues, such as social and economic injustice, war and human rights, North-South inequality, international trade barriers, women and minority rights, and landless farmers. dilemmas, global environmental issues, sustainable development issues, etc. Heterogeneous citizen groups are mutually tolerant of each other's issues, and try to implement deliberative democracy in internal practice and achieve openness of issues in external interactions. Open space is considered to be unlimited. An undifferentiated space with no structure, no intermediary, no control, no center, no edge, and no tendency to exclude others is a fertile ground for nurturing a diverse and inclusive social culture.

(5) Demonstrating the huge potential of network operations.

Diversified discussions on global issues rely on the emergence of the global public sphere. The World Social Forum is a massive global democratic movement that provides support for countless individuals and individuals who are dissatisfied with neoliberal globalization. Organizations provide a transnational social space for communication and exchange, and the creation of this open space is highly dependent on developed information and communication technology. The massive World Social Forum is an example of the large-scale application of the Internet, a civilian technology. It can Attracting widespread participation from citizens and grassroots organizations from different corners of the world relies on the instant delivery of free and freely available online information. Information and communication technology has allowed the World Social Forum to continue to speak out on a global scale after the COVID-19 epidemic. The 2021 "Virtual March Day" will be broadcast live on the global Internet for 24 hours to share the forum's struggle experience in the new situation with the world. Some scholars bluntly said that the World Social Forum is the product of networked organizations. It not only uses itself as a carrier to continuously incubate a variety of networked organizations, but also

¶ Liu Chengjun: «Left-wing Thought Trends in Latin America», published in «Latin American Studies», Issue 5, 2004, page 14.

¶ Klaue Keirahaer, Jayson: «Exploration of Open Space: World Social Forum and Political Culture» ¶ Published by «International Society Science Journal» (Chinese version), Issue 4, 2005, Page 17, Page 14.

At the same time, it attempts to transform the organizational form from a vertical bureaucratic operating model to a networked operating model. To a certain extent, the World Social Forum, which skillfully uses information and communication technology, has made a huge contribution to the creation of a transnational public sphere and the expansion of political and democratic space. From this, we can also A glimpse of the huge development potential of online citizen organizations.

### The lack of open space in the Three World Social Forum

Over the past 20 years, the world political and economic situation has been changing rapidly, and the World Social Forum has also experienced ups and downs in its development process. As an organizational practice form that resists the traditional hierarchy and state-centered theory, the World Social Forum represents a unique way of social and political practice. It is not a political party with a political ideology, it is not a forum meeting to discuss academic issues, it is not even a pure social movement, but a diverse, open, inclusive and shared global space. It serves as a transnational field for discussing alternatives to globalization. Domain, the World Social Forum's pursuit of "another globalization" has not been smooth sailing. "Realizing utopia in a world without utopia" may be the biggest shortcoming of the World Social Forum. From the perspective of open space, the World Social Forum In its development, it faces multiple challenges such as the dispute over the breadth of "openness", the structural differentiation of "space", and the practical confusion of "replacement", which also makes its path to global protest a thorny road.

#### (1) "Openness": Debate over the breadth of the World Social Forum

Whether the World Social Forum fully follows the action concept of "opening to diversity" and to what extent it has "opened to diversity" have always been the focus of debate in academic circles.

"Opening to diversity" means tolerating diversity and accepting differences. The World Social Forum's tolerance of diversity and differences is reflected in the following aspects. First, in terms of personnel composition, open spaces respect different countries and ethnic groups. People of different origins, different genders, and different skin colors. The World Social Forum is a huge network composed of organizations and individuals that brings together the human rights movement, the trade union movement, the anti-poverty movement, the environmental movement, the anti-war movement, and the women's movement. Second In terms of principles and program, the World Social Forum brings together multiple actions, defines itself as a decentralized, pluralistic, non-religious, non-governmental and non-party space, operates in a non-partisan context, and explicitly prohibits political parties. Representatives participated. Thirdly, in terms of theme content, various topics under the goals of "changing globalization" and "another kind of globalization" are constantly changing, and there is persistence in change. In the 2021 online world society under the influence of the epidemic Forum, issues such as economic justice and social distribution are still the focus of debate in the forum as they were 20 years ago. However, the world society

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Just a traditional market space? It has to be admitted that this is a question that is still difficult to answer. (2) "Space": Discussing the structure

of the World Social Forum Chico Whitaker compared open spaces to

urban spaces He clearly expressed the difference between space and movement, pointing out that a movement must gather people through a pyramid-like organizational structure to achieve certain goals. However, space is a carrier without a leader. He particularly emphasized openness. The nature of horizontal interaction in space. However, scholars have three different views on the operational structure of the World Social Forum that uses open space as an organizational representation.

One is the "horizontal structure" theory. This view attributes the cause of the horizontal structure to the hierarchical organization of anti-traditional politics and emphasizes the organizational logic of political change and paradigm change. Scholars have proposed "horizontalism" or "utopian space" etc. to define the horizontal interactive and connected organizational structure characterized by "open space". The World Social Forum maintains its legitimacy through anti-hierarchical organizational logic and horizontal organizational design, believing that it wants to truly oppose "all forms of hegemony". It is necessary to resist and get rid of the original political organizational framework and stop the spread of power in hierarchical organizations. It can be said that this is a rethinking of the representative democracy and political order that became increasingly rigid, coercive, and formalistic at the end of the 20th century.

One is the "vertical structure" theory. There are not a majority of scholars who believe that the organizational structure of the World Social Forum is actually a vertical structure. However, such scholars pay attention to the vertical organizational connections hidden under the horizontal interaction of the forum. It is proposed that the World Social Forum, as a transnational, diversified and intertwined world movement, must inevitably have a vertical hierarchical organizational structure. However, compared with the top-down interactive form of "traditional politics", it is only It only pays more attention to the bottom-up interactive logic. On the other hand, scholars pay attention to the nature of the vertical connection between the global structural level and the individual subject level of the World Social Forum. They believe that the World Social Forum is to a large extent a global institution and The "transmission belt" between individuals Vertical logic has been unconsciously embedded in existing global governance mechanisms and agendas.

Klaue Keirahel, Jayson: «Exploration of Open Space: World Social Forum and Political Culture», published in «International Journal of Social Sciences» (Chinese version), Issue 4, 2005, pp. 17-18. Chico Whitaker "World Social Forum - Possible 2018" pp 183 - 194

Lesley J Woody "Horizontalist Out of the Camps and the Bolivarian Revolution: A Story of Blocked" "Horizontalist Out of the Camps and the Bolivarian Revolution: A Story of Blocked" "Horizontalist Out of the Camps and the Bolivarian Revolution: A Story of Blocked" "Horizontalist Out of the Camps and the Bolivarian Revolution: A Story of Blocked" "Horizontalist Out of the Camps and the Bolivarian Revolution: A Story of Blocked"



The denunciation of the hegemony of international financial capital represents the voice of the people and stands on the side of progress. However, the loose organizational form makes the forum more often just provides opinions on issues, and plays more of a deconstructive role than a constructive role in the issue. World Social Forum Therefore, it is nicknamed "Democratic Utopia" because it is based on the denial of the present rather than the definition of the future. It seems to pay more attention to the form of the movement than to the content of the movement. The World Social Forum helps to maximize the promotion of Unite and build consensus, but that may be all. It does not expect to

create an "agenda" for political power. Again, the struggle strategy oscillates between radical and moderate.

Compared with the rush of street politics, the World Social Forum embodies It has a more rational, speculative, and restrained side, but there have always been two tendencies within it, namely mild reforming globalism and radical anti-globalism. This oppositional yet conciliatory stance stems from the diverse actors' views on globalization issues. The dual strategies proposed are: one is to choose to negotiate with international institutions and try to change the world order by changing the existing system, which is a moderate practical strategy; the other is to systematically oppose all institutions that represent neoliberal globalization, leading to The World Social Forum is hesitant between these two strategies and is often swayed by them.

Finally, the movement's ideas are out of touch with the practice of governance. Since the 21st century, the "pendulum effect" of political forces in Latin America has been very obvious. Although a "pink wave" once formed, most left-wing political leaders violently criticized the new system during the election campaign. The liberal economic model, however, after taking power, was unable to carry out radical reforms to the free market model. For example, the Brazilian left-wing party, as an important force that gave birth to the World Social Forum, has been disappointing in its policy practices since coming to power. Lula said in 2002 After coming to power on behalf of the Brazilian Workers' Party, he did not fulfill his campaign promises. Instead, he continued to implement the conservative policies of the Cardoso administration. Critics believe that this abandonment of breaking with neoliberalism will only solidify the chronic diseases of extreme poverty and social injustice. For this reason Many people criticize the Labor Party government as a "left-wing government without a left-wing agenda" and criticize the Labor Party as a "left-wing party dreaming of right-wing dreams". Its economic and social policies are not aimed at eradicating inequality.

The World Social Forum's continued struggle to advocate "another world" and "another globalization" is commendable, but what is even more valuable is to find the reality that leads to "another world" and "another globalization" A path that can both deconstruct and construct, both deny and define, both suggest and build. This is a more constructive and ideal form of citizen movement, although such a requirement is difficult for a

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Wang Shuang: "World Social Forum: Era Background, Development Process and Limitations", published in "Contemporary World Socialist Issues", 2015 Issue No. 1, Page 125

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Fang Xufei: "The Divide, Changes and Prospects of Left and Right Political Parties in Brazil", published in "Latin American Studies", Issue 5, 2020, Page 61.

It's a bit harsh for a grassroots forum.

#### Four Conclusions

From the resounding "Another World is Possible" in 2001 to "What we want now and in the future is not a Davos world" in 2021, the World Social Forum's vision for changing the current globalization and pursuing "another world" It is the same as always. The participants of the World Social Forum insisted on building an open space to integrate diverse forces to jointly resist neoliberal globalization. Their ideas on "what is another world" and "how to lead to another world" are widely recognized. Action is profound and productive. Under the banner "Another World Is Possible", the World Social Forum provides a platform where activists can express their challenge to the pervasive hierarchical and undemocratic nature of economic globalization. Faced with the "democratic deficit" of neoliberal globalization, the performance of the World Social Forum has allowed the world to see "what democracy looks like". However, the World Social Forum cannot replace the global division of labor system, global governance system and exclusive value system dominated by Western countries. Little achievements have been made in "another globalization". In a word, the "Porto Alegre Consensus" cannot effectively deal with the neoliberal "Washington Consensus". How to reverse globalization after the financial crisis and the epidemic crisis How to save globalization from the declining trend of protectionism, populism, unilateralism, xenophobia, etc. cannot be solved by simple discussions, protests, and demonstrations. Only by gathering the common values of all mankind and leading the practice of reshaping globalization can See the results. The concept of a community with a shared future for mankind proposed by China is hailed as "the only future for mankind on this planet". Building a world of lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness, inclusiveness, cleanness and beauty represents the greatest common denominator of the interests of all countries. Beyond the laws of the animal jungle of capitalism, winner-take-all logic, and zero-sum game thinking, it provides conceptual support and value guidance for interpreting what "another world" is. As a practical platform to promote the construction of a community with a shared future for mankind, the "One Belt, One Road" initiative Use connectivity to remove obstacles to poverty reduction, promote equal cooperation through consultation and joint construction, use innovative mechanisms to break hegemonic injustice, replace "winner globalization" with "win-win globalization", and provide solutions for promoting "how to lead to another world" At a time when globalization is facing strong headwinds, crises and challenges are coming one after another, and populism is on the rise, reviewing the successes and failures of the World Social Forum will help us clarify our future ideals and grasp current actions.

(Editor Gao Han)

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