



Information for Social Change

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**Special Issue on
Libraries & Information in World Social
Forum context**

**Special Issue Editors: Mikael Bök and
Shiraz Durrani**

Information for Social Change is an activist organisation that examines issues of censorship, freedom and ethics amongst library and information workers. It is committed to promoting alternatives to the dominant paradigms of library and information work and publishes its own journal, *Information for Social Change* (freely available online at <http://www.libr.org/isc>). Information for Social Change is an Organisation in Liaison with the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP).

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"In fact, the biggest challenge for the organizers of the World Social Forum does not consist in defining new and better contents that could lead to even more concrete proposals, but to guarantee the continuity of the form the Forum was given – a case in which the means are determinant for the aim to be reached.
(Chico Whitaker)

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Editorial: Welcoming people power on the occasion of the World Social Forum

Shiraz Durrani

In all countries, the ruling classes have used their control over information to influence people's world outlook and social awareness. Developments in information and communication technologies in recent years have given them even more power to control destinies of peoples, countries and the world as a whole. Those who control information and systems of communications also decide what interpretation to give to our history and culture. They decide which ideologies, individuals and political and social movements "live" and which will die. This is no crude mind control. This is a silent and hidden hand going into our collective minds to organize our collective information and knowledge. Aspects of information that are unpalatable to the ruling classes are deleted and those that legitimize their rule are magnified. This newly recreated world is then projected through all means of social communication: mass media, the education system, arts and culture as well as through libraries and archives.

Perhaps the most important example in recent years of the (mis)use of information for political and economic use is the propaganda mounted by the Bush and Blair administrations about the "existence" of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. It did not matter that there was no real evidence for this, it did not matter that "evidence" had to be created to suit the political aims of those keen on waging wars – wars that have led to the death of over 700,000 people in Iraq. It did not matter that other countries are allowed, as a "natural right", to develop and use weapons of even more deadly mass destruction. No, what mattered was that people had to be convinced by incorrect information about the existence of such weapons in Iraq and to designate Saddam Hussain, once an ally of the same powers, as a monster who had to be destroyed – together with the country and citizens as "collateral damage".

The fact that those who invaded Iraq controlled, directly or indirectly, mass media to silence the oppositions to the wars was a crucial factor that allowed the invasion to be given a superficial gloss of "agreement" in national and international terms. Millions of people around the world marched and shouted their opposition to the wars, but this had no effects on the so-called democratically elected "leaders" who used the most advanced weapons of mass destruction to rain death on people of an independent country. The same mass media were used to hide crucial facts – that the real interest in destroying Iraq as a viable country was to meet their geo-political interest in West Asia, to control oil in a major oil producing country which was threatening to stop using US dollars for oil transactions. The same media are used to misinterpret resistance as sectional wars. Those opposed to the invasion of their country are not seen as part of resistance, and their resistance is interpreted as religious wars in the well-used imperialist tactic of "divide-and-rule".

A discussion about the central role of information in our social and political lives today is an appropriate one during the World Social Forum. Control over

information about brutality and destruction as seen in Iraq have been used in the history of the world as created by imperialism for over 500 years. One needs to look at just a few books published recently to see this as very much part of the British Empire. Those who may not have time to read all the new material can perhaps look at just two books:

- Caroline Elkins (2005): *Britain's Gulag: The Brutal End of Empire in Kenya*. London: Pimlico.
- John Newsinger (2006): *The Blood Never Dried: A People's History of the British Empire*. Bookmarks.

These books provide details about historical brutality and terrorism employed by imperialism for centuries in Kenya, Ireland, China, India, Egypt, Palestine, and Malaya. No part of the world has escaped this brutal onslaught in which whole nations and communities have been wiped out. Yet such facts are not common knowledge as our media, information and educational institutes do not make us aware of them, preferring instead to focus on a few "benefits" bestowed on people around the world in the name of Empire.

One can see the position of British ruling classes from what Gordon Brown says. He wants Britain to stop apologising for its colonial past. Instead, the British Chancellor calls for the "great British values" - freedom, tolerance, civic duty - to be admired as "some of our most successful exports". But Britain has never apologised for its colonial massacres and plunder and there are very few examples – if any - of a British colony having been left with "freedom, tolerance, civic duty" as a benefit of colonialism. Perhaps it is time for the Chancellor to read the two books quoted above – together with *Never be silent* - and talk again about "our successful exports" – which in Kenya have included mobile gallows to "pacify" the rebellious natives. Perhaps he can also give us facts to disagree with a former MP, Richard Cobden who was opposed to the British Opium Wars in China. Newsinger (2006, p. 67) quotes Cobden:

...in the slave trade we had surpassed in guilt the world, so in foreign wars we have been the most aggressive, quarrelsome, warlike and bloody nation under the sun. [In October 1850, he wrote:] we have been incomparably the most sanguine (bloodthirsty) nation on earth.

This role of the "most sanguine nation on earth" has now been taken over by USA which took over from the British Empire.

But all is not lost. The same technology that enables "difficult" parts of history to be deleted from our consciousness also provides people with tools to retrieve that same history from the recycle bin and put it in the forefront of life. As Derek Walcott says, "*The native, the exotic, the victim, the noble savage, is looking back, returning a stare*". The process of returning a stare is made easier today as people everywhere claim back their histories and break embargos placed on their information. Everywhere, they are breaking controls on the means of production of books, news and information. The people's war of liberation in the information field has started in earnest.

And that is the significance of the 2007 World Social Forum in Nairobi. It comes at an important time in history. The power of USA is fast declining – economic,

political and moral. While new powers such as China, India, and Brazil are taking its place, none of them demonstrate the imperialist zeal for world domination that Britain and Europe did at one time, and that USA has done since the end of the Second World War. The defeat of USA in Vietnam did not teach it the real lesson that people's power was on the ascendancy. The changes in USSR only increased its arrogance and increased its attacks on people and countries to force "regime changes". Its slow defeat in Iraq is reinforcing the same message. This time, this symbolises its decline as a world imperialist power.

There is evidence of new people's power and movements everywhere today, ranging from Latin America to Asia and Africa. At the same time, new possibilities opened up by ICT have created conditions for people to take power into their own hands by forming global communities of interest that have the potential for setting world agenda in many fields: political, environmental, economic. The WSF is one such community.

It is significant, as documented in this issue of ISC, that library and information workers are taking a stand, both as individuals and as information workers, in this process. It is to the credit of colleagues in Africa that they are setting new standards of control over information in this important forum at an important historical juncture.

We wish all the participants at the WSF a successful Forum and look forward to the consolidation of a new forum where real economic, political and cultural democracy and social justice are the guiding principles to create a new world. Real people's power is within our grasp today – if we can unite on these principles.

Shiraz Durrani

17 December 2006

Introduction: Waiting On The World To Change

Mikael Bök

The issue of ISC which you see on your computer screen is about libraries and information in the World Social Forum context. We are putting the libraries in a WSF context, because ISC has so far mostly been spread and read among librarians and information specialists. But it should certainly also be the other way round, so that we would look at the WSF from a library point of view.

Either way, we hope that you who read this journal will actively support the process of changing the world social order through "information activism" as well as by being active in global activities such as WSF. The two are closely related.

The modern public library is, in fact, what the Social Forum also tries to be: "an open space".

But there is a big gap in the World Social Forum! It is the absence of the library. We, the librarians and information specialists, are supposed to be there, but we are not yet there.

What is worse: If librarians are absent from the World Social Forum, they are also absent from their real role in the information world.

We have been "*blithe as a milkmaid, or sumptuously dressed according to the wishes of its masters*", as Suzanne Briet wrote 1951 in her book about documentation.[i] But from now on, we need to follow the example of judges, legislators and governors and consider ourselves as the informational power, which has to check and balance the other powerholders.

The World Social Forum does not stay within the national borders, it is not an arrangement between states and governments. It is society itself, because society can no longer be confined to separate nations and national states. The internet is the ultimate proof, and at the same time the prime condition, of the globalisation of the human society. The time of the Empires is past. The United States of America will not lead the world. Nor will China, or Europe. The solutions attempted by the Alexanders, the Caesars, the Napoleons, the Stalins, the Hitlers and the Bushes, have proved not to be viable.

We, librarians and information specialists, are part of the solution. It could perhaps be called: the civilised solution. As said Mahatma Gandhi: civilisation would be a good idea.

* * *

Information for Social Change started to appear in 1994 - years before the World Social Forum was born. In this issue you will find articles and documents which introduce you to the principles and methods of the WSF: for instance, an interview with one of the founders of the WSF, Brazilian theologian of liberation and social activist Chico Whitaker, who is one of the winners of the "alternative

Nobel Prize", The Right Livelihood Award, in 2006. We have chosen Chico Whitaker's sentence about guaranteeing the continuity of *the form the Forum* as the motto of this special issue, because it should be obvious that librarians have a special role to play precisely in this respect. You will also note that Nicolas Haeringer and Martí Olivella are actually trying to do the librarians' job in their reflections on how the Forum should develop from a series of events into a continuing process. This is only to be expected, of course. Is not each one of us a bit of a librarian; a collector, creator, disseminator, presenter and guardian of information?

What is the Social Forum, except being an embryonic world society? A researcher, Marlies Glasius, is defining the spread of the social forums as the growth of deliberation and struggle, which are forming a contradictory unity.[ii] She founds her thesis on Kant's idea of a universal civil society, on the one hand, and Gramsci's thoughts about the political and cultural hegemony, on the other. I like this dialectical definition of the social forum as something for ever unfinished, and which is always weighing between two alternatives: the search for truth together with the necessary debates, affirmations and refutations - the deliberation; but at the same time the need to organise and realise, to construct the new counter-power which has to prevail over the empires of the old world, in one word: the struggle!

The World Social Forum, as is well known, was originally conceived as a counterpoint to the World Economic Forum. However, the WSF, too, has hitherto to a great extent been a forum for deliberation and struggle on *economic* issues. It was the pathology of the finances of this world, in particular, that brought together the European and Latin American individuals and organisations who triggered off the first Social Forum of Porto Alegre in 2001. This should explain why one section of this ISC issue has got the title: World Public Finances.

For the citizen, the common man and woman who of course do not exist as one particular type, but in thousands of variations, the world's finances has hitherto been the most distant and disinteresting subject conceivable. Not so anymore. We have started to take an interest in these exotic things and activities: the billions and the banks. We have found the international finance to be a most fascinating subject! The big numbers are not that difficult, after all. Rather, it is the information: the hieroglyphics of the money,[iii] which are there to separate us from them, the high priests of Capitalism.

Financial expertise is and will be needed, yes, but one does not need to be an expert to understand that the present world financial system (or rather non-system) is sick. It is enough to know some basic things: that the trade with money is the world's biggest market, for instance, which has grown more than a hundred times since James Tobin (Winner of the 1981 Nobel Prize in Economics) proposed his little tax on financial transactions back in the seventies; at that time, already, he was troubled by the volume of speculation on the financial markets!; or, that half of the world trade passes through the tax havens; or, again, that the indebtedness of the US economy has reached a catastrophic level, not to speak about the debts of many countries of the global South, which continue to hinder them from becoming what they are called, namely, *developing* countries.

What roles do the librarians and libraries play in all this, the world's public finances? As mentioned earlier, it is to do with information. In order to explain how it can be "the information", I should like to quote, here, a passage from the English summary of the doctoral dissertation of Finnish library scientist Timo Kuronen:

"The legal right of access to information is limited to public documents, actions by the authorities and certain administrative matters related to the individual concerned. A general right to freedom of information which includes information about the market economy does not exist. There is not even any prospect of such a law, and this is a serious problem, since the private sector's share of all social functions is very large and growing continuously. Information about the markets is a blind spot in freedom of information, the ideological background of which is seeing information as a commodity that can be owned like any other." [iv]

Transparency in the World Public Finances (WPF) could be considered to be an implicit goal of the social forum process, although the Forum does not set goals, or adopt programs, or make any resolutions. But WPF, as a goal, is probably supported by most of the hundreds of organisations and movements which participate in the process of the social forum. Many of these are, as was already said, focussing their activities on financial problems and on international institutions like The World Bank, The International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation which are themselves seen as part of the problems.

Therefore, a number of organisations - Liberdade Brasil, Attac Japan, the Network Institute for Global Democratisation etc. - are now trying to launch an initiative, called "World Public Finances", at the Nairobi WSF. The articles below by Emma Lochery and Francine Mestrum, plus the concept paper by Matti Kohonen, should provide more information on the subject.

The bulk of the content in this issue of ISC is, however, meant to throw light on the beginning process of *rapprochement* between the social forums and the libraries. The public libraries and the social movements, which started to grow in parallel and together a couple of centuries ago - first in the USA, and then in Europe and the rest of the world - somehow seem to have lost sight of each other's somewhere on the way. They need, in short, to reconnect and build the world's public library. The centrepiece of that new institution is already in place; it is called the internet.[v]

As far as the present author is concerned, the connection of the library and the social movements begun in Finland with the opening, in February 1994, of "The Cable Book", the branch of the City Library of Helsinki which ran the first World Wide Web-server of the library, taking advantage of the GNU/Linux operating system (then version 1.0), which was installed in the computer of the People's Educational Association. It continued ten years later at the World Social Forum in Mumbai, India, where the then chairperson of the IFLA, Kay Raseroka from Botswana, said that librarians should go to the WSF and document it in their libraries. And now it is gaining speed via the first WSF in Africa, the one in Nairobi 20-25 January 2007. The article by Esther Obachi, who

is the secretary of Kenya Library Association and a founding member of PALIAct (Progressive African Library and Information Activists' Group) on "The Management of the WSF Information" should bear witness to where we stand as this issue goes to print.

A few days before Christmas, I heard a new pop song on the radio. It is called "Waiting on the World to Change":

*It's hard to beat the system
when we're standing at a distance
so we keep waiting
waiting on the world to change
now if we had the power
to bring our neighbors home from war
they would have never missed a Christmas
no more ribbons on their door
and when you trust your television
what you get is what you got
cause when they own the information, oh
they can bend it all they want [vi]*

1. Quoted from: Briet, Suzanne (2001): What is Documentation? Selections from *Qu'est-ce que la documentation?* (Paris 1951) translated and commented by Ronald E. Day and Laurent Martinet. See <http://ella.slis.indiana.edu/~roday/briet.htm>

2. Glasius, Marlies: "Deliberation or Struggle? Civil Society Traditions Behind the Social Forums" *Ephemera*, volume 5(2): 240-252. <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-2/5-2glasius.pdf> Published/accessed: 2005/ Accessed December 2006. - See below, Further Readings on the WSF.

3. I borrow this expression from Peter Lamborn Wilson's essay "Hieroglyphics and Money", in *Poetics and Politics in Action*, edited by Anne Waldman and Lisa birman, Coffee House Press 1998, pp 267-288.

4. Kuronen, Timo (2000): *Kansalaiskeskustelun edellytykset ja mahdollisuudet tietoverkkojen aikakaudella*. *Acta Electronica Universitatis Tamperensis* 31, p. 198 (<http://acta.uta.fi/pdf/951-44-4814-6.pdf>). - In English translation, the Finnish title of this work could be: Conditions and possibilities for the Deliberation of the Citizens in the Age of the Networks.

5. But for how long? "We must ensure that the Internet remains open and accessible to all citizens without any limitation on the ability of individuals to choose the content they wish regardless of the Internet service provider they use to connect to the Worldwide Web. We cannot take this future for granted. We must be prepared to fight for it because some of the same forces of corporate consolidation and control that have distorted the television marketplace have an interest in controlling the Internet marketplace as well. Far too much is at stake to ever allow that to happen", as said Al Gore in his speech "America's Democracy is in Grave Danger" at Media Conference, October 2005.

6. From *Waiting on the World To Change*, by John Mayer. You can listen to and watch it here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKSOIM4BTws&eurl=> But don't wait. Do it!



Politics of information: reality & vision



Never be Silent. Three questions from BiS to Shiraz Durrani

- regarding his newly released book *Never be silent; publishing and imperialism in Kenya 1884-1963* (2006, London: Vita Books)

BiS is the acronym of the Swedish organisation Bibliotek i Samhälle (Libraries in Society)

BiS is a socialist association of people working in libraries as well as others with an interest in library issues. According To BiS, it is the objective of libraries to safeguard and develop democracy by:

- supporting freedom of expression and by guaranteeing the provision of information as a base for expressing opinions and social criticism
- being a publicly funded and democratically governed institution, which is developed in a dialogue with its users and the local community
- working in a outreaching, literacy promoting and guiding way, prioritising those facing the risk of ending up on the wrong side of the growing information gap
- actively offering information and literature, which is complementary and alternative to the commercially viable.

BiS was funded in 1969 by students of the Library School in Stockholm. From the very beginning it has issued its journal *bis*, nowadays appearing four times a year. During the first ten years, all work was done in a very decentralised way through numerous branches in Sweden. BiS has still no chairperson, but a national board and an editor of its journal.

From 1991 BiS has been actively involved in solidarity and exchange work in South Africa. BiS has supported the Masizame Resource Center in a township in Eastern Cape and been a part of a national school library project 1997 - 2002, working together with progressive South African counterparts.

BiS has got a website www.foreningenbis.org where the main elements of BiS' work is displayed. During the last three years, a special emphasis has been put on fighting the neoliberal GATS which is a threat to public libraries. The journal has an important role in raising alternative issues and new perspectives on the library in the society.

BiS is part of a international network of progressive library organisations.



Shiraz Durrani at the Training the trainers workshop, Nairobi, July 2006. Photo M.B.

1. Why did you write the book? Your book has the title: “Never be silent”. Why?

The book started as a paper for a Workshop entitled, “libraries and rural development in Kenya”. It was an exploration of the role that information workers should play in ensuring that the information needs of people were met. This was a way of understanding and redefining the social role of librarians in Kenya. That was the first reason for writing the book.

The second reason was to re-interpret the history of Kenya from people’s point of view. A large amount of history has been written and interpreted by those who sought to justify colonialism and imperialism. Facts were often distorted, hidden or misinterpreted. Those who sought to see history from a people’s point of view were not free to carry out research, or to publish their findings. I used secondary sources to give the events a new interpretation. Thus the book seeks to provide an alternative and, from my point of view, an authentic, version of colonialism and resistance to it in Kenya. The history of publishing in Kenya, as an important aspect of social communications, provides a prism for seeing and understanding the reality of social and political struggles in Kenya.

The third reason for writing the book was an act of political activism at a time when there were few democratic avenues for political activists. All progressive political activities in Kenya from around 1965 had to be carried out underground. A new generation of cadres needed to be nurtured in theories of liberation and tested in active struggles. They had to be given a new, Pan African and anti-imperialist world outlook, based on principles of socialism.

A missing element in this process was a lack of appropriate study material. The underground opposition needed progressive material from overseas (e.g. writings of Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Castro, Lumumba, Nkrumah, Cabral etc) and organised their supply through underground networks - note that this was before the internet made such material easily accessible. But it also needed material that reflected local history, struggles and achievements. Such material had to be written locally. Thus activists of the underground December Twelve Movement wrote and published *InDependent Kenya*¹ as well as issued its own newspaper, *Pambana*². My publications, including *Never be Silent*, aimed to supply such material for political use. My other publications included a short introduction to Mau Mau³.

The title, "Never be silent" is taken from a liberation song sung by the Mau Mau activists as a way of recording their history, and to organise and mobilise their supporters. The song was:

We will never be silent ⁴

On January 7th we were surrounded at Bahati
by the colonial army.

We will never be silent
until we get land to cultivate
and freedom in this country of ours, Kenya.

Home Guards were the first to go and close the gates
and Johnnies entered while the police surrounded the location.
You, traitors! You dislike your children,
caring only for your stomachs;
You are the enemies of our people.

We will never be silent
until we get land to cultivate
and freedom in this country of ours, Kenya.

2. In a popular movement, what is the role of the professional librarian or information worker?

It is important to see professional librarians in their social context. They are part of a social setup which, under capitalism, is divided into various classes. The information sector, in common with other aspects of life, is in effect a tool of a particular class which uses it to further its class interests. At the same time, classes with less political or economic power are engaged in a constant resistance to assert *their* class interests. The professionals in this context are not neutral. Whether they admit it or not, they are involved in this struggle on one side or another.

A popular movement in such a situation seeks political power to meet the needs of those it represents. A key requirement for their struggle to succeed is control over social information. The information needs of the popular movement are, of course, related to the needs of their struggles. In essence, they need to know everything their enemies know, but in addition they also need to know and understand the reality of the situation from their own point of view, both national and international, so that they draw correct lessons for their struggles. They need scientific and technological information which can further their social struggles as well as provide means of satisfying their material needs. For this to be done, they need to control tools of social communication – printing presses, books, radio stations, ICT, videos, photo documentation, libraries and all the other tools made possible by developments in ICT.

Thus a popular movement needs its activists to have skills to ensure that it can control and use all these technologies – just as they need the skills of lawyers, doctors, peasants and workers.

Professional librarians can contribute to the success of a popular movement by being active in the struggle and contributing their skills to provide informational support for the popular struggle. All the traditional skills of the information professional – acquiring material relevant to advance their struggle, storing, dissemination, cataloguing and classifying information etc – are needed in the struggle. Librarians are the collective information banks of the struggle upon which the organisation can draw.

No popular liberation movement can succeed in achieving its vision without ensuring that its information needs are met. Thus the Mau Mau had a comprehensive information strategy to meet its information and communications needs, as documented in *Never be Silent*. They controlled newspapers, printing presses, teaching programmes; they organised field hospitals and gun factories, they established libraries in secret locations – all of which needed appropriate skills and information. They developed methods of information dissemination and used orature and freedom songs to reach people who could not read or write. They also collected and used intelligence to monitor enemy movement, and battle strength. In all this, the trade union movement played a key role.

The Mau Mau did not have professional librarians as we know them today to do this work. But the need for the librarian's skills was there. In fact it was the activists themselves who became librarians and documented events, wrote and collected information, organised secret libraries in the forests and ensured that correct information reached those who needed it in an appropriate form and at the right time. Today's "professional" librarians can learn much from their example of how to be activist librarians.

Given the stranglehold over mass media globally by a small number of media conglomerates, it is important that alternative information is made available to people in a form and language appropriate to local needs.

At the same time, a popular movement needs to work with other popular movements to strengthen itself. Imperialist forces work globally, forming "coalitions of the willing" to maintain their stranglehold over people, countries and resources. In the same way, popular forces need to work in unity in a global alliance with those struggling against imperialism. Information activists need to take a leadership role in this process of global co-operation of popular forces and facilitate information transfer to bring people and organisations together on the basis of awareness about each other's programmes, visions, experiences, successes and failures.

The vision of a global popular movement, such as the World Social Movement, can emerge only if there is this active information exchange. It is the role of the professional librarian to create networks for such exchanges.

3. "What is the role of ICT in the information provision to popular movements?"

This is tied with the previous question. Popular movements need all the tools they can get hold of in order to achieve their vision. Such tools vary according to the particular stage of the struggle in particular countries. But at every stage there is a need for relevant information to be assessed, collected and disseminated. Given the rapid growth in the amount of information available today, it is no longer possible or practicable to rely on tools in use in previous struggles.

Developments in ICT has created new tools and technologies that can help in collecting and disseminating material from various liberation struggles. The enormous amount of oral and written material generated during the long history of struggles against colonialism in Africa, Asia, Latin America, as well as in Europe and USA can be now be collected, documented and made available more easily with ICT. Similarly documentation on the policies and activities of organisations and leaders active in the anti-colonial, anti-imperialist movements

(before and after independence) need to be made available. With the possibilities opened up by ICT, this can be a manageable task, especially if there is greater cooperation between various popular movements.

One does not expect any organisation to use manual typewriters today to draft their manifestos. Nor can all activists be reached by the traditional postal mail. The enemies that the popular movements are fighting against use technologies that can take people to the moon and Mars. There can be no hope for victory if the movements themselves do not upgrade their tools and technologies to match those of their enemies. One cannot fight modern warfare using catapults. Similarly, one cannot hope to win people's wars by using pen and paper. ICT as a tool for communication is crucial for victory in people's movements. Not only can it provide an efficient and effective means of communication, it can also help to organise its supporters as well as train an army of advanced cadres for new battles.

It is easy today to reach millions of people by the use of emails and text messages within seconds. "Video guerrillas" take pictures of enemy atrocities and broadcast them to the world. Satellite television stations, using people's culture and languages, can help to break the imperialist embargo on people's communications. Radio stations can still be a powerful means of reaching people right in their houses, factories and fields. While the corporate companies seek to use these channels for diverting people's attention away from the reality of their exploitation and the its causes, the popular movements can use them to open people's minds to the reasons for their suffering. They can provide a world outlook that imperialism seeks to block out. In essence, ICT has changed the whole balance in the struggle against corporate globalisation and created a new generation of activists who will help liberate the people of the world.

Shiraz Durrani

09 September 2006

Never ever ⁵

We will never be silent
sang the Mau Mau.

We will never give up
even in death
the fight for what is right
the fight for our rights.

Cuba stands *imara* for forty years and more
Venezuela takes destiny in its own hands

Bolivia joins the march of history
Nepal shows it is not far behind.

Contras and proxy wars no longer work
bombs fail to subdue Iraqi liberation
missiles are turned on oppressors in Lebanon
Afghans cannot be "pacified"; Palestinians just never give up.

The tide of history turns
unrecognised, insignificant changes
portend the demise of the two Bs, making them the has-beens
grim brothers, indeed.

Who can be silent
when the silent cry of the dying child
calls on everyone, everywhere:
never be silent, never

never, never be silent
never ever

Shiraz Durrani
28 August 2006

1 1983. London: Zed Books.

2 Further information about these, and other underground publications is available from: Durrani, Shiraz (1997): *The other Kenya: underground and alternative literature*. Collection Building. Vol. 16(2) 80-87.

3 Durrani, Shiraz (1986): *Kimaathi, Mau Mau's first Prime Minister of Kenya*. Middlesex: Vita Books.

4 A Mau Mau liberation song, quoted in Mathu, Mohamed (1974): "The urban guerrilla". Ed. Donald Barnett. Richmond, British Columbia, Canada. LSM Information Centre. pp. 23-24.

5 Published in *Information Equality*, Africa No. 2 (September, 2006). [Newsletter of the Progressive African Library and Information Activists' Group – PALIAct. Available at: <http://www.seapn.org.uk/PALIAct-new.html>].

2015. The Public Library as a Political Category

Mikael Bök

Today is a special date. We write 11 September 2015. The crime at the beginning of this century must not be forgotten!

It must be over 20 years since my first (and only?) intervention in *web4lib*, an electronic discussion forum for *library-based online managers*. *web4lib* has been neatly archived on the Internet, but the archive only reaches back to April 1995. I therefore had to dig into my old mail folders at the 'Cable's Knot' in Helsinki, Finland, to retrieve my letter. Here it is below, headers and all (Donald J. Napoli, director of St Joseph County Public Library in South Bend, Indiana, was an American colleague with whom we competed for the 'first' server-based public library):

Date: Sun, 19 Mar 1995 10:21:38 +0200 (EET)

From: Mikael Book <book@katto.kaapeli.fi>

To: Web4Lib Moderator <listchek@library.berkeley.edu>

Cc: web4lib@library.berkeley.edu,

'Donald J. Napoli' <donald.napoli.8@nd.edu>

Subject: Re: Responsibility for Library Home Page

>This is a fairly brief reply to the responsibility question. The Library is
>an integral major participant in the development of the University's
CWIS,
>including the development of a University home page. Anything posted
>thereto must be approved by the larger body.

The above statement clarifies the difference (in questions of responsibility) between the university library and the general, public library. The former is a part of that semi-autonomous (in relation to the state) public institution, the university. Being only a part of the university, the university library is only, or at least primarily, responsible to the university. The university itself is then responsible to the rest of us (the society at large). Above all, the university is responsible for the quality and development of science, learning and higher education.

To whom, then, is the general, public library responsible? Certainly not to the university. The responsibility of the general library is to the general public. The public library is the backbone of the public sphere, thus of the public itself. The public became one only when it started to read and write, i.e. the genesis of the public coincides with the coming of the book, the bookshop, the journal, the Lesegesellschaft, the coffee house, the newspaper – and then, finally, the public library. The public library system was born at the point in history when the masses began to read books and papers, i.e. when the people started to constitute itself as a public. This happened only during, say, the last two hundred years. (In my country, Finland, we actually celebrated the bi-centennial of the public

library only last autumn.) The process I refer to is, obviously, parallel to the rise of political democracy.

Now, coming back to the question of responsibility of what is said on the hypertext-pages and how these pages are edited, lay-outed etc, *in the public library*, I am of the opinion that the individual librarian is the basic operational and responsible unit. Please consider this person (the librarian) as a public figure, a publisher and editor who is responsible to the public for what she or he says and writes.

This figure (the individual librarian) should have maximum freedom of expression. There should be no committee or board who can intervene *before* she or he says or writes, or says, or shows, what she or he likes to write, say or show.

I don't mean that it is a bad idea to set up a supervisory board for the WWW-pages of the library, maybe with the chief-librarian as its head. What the policy of such a board should be is not so terribly difficult to see. It is summed up in 'the ideal of making all information available without delay to all people' (I thank Michael S Hart of the Gutenberg Etext project for this formulation; he has in turn quoted it from The Software Toolworks Encyclopedia by Grolier Electronic Publishing 1990). The crucial word, here, is, of course, 'information'. (I suggest that, in the library, at least, we apply the semantic approach; information is 'meaning'. Thus, we skip, for the moment, the mathematical or 'bandwidth' concept of information.) The point is, however, that the traditional 'ethos' of the public library, is providing both the necessary and sufficient platform for the organizing of the 'electronic library'. The problem, here, is not one of responsibility, but of the fast tempo of change, the very small scale of economic investments (public or private) in the library sector (compared with the investments in the so called information super-highway), the need for new skills, and even for the acquirement of new kinds of 'literacy'.

A note on our practical experience: The library in Helsinki, Finland, where I spend my working-day, (The Cable Book) in an effort to link the electronic publishing activities of various civil associations and cultural movements to the World Wide Web *via the public library*, was the first public library on a WWW-server (in the world). Our experience may not be the most relevant one (for the other libraries), but it just so happens that we have *the longest* experience of publishing international, public hypertext (WWW) in the public library. Of course, we started only a year ago (28 Feb, 1994) so maybe experiment is the right word, rather than experience! Anyway, our experiment/experience can be summed up like this: so far we have managed OK *without committee and without chief editor!* The librarians, actually all staff members including the book-binder and even the young guy who does his service as conscientious objector in the library, have proven fully capable of taking their new personal responsibility as organizers of the library without walls.

Let the librarian be what she or he is: a responsible person. Let her or him assume the new responsibilities which come with the Internet – to be a guide to information for the library's patrons, i.e. the public. Right now (spring 1995) the alternative direction of the electronic library seems to

be towards becoming just one huge commercial advertisement.
book@kaapeli.fi

In 1995, even some philosophers were speaking about libraries without walls. They thought that all solid things would melt into air. But the walls of the library proved to be robust. It appears that the library has become a universal trait of humanity. That insight is not new, of course.

No, the real innovation, when I compare the situation now with then, is the new constitutional status of the library. And constitutional in more senses than one. The library is now formally recognised (by Articles 3 and 4 in the Constitution of 2014) as a power of the state. In other words, the Legislative, Executive and Judicial branches of the state are today checked and balanced by a fourth power, the Informational power as termed by our legislators. This fourth state power is, of course, nothing else than the library.

Manuel Castells and others had already used the word 'informational' in discussion of the 'information society' in the 1990s (Castells, 1996). At that time, and indeed a decade later, the future of libraries and librarianship still appeared to be uncertain, even grim. Here I summarise some of the developments that have led us to regard the power of the library almost as a natural phenomenon. I will focus on the years 2005–2009.

The changes have been very fast and dramatic. Yet they did not all happen at once. It is necessary to understand the present as a result of longer historical processes, by which I include the transition from orality to literacy, and the history of libraries from their genesis in ancient civilisations such as Sumeria, Old China and Ancient Greece, and further via the Arabs of the Near East and Africa, to the birth of the modern public library in the enlightenment and democracy movements of 18th- and 19th-century Europe and America.

The relatively short history of the modern public library has always seemed to run in parallel with the history of that fragile political system called democracy. Indeed, the story of democracy is that of the library.

Independent minds

To go back to my library of the 1990s: who should be responsible for the content and the quality of its homepage? Behind that question loomed another, much bigger issue: who was to be responsible for the content and the quality of the library itself?

With time it dawned on Internet users, at least to the new generations who had grown up with it, that the net was not a 'library metaphor', as many early writers on the digital revolution had thought, but a library in itself. The Internet was no longer seen as a virtual library, but rather to be as real as the traditional 'physical' library.

Yet the real break-through, which was to come only a couple of years later, was the result of a long process of maturation. First and foremost came intellectual freedom, both as an idea and as fact. Intellectual freedom is not

abstract. The modern public library, which strives to deliver all information to everybody without delay, is the concrete embodiment of intellectual freedom.

The pioneers of the public library movements in America and Europe during the late 19th and early 20th centuries had anticipated this feature of the library. However, it could only become a reality when the library's walls, and thus the library as such, seemed to vanish into thin air, or became subsumed under global financial capital, selling out to information-broking corporations as a result of the free-market fanaticism that reigned sovereign during the first decade of the 21st century.

A common mistake among those who with fascination and awe observed the new social phenomena that followed upon the rapid spread of the Internet during the second half of the 1990s was to assume the existence of a separate, 'virtual' reality. Even the author of the famous *Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace* (Barlow, 1996) seems to have postulated the existence of a new 'home of Mind' somewhere beyond and above the old world 'of flesh and steel'. The birth of library power could come about only on the condition that this dualistic temptation was resisted and, gradually, overcome, so that people could finally see that the Internet, far from being a separate realm, is an organic part of the library.

'Organic' is not used here in a romantic or mystical sense. The library is 'a growing organism', said Ranganathan, and the Internet is just a new branch on the big tree. So Barlow warned governments: 'Do not think that you can build it, as though it were a public construction project. You cannot. It is an act of nature and it grows itself through our collective actions', he certainly hit a stroke in the right direction. Except that he mistook the declaration of independence of the libraries for a declaration of independence of 'cyberspace'!

Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as cyberspace. True, after its detours in the science of 'cybernetics' and in 'cyberspace', 'cyber' has today returned in the shape of what we sometimes call the cybernation of information by the libraries.

At the time of their publication, both the *Internet Manifesto* and, in particular, *The Glasgow Declaration on Libraries, Information Services and Intellectual Freedom* passed relatively unnoticed by the press and the general public. Both documents were put forward by International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) and IFLA/Freedom of Access to Information and Freedom of Expression (FAIFE) in 2002 (a year after 9/11). In retrospect, these documents stand out as true landmarks on humanity's road towards democratisation, whereas the whole pile of official declarations on trade liberalisation, financial globalisation and free movement of capital, although stemming from the same time only a decade ago, now seems completely outdated. Take, for instance, the concept of 'liberalisation' in the now defunct the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) treaties on free trade in services and intellectual property. 'Liber', it might be recalled, means free, but that particular 'liberalisation' only meant that capital would be flowing freely over national borders. Intellectual freedom proved to be a wholly different story. Intellectual freedom has since also prevailed over 'intellectual property'.

Today, the beginnings of a cybernetic government by way of information and communication, and through the libraries, are easier for everybody to see. How

our 'cybernation' will develop in the years ahead is still too early to predict because, as everybody knows, it is not without its deficiencies and problems.

A structural transformation

At the beginning of the 1990s, when the Internet (for the larger public) was just taking its first steps, I was appointed member to one of those innumerable State Committees that were to investigate the effects of the digital revolution (they did not call it by that term, but that was what it was) on society and, in particular – in the case of this committee – on the libraries. Being a political radical, I soon became isolated; indeed, the whole committee was soon left to die a quiet death and replaced was by another committee, which had no radicals on board.

Another member of that committee was Dr Häkli, who was then still the Chief-Librarian of the prestigious Helsinki University Library, which plays the role as national treasurer of the country's literary heritage, but also acts as a national guide to the future for the whole sector of libraries, museums and archives.

As the discussion of the committee touched upon the need to develop the technical library systems for cataloguing and searching for information, the elderly and somewhat aloof Mr Häkli, who only rarely opened his mouth, commented: 'Oh, I thought that information technology had already taken care of all that!'

Dr Häkli's remark, which was only meant ironically, turned out to be a rather accurate prediction. IT – and, it should always be stressed, the Internet – certainly 'took care' of the technical library systems. No doubt the librarians, proud and jealous of their professional skills, tried for many years to avoid this conclusion, seeing it as frightening for the future of their profession.

But the librarians rapidly overcame their fears. Already in the 1990s, many libraries became 'hybrids' that combined their collections of printed books and journals with computerised workstations and Internet access for their patrons. Librarians all over the world quickly got the message that they had to make the maximum use of computers and the Internet. Unfortunately, two serious obstacles stood in their way.

The first, of course, was their relatively scarce resources. For instance, how would the library afford, at the same time, to maintain its collection of books (considering that book publishing did not decrease, but increase, with the advent of e-publishing) and to increase its supply of computer-mediated information services?

Secondly, how could they compete with the new computer-mediated information services? The obstacle here was in part the ruling ideology of 'privatisation' of everything, including all the formerly public information services such as public broadcasting companies, schools and universities (which also serve the public in the vast field of 'information') and, last but not least, the libraries. The dominance of capitalist media corporations, and thus the weak position of the libraries in the informational relations of force, was felt as overwhelming. So when the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation donated a million dollars to a library in Europe, Asia, Africa or Latin America, the librarians just gratefully accepted it, although many of them probably felt such a self-

interested gesture of charity from the richest couple of the world to be humiliating. What is a private software firm in the hands of a few capitalists compared with a public library, one of the most important institutions of mankind?

The library cannot live out of charity. The library must be strong and take the lead, especially in IT and on the Internet. The asymmetry of forces between the two was so crushing, however, that it paralysed the will and hopes of the librarians, a group which, after all, still represented the real expertise in the information field. This is why Google (and other search engines) and Wikipedia (and other similar encyclopaedias) have only recently become organic parts of the library. Let us look a bit closer at these two important, although rather different, examples.

Google started out very nicely from the work of two whizz-kids, who managed to set up a superior information search engine on the Internet. Soon all Internet users, including librarians, became heavily dependent on it. If you looked up 'World Social Forum' (WSF) on Google, you got tens of thousand of hits. In the catalogue of the library, by contrast, you scarcely found a single book on that important new institution of the global civil society. So Google just won 1000 : 1, and you didn't even need to walk away from your desk at home to the information desk at the nearest library (if there happened to be one in your neighbourhood).

Dr Häkli could still say 'keep those thousands of hits on Google, but I'll read the book!', and would have an important point because the written information only lives with a human subject who appropriates it, i.e. with somebody who 'reads the book'. But the arguments of the old humanists, or those who believed that they, and only they, were the true humanists (not to be confused with Dr Häkli, who *is* a true humanist), started to fall, one by one. Not even the often heard objection, 'When I go to bed, I prefer a book to a computer', lasted for very long. This insight came to me at last when, back in 2004 or 2005, waking up from some more or less pleasant dream during the small ours, I found my wife reading essays about cryptozoology in the bleak light of her Treo, one of the first mobile phones that also served as the physical infrastructure of e-books.

The further development of Google, however, was one more tragedy of the commons. Google, as you remember, was privatised and listed on the Nasdaq stock exchange. What a shame. They sold it all; they simply were not capable of imagining an alternative to a money-driven world. TINA, 'there-is-no-alternative', was written in capital letters on their foreheads.

Why did the librarians of the world not create their own Googles? Why did they not take up serious competition against those ... yes, those capitalists? What else could those entrepreneurial, but not very civilised spirits be called? Right behind all those hackers turned greedy, some of whom were really gifted, for example Linus Torvalds or the guys who developed Google, or who were mediocre at best, like Bill Gates with his all-pervading Windows system, lurked the people for whom money was the alpha and the omega: the capital managers, the investment bankers, the patrons of the oil-industry, the warlords...

The profession and the traditional ethos of librarianship tended to make the librarian '... blithe as a milkmaid, or sumptuously dressed according to the wishes of its masters' (Briet, 2004). A librarian used to be the loyal nurse of

everybody's information needs, performing only subordinated functions and tasks in the social production of knowledge, world-views, ideologies and entertainment. How would the helpful and sympathetic, but humble and politically unambitious professionals, library and information specialists (LIS) become leaders, governors and strategists of the information society? And, considering that most LIS were women, how would they take the lead in IT which, like most technology, was traditionally dominated by men?

On a general level one can state that quality, content, meaning and communication successively came to prevail over quantity, technological form, bandwidth and information. The old joke from the beginning of the digital era, 'technology is the answer, but what was the question?' surfaced again in the period of maturation of the technology, and as the public space became saturated with a seemingly never-ending stream of new technical devices and 'revolutionary' software applications. First and foremost, people finally learned to make use of all these new gadgets and to use them for what they were meant to be used, namely to make your voice heard and your face visible. The forces of consumption, and among them not least the library and information professionals, started to develop into forces of production.

One of the important phenomena of the more mature Internet of the first years of the 21st century was the fast, almost sudden appearance of Wikipedia. If Google and the other Internet search engines provided hundreds and thousands of 'hits' for almost any keyword or search-phrase, Wikipedia gave structured and fresh knowledge, not on everything of course, but on almost all such things that fit into an encyclopaedia.

It is probable that the idea of an encyclopedia may undergo very considerable extension and elaboration in the near future. Its full possibilities have still to be realized.

Thus wrote H. G. Wells in the 1930s in his essay *World brain: the idea of a permanent world encyclopaedia*. Those certainly had been prophetic words.

Wikipedia's entries outnumbered those of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and the *Brockhaus* even by 2004/05, and it outdated these traditional encyclopaedias by far by means of its salient feature of becoming continuously updated by its own users. Undoubtedly, Wikipedia's plasticity and capability of uninterrupted growth was absolutely necessary in an era of explosive scientific and technological development, for better or worse. What could the *Encyclopedia Britannica* tell you about, say, nanotechnology, global dimming, 9/11, the ATTAC movement (Association for a Tax on financial Transactions to Aid the Citizen), and other important phenomena of that time? Almost nothing; only a digital online encyclopaedia could make it.

Yet had Wikipedia only been superior in terms of quantity and freshness, and equal to its printed predecessors in terms of quality, it would still have only been one more of the same kind, i.e. a new-fangled and superior encyclopaedia, but an encyclopaedia nevertheless. And encyclopaedias, useful and entertaining (T. S. Eliot never went on a journey without a volume or two of the *Britannica* in his luggage) as they may be, are bound to remain temporary substitutes for real knowledge. Knowledge, after all, cannot live in articles or books, and not even in websites and e-books that are updated as often as to become almost 'real-time'; the insights of knowledge, the knowing in itself, can be nothing else than

processes of the living mind, or the 'society of minds', as knowledge is by nature a social thing.

This description of knowledge as a social process is not so far from what the Wikipedia was really about. Wikipedia developed further and made visible one of the most interesting features of the Internet, its co-operative nature and, at the same time, the inclination of human beings to collaborate and construct their knowledge base together and just for the fun of it (which explains why latter-day T. S. Eliot's could not imagine going anywhere without their laptops and iPods).

Viewed from a sociological angle, the Internet is the community of its users, who make it work by means of 'networking', which is concerned with the same thing as co-operation, and which is very much about communication, i.e. the sharing of meaningful messages and content. These simple truths had been at odds with the commercial and consumerist ideology that still dominated the scene during the first decade of the public Internet; yet the ideas of co-operation and peer-to-peer exchange of information lived on and flowered just beneath the commodified surface of society. And of course it was precisely in the libraries that these ideas of free communication and sharing of knowledge, so contrary to the corporativistic ideology of intellectual property, had one of their safest havens.

The phenomenon of blogging was another symptom of the shift from quantity to quality, and from using information to producing it, i.e. from information to communication. Blogging simply meant an exponential growth of the number of people who not only read but also wrote the public hypertext. Undoubtedly, 'blog' was a dim concept. The World Wide Web had actually seen innumerable 'blogs' right from the beginning in 1991/92. Those who complained that the actual content of the blogging was usually of as little relevance as any chat over a cup of coffee, were not totally wrong, either. Still, blogging meant a great step forward in the 'structural transformation of the public sphere' (Habermas, 1962). Blogging helped the public itself to rise from the degraded status to which the undirected mass media had reduced it during the 20th century. Thus, blogging contributed strongly to the return of the 'reasoning public' that Habermas had valued so highly in his somewhat pessimistic and nostalgic treatise from the time when TV made its global breakthrough as a mass medium at the end of the 1950s and beginning of the 1960s.

Among the LIS, blogging was very much à la mode in the years following 2004. It was at this point that the LIS began to take their place as a vanguard within a reading, writing and reasoning public that was becoming ever more aware of itself and its own potential. Many of the bloggers, who used the Internet as intensively as the scientists and researchers (the World Wide Web had, after all, been invented at CERN, the European centre for nuclear research), were librarians and women. One of them wrote in her blog that librarians should function as 'strategy guides to information and knowledge' and that she, Jenny 'The Shifted Librarian' Levine, was going to use that title on her visit cards instead of the more traditional title of 'librarian'. Intuitively, she had grasped the whole meaning of the change that lay ahead.

9/11 and open conspiracy

The era of neoliberalism and conservatism was marked by many great financial and politico-economical scandals and crimes: BCCI, Enron, Worldcom, Clearstream, Yukos-Menatep, Parmalat, etc., are still remembered as symbols of capitalistic fraud and deception.

But the greatest and most compromising of all those crimes was 9/11. This is not the place to tell the whole story, some parts of which have, unfortunately, remained unexplained and obscure until this very day, the 11th of September 2015. Suffice it to recall the so called 9/11-truth movement that gathered the most diverse kind of people in its rows, from American family members of the innocent victims of those terrible and tragic events to some of the world's most experienced politicians and observers of public affairs (such as former German technology minister Andreas von Bülow, or veteran Egyptian political commentator Mohammed Heykal), from serious academic intellectuals to sinister conspiracy theorists and – as was unavoidable – ‘misinformers’, who deliberately created the FUD (fear, uncertainty and doubt) that was so typical of those years. Those were the years of the so-called ‘war against terrorism’!

David Ray Griffin, with his devastating critique of the report of the official 9/11 Commission – set up by the President and Congress of the USA and published in the summer of 2004 – was foremost among the critics of the semi-official account of 9/11 that had been fed to the public all over the world by the mass media and governments. Griffin, an emeritus professor of philosophy from the Claremont School of Theology, California, was very well aware that he did not possess ‘the whole truth’. The general thesis of Griffin was, therefore, that a new and totally independent investigation of the 9/11 attacks had to be opened, and that the journalists of the mainstream press finally had to scrutinise the many unanswered and disturbing 9/11-related questions with courageous and open minds (Griffin, 2005).

Other participants in the 9/11-truth movement, who were inclined to look at things from a more cynical perspective than Griffin, accused him of political naivety, or of a having-it-both-ways attitude. Why would a press that has spread all the lies, and a government that was itself involved in the conspiracy, help the 9/11-truth movement to find out the truth? Yet the position of Griffin was the more fruitful, because the raising of consciousness and courage among the general public was a prerequisite for any further action, and how could that consciousness be achieved if not through a public investigation and a reasoning in public that permitted an advancement together towards the truth?

In a footnote about the tendency of the American Left to avoid taking a hard look at the evidence, which proved the official 9/11-account to be full of ‘omissions and distortions’, and to consider the possibility of official complicity, Griffin wrote:

To some extent, this fact [the attitude of the Left] reflects a matter of principle – a concern that devoting attention to possible conspiracies is diversionary. Some of the reasons for this wariness are valid. One concern is that a focus on exposing conspiratorial crimes of present office-holders may reflect the naive assumption that if only we can replace those individuals with better ones, things will be fine. Underlying that worry is the concern that a focus on conspirators can divert attention from the more important issue of the structural problems in the national and global

order that need to be overcome. But although those dangers must be guarded against, we should also avoid a too strong dichotomy between structural and conspiratorial analysis. For one thing, although structural analysis is essential for any deep understanding of social processes, structures as such, being abstractions, do not enact themselves. They are influential only insofar as they are embodied in agents – both individual and institutional – who act in terms of them. These agents, furthermore, are not fully determined by the dominant values of their societies. They have degrees of freedom, which they can use to act in ways that are more or less just, and more or less legal. When political leaders enact policies that are egregiously unjust, dangerous, and even illegal, it is important to replace them with leaders who are at least somewhat better. Finally, and most important, the exposure of a conspiracy may, rather than diverting attention from a society's problematic structures, turn attention to them. For example, if it became evident that our national political leaders caused or at least allowed the attacks of 9/11 and that they did so partly because they had deeply embodied certain values pervasive of our society, *we might finally decide that a society-wide reorientation is in order* (Griffin, 2004: 204. My italics.)

Opinion polls taken in the years following 9/11 in fact showed that a majority of the inhabitants of New York, the scene of the main events in 2001, did not believe in the official story. The problem was that the official story had almost taken the place of a religion. Thus, expressing the doubts and posing the disturbing questions in the open was like committing sacrilege. For years, only citizens with exceptionally strong nerves, those who were personally touched, for instance the widows of men who had died when the World Trade Center collapsed, or those who did not care because they saw conspiracies everywhere, and thus had no reputations to lose, dared to stand up and speak their minds in this climate of semi-ritualistic conformism. Many opted for the view that Griffin advocates in the above-quoted passage, that it is better to focus on the structural ills, and try to find cures for them, than to cry 'catch the thief!'

9/11 and the subsequent 'war against terrorism' was also exploited by the US Government, and by other governments, as pretexts to tighten control over free speech and communication. The American Patriot Act, for instance, gave the police extended rights to spy on the reading habits of individual users of the public libraries.

So the prospects of the 9/11-truth movement still looked bleak when three, four or five years had passed since the massacre. Had the US army been successful in Iraq and Afghanistan, and had the Bush administration cared a little more about its own people and the peoples of the rest of the world, it might have made it, gone unpunished. Unnecessary speculation! The Bush Government did everything in its power to increase the doubts and suspicions about itself, and its aggressive foreign policy indeed led it straight into the kind of war that equals disaster.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the librarians, like the members of other intellectual professions, found themselves at a crossroads. The uneasiness of the political situation that followed upon 9/11 was felt in most parts of the world. To this came the reminders of the hubris that is underpinning western civilisation. Leena Krohn commemorating *The House of Usher* by Edgar Allan Poe, observed:

Every civilization has its end, and ours has already grown extremely fragile from its internal hostilities, its overpopulation and its thoughtless ways of using natural resources. We have built on sand. 'That once barely-discernible fissure' extends now 'from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction to the base' (Cheney, 2005).

In this spiritual climate the idea of an Open Conspiracy again took root in the minds of intelligent and active citizens. The movement got its name from a nearly forgotten blueprint for world-revolution that H. G. Wells had written in the 1920s. While H. G. Wells had remained popular as a writer of science fiction, most of his political ideas had for a long time only collected dust, until they were rediscovered by the critics of the dominant forms of globalisation at the beginning of the new millennium.

The founders of Open Conspiracy stand out as the authentic intellectuals of that recent epoch. They were the ones who dared to rise up, as the French writer Emile Zola once did, to accuse the mighty and powerful of conspiracy against the meek and powerless. The standard counter-accusation against these courageous people was, of course, that they were 'conspiracy theorists'. However, like the Black Panthers of the 1960, who decided that 'Black is beautiful', they affirmed: 'Let's make the conspiracy open!'

Open Conspiracy to some extent participated in the efforts to reveal and publicise the secret official conspiracy of 9/11. However, it was first and foremost determined to build an international revolutionary movement in the open.

On what grounds could that movement claim to be revolutionary? Open Conspiracy did not pretend or propose to transform the whole of society into *etwas ganz anderes* in accordance with the prescriptions of an utopian theory. From H. G. Wells and the numerous people who had shared his beliefs, one of whom was Bertrand Russell, the new open conspirators had this common feeling:

Let us get together with other people of our sort and make over the world into a great world-civilization that will enable us to realize the promises and avoid the dangers of this new time.

Civilisation, however, is young and inexperienced while the library is old and wise. Civilisation is particular; the library universal. Civilisation is euro-centric, but the library originated in the Middle East. Libraries were a reality in Mesopotamia before the ancient Greeks invented the myth of Europe.

The innovation of Open Conspiracy consisted in setting library power squarely on the agenda of mankind. Library power was something different from the vague ideas that people had until then made themselves about a 'world government'. It was certainly not any kind of 'United States of the World', with a President, Government, Parliament and universal national anthem. By consequence, it also strongly differed from the dreams of those desperate rulers of the world's only 'superpower', as the USA was, or pretended to be. Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and Rice had clearly expressed their hopes for continued dominance during a 'New American Century'. The traditional, imperialistic 'superpower' was the only model of global governance that those

old-fashioned politicians, bankers and industrial magnates were capable of envisaging.

The idea of library power grew out of two rather simple insights: (i) that the library as an institution is universal enough to serve as a foundation of a world civilisation; and (ii) that the Internet is a library.

The dispute over Internet governance

Originally, the question about the responsibility for the Internet was largely seen as a non-issue. The Net was believed somehow to take care of itself in its own cybernetic way. Signs of a change in this regard started to be felt during the first World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), the two sessions of which took place in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005), respectively. A number of countries (including, notably, countries with governments that wished to restrain the freedom of information and expression of their citizens) started to press for the creation of a government-run body under the United Nations to supplant the now defunct ICANN (The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers). However, the Government of the USA, where the root servers of the Internet were located, did not want to lose the monopoly of control that it had – or believed that it had.

Active citizens round the world were watching the growing conflict over Internet governance, as it was called, with fear and suspicion. Only conservative bureaucrats and politicians of the older generation, who actually had very scant and superficial knowledge about the Internet (in the mid-1990s, when it emerged, they were already in their 40s or 50s), favoured Internet governance by traditional state governments.

The alternatives to some kind of multilateral arrangement under the United Nations did not look much better. Governments (except, of course, that of the US) did not want to let the US retain its exclusive influence. And why should they? But the US Government had already, using 9/11 as a pretext, taken steps towards a tightening of its control over vital technical functions of the Net.

If the US monopoly looked untenable, the possibility that the Internet would ultimately become 'privatised' and run by the giant corporations (Nokia, Samsung, Microsoft, Sony) that the Internet itself had helped to become powerful global players seemed equally disgusting, at least to the millions of people who had by then learned to use and appreciate the new source and means of information and communication.

Almost nobody imagined that the librarians, and their institutions, the libraries, would soon play the key role in the field of Internet governance. True, IFLA was trying to make the voice of the librarians heard at the first WSIS. In a number of statements, the leaders of IFLA reminded the political leaders and the international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) at the WSIS of the existence of the world's network of libraries:

The most important message which we must take home from this city of international dialogue is that libraries are essential if we are to 'humanise l'homme', if we are truly to develop a people centred information society. We must emphasise to our colleagues, to our communities, and especially to our governments that it is not necessary to reinvent the wheel. The global network of libraries, with more than 2.5 billion registered users is already at the heart of the information society. A modest investment will

return great benefits for communities and nations
That is what Alex Byrne, president-elect of IFLA, said at the preparatory WSIS session in November 2003. These words, however, were scarcely noticed by the media (the WSIS was given scant attention), or even by the representatives of the other INGOs who had somehow managed to participate in the WSIS on the spot.

On Internet governance, IFLA at first took the following position:

In regard to the proposed approaches to the governance of the Internet, IFLA supports a multistakeholder approach which involves governments, civil society and business and which offers a path for increasing participation by those interests in all countries as the capacity to participate develops. (September 2005)

What modesty from the side of a community which knows that it 'is ... at the heart of the information society', especially considering that neither IFLA nor the libraries had even been mentioned by the report from the international Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG)!

The Internet is capable of running itself. It does not need to be 'governed' at all. Therefore, the dispute over Internet governance that emerged at the WSIS could be seen as largely unnecessary. Yet there was the domain name system (DNS) that had to be taken care of centrally. The policy on domain names had, since 1998, been set by ICANN, a 'private-sector, non-profit corporation', as it was called, although it had never cut its umbilical cord to the US Department of Commerce. Development of the Internet also required the continuous elaboration and setting of universally applicable technical standards, guidelines, specifications and tools. Various international industrial-academic consortia, such as the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), worked on these tasks.

After the first WSIS, which officially was proclaimed a great success, but unofficially was seen by many as 'the weirdest global summit on the globe' (Bruce Sterling), the American Library Association began to raise its profile on the Internet governance issue. EBLIDA, the European Bureau of Library and Documentation Association, soon followed suite. As the dispute over Internet governance seemed to continue without end, IFLA finally went on to propose that the governance of the Internet be trusted to the world's library community.

Although this proposal was met with some skepticism at first, it soon started to gain wide support. The beauty and simplicity of this solution to a difficult political problem was not appreciated by everybody. In particular, the governments and bureaucrats of dictatorial regimes, such as China and Iran, feared that such 'library power' would prove to be yet one more step towards eroding their ability to control and monitor their citizens. These governments had originally demanded a reform of ICANN for precisely this reason, i.e. in order to increase their own power over the Net.

Another opponent to the interesting *démarche* from the side of the library community was, not surprisingly, the US Government. It is rare that the powerful are ready to give up their power without a fight. In this case, however, the position of the US Government was very weak, for historical reasons. No government had done more to develop and spread the Internet than the US Government. Yet nobody could claim ownership or exclusive intellectual property

rights over this new library-like institution, the Internet. The World Wide Web had not been invented in America, but in Europe. A great deal of the software on which the nodes of the network run were based on GNU/Linux, an operating system for computers that had, against all odds, been developed by a young man from Punavuorenkatu-Rödbergsgatan in my hometown Helsinki (I happened to know the young man and his parents, who were of my own generation.)

But the issues concerning authorship or ownership or (state) governance were absurd in the case of the Internet. You could own books, both those you had written and those you had bought, but you could not own 'the book' as a form and cultural archetype. (Which is one of the fundamental reasons that public libraries managed to survive despite the aggressive 'liberalisation' of every public service that was going on under the GATS and the TRIPS.) Neither could the Internet as a form and a cultural archetype be owned, bought and sold – or governed, in the traditional sense of that word. So the US Government had to retreat and admit that the Internet belonged to everybody, just like the books in the public libraries, and, more generally, like the whole public sphere with its intellectual freedom on which all the modern forms of democracy are resting.

Open Conspiracy whole-heartedly embraced the idea of library governance of the Internet. Throughout history, the libraries had been entrusted the tasks of organising, cataloguing, presenting and preserving the world's written heritage. The profession of the librarian had developed to meet that challenge, and it had proven capable. Would it not be capable of running the domain system of the Internet? If some technical assistance was needed, it certainly could and would be provided. The gifted computer programmers, the real hackers, had always proudly defied the mighty and rich. The Free Software Foundation and other associations of the best computer programmers were there to help the libraries. The minds who constituted the world's 'electronic frontier' were certainly not natural allies of the governments of the USA, China or France, or the Commission of the European Union.

Social information and the World Social Forum

In theory, the modern political library stayed politically neutral and autonomous. Anything else would have contradicted the intellectual freedom that the library was set to guard and cultivate. Traditionally, however, the concept of the autonomy of the library had been related, above all, to the nation where the library functioned and to the nation-state that, usually, covered the main part of its expenses.

The globalisation of the public sphere which arrived with the Internet changed the conditions of the library's relative autonomy. It became urgent to re-define the status of the libraries within the political system, and this time in the global political system. As we have seen, the declarations on intellectual freedom by IFLA/FAIFE, and on the Internet by IFLA, paved the way for that important progress in the thinking of librarians. Even more so, the increasing 'hybridisation' of the libraries, by which I mean all the combinations of traditional and digital libraries that were planned, or actually practised, during the first decade of the public Internet and World Wide Web, pointed in the same direction.

In this new situation, the need for something like a 'Declaration of Independence of the Libraries', whereby the international library community would swear loyalty to the peoples of the world, instead of to the national governments, became a necessity. Within the library community, discussion started on the old theme of Montesquieu and the founding fathers of the USA: the question of the division of powers. They found that time had ripened for the libraries to constitute themselves as a 'fourth' state power (the three others being, traditionally, governments, parliaments and judicial courts). That idea had a precursor in the somewhat vague conception of a 'Fourth Estate', meaning the printed press. The new conception of library power was far more precise.

The worsening international political climate in a world that again risked being split into hostile blocs, or even experiencing 'clashes of civilisations' (one of which still upheld the myth of Osama bin Laden and his 20 terrorists) also reasserted Albert Einstein's saying, 'Remember your humanity and forget the rest'. A new universalism and/or cosmopolitanism had to emerge, but it had to be stripped of the hubris of the earlier generations, who believed that humans were called to dominate and control the earth and the forces of nature. Here, the other and more fundamental climate change played its decisive role. How ironic that it had been possible to study and verify the phenomenon of global dimming only when air traffic was halted during the first days and hours that followed upon the 9/11 attacks. Henceforward, remembering one's humanity meant, above all, remembering one's own limitations as a human being.

People of all kinds worldwide became better informed because of their access to the Internet. And their loyal servants, the librarians, became ready for the challenging of empires.

The participation of the library community in the World Social Forum had started already in Porto Alegre, Brazil, where the first three WSFs were organised (2001–2003). The successful workshop on 'Libraries and the Democratization of Information' that took place during WSF IV in Mumbai, India, January 2004, marked the beginning of a new phase in the convergence between the WSF and the libraries. The main speaker at that workshop, IFLA chair Kay Raseroka from Botswana, proposed that LIS participate in the WSF and – this was the really significant part of her speech – use their professional skills to document it.

A great project! The editorial staff of a newspaper or a TV channel can cover the life of a whole city, or even a whole country or region. However, if the 'life' consists of literally thousands of information-centred events – conferences, seminars, workshops, groups – per day, then a few reporters, or even a whole group of them, have to be happy if they manage to select just a few of the more important ones to cover and report to their audiences. That was very much the case with the WSF.

Kay Raseroka's proposal was, therefore, the beginning of a revolution in the way the WSF was documented and presented to the WSF participants themselves and to the larger public as well. Librarians from various continents and countries decided to integrate the information from and about the WSF in their concept of social information.

The prevailing concept of social information is rooted in various regional and national traditions and ways of responding to the challenges of the digital revolution. The American GILS (Government Information Locator Service), for

instance, was seen by many Europeans as a positive model to follow. While European authorities tended to regard governmental information as a possible source of revenue, in America it was generally thought, and rightly so, that the citizens (taxpayers) had already paid for the knowledge and information that had been produced with money from the state budget. So government information was offered free of charge via the GILS. Soon, however, Google, Wikipedia and other effective ways of finding information on the Net rendered earlier systems such as the GILS obsolete. If only governmental offices at all levels published information about their plans and doings, sufficient transparency and accessibility could be achieved without separate technical systems such as GILS. At the end of 2005, GILS was actually put to an end by the national Institute of Science and Technology, NIST. (Incidentally, NIST was also the organisation from which the US Government commissioned studies on the collapse of buildings WTC1, WTC2 and WTC7, which were said to have been caused by the airplane crashes and the subsequent fires on 9/11; those collapses, and especially that of WTC7, which was not hit by a passenger jet, have never been fully explained.)

The libraries were, as a matter of principle, supposed to include as much as possible of the government information in their collections. The principle of intellectual freedom, by contrast, demanded that the libraries treat the governmental information like any other information, namely as something that is most probably incomplete, and possibly also one-sided or biased, if not plain wrong.

Social information, the concept used in library work, was applied to integrate various categories of political, economic and cultural information, including government information or 'public information', under a single broad concept. In the English language, social information is distinguished from scientific information, the latter being information based on the natural sciences and technology.

The librarian's critical attitude to social information, however, resembles that of the social scientist. The 'neutral point of view', which is recommended by the authors of Wikipedia, also comes to mind as a possible description of the institutional spirit of the libraries.

Social information, as a concept, has one root in the Swedish notion of 'samhällsinformation' (literal translation: 'society information'). Thus, Anders Ericson, writing in 2002, noted that

The Swedes [...] make greater use of the wider concept *samhällsinformation* (community and society information) and increasingly classify their Web links under headings such as Health, Environment, Education, etc. which offer access not only to local and government authorities but also to various organisations and private persons. A quick browse through British websites indicates that similar solutions are common also there (Ericson, 2003).

The information of (from, about) the WSF, and the related documentation project of the librarians, was a peculiar case of social information that was international or 'global', but non-governmental. Through their 'WSF Information' project, the libraries engaged directly in the construction of global civil society

and a global public space. A major event in the development, whereby the libraries enhanced their role as a global political actor, was the WSF in Nairobi (2007). This WSF hosted a large conference on library policy and a number of special workshops on important issues. One of the workshops was dedicated to finding answers to the question: 'How to create a "WSF information" in the world's public libraries, to be placed on a par with "government information" and – in Europe – with "Europe Information"?'.

Open Conspiracy entered into a new phase when library workers from around the world united with the social activists of the world's peace and justice movements at the WSF in Nairobi. After the WSFs in Porto Alegre, Mumbai, Caracas, Bamako, Karachi and Nairobi the INGOs had found a common home that was at the same time very old and brand new: the global library.

Further developments

I shall only add a short note on further development from 2007 until today.

The global campaign in favour of a new financial architecture culminated in the years 2006–08, and the long-awaited international conference on a Global Currency Transactions Tax (CTT) was finally held in February 2009. In June that same year the international CTT Treaty, which had been sketched by Lieven Denys and Heikki Patomäki and presented at WSF II in Porto Alegre, was ratified by 57 states, whereafter it entered into force. In February 2010, the Assembly of the CTTO (the organisation that had been created by the conference and the treaty on CTT) decided to allocate 20% of the tax revenue to an international library fund that was to be managed by IFLA. In one stroke, the library community had substantially increased its ability to support modern public library systems in countries of the Global South and to strengthen its role in the policy-making on telecommunications and Internet governance.

The catastrophic and catalytic event that occurred in August 2009 dealt, as everybody knows, a serious blow.

The Fourth WSIS, held in Kiev, Ukraine, in 2012 marked the final breakthrough of the international library power. The first WSIS had been organised by the International Union of telecommunications; the WSIS in Kiev took place under the aegis of IFLA, which had now attained the central position in the information society that it deserved. However, as always when a new power establishes itself, cleavages soon appeared between different currents of thought and opinion. In this way, a number of new political formations – a kind of 'global political parties' – has emerged. Which, after all, is alright. But beware of a uniform political culture!

It is only for the sake of those without hope that hope is given to us.
(Walter Benjamin)

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World Social Forum



The World According to Chico (The Right Livelihood Award 2006)

The aim of The Right Livelihood Award, according to its founder Jakob von Uexkull, is "... to help the North find a wisdom to match its science, and the South to find a science to match its ancient wisdom".

The Right Livelihood Award 2006 went to Chico Whitaker (Brazil), Daniel Ellsberg (USA), Ruth Manorama (India), and the International Poetry Festival of Medellin (Colombia).

Chico Whitaker was awarded "...for a lifetime's dedicated work for social justice that has strengthened democracy in Brazil and helped give birth to the World Social Forum, showing that 'another world is possible'"



Finnish social forum-goers met Chico Whitaker and his wife Stella when they visited Helsinki on their way to the ceremony in Stockholm, early December 2006. From left to right: : Stella Whitaker, Thomas Wallgren, Otto Bruun, Mikko Sauli, Ansku Ylä-Anttila, Tuomas Ylä-Anttila, Mikael Bök and Chico Whitaker. (Photo: Mika Rönkkö)

A Biographical Note

Francisco ('Chico') Whitaker Ferreira is a Roman Catholic activist, who has worked for democracy and against corruption throughout his life, both at home and in exile. He is one of the key people behind the burgeoning World Social Forum.

Early career and exile

Chico Whitaker was born in 1931 and received his diploma in architecture and urban planning in 1957. He left architecture school to participate in research on the standard of living of the inhabitants of São Paulo at the Research Institute SAGMACS. Whitaker joined the Planning Office of the State Government of São Paulo and became, in 1963, the director of planning for the Federal Government's Land Reform Superintendence, SUPRA. He left this function with the military coup in 1964, joining the opposition to the regime. During 1965-66 he could still work in Brazil, as planning advisor of the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops (CNBB). But at the end of 1966 the military forced him into exile with his wife Stella and their four children.

During 15 years abroad, Whitaker initially lived in France, where he worked as a teacher in the training of Third World public servants, as researcher and as UNESCO consultant. He also worked in Chile for the UN Economic Commission for Latin America for four years, and lived through the overthrow of Allende. When returning to France after his stay in Chile, he coordinated in Paris, during six years, the "International Study Days for a Society overcoming Domination", launched by the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops with the support of four other Bishops Conferences and the International Commission of Jurists. This project facilitated the exchange of experiences among people fighting in 100 countries against all types of oppression. Work for democracy and against corruption in Brazil

Back in Brazil from 1982, Whitaker first worked as political and social affairs advisor to Cardinal Evaristo Arns in São Paulo. He was one of the founders of the São Paulo Association for Solidarity in Unemployment and, always with his wife, was one of the main activists in organising the popular participation process during the drafting of the Brazilian constitution: The "Plenaries for popular participation", created all over the country for this purpose, presented 122 amendments to the Constitution project, with 12 million citizen signatures.

From 1989 to 1996, Whitaker was elected twice as local councillor in São Paulo for the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT). In 1996 he left this function to return to work with civil society. He remained a member of the PT until early 2006, resigning when he considered the party was no more faithful to the principles of its foundation.

As Executive Secretary to the CNBB's Commission of Justice and Peace (CJJP) Whitaker both conceived the idea, and was instrumental in the implementation, of a Bill of Popular Initiative: One million signatures were collected against electoral corruption, and particularly the purchase of votes. The Bill was approved by Congress in 1999. Whitaker sits as the CJJP's representative on the National Committee of the Movement Against Electoral Corruption, created after the approval of the Bill, which involves more than twenty of the major national civil society organisations in Brazil. The Bill has already had great impact: Since the first election respecting it, in 2000, more than 400 mayors, deputies and councillors, who were found to have been involved in electoral corruption, have lost their mandates.

The World Social Forum

In 2000 Whitaker was one of those who conceived the idea of the World Social Forum (WSF) and played a key role in bringing it to realisation. The idea was to hold a large conference event, a parallel to the World Economic Forum in Davos, to share the various insights of those from around the world who were working for alternatives to "world domination by capital, within the parameters of neoliberalism." The slogan was 'Another World is Possible'. The idea was taken forward by eight leading Brazilian organisations, operating by consensus.

The first World Social Forum was held in 2001 in the city of Porto Alegre in Brazil, attracting 4,000 delegates and 16,000 individual participants from many countries - far more than the organisers had anticipated. People came from Porto Alegre and other places in Brazil and neighbouring countries, as well as from Europe, North America, Asia and Africa. It was such a success, that a second event was held in 2002, attended by 15,000 delegates representing 4,909 organisations and movements in 131 countries, with another 35,000 'non-delegate' participants. During 2002 several regional or national forums were organised in all continents, and a World Social Forum took place again in Porto Alegre in 2003, with 100,000 participants. That year also saw the first Asian Social Forum being organised in Hyderabad. In January 2004, the WSF itself moved to Mumbai, and attracted 120,000 to take part. In 2005 the WSF was back in Porto Alegre, with 150,000 participants, and in 2006 was decentralised in three regions of the world: Mali, Caracas and Karachi. The 2007 WSF will be in Nairobi.

From the beginning, the Forums have been much more than just meeting places. They have become platforms for civil society organisations from all around the world to exchange views, form coalitions, work on concrete strategies and coordinate campaigns.

The success is explained by Whitaker by the principles adopted to organise the Forums: horizontality, non-directivity, respect of diversity, no spokespersons, no final document or orientations, self-organisation of the participants' activities in the forums. These were defined in 2001 after the success of the first Forum, in a Charter of Principles, which is now the sole criterion for participating in the

Forum events. It provides for anyone to take part, except government representatives, military organisations and political parties.

Quotes:

Whitaker wrote for a French publication for the 2003 World Social Forum:

"Porto Alegre is not a 'summit of grassroots organizations' nor is it a world congress of a new international movement, but rather a free-form context designed for encounters to enable mutual recognition and learning, which respects all individualities. The Forum brings together delegates from social organisations that are striving the world over to build a world centred on people instead of on accumulating wealth. Today the Forum's organisers are certain they are on the right track to helping citizens rid themselves of their feeling of powerlessness".

Liberation Theology, the inspiration underlying Whitaker's life's work, is the radical Catholic theology, which - as he puts it - says that

"true religion, especially Christianity, basically means working for the upliftment of the poor, fighting for their rights and against the exploitation of the have-nots by the haves."

Publications: A book written by Whitaker in 2005, "The challenge of the World Social Forum", has been published in Portuguese, Spanish, Italian and French. Editions in English, German and several Indian and Kenyan languages are on the way.

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Source: <http://www.rightlivelivelihood.org/recip/2006/chico-whitaker.htm>

Interview with Chico Whitaker

Questions asked by Ole von Uexkull on September 22, 2006

Q: You have worked your entire life for the democratisation of Brazil. Are you hopeful about the situation today?

A: We have lived, in last century in Brazil, two long periods of dictatorship: from 1930 to 1945 and from 1964 to 1980. Each time, when we have again a period of democracy, we must re-learn how it functions. Many distortions remain, and people take a good bit of time to believe in the possibility of solving our problems through the democratic institutions. And we have a lot of problems to solve. Our country is champion in social inequality. And democratisation is not only guaranteeing political rights, elections, etc, but especially the right for all to live with dignity. Nearly half of the Brazilians are still half-citizens: the Constitution guarantees to them all these rights but they don't even know they have these rights...

Democratisation is really a long process. In between new problems appear, like now, for example, with a big corrosion in the credibility of the parliament because of corruption scandals. I am nevertheless hopeful because we are progressing. Slowly, but progressing. If political parties are in crisis, civil society begins to emerge as a political actor with more autonomy. We have very much to do, but there are much more people than we can imagine wanting to change things. If we arrive to define strategic objectives of change, we will go more quickly.

Q: You quit the workers' party (PT) earlier this year. Why?

A: This is also a long history. When I returned from exile in 1981 the PT was starting to get organised. With people having many dreams. It was really a new type of party, in its way of functioning and in its composition. It attracted effectively the poor of the country, giving them the opportunity to play a political role in the fight for equality and justice. The respect of ethical principles was also essential in its practice, in a country where corruption is nearly endemic and enters everywhere. But as the party entered in the electoral process and began to conquer positions in the administration, pragmatism – all means are good – to conquer the power became dominant inside the party. I saw this tendency arriving already ten or fifteen years ago, when I was elected councillor in São Paulo. As the party won the Presidency of the Republic, these distortions exploded, changing it entirely. It became only one more party among the others. Many of us – nearly half of its members – decided to work in the re-foundation of the party. Myself, as I had always worked with popular participation and civil society organising, I thought I could be more useful in this type of work, outside any party.

Q: You were in Paris with Oded Grajew when he conceived the idea of the World Social Forum in January 2000. What did it take to make this idea come real?

A: Returning to Brazil, we presented the idea to others, coming from various types of work in society. A group of us – from eight different organisations – decided to face the challenge. We deepened the idea of Oded, that we considered brilliant, and from then on we had no more time to stop or to think about what to do. The first Forum was a big surprise also for us. We were expecting 2,500 participants and they were 20,000. We then wrote our Charter of Principles, based on the reasons we identified for this success. From then on, there were still less possibilities to stop. The WSF was a real political invention. And it is now a global process that brings hope to more and more people.

Q: The slogan of the World Social Forum is „Another world is possible“. - How does this world look like?

A: Very frequently people ask us this question. I always say to those who ask the question: you know it. The “other” world we would work to build is the utopia of all human beings: peace, justice, dignity of life for all, cooperation and not competition as rule of life, solidarity as main value, no kind of oppression, respect of diversity, no more wars and violence between human beings, respect of the nature to protect our planet and thinking of future generations, etc, etc.

Q: What about the impact of the World Social Forum? Isn't it just a big fair with little concrete outcomes?

A: The first big impact is the perspective of hope the Forum opened, encouraging people to rise up to work for a new world. A second impact is in the action of those who come to Social Forums. All those who come – at the world level as well as at the regional, national and local levels – are already working for this or are being invited to do it. When they return home after having experienced the openness and horizontality of the event – when it functions according to our Charter of Principles – they continue their work enriched with the experiences of others they have got to know during the Forum, the exchanges they have experienced, the convergences they have discovered with the struggles of others, the articulations they were able to build to initiate new actions to change the world.

All this makes people feel happy – like in the joyful fairs – also because they discover that it is possible to do politics without having to fight for power, and build a type of unity based on friendship, solidarity and cooperation. As in good networks, not depending on orders coming from above, as in the traditional pyramidal and disciplined political organisations. In this sense many new initiatives in the struggle against neo-liberalism and the domination of money were born in the Forums, and they already have concrete results. But the deepest impact of the Forum will appear in many more years, as its process

expands all over the world, rooting itself in all countries and continents, through the regional, national and local forums that are already multiplying everywhere.

Q: What is your aspiration for the future of the World Social Forum?

A: My aspiration is this multiplication of Forums all over the world, creating the conditions to overcome the frustrations we had in the attempts to change the logics of economic, social and political life in the XX century. My aspiration is that the Forum becomes really a door opened to hope in a new century free of all types of domination and oppression, for the happiness of mankind.

Source: <http://www.rightlivelihood.org//interviews/chico-whitaker--2006-09-22.htm>

Social Movements Set to Assert Their Presence at WSF Nairobi 2007

Onyango Oloo



Onyango Oloo is the National Coordinator of the Kenya Social Forum. He was one of the lecturers at the "Training of the Trainers- workshop on the WSF in Nairobi, 3-5 July 2006 (in the picture by MB above), which is covered elsewhere in ISC Number 24. This article by Oloo has also been published in *Pambazuka News* (www.pambazuka.org), 21 December 2006.

The clock is winding down. With barely a month before the commencement of the 6th World Social Forum (WSF), social movements from Africa and around the world are gearing up to make their presence felt in the Kenyan capital where the annual event is scheduled to take place from January 20th to 25th 2007.

Indeed, there has been a flurry of activities in the host country itself. At

the end of November, a bevy of organizations and movements representing various pastoralist and minority groups converged at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre to celebrate the Kenya Pastoralists' Week. In contrast to previous outings, the 2006 edition was devoted to building up support and mobilising for the World Social Forum. Impatient with their stereotypical image as cultural artefacts used to drum up foreign exchange earnings from tourism, members of the Maasai, Samburu, Turkana, Rendille, Pokot, Yiaku, Njemps, Ogiek, El Molo and other marginalized groups (many of them from the historically ignored and systemically impoverished northern limits of Kenya) resolved to bring to the global audience offered by the WSF space, issues more relevant to their lived experience.

Among these issues are colonial era land edicts and policies which dispossessed their communities; the impact of mining and extraction activities on the environment and human livelihoods; discriminatory policies by successive governments that have guaranteed the stubborn survival of pre-colonial conditions of poverty and underdevelopment among many pastoralist and minority communities; the arrogant disregard for the concerns raised by (for example) Samburu women raped over the years by British soldiers dispatched on military exercises in those Kenyan communities; proposals on ending conflict and creating conditions for sustainable growth; the role of youth; tensions persisting with neo-colonial era settler farmers and indigenous Kenyan comprador businessmen in hiving off thousands of hectares of land while the pastoralists and minority communities are targets of state terror, evictions and denunciations and other related concerns.

The WSF 2007 may also serve as an occasion to celebrate recent victories by some of the above marginalized groups. In Botswana, the San people made global headlines in December 2006 after a court affirmed their legal claim that they were wrongly forced off their ancestral lands by the Botswana government and that they had a right to return to their homes in the Kalahari Desert. Hot on the heels of that decision barely a week later, another court this time in Kenya, agreed with lawyers for the minority Njemps community that they had a right to a parliamentary representative from their own community given the decades of exclusion and marginalization by successive Kenyan regimes, both colonial and neo-colonial.

On the other side of the coin, members of the Digo community on the Kenyan coast are fuming after a High Court judged ruled in favour of the Toronto-based Tiomin company and against seven local farmers who are opposed to the paltry compensation packages the firm was offering for displacing members of the community from the site of proposed titanium mining operations. The court also ruled that the Kenya government could immediately proceed with forceful evictions of all farmers opposed to the displacement and proposed compensation. The Tiomin issue has been a lightning rod that has led to national and international coalitions and solidarity campaigns bringing together activists in Kenya, Canada, the United States, Italy and other parts of the world.

The Yiaku people have been also quite involved in the plans for the World Social Forum 2007. They have at least two representatives sitting in the Organizing Committee itself and active in the Social Mobilization Commission.

Theirs is a unique case for cultural survival: in the 1930s, they were forcibly assimilated into the larger Maasai cluster and over a period of decades, they have effectively lost their language with less than 10 people (mostly greying elders) able to communicate in the Yiaku tongue. Today they are confined to the inner reaches of the Mukogodo Forest on the outskirts of Nanyuki town in the Laikipia District of central Kenya. But in a testimony of their grit and resolve to fight for their right to self-determination, they have joined up with other marginalized and endangered peoples in Africa and around the world and no doubt they will have compelling testimonies to share during the January global event in Nairobi.

Dwellers of the so-called "mitaa ya mabanda" or informal settlements in Kenya- from the sprawling slums of Kibera and Mathare to the lesser known Huruma, Korogocho, Mukuru, Kondele, Chaani and other slums are quite in the thick of things. The Kutoka Network is working closely with these communities to ensure a massive presence of the inhabitants of these settlements at WSF 2007. One of the highlights of their activities will be a marathon that will snake its way through the Nairobi slums to historic Uhuru Park - the venue of the opening and closing ceremonies.

Hawkers, who have of late borne the brunt of municipal government and state terror in the Kenyan capital, are also organizing to participate, partly to correct the media misperceptions that they are nothing but a bunch of hoodlums working in cahoots with organized criminals to desecrate the central business district of Nairobi.

Women in Africa and around the world are busy organizing their presence at the WSF 2007 with the Nairobi-based FEMNET and the Kampala-based AWEAPON taking a very conscious lead in hooking into encounters like the Feminist Dialogues to ensure an effective participation by women.

The Kenyan trade union movement walked into the WSF process rather late in September 2006, and found their way around after a couple of hiccups. At first, it was a major battle to get the phrase "right to decent work" inserted into the major principles guiding the WSF 2007 meeting because some WSF veterans objected to incorporating the name of a specific ILO campaign into a broad platform such as the WSF. At the end of the day, there was a compromise and the phrase was adopted after protracted behind the scenes discussions.

More recently, a press conference organized by the Kenyan trade union leadership cast wrong aspersions at the Nairobi-based WSF 2007 Secretariat and this created some bad blood, which was once again overcome after face to face meetings with representative of the two bodies.

Even before the arrival of COTU (the Kenyan trade union confederation) on the WSF scene, workers and their issues were very much part of the WSF process with South Africa's COSATU part of the International Council of the WSF and OATUU head Hassan Sunmonu one of the most familiar presences at the African Social Forum council meetings. Elsewhere around the world, bodies like the Canadian Labour Congress and other trade union formations have been longtime supporters of the WSF process since its very inception.

In Kenya, bodies like the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) have worked for a long time to highlight the plight of export processing zones (EPZ) wage slaves and flower farm workers. The KHRC recently organized an international forum for shopstewards from Thailand, Indonesia, South Africa, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and other parts of the world to talk about the issues workers would be bringing to the WSF 2007.

The Kenya Land Alliance, one of the constituent bodies of the Kenya Social Forum and a member of the WSF 2007 Organizing Committee has for the last year been mobilizing peasants, squatters, fisher folk, pastoralists and other rural folk to bring their issues on land and livelihoods to the WSF event. KLA has supported regional forums such as the Western Kenya Social Forum, the Coast Social Forum and the Central Social Forum, materially and otherwise.

Other dynamic bodies in the WSF 2007 Organizing Committee such as the Shelter Forum, Citizens Assembly and Haki Jamii have mobilized evictees, urban dwellers, the poor, the youth etc to articulate social and economic problems and suggested alternatives.

On a global scale, the World Assembly of Social Movements has held a series of meetings and exchanges on how best to use the WSF space to galvanize social movements. At the continental level, the South African based Khanya College and the newly founded Sankara Centre for Social Movements in Kenya are determined to see that the WSF 2007 event is an occasion to network and map out joint actions with other social movements from around the world.

In the same vein, an initiative coming out of Asia and Africa will be a prominent feature of the WSF Nairobi encounter, as activists from the two vast continents map out the elements of Africa-Asia Solidarity. A similar process is underway involving Latin America and Africa.

At the formal organizing level, all these initiatives, encounters and proposals have been concretized in an International Council of WSF (supported by the local organizing committee and the African Social Forum) decision to devote the fourth day of the WSF event (January 24, 2007) to solidifying joint actions and campaigns, partly to stave off lingering criticisms and perceptions that over the years the WSF has become little more than a talk shop.

With just weeks before the WSF 2007 event, it is clear that the WSF process itself is a contested ideological terrain. Some of the more activist

types are struggling to ensure that WSF events transcend their depiction as annual NGO jamborees with the usual high flying suspects flitting from one seminar to the other workshop before jetting back to their familiar civil society lairs.

Social movements, including dozens in Kenya, want to see the WSF being transformed into a space for organizing and mobilizing against the nefarious forces of international finance capital, neo-liberalism and all its local neo-colonial and comprador collaborators.

Whether this will be realized is a practical question which will be put to the test in Nairobi this coming January.

From Event To Process Reinforcing the social forums' processes

Marti Olivella and Nicolas Haeringer

Martí Olivella is the director of the Centre pour l'Innovation Sociale in Barcelona. Nicholas Haeringer is a social researcher from Paris. Both are active in Memoria Viva (<http://www.memoria-viva.org/>). They wrote this article in French after WSF 5 in Porto Alegre, January 2005. The version which we publish here is the result of the combined efforts of the anonymous translator at http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/dinamic.php?pagina=ci_barcelona_nico_in and Naila Durrani.

The Social Forums have existed for five years. They have grown in number, at all levels, and are starting to reach all the continents. Since the first WSF, the Brazilian Committee, and later, the International Council, have assured the forum's continuity. The world social forums follow this pattern and every year, its organizers try to learn from the preceding year. There is an improvement not only in quantity (i.e. the number of participants), but also in quality.

However, it is necessary to recognize that at present, the social forums are essentially events dependent on time and venue availability. There are very few organizations that have resources to follow the WSF organization's rhythm, and even more rare are the organizations which can follow the rhythm of another forum, a regional one, for example. On the other hand, the people who organize different forums are not yet prepared to offer the tools and methods that would allow its participants to follow the forum's dynamics, which go beyond the event itself. The « memory » projects are an exception, which start a few weeks before certain forums and continue several months after the event, offering the participating organizations the possibility of working further on their proposals and reports. Attempts are currently being made at the level of the ESF. These could inspire a similar approach within the International Council too.

The forum as an event and the forum as a process

There is a great number of people who try to reinforce the forums as a process. This can be amply explained. For the time being, it is important to try to reinforce the dynamics of the forums, starting from the inside. From this perspective, the phases before and after the forums should not be left only to its organizers, militant professionals and a few journalists. It should be possible for each participant of the forum to contribute to the formation of the Forum's dynamics, in an approach that corresponds to the forum's image of openness and inclusivity, and one that gives importance to diverse points of view, without trying to reach a consensus. On the other hand one could consider that reinforcing of the forums as process is a good way of bypassing the opposition between the forum as an event and the forum as a movement.

To reinforce the forums as a process means enabling their existence beyond the event itself, from their current transitory status to a more permanent one. This permanency cannot be achieved in terms of an open space vision of the forum, but through establishing and ensuring simple but clear procedures, with the guarantee that it will not turn into an organizational or a hierarchical structure. This is precisely the risk that accompanies the conception of the forum as a movement. Firstly, to be realistically an "open spaces" conception, the forums cannot be just that; in order to increase the number of organizations involved, the forums dynamic cannot be confined to a few days only in any year since it is almost impossible for the organisations to meet, share and articulate their proposals of potential interest to each other .

The event-forum has its own constraints owing to their immediate and accumulative aspects. The event gives us little time to step back and analyze its long term effects. The social forums are not comparable to the Davos economic forum. They cannot be organized in a completely sequential and reflective manner. Their very intuitive and spontaneous character are essential elements that allow them to be innovative. The erratic character of the forum's organizational process, through which each person hears and discusses the problems presented, is not so much a sign of immaturity but a proof that the forums are a major political innovation. Thus, we can only expect that the groups engaged in the preparation of a particular forum are also taking account of its longer term or on-going nature.

The process and the event should be distinguished from each other, not as opponents, but in order to juxtapose them in a dynamic manner, so that they may reinforce each other. And the methods for reinforcing the forum-process should be actively sustainable.

Up to now, the process is the poor relative of the event. There is no specific budget dedicated to it. The expenses of the process remain invisible, and rely on contributions given by organizations that have good financial, human and technical resources which allow them to work on the process during the whole year. Owing to this, the forum-process has not yet been formalized. In spite of all the difficulties, the forums have organized themselves and their organizers have learnt what is required and have started to introduce a number of changes from one forum to another. The social forums are not separate events which succeed each other without any link. Thus the management system of the process does in fact work. But it has its limits, as shown by the big increase in the number of meetings, discussion lists, groups and subgroups or even the WSF 2005 debt. Another consideration implicit in the process, which lies on the informal relationship among the organizations and in which the role of some of the individuals is central, does not allow for inclusivity in the organizational process. The existing complexity of the situation calls for important changes to be made.

It is urgent to raise funds which will allow a more rigorous and transparent management of the process and which will guarantee that its leaders do not take over the power, but would facilitate the work of others. This becomes even more urgent since the world social forum keeps re-inventing itself as it will be decentralized by being held in several venues in 2006. The work will be carried out mainly from afar. This will include anticipating and transforming the way the

IC at its Commissions work which currently work only through physical meetings, wherein the discussion lists are rarely used for discussing topics such as funding, where the follow-up of decisions made in a meeting is not satisfactory, where the participants who were absent in a meeting raise again topics that have already been decided upon during previous meetings, where the responsibilities and the roles of the commissions and the formal/informal groups are not very well defined, and where because of lack of exchange of information, many things are done more than once by different groups and different people while other tasks are left hanging.

Two dimensions of the process-forum

The process-forum has two dimensions within the framework of the World Social Forum :

- the establishment of the organizational process of the world social forum, its decentralized venues in 2006 and support to the preparatory dynamics for the forum in 2007 ;
- Construction of a process which will enable the forum to go beyond the event itself, whereby participation in the event will become an element of the whole dynamic of WSF.

The first aspect is all about working at a distance, about collaborative tools that will turn meetings, which are expensive, time-consuming and are harmful to the environment (because they use too much fuel), into becoming only a step at the heart of a much bigger and permanent work plan. It is about encouraging coordination, facilitating and making more dynamic the different work groups which are linked to the world social forum organization.

The second aspect concerns the visualization, re-valuing, transmission and debate about what is discussed along the forum, by means of written documents, pictures, audio files, videos and any other means.

Numerous approaches are either already in place or are being launched, and seek to consider one or several elements of the process-forum. A list, as exhaustive as possible is presented as follows: the works of the WSFtools group about consultations and collaborative tools, the works and perspectives opened by Memoria Viva, the Proposal's Billboard system, the evaluation of the WSF with Delibera, the proposal « Map for another world », the proposal to organize a world social forum through the internet by some International Council members. We should also include the Nomad project and Babels' work linked to the forum memories, and working in co-operation with Nomad. Further down on this document there is a description of each of these groups as drawn up by themselves .

Some of those approaches are directly linked to the International Secretariat, others come from IC members. Some were born within the Content and Methodology committees of the IC. They are all legitimate and tend to go in the same direction. The aim is not to make them compete nor to force them to come together. In fact, it is important to make sure that they continue

complementing each other, and to try to coordinate them well, so that we avoid some things being done several times by different groups. Agglutination [this word is often used within the WSF about the clumping together of events and activities - ed.] should begin within the IC itself before we come to the WSF's activities.

Taking into account what the facilitation of the forum-process implies, we have to raise funds that would be specifically dedicated to it, in order to make it possible for a small international and decentralized team to work on the facilitating and making more dynamic the processes in liaison with the International Secretariat and the Sao Paulo Office. This would also enable IT experts to put together the electronic tools which are essential in the international dynamics of an innovative body such as the forum.

Current actors of the forum-process (as an indication, additions to be made, in any order)

The International Secretariat : The international secretariat of WSF, and in particular its Brazilian section, have until now convened the IC meetings, facilitated the committees' work (more or less actively, depending on the committees), and taken charge of the relationships with WSF's national organizers (BOC and its working groups). The IS is responsible for the budget, through to members of the BOC. It leads the Sao Paulo office. The IS works around a mailing list and frequent meetings of its Brazilian section – without keeping any minutes.

The International Council: The International Council is the place where decisions regarding WSF's major orientations are made (decision to organise WSF 2004 in Mumbai, suppression of plenary sessions organized by the BOC and the IC, consultation, organization of the polycentric forums, etc). Those decisions are mostly prepared by the International Secretariat. The IC can also contribute towards facilitating certain aspects of the forum-process, such as the facilitation of the agglutination groups – even if this facilitation is not very active. The IC have elaborated some rules regarding functioning which are available on WSF's website. Summaries of its decisions are published in the forum's newsletter (bulletin), and the minutes are sent to IC members. It has a mailing-list (without are not archived).

The IC commissions: Some commissions are much more active than others: content and methodology commission, finance commission, and to a lesser extent, the expansion and communication commission. Up until now, the strategy commission is the less active one. It prepares the IC's decisions and also proposes some decisions. Content and methodology commission, organized in sub-groups, are also a space where some IC decisions are made concrete (such as the consultation). The commissions mandate was defined in Miami. Every commission has its own mailing list (again not recorded). They don't have an online working space.

Memoria Viva: Memoria Viva's team was created from the IC Content and Methodology Commission (CMC)'s work teams. This team was in charge of facilitating the interlinkages, at the moment of the WSF 2005 registration, to

build up its written memory, through the Proposal Panel system, to build a website capable of becoming the Memory webpage of all World Social Forums and made accessible to receive information from others Forums. It is a small team made up of Brazilians, Catalans and the French and financed from November to March by CCFD and ESF 2003 funding association. The 4 CMC Brazilian facilitators were in charge of the political and institutional direction of the project. Memoria Viva is organized around a web site, a database and a mailing list (which is recorded) and it communicates mostly through Skype.

Nomad: The International Nomad Project aims to create alternative technical solutions to the translation teams. It does not intend to become WSF's service provider, but looks at the possibility of experimenting with new techniques, and coming up with new ways of using existing techniques. The Nomad project also allows the archiving of some of the audio content of some of the activities of the forums, has several mailing lists (which are recorded), forums, wiki and a website. The Nomad project goes beyond the social forums.

Babels: Existing outside the WSF event, Babels is an international network linked to most of the Social Forums and other events. Transtrad is a subgroup dedicated to the written translation of documents produced throughout the organization of the forums. Babels brings to light the political meaning of languages. Some of Babels's members also work directly or indirectly linked to the forums memories (multilingual lexicons), many mailing lists (with archives), forums, wiki, web, database. The Babels network goes beyond the Social Forums.

Wsftools: At the Utrecht Meeting, this group has been given charge of proposing technical tools for the global consultations held prior to the decentralized forums held in 2006. It is also in charge of proposing tools and methods to allow the International Council to work from a distance. Has a mailing list (but no files) and wiki.

Delibera: This deliberation multilingual webtool was utilized to evaluate the WSF 2005 after having been used to prepare the International Council Meeting in Porto Alegre in 2003 to evaluate the resolution proposal of the IC. Delibera can be used to evaluate from a distance the degree of agreements and disagreements and the arguments and suggestions collected from the IC or the committees' documents, prior to the meetings, as well as during the meetings. Delibera can also help to prioritize proposals and actions in a participatory manner but from a distance and within the framework of the forum-process.

Map of the new world: This project was presented in a document sent to the International Council's list and concerns the Forums' Memory. It aims to allow each organization to dispose of what it has done during the forum and also to inform any interested party of its continuation and its participation in the forum through an open publishing system.

A WSF on the internet: Members of the IC have proposed in meetings or through the mailing list to organize a virtual WSF in 2006.

The Challenges of a polycentric forum-process (to be completed)

Important note: The tasks described in the following are facilitating tasks. They aim to make more dynamic, to animate, as well as to take over the information developments needed. Evidently the decisions are to be taken within the core of the entities in charge of that (IS, IC and organizing committees).

–Support in the animation of debates in the IC and its committees (moderation in the broadcasting lists, keeping in mind the multi-lingual nature of these lists, follow-up to the decisions taken and establishing links between the IS, IC and committees, etc.)

–Support in the preparation of the IC Meetings and of its committees (preparatory documents, agendas, etc.)

–Establishment of cooperative tools which will allow the International Secretariat and the International Council to work from a distance (ref. Utrecht's IC decision, under preparation in Wsf-tools). These tools will rely on a small animation team (preparation of Pedagogical kits, animation and making more dynamic the debates, online support, etc.)

–Support in the adequate articulation of the different "chapters" of the WSF 2006 (establishment of tools to enable the setting up of effective linkages among IS, IC and its committees on the one hand and the organising committees on the other).

–Support in the organization of a general consultation (IC Utrecht's decision, being developed within the Wsf-tools).

–Establishment of a kind of process "Mural de Propuestas" ("Mural of Proposals"), which will be added to the current database website found in www.memoria-viva.org (IC Utrecht's decision, to be developed in the CMC and Memoria Viva), Web publishing animation, links to the other forums (e.g. regional, thematic and local).

Further Readings on the World Social Forum

This is a commented list of readings on the WSF as of December 2006, mainly in English, and prepared especially for librarians who would consider involving themselves in the process.

" [...] the World Social Forum process is NOT the latest attempt to create a monolithic "world revolutionary vanguard movement" nor is it a reincarnation of an international "united front" seeking to overthrow, one by one, governments around the world. Such a notion would be a complete negation of the very essence and concept of the World Social Forum as outlined in its Charter of Principles. [...]

Rather, the World Social Forum is, to use a Kiswahili word, a global Jukwaa, in other words, an international PLATFORM, to quote from the Porto Alegre Charter "an open meeting place where groups and movements of civil society opposed to neo-liberalism and a world dominated by capital or by any form of imperialism, but engaged in building a planetary society centred on the human person, come together to pursue their thinking, to debate ideas democratically, formulate proposals, share their experiences freely and network for effective action."

(Quoted from <http://wsf2007.org/>)



The WSF International Council Meeting in Nairobi, March 2006 (Photo: MB)

In English:

"Karibu to WSF Nairobi 2007!"

Relation: People's Struggles, People's Alternatives - the theme of the WSF Event in Nairobi 2007

URL: <http://www.wsf2007.org/>

Published/accessed: Accessed 17 December 2006.

Comment: This website about the current WSF event could be the right place to start.

Nisula, Laura and Sehm Patomäki, Katarina (Eds.): We, the Peoples of the World Social Forum...

Relation: Network Institute for Global Democratization (NIGD) Discussion Paper 2/2002

URL: <http://www.nigd.org/libraries/bamako-nairobi/tot-workshop/module2/WeThePeoplesOfTheWSF.pdf>

Published/accessed: 2002/ Accessed December 2006.

Comment: A concise booklet which entails reflections by participants in the two first WSF events at Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2001 and 2002, plus the text of the "World Social Forum Charter of Principles".

Larmer, Miles: "whose Forum, which Africa?"

URL: <http://www.africansocialforum.org/english/files/fsm/article4.htm>

Published/Accessed: 2004 / Accessed December 2006.

Comment: Critical reflections by a South African historian on the African Social Forum held in Lusaka, Zambia, 10-14 December 2004.

Glasius, Marlies: "Deliberation or Struggle? Civil Society Traditions Behind the Social Forums"

Relation: Ephemera, volume 5(2): 240-252.

URL: <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-2/5-2glasius.pdf>

Published/accessed: 2005/ Accessed December 2006.

Comment: The author takes a deeper look into the dual nature of the WSF and its process. This article might be of help to professionals, like librarians, who try find a role for themselves in it.

Marin, Gustavo: "Methodological Contribution to the WSF 2005 Activity-aggregation Process. Attempting to See the Trees and the Forest at the Same Time .."

Relation: Memoria Viva

URL: <http://www.memoria-viva.org/fsm05/docs/portoalegre2005en.rtf>

Published/accessed: Accessed December 2006.

Comment: The author shortly reports an experiment in "mindmapping" of a WSF event.

Reyes, Oscar: "World and European Social Forums: A Bibliography"

Relation: Ephemera. Volume 5, number 2. (The Organisation and Politics of Social Forums)

URL: <http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-2/5-2biblio.htm>

Published/accessed: May 2005/ Accessed December 2006.

Böök, Mikael: "Librarians and World Social Forum, Unite!"

Relation: Information For Social Change No. 19

URL: <http://www.libr.org/isc/articles/19-Book-1.html>

Published/accessed: 2004 / Accessed December 2006

Comment: I looked for information about the WSF in my local libraries. This is what I found.

Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, Peter Waterman (Eds.): World Social Forum Challenging Empires

Publisher: The Viveka Foundation, New Delhi

URL: http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html

Published/accessed: 2004 / Accessed December 2006

Comment: This relatively large anthology of writings and documents from the first years of the WSF (2001-2004) was published at the opening of the WSF in Mumbai, India, 2004.

George, Susan: Another world is possible if...

Publisher: Verso, London and New York

Relation: Transnational Institute

Published/accessed: 2004.

Comment: A book on the contemporary social movement by one of its leading thinkers and writers.

In French

Cardon, Dominique et Haeringer, Nicolas: "Formes politiques et coopération digitale. Les usages d'Internet par les Forums sociaux"

Relation: Centre d'études des mouvements sociaux – EHESS; Centre d'Étude et de Recherche en Sociologie des Organisations - Université Paris-Dauphine

Published / Accessed: Forthcoming.

Writing and reading more together

Library Success: A Best Practices Wiki

Starting from Esther Obachi's article on The Management of the WSF Information in ISC 24 (this issue)

URL:

http://www.libsuccess.org/index.php?title=Management_of_the_WSF_Information

Reading List prepared for ISC by M.B.



World Public Finances



The Secret Making a Joke out of Development Efforts

Emma Lochery



Emma Lochery, active in the *Tax Justice Network* (www.taxjustice.net), is a post-graduate student with an international background. She is presently working for Innovations in Civic Participation (www.icicp.org), which supports youth service around the world. (Photo with Emma 3rd from the left, taken at the Lenana training center in Nairobi, July 2006, by MB).

Tax. Not a very sexy subject. Treated as technical and a necessary evil, taxation policy does not attract the same celebrity attention as aid flows, debt, and trade policy. Yet it lies at the heart of problems afflicting the developing world. Tax injustice is embedded in the current international financial system, ensuring that there is a net capital flow from global South to North—from poorer to richer countries and not the other way round. American researcher Raymond Baker estimates that up to US\$500 billion flows out of developing countries each year due to commercial exploitation of taxation weaknesses, corrupt practices, and money involved in criminal activities, most of it ending up in tax havens. To put

that into perspective, the Make Poverty History campaign argues that an immediate annual injection of an additional \$50 billion is needed for countries to make progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Why have people for so long turned a blind eye to a problem so large in scale it dwarfs and underlies the concerns commonly highlighted in mass campaigns?

The amount of money involved is not the only issue at stake. Current rhetoric on development focuses on sustainability. Taxes are at the centre of the project to create sustainable states with accountable governments. Many a revolution, with the American as a prominent example, has been prompted by one issue: tax. Indeed, the slogan of “no taxation without representation” highlights the intimate connection between fiscal policy and democratic government. Functioning tax systems can provide an important framework for political representation, providing another avenue by which citizens feel they have a higher stake in government and policy outcomes.

For a state to be free from permanent dependence on aid flows and the attached conditionalities, it must be able to generate revenue domestically to provide public services such as health and education systems and to maintain domestic governance structures. Tax systems are not solely instruments for meeting budgetary needs however: they are the main tool for redistribution within a society, valuable for lifting its poorest members out of poverty. A recent UNU/WIDER study demonstrated that levels of pre-tax income inequality in richer countries were similar to those in poorer countries: it was through redistribution that final levels of inequality were lower in richer countries. Oxford academic Alex Cobham argues the impact of redistribution is clear if income inequality levels before and after redistribution in Sweden and the US are compared. Both countries exhibit similar levels of pre-tax inequality but Sweden removes more than half of the original inequality through redistribution.

However, as capital becomes increasingly mobile, the tax burden falls ever more on labour and consumption. In a definite pattern that can be traced from the beginning of the 1970s, there has been a significant growth worldwide in the use of indirect—or VAT style—taxes. These regressive taxes hit the poor hardest because they spend proportionally more of their income on basic necessities. This move towards regressive taxation has been reinforced by International Financial Institutions’ enforced programmes of trade liberalisation. Many of the poorest countries in the world, concentrated in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, depend on trade taxes for a third of their overall revenue. The IMF has encouraged countries to replace these taxes on imports and exports with regressive VAT systems. The negative side effects of the regressive tax are compounded by the failure of VAT to replace revenues: a recent IMF study reported that out of every dollar of revenue lost through liberalisation, low-income countries were gaining back less than 30 cents from the implementation of a VAT system.

Poor Countries are “Haemorrhaging Money”

Andrew Pendleton, senior policy adviser at Christian Aid, argues, “For decades, poor countries like Kenya and Bolivia have been haemorrhaging money to which they are properly entitled”. Pendleton authored the NGO’s paper discussing the effects of tax policy on the poor which offers case studies showing how calls for countries to mobilize their own resources for development have not been backed up by the actions of international institutions. Levels of tax revenues remain disturbingly low. While in OECD countries, tax revenues account for around 30% of GDP, in poorer countries, that figure is more like 10-17% of a much lower GDP.

Bolivia has gas reserves with a total estimated value of US\$250 billion. However, in 1996, the gas industry was privatised. A group of companies including BP and British Gas made a deal that they would pay 18% royalties on all new reserves—because the reserves were new they would be exempt from paying a 25% income tax. 97% of Bolivia’s gas reserves were declared new.

In May and June of 2005, widespread unrest hit La Paz and surrounding areas. While high world prices of gas and crude oil meant that companies BP, Exxon Mobil, Shell, and CononoPhillips were declaring their incomes had risen by 39% from the previous year’s levels, the people of cities like El Alto just north of La Paz, home to many of the migrants attracted by the promise of urban employment, lived without basic water and sanitation infrastructure and cooked their food in crude ovens built from dried mud. How is the construct of the international system causing and prolonging this level of inequality?

Tax Havens Cause Poverty

The French for tax haven is ‘paradis fiscal’, an apt name for the financial centres where rich individuals and multinational organisations are charged minimal or zero tax rates. There are about 70 tax havens around the world, most of which are found in Europe and the Caribbean with prominent examples being the Channel Islands and Switzerland. The Tax Justice Network (TJN), a coalition of activists and researchers which seeks to challenge the problems of tax avoidance, tax competition, and tax havens, argues that a direct link can be drawn from tax havens to poverty. Their research in 2005 found that rich individuals held US\$11.5 trillion offshore, meaning that the tax revenue forgone internationally each year on these individuals’ wealth is around US\$255 billion, greater than the global aid budget the UN claims is necessary to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. They also report that in Latin America, over 50 per cent of the total holdings of cash and listed securities of rich individuals is held offshore; in the Middle East, the figure is closer to 70 per cent. The people of these countries are missing out on desperately needed revenues.

However, individuals are not the sole or even main concern. Multinational companies (MNCs) also reap many benefits from the existence of tax havens, particularly due to the secrecy which enshrouds them. John Christensen, who

directs the international secretariat of the TJN, used to work in financial industry in Jersey and described it as “a world of smoke and mirrors”. Large companies can set up a subsidiary company offshore which on paper owns much of the capital of the firm; in the case of an oil company this could mean rigs, drilling equipment, or even the company logo. The subsidiary based in the tax haven can then rent the capital back to the company at extremely high rates which then can be deducted as expenses, meaning less tax will have to be paid in the country where the resources, say oil or copper, originated. The resulting difficulty in tracing profit derivation is further clouded by the difficulty of tracing ownership. Christensen explains that “a Jersey registered company might be owned by a trust based in Luxembourg, with nominee trustees living in Switzerland.”

Counties in the developed world suffer the effects of MNC practice as well. A good example revealing the centrality of tax havens to corporate tax strategy is the Enron scandal currently being unravelled in American courtrooms. The figures involved in the case are impressive—for instance, the company declared profits of US\$2.3 billion from 1996-1999 but paid absolutely no tax. As author Lucy Komisar recounts, Enron had 881 offshore subsidiaries: 692 in the Cayman Islands, 119 in Turks and Caicos, 43 in Mauritius, and 8 in Bermuda. When the advanced tax authorities in developed countries have trouble dealing with the misbehaviour of MNCs, it is clear that the under-resourced authorities in the developing world will struggle to increase their tax receipts from MNCs.

Companies are aided in designing their tax strategies by major accountancy firms whose attitude towards tax havens runs directly against their claims to care about corporate social responsibility. KPMG, which itself operates from a secretive Swiss base, was heavily criticized for creating the tax strategy for WorldCom, the huge telecommunications firm which declared Chapter 11 bankruptcy in 2002. In December 2005, KPMG’s head of tax Loughlin Hickey gave the Institute of Chartered Accountant’s annual lecture, appealing for the cultivation of trust between tax authorities and accountants. Tax Justice Network advisor Richard Murphy asked whether Hickey could engender some of the trust by ceasing to work in tax havens. Hickey replied, “I am proud that KPMG is in those territories. . . quite frankly if principled firms like ourselves are not in these territories we don’t aid them.”

The claim that tax haven territories are developing countries has also been used at the level of the UN where in the meetings of the low-profile Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters, the representation of tax havens far outweighs that of developing countries. In addition, while thousands of protesters attended the Hong Kong trade negotiations in December 2005, when the UN Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters met, there was only one civil society organisation present—TJN. Developing country and civil society voices decrying tax injustice are only now increasing in volume.

Nairobi 2007: A Tax Justice Network for Africa

African countries are at the centre of the tax injustice crisis, a situation demanding attention and action. Recently at the 2006 World Social Forum (WSF) in Bamako, Mali, the Tax Justice Network met with representatives from across African civil society. The aim of the trip was to discuss the possibility of creating a TJN for Africa at the next WSF to be held in Nairobi in 2007.

Each seminar opened with comments planned to frame a discussion led by the participants. And indeed, what happened in the first workshop and continued throughout the whole forum completely affirmed the need for a TJN for Africa. Overall plans to construct the network were complemented with a depth of knowledge, experience, and passion from all sides of the vast continent. Participants in the workshops—researchers, trade unionists, journalists, NGO workers, and students—offered examples from their own countries of abuse of tax policy by multinationals, the connection between kleptocratic leaders and secret Swiss bank accounts, and the increasingly regressive nature of domestic tax systems. A Ghanaian recounted how mining companies in Ghana, famously operating in the city of Ashanti, are given tax amnesties for ten years and then leave six months before the amnesty is due to run out, giving very little back to the communities living on the land from which they derive their profits. A journalist from Nigeria criticised the multinational oil companies' claim that their tax payments were confidential due to non-disclosure clauses found in their contracts with government: since when were tax payments to the government a commercial secret?

There was also a clear call to go ahead with plans to launch the network in Nairobi. A researcher from South Africa described how COSATU, the Congress of South African Trade Unions, along with other civil society organizations annually publishes the 'People's Budget' which they present to government. To strengthen and improve the initiative, they are also seeking ways to include information on the taxes companies should be paying. They need expertise—exactly what the proposed tax justice network would provide. As well as matching individuals and organizations with accounting expertise and knowledge of campaigns in other parts of the world, the network gives weight to individual campaigns, making activism safer and putting pressure on governments, companies, and international institutions simultaneously.

The secret is out: a financial system based on capital flight, tax evasion, and tax havens must be changed. All eyes on Nairobi 2007.

For more information:

Please contact emma.lochery@st-annes.ox.ac.uk with comments or questions. See "Tax us if you can", A Tax Justice Network Briefing Paper, September 2005 at:

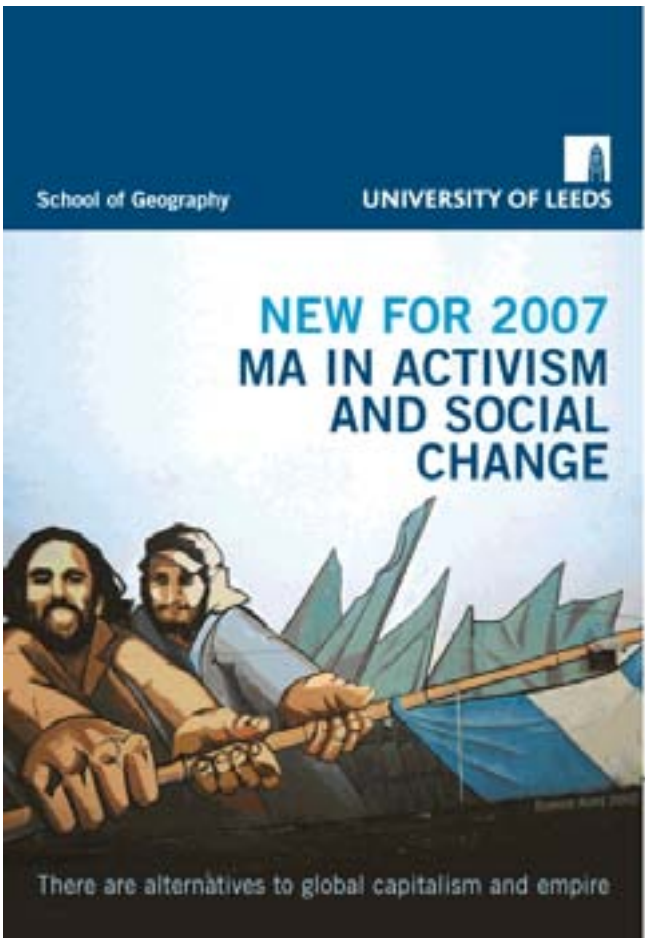
www.taxjustice.net

And briefing papers based on the research by Alex Cobham and other analysts at:

<http://www.oxfordgovernance.org>

Christian Aid's report "The shirts off their backs: How tax policies fleece the poor" is available to download here: <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/509tax/>.

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> clock back to my grandfather's time when only the children of the rich
> could study after high school, it's a disgrace."

It's poor people's money that makes the wealthy rich

About the scandalous gains by banks and other financial institutions profiting from the revenues and money transfers of emigrants

Francine Mestrum



Francine Mestrum in Geneva, Oct 2006(photo M.B.)

Francine Mestrum is a Belgian social scientist and specialist on development issues. Her publications include *Mondialisation et pauvreté. De l'utilité de la pauvreté dans le nouvel ordre mondial* (L'Harmattan 2002).

Mestrum is active in the international movement Attac (Association to Tax financial Transactions to Aid Citizens). This article explains the idea of a campaign about 'remittances', that is the money migrant workers transfer to their home countries. Attac Flanders, Italy and Spain plan to launch a campaign about the remittances at the WSF in Nairobi. The article has been translated from French by Harriet Leeck.

About ten years ago I was walking on an almost virginal beach on the Atlantic coast of Honduras. Suddenly I saw an African village on the beach! A maze of lanes and huts, with women who prepared food in front of their doors and children playing. And in the centre of these huts, there were some stone-built houses. Houses built with the money of the emigrants who live in New York, it was explained to me. Garifunas – which represents the Black population of Honduras – is a significant community of emigrants in New York. And it sends money regularly to its village of origin. This money makes it possible to build 'real' houses. On the beach!

A few years now, this money, sent by emigrants to their countries of origin, has been the subject of lively discussions in all the international organizations. That is explained by the discovery that they constitute actually a rather important and very stable financial source going in the direction of developing countries. And each year this financial flow increases.

According to estimates by the World Bank, these transfers ('remittances') rose in 2005 to 232 billion dollars. Not less than 167 billion dollars were headed towards developing countries. This amount doubled in five years. It is also the double of what the sum total of official development aid represents. And it is eleven times the amount of net transfers directed towards developing countries. Moreover, according to the World Bank, it is necessary to add about 50% to this, to include informal 'transfers': money which is transferred by friends or the family, or systems such as 'hawala'.

The money is not primarily intended for the poorest countries. In fact, sub-Saharan Africa receives less than the other countries. Nevertheless, these amounts can play an important part in the reduction of poverty. This is very interesting, because this way, the World Bank is bound to admit that monetary transfers can contribute to reducing paucity, an element that was not paramount in its global strategy for fighting poverty.

It is obvious that these money transfers by emigrants can potentially contribute to reducing poverty, but only provided that the migrants come from poor families. An Indian engineer in the United States, transferring money, will help his family of the middle class, but it will not reduce poverty. A Mexican peasant, picking fruit in the United States and sending money to his family will reduce poverty directly. According to World Bank sources, poverty in Guatemala has thus been reduced by 20% and in Uganda by 11%.

The money received by poor families is used for consumer spending, food and clothing. After that come health care and education. More than just the number of poor people, actual poverty is thus reduced.

At this point in time when poverty reduction has become more of a priority for the development of co-operation, the attention that international organizations pay to these financial transactions is thus easily explained. It should nevertheless be mentioned that there are other considerations at play here, too, that are not always as laudable.

First of all, following the UN conference in Monterrey in 2002, there began a somewhat deeper probing to find 'innovative mechanisms for the financing of development'. There had been deliberations about international taxation - a Tobin tax or the tax on plane tickets that was recently introduced in France. There were also discussions of a tax on immigrants' transfers, but this idea was quickly abandoned, given the already very high prices of these transfers and the fact that they were in the majority of cases about incomes that had already been taxed in the

country where they had been earned.

Secondly, following the attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States want stricter control on financial transactions, given that they could be used to finance terrorism. Hezbollah recently stated having received money from Lebanese emigrants in Argentina. This is something that the United States would like to avoid. The idea is interesting insofar as it enables the control of financial flows of dirty or illegal money.

A third reason is the desire to eliminate informal transfers as much as possible. The idea is to facilitate and simplify the life of emigrants, by facilitating a sort of liberalization of financial services. In fact, if banks in the developed countries have easier access to the markets of developing countries, then that leads to greater control of financial transactions and to integrating an additional segment into the capitalist system.

A fourth reason is that one wants, one way or another, to use this money for 'development'. All organizations declare that these transfers can never replace development aid, and that they constitute private means. There are however lots of ideas bandied about suggesting ways to use those private means towards productive ends, and not just for consumption. In Mexico, for example, the State, the regions and the communities donate three dollars for each dollar that comes into the country and that is then invested in local development funds. However, in spite of this generosity, the families often prefer to use the money as they see fit.

Finally, a fifth reason is that one would want money transfers to be less expensive. This is the principal argument of all liberalization efforts. In this specific case, the argument is correct because the amounts that are being charged for these transfers are scandalously high. Admittedly, they were lowered in the past years, but on average the transfer of small amounts costs between 10 and 15%. It's there that the World Bank pleads for substantially higher competitiveness.

A transfer of 100 dollars from Texas to Mexico costs the emigrant 18.99 dollars. A transfer of 100 Euro from Italy towards Morocco costs 14.99 Euro. Senegalese emigrants in Belgium transfer on average 154 Euro per month to their family, Congolese emigrants average 78 Euro per month. In the Benelux countries, transfers between 100 and 200 Euro cost 17 Euro.

In reality very few banks and financial institutions effect money transfers of amounts that are relatively low. But according to the World Bank, the received costs are always quite higher than the real costs. The major players in this market are Western Union (with a market share of 13%), MoneyGram, Vigo, Dolex and Bank of America. In Belgium it is primarily Western Union operating there, in partnership with the Post Office. This formula is, according to the World Bank, the most expensive. Another solution was introduced in the Philippines: emigrants can transfer money to their families at lower costs with the help of their mobile telephone!

More competitiveness is a consideration, but not necessarily the ideal

solution. An interesting alternative could be to directly entrust the Post Office, an institution represented in all the countries of the world and a global organization, with these transfers. Free counters could be reserved for the money transfers of emigrants. One could also try to make informal arrangements more transparent because they are in any case by far the least expensive. Money transfers towards criminal or terrorist ends are also quite easily done in formal systems such as in Clearstream, etc.

Whatever the preferred solution, the exorbitant costs which are currently taken from emigrant workers are unacceptable. Attac protests against the exploitation of people who are already very vulnerable in our societies.

In this document, we do not deal with the issue of migration itself, as this involves another discussion. We limit ourselves here to the question of those individuals who live and work in our countries and who want to help their families that remain in their country of origin. It is those for whom their financial assistance is intended, and not banks and financial institutions.

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Document: Concept Paper for World Public Finances in Nairobi

Matti Kohonen

Matti Kohonen is a doctoral student in sociology at the London School of Economics. He is active in the Tax Justice Network and the Association for Taxing the financial Transactions to Aid Citizens (ATTAC). He wrote this concept paper following a meeting at the polycentric social forum in Bamako, January 2006.

Introduction

World Public Finances (WPF) has been launched by NIGD and Liberdade Brasil to constitute a process in which we work towards a common conceptual agreement on which measures are needed to safeguard public finances in all levels. Nobody is questioning the need for increased public finances, but most disagree its availability and its potential sources. It is the greatest paradox of our time, the wealth creation capability of the world has never been as high, and we seem to lack public finances to fund even the basic needs of citizens both North and South. What we argue through WPF is that there are widely available sources of financing that are not available due to large amounts of money used on debt repayments, lost to tax evasion, held up in currency reserves or lost due to corruption in public administration. The combined effect is that the 20 billion dollars of annual aid flows to Sub-Saharan Africa, is minimal compared to the 50 billion dollars lost due to illegal capital flight.

We therefore urgently need to turn away from focusing on aid as the main catalyst for prosperity in the developing world. In stead, we should turn towards public finances, domestic resource mobilisation, questioning the legitimacy of odious debt, debt arbitration and ownership of assets in the developing world. Ownership of assets includes burning issues such as land reform. One could envisage redrawing water ownership rights especially in Africa to shift the balance towards Sub-Saharan Africa on the Nile river. Mineral resources are crucial, for a massive transfer of wealth from North to South, thus introducing high (above 10%) royalties on extractive industries is needed. Such royalties would alone lift places like Ghana, Sudan and Angola out of poverty assuming proper oversight over the governance. Even the poorest countries have mining operations, though currently in Mauritania and Niger local populations benefit next to nothing from them.

The idea behind launching the WPF platform is to work together between these issues and campaigns in order to come up with a coherent proposal to shift the global financial system for the benefit of the poor. There are many campaigns looking at the national level, especially in terms of corruption, or working on single aspects where a potential tax base is not being utilised, for instance

currency transactions. Politically, we believe that the WPF platform has the capacity to contribute towards work of a complete overhaul of the global financial system, one which was last accomplished at the wake of the neo-liberal global market between 1979 and 1981 when Thatcher and Reagan were heads of state in countries with the two largest financial centres of the world, UK and USA. It is turning the neo-liberal tide that we are attempting to do.

We do this in the spirit of past visionaries such as Kwame Nkrumah, who started the wave of Pan-Africanism and led to a vast expansion of public finances in Ghana and across the African continent in countries that followed his spirit, freeing themselves from the slavery of colonisation. We can also look up to Alfred Marshall, who in the immediate aftermath of the second world war convinced European socialists to adopt the welfare state as the ideal type of social control over market disturbances and inequalities. In the era of globalisation, there is once again a lot of scope for national policies over public finances, but the main problems of capital flight, debt, tax evasion, and secrecy spaces needed for corruption lie outside the territories of most nation states. For these tax havens, offshore markets, legal loopholes, flags of convenience, the only type of regulation that works needs to happen on the global level, most notably within the UN and in the WTO. New global institutions are proposed to be founded to carry out global taxation.

We need a global financial system that responds to national welfare needs, away from the system where offshore markets have taken the role of setting the pace for regressive tax policies, tax competition and has created footloose and secretive space for money transfers. In the spirit of Karl Polanyi, who looked at how the market and the social spheres are in constant battle one over the other, we should look at how the market has changed in the post-1979 era, and mobilise the social forces that contest the new neo-liberal market. We may live in a market society, but we as citizens working through social movements have the opportunity to change this. These times require new conclusions and new methodologies to come up with proposals for change, therefore the initiative of the World Public Finances will be a participatory one, rooted in common mobilisations and principles of participation. The methodology is crucial to the concept of world public finances, as there will be no closed committees or ask of signatures without the opportunity to comment the draft. An 'open declaration' is like a source code used in the Free/Libre/Open-Source Software (FLOSS) movement. We hope in Nairobi to launch a process of coding or hacking the new financial architecture, but that code will be released after the WSF closes as an initial beta 0.1 version. Whether governments want to run the code will be up to the pressure that we as social movements exert on them, the networks that we build with political movements and parties, and the theoretical and conceptual debates we win in the public, academic and political spheres.

History of the initiative

The WPF platform recognises itself as a thematic platform of social movements

that emerged out of the open space provided by the WSF. The substantive content of the platform is derived from these meetings held within the WSF itself.

In the WSF 2005 the movements co-ordinated seminars under the platform of 'otro sistema financeiro'. In the polycentric WSF of 2006 the first participatory meeting of the platform was held in Bamako, where various movements expressed campaigns, concepts, processes and activism that gives us a clear indication of what problems we currently face with public finances across the world. The seminar in Bamako established a methodology to discuss world public finances, in order to create a common concept. The later stage will be one of assembly of the concept once the elements have been laid out. At the end of the later stage, we hope that a declaration would arise agreed upon by the movements.

Actions in Bamako

(a report is available at <http://www.nigd.org/docs/WPFBamakoMattiKohonen>)

The World Public Finances platform held one seminar in Bamako. The speakers presented the history of the initiative, and actions and mobilisations happening around the world for the support of public finances. Then the participants around the table were asked to contribute their understanding of world public finances, and we came up with the following list:

- a) Reparations from multinational corporations, in particular banks that financed the Apartheid regime in South Africa, for human rights violations committed during the Apartheid era;
- b) Cancellation of debt for all developing countries;
- c) Establishment of an independent debt arbitration panel to avert the possibility of a future debt crisis, and finish the current debt crisis much quicker;
- d) Establishing global taxes, particularly on cross-border activities that are currently not taxed, such as kerosene used as airplane fuel, and financial markets of all types;
- e) The draft treaty for the currency transaction tax lays out a global tax authority to collect and redistribute; this is proposed as a model for global taxation;

f) Enlarge the definition of money laundering to account for tax evasion as well; the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) of the IMF currently has a very limited view of what accounts for money laundering;

g) Implement a new set of international accounting standards that would show where profits are made, where taxes are paid, and how multinational corporations are structured so that they can be taxed more effectively and regulated under the public scrutiny of both the government and civil society;

h) Tax evasion needs to be tackled as an important topic, both individual and corporate tax evasion;

i) Tax competition needs to link the debates over special treatment of multinational corporations in both developing countries, where they ask for tax holidays before deciding to invest, and in the industrialised countries, where there is a need to halt the race to the bottom of corporate tax rates;

j) Information exchange between tax authorities is required to catch cross-border tax evasion, especially within subsidiaries of multinational corporations and private banking schemes;

k) Progressive taxation needs to be discussed because public finances are being eroded by proposals for flat taxes and single rate taxes on income, for example, or, on the other hand, on taxes like the VAT on consumption, which is regressive, due to the statistical fact that the poor use a proportionally larger amount of their income on basic consumption that falls under the VAT;

l) Public information is required on the economy, in terms of national budgets, especially regarding the activities of companies. Libraries were proposed to take on this political role of keeping the information on the economy for public scrutiny;

m) Issues also need to be linked from the ground level up in order to better coordinate our campaigns, and gain information on the achievements, and struggles in other countries, cities and communities;

n) There needs to be public scrutiny over the use of public finances, including schemes that are set up for developing countries, such as the HIPC and other grants or lending schemes, that constitute public finances in developing countries.

This list is not exhaustive of the topics that could be under world public finances, but they are the ones that have come out of the Bamako meeting by the

participants themselves. Some of the most interesting things that can happen are common campaigns. For example, Makoma Lekalakala from Jubilee South Africa identified Barclays bank as the main perpetrator of financial crimes in the Apartheid era, and John Christensen from Tax Justice Network said that they are among the most aggressive banks pushing for the creation of new tax havens (for example in Ghana) and facilitating money laundering. A global boycott of Barclays Bank and its subsidiaries may emerge as a result of this cross fertilisation of different strands of world public finances.

We also saw a convergence in the thinking about global taxes, such as the kerosene and financial transactions taxes, in the sense that it should not principally be a development finance tool, but a tool to regulate global markets and cross-border activities outside the reach of any single nation state. This was mentioned by Jacques Nikonoff of Attac France, as well as Mikael Bök of NIGD and Attac Finland. We hope further debate about the role of global taxes within world public finances.

There could be more participants in the participatory seminars to be held in Nairobi as compared to the one held in Bamako. For instance NGOs working as watch dogs over public expenditure and the use of aid money were only represented by one Nigerian NGO. Trade unions were there in the element of Finnish youth movements and international solidarity campaigns. Trade unions should realise their central role in the debate over public finances even further. Finally, ecological tax initiatives were under represented besides the kerosene tax.

The only area that was completely absent were trade issues, and in this respect the World Public Finances platform has to ask the question whether the platform is separate from all trade issues. I find taxation an integral part of any trade and investment decision, and if the trade issues are not explicitly taken in, then a link should be made to tell the trade campaigners that they need to look at taxation, money laundering as part of the terms of trade. West European economies gain tens of billions of dollars from developing country money laundering that is circulated in Western economies, especially in the housing market. You can, for instance, as a standard practice buy a house with a suitcase full of cash in London. There are no questions asked, and there is no compliance over Know Your Client requirements in most housing markets in Western Europe. The estate agents are in some ways worse than offshore banks, because there hasn't been any case of anti-corruption moves in the housing markets so far so they operate in an environment of complete regulatory ignorance in this respect.

Proposed actions for Nairobi

I find that we should in the first instance repeat in Nairobi what we did in Bamako in terms of the participatory session where ideas, issues and

mobilisations for public finances were shared. The session is likely to be a larger one in Nairobi, as more participants are expected to attend the Nairobi WSF. There will therefore be more input to the concept of the WPF from various organisations as long as we actively invite all relevant organisations to bring their input to the seminar. That session should be used to extend and clarify the list that currently from a to n.

In addition to what we did in Bamako, there could be a second session where the points are collected together, and work is done in attempt to collate points made by participants of the first session and propose a declaration of world public finances to be called for. This intent of a two-stage process should be made clear to participants, and that they can opt out of the second stage if they so wish. The declaration can only be made if enough organisations come to the second session to draft a declaration. The declaration would then be put to the public for comments as it need not be final. It would still constitute a historical piece of work that is then set out for further debate. Such a statement would arise from within the open space of the forum, unlike the Bandung appeal for instance that emerged from outside the space of the forum though coinciding with the event.

We understand that this sort of a methodology hasn't been attempted before, but we think that the WSF needs to innovate new working methods. We do not see the assembly of social movements as adequate in articulating systematically on one hand the grievances or on the other hand the potential energy and knowledge for change that the movements gathered to the WSF represent. This sort of a methodology of 'open declarations' isn't set to replace the assembly of the social movements, but rather to complement the assembly which at least has its place in calls for non-violent action against the structures of the neo-liberal global economic system, belligerency of states and non-state organisations and transnational corporations. The assembly of social movements is a good forum to call for actions, like the February the 15th 2003 demonstrations, but it cannot come up with declarations, as it isn't its role. Therefore new methodologies are called for when previous ones are deemed inadequate.

Therefore, two working seminars are planned for Nairobi. This, however, does not exclude a larger scale plenary session where the key concepts of world public finances are discussed with a wider public who may for the first time hear the topics that are being discussed. Finally, we would also like to encourage different strands of the WPF platform to organise their internal preliminary workshops especially before the WSF in Nairobi, in addition to some working seminars organised inside the space of the forum. If internal work is done before the WSF itself, then the time of the WSF can be more fruitfully used for drawing up open declarations and networking with wider platforms such as the WPF.

To concentrate work among the participants, we should additionally commence an edited publication project to collect chapters on world public finances from

various contributors and look how different themes are emerging in the understanding of public finances. This would make even further allow the meetings to focus on coming up with a coherent platform, and raise the profile of the platform.

Rationale

Transnational corporations only exist due to the secrecy space where they have been allowed to operate by national governments. Take away their current opportunity to use hundreds of thousands of offshore trusts to hide debt, profits and assets, the secrecy of intercompany transactions where through mispricing transactions profits can be shifted to low tax jurisdictions, the powerful armies of lawyers and accountants who negotiate tax holidays and design tax evasion schemes, the outright corruption of officials that requires large sums of money only TNCs can put together and hide, the paper tigers that TNCs are will mostly disappear. Only a few will remain, ones who genuinely are in industries where scale is necessary (possibly airplanes and ship building), and TNCs that execute not economic efficiency but are really controlled by powerful governments, such as military equipment, nuclear power and oil companies.

The very existence of TNCs is such a well organised scam that it needs a strong theoretical backing. It is the neo-classical economic theory that gives a smoke screen to the operations of TNC with their theories that legitimise the dominance of all enterprises by their sheer existence. The post-rationalisations that economists do in their models are the wrong way around to understand the economy, one should instead start by studying economic action and economic life from the qualitative and ethnographic standpoint, Companies generally do what they are told to do by whoever owns them. As most companies are asked to create shareholder value (often in the short term), they will look at ways it is best gained. It just happens to be so that hiring lots of accountants to cook your books is the best way to sustain profits these days. As a result many of the smaller companies that don't have access to over paid lawyers and accountants in offshore markets lose out in competition. Schematically this is what is happening, as one cannot explain the rise of the TNCs in my view in any other way than as a well organised scam.

Regulation has to start from a real understanding of the economy, i.e. who is benefiting from the current global economic system. The market cannot only be characterised by the logic of firms and individuals, as the logic of the firms and individuals is always met by regulative bodies that define the boundaries, duties and space of manoeuvre of the firm and the shape of the money economy. Incoherent boundaries create incoherent TNCs, that by using such loopholes give us a sense that the economy is more global than it actually is in the sense of movements of goods, services, money and people. The figures on world trade are a hoax as most of it is inter company transactions that on average are mispriced by an average of 5% in developing countries to avoid paying taxes where the profits are made. Companies don't actually do that much trade between different parts of the same parent company, these trades only happen

in books written by accountants that are read by government statisticians who are told to believe these books.

On top of trade issues, the coercive fiscal regime stifles prosperity in many developing countries due to the fragility of their domestic financial system that is overburdened with high public debt, inefficient tax collection, heavy bargaining by international investors for tax holidays, low levels of extractive industries royalties, and large foreign currency reserves. These reserves protect the economy against currency speculators that can ruin years of wealth accumulation in the majority of their populations overnight. Hyperinflation caused by a currency crisis can wipe out domestic bank savings such as happened in 1997 in Indonesia and other Asian economies and in 2001 in Argentina. There have been about thirty currency crisis in the past decade, and no solution is seriously put on the table apart from tightening the Basle rules for central bank and banking sector capital adequacy rules.

Most importantly however the WPF platform will turn the focus on domestic resource mobilisation and away from the debate between trade and aid. Aid will never lift the developing countries away from poverty, it rather creates new dependencies as a result. Much of trade as I noted before is bogus transactions that happen only on paper in the books of TNCs. Furthermore, trade distortions induced by subsidies in Europe and USA mean that without strong domestic public finances in developing countries they cannot even lobby their own interests at the WTO. Strengthening public finances is therefore the key to development, coupled together with global financial and trade regulation. This will not only benefit the poor, but solve the public finances crisis in the industrialised economies and reassert the distributive role of public finances. If public finances in the immediate post-war era in Europe were a vehicle for redistribution of wealth, they have largely lost that role now, where as in the developing countries, many movements and trade unions are looking at the vision of progressive taxation in solving pertinent social problems of inequality, poverty and power in modern capitalist economies.

Matti Kohonen, London June 2006

Further Readings on World Public Finances

" [...] Trillions of dollars are flowing every day in the financial markets. Are there any global rules? The answer is no. There are no global rules which govern the operations of the global institutional investors from hedge funds to mutual funds to pension funds. There are no global rules which govern the international interest rates. There are no global rules which govern the exchange rates. There is no global policy framework which coordinates the international monetary policy. And even within the powerful G7 countries there is hardly any policy coordination on these global financial issues. So basically, what we have right now is a global financial nonsystem."

– Kavaljith Singh (<http://www.attac.fi/moretaxes>) -



Above: "Asile", a logotype by the Swiss artist Franck Na.

Below: translations of the word "Asile":

asile (abri, refuge) nm asylum (shelter)

asile (havre de paix) nm sanctuary (refuge)

asile (hôpital psychiatrique) nm psychiatric hospital

(<http://www.wordreference.com/fren/asile>)

Franck Na has also been active in the World Social Forum, where he has been building an ambulating library called The Book Tree (Arbol de livros). He can be reached by email at gevona@freesurf.ch

In English:

Sing, Kavaljith: Taming Global Financial Flows. A Citizen's Guide

Relation: Public Interest Research Centre in New Delhi

Published/ accessed: Zed Books, 2000.

Comment: This book qualifies as "A Citizen's Guide".

Kaul, Inge & Conceição, Pedro (Eds.) : The New Public Finance. Responding to Global Challenges (overview)

Relation: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

URL: <http://www.thenewpublicfinance.org>

Published/Accessed: Oxford University Press 2006

Comment: Essays by excellent economists. One day they might speak up in favour of World Public Finances, on the condition that the World Social Forum process grows stronger.

Ugarteche, Oscar & Acosta, Alberto: Global Economy Issues and the International Board of Arbitration for Sovereign Debt (IBASD)

Relation: The Economic Research Institute, UNAM, Mexico City.

Published/accessed: Forthcoming

Comment: Ugarteche is a Peruvian, Acosta an Ecuadorian economist. They are authors of numerous publications. This is a technical paper on the financial nonsystem.

In several languages

Tax Us If You Can

URL: http://www.taxjustice.net/cms/front_content.php?idcat=30

Accessed December 2006.

Comment: Introduction to the associated problems of capital flight, tax evasion, tax avoidance and tax competition, prepared by specialists of the Tax Justice Network. Translations into Dutch, French, German, Portuguese and Spanish are currently available.

Denys, Lieven & Patomäki, Heikki: Draft Treaty on Global Currency Transactions Tax

Relation: Network Institute for Global Democratisation, NIGD.

URL: <http://www.nigd.org/ctt>

Published/accessed: 2001/ Accessed December 2006.

Comment: This is the complete draft international treaty on the "Tobin Tax" that was presented as a discussion paper at the second WSF in Porto Alegre, January 2002. Translations into Portuguese, Japanese, Finnish, Swedish and Catalan are currently available.

Writing and reading more together

World Public Finances Blog

Starting from Matti Kohonen's concept paper in ISC 24 (this issue)

URL: <http://worldpublicfinances.blogspot.com/>

World Public Finances Mailing list

URL: <http://sympa.kaapeli.fi/sympa/info/wpf>

Reading List prepared for ISC in December 2006 by M.B.



World Public Library

Mumbai, January 2004



Document: Democratization of Information with a Focus on Libraries

**Report from the World Social Forum IV, Mumbai, India,
January 2004**

Mikael Bök

This workshop on Democratization of Information with a Focus on Libraries might have been one of the first signs of an involvement of professional librarians in the World Social Forum. The initiative to the workshop came from the Network Institute for Global Democratization (NIGD). Much of the preparations were made at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), which is situated in an Eastern suburb of Mumbai.

First Session at TISS, Sir Dorabji Tata Memorial Library, 18 January from 9 a.m. to 19 p.m.

The session was attended by ca 80 persons, most of whom were library and Information Professionals (LIS) from Mumbai, Pune, New Delhi, Dharwad (city of Karnatak State University, where many of the Indian LIS are being educated), Ahmedabad and other Indian cities.



Mirja Ryyänen, Harsha Parek and Kay Raseroka at TISS, Mumbai, January 2004 (Photo: M.B.)

Speakers:

Prof. Usha S. Nayar, Deputy Director, TISS (Welcome Address)
Dr. Muttayya Kaganuramath, Librarian, TISS (Introduction to Workshop)
Dr T.A.V. Murthy, INFLIBNET, (Address by the Chief Guest)
Prof. R.R.Singh (Presiding Remarks)
Ms Kay Raseroka, President, IFLA, Gaborone, Botswana (Keynote Address)
Prof. Harsha Parekh, SNTD University, Mumbai, India
Mr Doug Schuler, Evergreen State College, Washington, USA
Dr Sangayya Shirumath, IIM, Ahmedabad, India
Prof. E Rama Reddy, University of Hyderabad, India
Mr Sunil Abraham, MAHITI Company, Bangalore, India
Mr N.V. Sathyanarayan, MD, Informatics Ltd, India
Mr G.K. Manyunath, IGIDR, India
Prof. C.R Karisiddappa, President, ILA, Dharwad, India
Dr B.D Kumbar, Karnatak State University, Dharwad, India
Mr D.V. Singh, Sri Ram College of Commerce, India
Mr Mikael Böök, NIGD, Finland
Dr Pandey S.K. Sharma, PLIO, UGC
Ms Mirja Ryyänen, former Member of European Parliament, Finland
Dr Ravinder Kumar Chadha, Director, Parliament Library, New Delhi, India

The importance of libraries and the librarians in society was stressed, or taken for granted, by all speakers. There was a near consensus on the opinion that democratization of information can only be achieved through an adequately and publicly funded global network of libraries. At the same time it was recognized that, henceforward, the democratization of information "implies a fundamental change in the role of the library", as IFLA president Kay Raseroka said in her keynote address. She explained her own position as follows: "As a facilitator of communication, the library has to establish contextual operations that are determined by the needs of the community they serve." Raseroka went on to say that librarians should take an active interest in society, and engage in documentation and communication. For instance, professional librarians should preserve, organise and present the information brought to the World Social Forum by hundreds of social movements and organisations, Raseroka said. - This possibility of involving the insitutional library is clearly something which the organizers of future World Social Forums (and of regional and local social forums) should also take into consideration.

The change in the role of the library also necessitates further democratization of the library itself. Two different aspects, in particular, were brought to the forefront and discussed:

- The Right to Memory: the non-literate as well as the literate people must be served by the library, and both groups must be included in its collective memory. The new information and communication technologies should be fully used for this purpose (Raseroka).

- Free and Open Source Software (FOSS): the increasingly digitalized libraries as well as all other public information services must be built on free and open source software; this is a precondition of transparency, accountability and democracy. (Prof. Rama Reddy, Mr. Sunil Abraham and others). The objection that technical support is not always available for FOSS was met by Mr Abraham, who maintained that the support is nowadays there, if only the libraries take the necessary steps to contract it,

as they do with firms which support proprietary software.

Under the the theme of "alternative knowledge formation", Mr Doug Schuler introduced the concept of a collective 'civic intelligence', without which the complex environmental and social problems of today cannot not be tackled. Further discussion of the role of the librarians in the construction of 'civic intelligence' would be most welcome! At least, several speakers elucidated the related concepts of "knowledge formation" in organisations (Sirumath), "information literacy" (Karisiddappa, Ryyananen) and "capacity Building" (D.V.Sing).

"Library Paradigm and Library Power" was discussed, first with special reference to Indian academic libraries (Pandey K. Sharma), and, secondly, starting from the question: where comes the library in the existing power structure of society? (Mikael Böök) A pledge for a Constitutional Upgrading of Libraries and the Internet was made: the libraries and the net must be granted power and secure status by means of constitutional provisions.

This thesis was supported by several participants. It also corresponds to Dr Koganuramath's introductory remark that the "library has to perform the role of a super system" in today's information environment.

In these discussions of abstract concepts and lofty principles some of the real contradictions and inequalities of, say, India's "information environment" risked, of course, to be neglected. Fortunately, this was not the case.

The existing legislation on libraries, intellectual freedom, and freedom of information in India was critically reviewed by Dr Ravinder Kumar Cahdha, Director of the Parliament Library, and Dr B.D Kumbar from Karnatak State University. "It is hearting to note", said Dr Kumbar, "that the major states in terms of population [...] like UP, MP, Bihar, Rajasthan and Panjab have no library legislation". He also noted that even in Karnataka, which has built a relatively wide network of public libraries on the basis of its own Public Libraries Act (1965), "lot of negligence and indifferent attitude have marred the growth of the system as a whole".

Second session, 19 January 2004 from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m, at NESCO Grounds Venue 126.

While the first session had been planned in detail, the second was rather improvised, and the participants fewer (ca 25 persons). NESCO grounds is a huge industrial area, where most of the events of the World Social Forum in Mumbai were organised. The workshop actually took place in a tent next to a noisy construction area, in striking contrast with the well-equipped, air-conditioned auditorium in the quiet surroundings of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences where we had met the day before.



NESCO Grounds, the venue of World Social Forum in Mumbai, January 2004 (Photo: M.B.)

Speakers and active participants

Ms Kay Raseroka, President, IFLA, Gaborone, Botswana (Chair)
Mr. Mikael Bök, NIGD, Finland (Introductory Remarks)
Mr Potare Dilip Pochiran, ex-student of library science, Nandeh (Mah.), India
Mr. Rashid Ali, Documentary film-maker. New delhi, India
Ms. Shweta Verma, Village Libraries Project, Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, Delhi
Mr. Mika Rönkkö, Technical Advisor, Puxirum Project, Alter do Chao, Brazil
Dr. Helen Jarvis, Librarian, Advisor to Council of Ministers, Cambodia
Dr Boris Kagarlitsky, Director, IPROG, Moscow, Russia
Dr Alla Glintchikova, Political scientist, Moscow, Russia

Mr Potare Dilip Pochiran, a former student of library science, gave a memorable description of the conditions of education and the libraries in the area where he lives, a rural district in Maharashtra. He said that libraries in rural India are "pathetic". The public domain is dominated by the political parties, which can be seen as a major cause of the bad state of libraries. All in all, the rural areas are totally marginalized. We are speaking here about two completely different worlds, he said, thereby also reminding us of the slogan "another world is possible". Potare said that he has not been able to complete his education because he knows only the Marathi language (his speech at the workshop was translated into English by Mr Rashid Ali). Nor has he found any job after he left his studies.

Further documentation

The full report of the first session at TISS, 18 January was prepared by Dr. B.S. Kademani, Scientific Officer at the Library and Information Services Division of Babha Atomic Research Centre, Mumbai.

The second session of the workshop at NESCO grounds 19 January was reported by Mikael Bök

The proceedings and papers of this workshop are available in "International Workshop On Democratization of Information: Focus on Libraries. Proceedings. Edited by Muttayya Koganuramath, Mikael Book, B. S. Kademani, Mallikarjun Angadi and Satish Kanamadi (96 pp.).

An online version is found at www.nigd.org/libraries/mumbai.

Libraries: open spaces

Kay Raseroka



A portrait of Kay Raseroka, drawn by "The Book Tree" at the WSF in Mumbai, January 2004. Artist: Unknown. Photo: M.B.

Kay Raseroka is Director Library Services, University of Botswana, and was President, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), 2003-2005.

This text is an abridged version of her Key Note Address at the workshop The Role of libraries in the Democratisation of Information, WSF IV, Mumbai, India, January 2004. The full text is available via <http://www.nigd.org/libraries/mumbai/>

Libraries share with the World Social Forum the principle of provision of open spaces, which encourage reflective thinking, exchange of experiences, interlinking of common interests for effective action. This workshop, therefore, provides the opportunity for discussion of our values amongst likeminded organizations of the WSF, and libraries globally through the participation of IFLA. It is only on the basis of shared values that a foundation for partnership and commitment towards interlinking of influence and taking of action for the good of humanity may arise. May our discussions reinforce our belief in social inclusion through democratisation of information access and contributions to the emerging knowledge societies.

Library and information services have a key role in society for providing access to information resources. They provide a public space through communication between readers and books, whether for discovery of new information, life-long learning, or person-to-person enquiry and group discussions can take place. These activities are enshrined in Ranganathan's Five Principles, the beliefs that librarians share as enshrined in the IFLA core values and form the basis of professional library and information services, globally.

These principles and values are an aspiration towards the provision of unhindered access to information for humanity, in the quest for knowledge to meet day-to-day human needs.

Libraries "encourage social inclusion, as they strive to serve communities regardless of age, gender, economic or employment status, literacy or technical skills, cultural or ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation, and physical or mental ability" (Libraries@the Heart of the Information Society, www.ifla.org). There are 2.5 billion registered library users worldwide. They access spaces that take a large variety of forms from those that operate from under a tree, mobile examples and hybrid libraries combining both physical space and collections with a virtual library of electronic materials and services.

The ability to read is, historically, the prerequisite for independent use of library services.

Traditionally libraries are repositories of printed materials and thus access to their content demands functional literacy and thus implicitly deprives oral-aural communities of the human right to freedom of access to information. This print focus contributes to a social injustice that affects millions of people directly and billions indirectly.

Those that are affected directly are those declared illiterate, people whose languages are not written and whose knowledge, that they are literate in, is transmitted orally and therefore unavailable in libraries. The indirectly affected are those who read in languages in which there are limited information resources and those that are accessible only through scripts that are not generally used for widely accessible communication. Thus libraries

contribute to aspects of the digital divide between North and South, rich and poor, urban and rural populations and men and women, as long as the core value of freedom of access is circumscribed by literacy. The democratising process inherent in library service cannot be advanced unless and until the system is redesigned to address people centered communication rights, and information needs.

The right to memory

Memory, is defined as the store of things learned and retained from an organisms activity (Webster,1987).It revolves around the ability to retrieve some impression of some past experience or some past event that has had some impact on our mind (Gedi&Elam,1996). Memory has to be retrievable and be shared experience or accessible through communication for it to be public.

By definition communication is a sharing of thought or information i.e. a gaining of access to information through whatever mode such as listening, reading or seeing. It involves the ability to transmit and/or receive, decipher and analyze accessed information. In order to participate fully in communication there is need to have the ability to create and share own experience or knowledge thus contributing to the cycle of information sharing, or a way of contributing to public memory. The communication of memory is the basis of community. The role of the library as the repository of memory for humanity imbues it with the responsibility for the communication of this memory in all ways that are possible. This responsibility includes the deliberate analysis and appreciation of oral transmission/ person-to-person information sharing processes of information as an essential part of the communication role of the library. The integration of these processes in library operations and systems will advance the democratizing role of the library.

Information and communication technologies

The advancement of information communication technologies (ICT) as tools that facilitate communication needs to be exploited to the fullest by libraries, beyond the current use in the organisation of printed materials. Libraries need to extend their responsibilities and embrace an active role in collecting, preserving and conservation of the non-print communication media particularly memories of oral cultures and indigenous knowledge. The broad spectrum of library and information service facilitators: from collectors and organisers of content to providers of information services need to collectively address this issue at local, national and international levels in order to fulfill the mission that arises out of the core value of freedom of access to information. In this way the basic divide between those who have a right to communicate and those whose memory is lost through lack of

communication, will be bridged.

Conclusion

If this proposition is accepted, it implies a fundamental change in the role of the library. As a facilitator of communication, the library has to establish contextual operations that are determined by the needs of the community they serve. Indeed the introduction of ICT use in libraries is changing the dynamics of library use.

The silent library has become the humming library as users discuss and learn from each other how to operate ICTs for accessing to information and skills building in the use of technology. The extension of library services to include a range of telecentre services that provide access as well as mediate information access for the non reading public, provides the entire spectrum of services whilst incorporating day to day interaction with the community, and thus learning of the real challenges faced and require information.



World Public Library

Bamako Experiences, January-February 2006



Document: THE ROLE OF THE LIBRARY IN THE WSF PROCESS

Proceedings by Kingsley Oghojafor

Workshop: Sunday 22 January 2006

Time: 11.30am - 14.15pm

Venue: Pyramide du Souvenir, Bamako (H1)

PART 1 (11.30am - 12.45pm)

La situation des bibliotheques au Mali, bibliotheque et democratie avec M.K Keita (Directeur de la Bibliotheque Nationale, President de l'Ambad, Mali), Lamine Camara (Secrtaire General de l'Ambad, Mali), Anne Abdrahamane (bibliothecaire, faculte de medecine, Mali).

PART 2 (13.00pm - 14.15pm)

The Role of the Library in the WSF Process
With Esther Obachi (PALIAct, Kenya), Mary Wanjohi (PALIAct, Kenya) and Kingsley Oghojafor (ISC, Nigeria).
Moderator: Mikael Book (NIGD, Finland).

Aim of the activity :

- * raise library-consciousness within the WSF-process
 - * raise WSF-consciousness among library and information professionals
- Follows up the workshop DEMOCRATIZATION OF INFORMATION WITH A FOCUS ON LIBRARIES at the WSF in Mumbai 2004 (see <http://www.nigd.org/libraries/mumbai>)

Expected outcome:

- * dissemination of WSF-information via libraries
- * library-based documentation of the WSF-process
- * library-related events at the WSF 2007



The three Malian speakers in the workshop on the role of the Library in the WSF. From left to right: Lamine Camara (Secretary of the Malian Library Association), Mamadou Knoba Keita (Director of the National Library of Mali; Chair of the Library Association of Mali), and Anne Abdrahamane (Librarian at the Medical Faculty, University of Bamako). - Photo M.B.

Proceedings, by Kingsley Oghojafor

Part 1:

Mikael Book opened the workshop by introducing himself and NIGD. According to him, focus on libraries started with the statement by Ms Kay Raseroka, the IFLA chair from Botswana when she pledged all librarians to go and participate in the WSF, and to start documenting the WSF's conferences, seminars, workshops and events in their libraries.

Mikael Book went further to introduce the entire workshop's first and second parts. Immediately after his introduction he invited the Malian librarians to take their seats to give their talks.

M.K. Keita (Director of Mali National Library) started the session by expressing his delight to be invited to this workshop and went further to explain how his colleague - Anne Abdrahamane - first told them about the workshop. They all decided to attend and contribute meaningfully to the workshop. He also explained how correspondence between them and Mikael Book made it possible for them to attend this workshop.

The title of his presentation is *L'état des lieux des bibliothèques au Mali*.

He gave an overview of the legislation on culture and libraries in Mali, and of the cultural policy. His presentation also included statistical figures. There are more than a hundred libraries and reading centers of different categories. This figure includes, for instance, 7 libraries in the national languages (bibliothèques en langues nationales) and 6 communal libraries (bibliothèques communales) in Bamako, and a mobile bookbank that is served via the railway stations between Bamako and the border to Senegal.

His presentation showed that libraries in Mali were lacking a lot of things needed to make them function more.

Anne Abdrahamane presented the situation of the university library, focussing on the faculty of medicine.

According to Anne Abdrahamane in his presentation, Mali has one university with several departments. The university has no central library. They have 9,000 books and some documents have been lost or kept away. They have more than 1,000 titles of periodicals, among others.

As for the users of the library, he said they are mostly students and lecturers who visit and use it for free. The medical library has 4 staff and there is 1 librarian for every 100 students, 2 of them are specialized in management.

About Internet and computers, he said there are 2 computers with Internet connection in the library. These were given by US National Institute of Health.

About journals, he said they have access to about 70 journals.

He said they don't give book loans to people because the materials are few and they are afraid it can get lost. They only give when they have serious confidence in the person collecting it- knowing that they would return it.

He said they also have a database for works published in the University.

Students, according to him, take the libraries seriously only when they are about to write their examinations.

Conclusively he said the libraries in Mali have a lot of problems. He even toured the libraries recently and the situation he encountered was pathetic, to say the least. There are no new books bought by government that he knows of- only certain journals they receive for free. He added that there was hardly ever any budget for libraries in Mali.

He recommended that policies need to be put in place to improve the situation of libraries in Mali.

Next to speak was **Lamine Camara**, who acknowledged the importance of the WSF as a powerful globalization initiative which should be encouraged and sustained. He also thanked the organisers for inviting them. He also acknowledged that libraries have a big role to play in the WSF process. In his words, there can't be meaningful democracy without the contribution of the libraries because of the important role they

play in information dissemination.

The title of his presentation is - The Role of Libraries in Democratization in Africa.

To him, libraries are more of a documentation avenue than anything else. And this makes people to find what they need in the libraries to help them make better decisions. Going further, Camara acknowledged the importance of libraries in educating people and disseminating information. Democracy, according to him, allows people to express views freely, to benefit from as many rights as possible. So, libraries have a lot to bring in strengthening democratic state by bringing transparency and good governance.

Going further, Camara said libraries need to take a part in educating people since they are in the heart of the education process. If libraries do this, it will help the people to contribute positively to democracy of the state since they will read current issues in the libraries. So, libraries and education go hand in hand.

Other issues he raised include the fact that information has become the most important aspect of the democratization process and without the role libraries dissemination would be difficult.

He also said that libraries allow citizen to have access to understand democratic process and help strengthen the process.

He concluded by saying that the WSF is a good avenue to publicize their profession as libraries and how important their profession is.

After this Mikael Book continued and gave his view on the importance of libraries, showing how it has helped in the democratization in his home country, Finland. He tried to correct the erroneous views people have of libraries not being as important. To him, libraries are far more important than how people take them to be.

Another thing, according to him, is that IFLA has ascertained the importance of libraries in democratization process. Librarians have made several statements in this regard.

Kingsley Oghojafor took over from there and introduced the second part of the workshop by asking if there were any questions, suggestions and/or ideas about what has been discussed thus far.

A lady asked of the situation of the National Archives in Mali. M.Keila answered that the archives in Mali are in a poor state and receive no funds.

A student participant explained that in his country, Guinea, there is a National archive and others not accessible to the people- because they are classified as top secret.

There were a few other questions and after the questions Kingsley continued and introduced the 2nd part.

PART 2:

Kingsley explained the theme of the second part of the Workshop, which was- The role of the libraries in the WSF process. According to him, the WSF process which

includes all the global, regional, national and local social forums since 2001 now needs the involvement of librarians and information professionals more than ever.

He introduced the speakers of the second part who will all try to answer the following questions-

- . How to raise library-consciousness within the WSF process?
- . How to raise WSF-consciousness among the library and information professionals?
- . Dissemination of WSF-information via libraries: methods, practical solutions.
- . Documentation of the WSF in the public libraries: project strategies, organization and funding.

Kingsley Oghojafor first handled the question of "How to raise library consciousness within the WSF process.

He explained indepth the important role that librarians and informational professionals have to play in the WSF process.

Esther Obachi handled the question of "How to raise WSF consciousness among the library and information professions?"

According to her, changing the librarians beliefs of keeping a status quo in society is an uphill task... but not an impossible one. She suggested, among other things, that it will be important for every opportunity available to be used to sensitize librarians and information professionals on the importance of playing a role in the WSF process.

She went further saying that using the National and International Library forums to sensitize these people would be an important starting point. She gave an example of the two forthcoming conferences (SCECSAL and IFLA).

She also suggested that the youths could be used since they are easily receptive of new ideas.

According to her, it is also necessary for us to come up with success stories from the WSF to encourage the librarians on the necessity of playing the role in WSF.

She also suggested on holding workshops, conferences, publishing both hard and online copies of newsletters, opening a discussion website/blogs for the librarians and link with the International library association throughout the world.

She concluded by saying that it would be important to hold an immediate pre-2007 WSF workshop for librarians.

Mary Wanjohi took over from her and handles the question of "Dissemination of WSF information via libraries: methods, practical solutions-

According to her, since the colonization of Africa, libraries have been for the elites. Libraries have been used by students for their academic work and to do research or

study for examinations. Since colonial days the trend has continued. There has been no changes in most African libraries.

She advocated that even the illiterates should benefit from libraries. Her emphasize was on the rural people who have had no access to information because they need it to improve their lives and to empower them. Therefore, information generated from the WSF must be disseminated to these people for empowerment purposes.

She recommended that librarians are the best placed professionals to disseminate these information. Therefore, librarians need to gather, organize and disseminate this information to the people who need it most. This can be done in all format - books, posters, audiovisuals, journals, pamphlet, etc.

She also recommends for WSF participants to work with the librarians and information professionals to make this achievable.

Mikael Book took over from her and handled the topic of "Documentation of the WSF in the public libraries: project strategies, organization and funding.

After his talk other people who attended the workshop asked questions about what they have heard.

How can the WSF participants help the librarians to gather the information that they generate at the forum? The workshop formulated the question but it ended without immediately answering it.

We discussed whether WSF participants have found it necessary to work with translators and journalists, but yet with librarians. The progressive translators have formed a the Babels group. The librarians could perhaps come of with a group called the Bibels, suggested Antonio Martins from Brazil.

THE SITUATION OF COMMUNITY LIBRARIES IN MALI

Mamadou Keita



Mamadou Keita at his office in the National Library, January 2006. Photo M.B

Mamadou Konoba Keita is the Head of the Libraries and Documentation centres department of Mali, and President of the Malian Librarians Association. He made this presentation in Bamako, 28 January, 2006, during the workshop on the role of the libraries in the World Social Forum.

I shall begin my comment by saying that books have always been at the heart of the main programs set up by the successive governments of Mali. Over the years, various policies have been adopted, promoting culture in general and literacy in particular. One of the most important of these policies is doubtless the one that we find in the preamble of the February 1992 Constitution which states: « The sovereign people of Mali proclaims its determination to defend the cultural and linguistic diversity of the national community and commits itself to the improvement of the quality of life, the protection of the environment and the strengthening of its cultural heritage. »

The same Constitution declares (article 8): « Freedom of artistic and cultural creation is recognized and guaranteed. Its expression is regulated under conditions defined by law. »

In this framework of laws and decrees, the State has initiated a program to encourage literacy through the creation of structures and projects that aim to put the book and reading at the heart of the national interest. In 1982 it created the National council for the promotion of books in Mali, an advisory organization made up of representatives of the ministry of culture as well as institutional and professional partners.

Even earlier, on September 22nd, 1960, the government set up the publishing

house "Editions du Mali", as well as The People's Bookstore of Mali (Librairie Populaire du Mali) and the National Pedagogical Institute, all devoted to promoting reading and literature. While the last of these three institutions still exists under a new name (National Center for Education), the first two have been disbanded and privatized.

Private initiatives have also emerged on the ground left vacant by the State: the Jamana cooperative in 1897, or the Mali Writers Union in the same period.

Thanks to the events of March 1991, other initiatives followed. We witnessed the creation of REMADOC, a network of librarians for development, OMEL, the Malian organization of book publishers, AMLP, the Malian association of professional bookshops, the JSS, "Jeune Société du Savoir", a network of science clubs as well as ALED, the association for the promotion of reading, education and development.

Nevertheless, the State remained very active in the sector of books and reading. In 1977, it set up the Operation public reading (Opération Lectures publiques) with the aim to implement public libraries in each district of Mali, each structure housing many thousands of books and being used as a permanent cultural centre, as well as a venue for training, information and leisure for young people and civil servants or retirees. The government also set up PRODEC, a ten-year education plan that envisions each school building as housing not only classrooms, but also systematically a library.

2000 was a historic year with the creation, for the first time in Mali, of a Ministry of Culture. Its missions, among others, are the development of national artistic expressions and cultural works. The same year saw the signature of AFLAM (Appui à la Filière du livre au Mali) a French-Malian agreement in support of the booksellers and libraries network in Mali. It also saw the creation of the network of School Libraries (Cellule des bibliothèques scolaires) which is still in the making.

The year 2001 saw the creation of the National Office of Public Libraries and Documentation centres and its subsidiary, the National Centre for Public Reading.

All these initiatives underline the will of the government to put books and reading at the centre of its policies. The government officials know that « a nation of readers is a nation of winners ».

But all these measures can only have the expected result if the amount of children going to school reaches a certain level and when we will have further pushed back illiteracy, allowing a majority of citizens who are beyond school age to learn how to read and write.

In Mali we distinguish between :

- Public access libraries : they are either publicly or privately funded.

*Publicly funded libraries are coordinated by the National Centre for Public Reading which takes care of management and technical follow-up. There are over

a hundred of them.

- 46 district libraries;
 - 1 rural community library;
 - 7 national language libraries;
 - 6 public libraries in Bamako;
 - 6 reading and children's activity centres in Bamako;
 - 1 reference library in Bamako;
 - 1 children's library in Bamako;
 - 11 book deposits in rural areas bordering the railroad between Bamako and the train yard at the border with the republic of Senegal,
- There are 88 of this type of libraries in total.

*42 libraries have been identified as being managed by citizen's groups.

- 70 school and university libraries: 9 in higher education; 38 in general secondary education; 11 in technical and professional colleges, 12 in general education.
- 380 public libraries have been identified at the level of primary education.

These statistics do not take into account the private schools, the number of which is difficult to determine exactly at this stage.

- Documentation centres : 43 have been identified within national directions as well as specific private or public organizations.
- There are also a number of family libraries, holding Islamic manuscripts in areas of predominantly Muslim faith like Timbuktu, Gao, Djenné, Dia, Mopti...
- Personal libraries of retired former higher public servants;
- Libraries of foreign cultural centres : French, American, Iranian, Libyan ...

Translated from the French by Moise Dembele

The spirit of the (West) African libraries - A response to Shiraz Durrani and Kay Raseroka

Mikael Bök



Mikael Bök in Accra, February 2006. Photo: Ralph Amissah

Mikael Bök, M.A., is an adult educationist and founder (1992) of a cooperative society (Katto-Meny) of associations, libraries, authors, journalists and companies that use the internet. He is an active member of the Network Institute for Global Democratisation (NIGD).

In this article, I shall discuss whether and how the traditional library can respond to the needs of the people of Africa, taking as my point of departure two excellent, but seemingly contradictory pieces on the subject, written by Shiraz Durrani and Kay Raseroka.¹

¹ Durrani, Shiraz : *Will Nyanjiru be silenced?*, and Raseroka, Kay: *Social inclusion and information needs: an exploration*. The two texts were published together in the Swedish Leftist library review *BiS* 2:2005, pp. 20-24. Both are available in English at <http://www.foreningenbis.org/socialutest.html>. - Durrani's text appeared originally in *University of Nairobi Library Magazine*, No. 4, 1980. It has since been re-published in *Information for Social Change (ISC)* No. 7, Summer 1998. A German translation appeared

Durrani tells about a young peasant woman, Nyanjiru, who has to work around the clock in order to satisfy her family's basic needs : food, clothing and shelter. The hardship of Nyanjiru stands in sharp contrast to the life of Kamau, a librarian, who provides a service that has been set up and is being maintained "through 'assistance' from a colonial, neo-colonial 'mother' country".

The information needs of Nyanjiru, according to Durrani, are clear: "she wants information which will help her to produce and protect her material requirements". Yet Kamau's library is totally inaccessible to her and cannot help her in any way. "Nyanjiru knows no library, and no library knows Nyanjiru". Worse, Nyanjiru is unacceptable to the librarians because their rules, like "Silence please in the library!", simply rule her out. So the question which starts and ends Durrani's piece is, "Will Nyanjiru be silenced?"

Raseroka counters² Durrani's story about Nyanjiru with an example of how people can benefit from the library even if they never would set a foot inside its walls. The story is told from the viewpoint of an old woman, whose daughter, Thandi, is dying of AIDS. Thandi's own young daughters are helping their grandmother to manage the difficult situation. Not only are they helping, they are also contributing crucial information about hygiene and AIDS care. Participating in an "action programme" of the public library they have learned, for instance, to wear gloves when touching a HIV/AIDS patient. At first, the grandmother thinks that it is strange that she should wear gloves when treating her own child. Her grand-daughter, on the other hand, is a person whom she feels that she can trust. So she agrees to use "the finger socks" and the whole family gets a moment of relief.

To quote Raseroka, this shows how libraries can "position themselves as mediators of information between children who use library resources as part of their learning about life skills and communities they come from", and also how they can "facilitate intergenerational discussion on and social inclusion of traditional life skills, indigenous knowledge and cultural values held by communities as an integral part of adaptation to changing ways of life epitomised by reading and television".

in *People Without Places - Die Bibliothek als Fluchtpunkt* (1999).

Shiraz Durrani is a London-based teacher of library science. He wrote "Will Nyanjiru be silenced?" when he still worked as a librarian in Kenya.

² It is a little bit unclear whether Kay Raseroka actually wrote her article in response to Shiraz Durrani. Kay Raseroka is working as a librarian at the University of Botswana. From 2003 to 2005 she was the chairperson of IFLA.



Illustration 1 An internet café in Accra (Ghana)

The stories told by Durrani and Raseroka contain important messages about the relevance (and irrelevance) of the library for the majority of common people in Africa. Seemingly, the messages contradict each other. Durrani wants to go straight ahead to the political problem while Kay Raseroka points to a question which lies beyond the sphere of immediate politics: the necessity of a scientific culture. Is this a so called antagonistic contradiction? Are Durrani and Raseroka really speaking about the the same thing, and if they do, are they missing each others points? What are these stories? Perhaps not so much stories about libraries as stories about how people live and die in present-day Africa. What are the limits of what one may reasonably call a library?

These questions are enough to produce a mental cramp. I should like to relax that tension by telling an own story.



Illustration 2 Participants in the polycentric World Social Forum in Bamako (Mali), 18-24 January 2006, discuss world economy and politics. Photo by M.B.

First, some words about the library workshop at the World Social Forum (WSF) in Bamako (Mali) in January.³ Neither Shiraz Durrani or Kay Raseroka were there in person. But they managed to make their presence felt even in their absence.

The library workshop was intended as a follow-up of a discussion on "the role of the library in the democratization of information" with Indian LIS (library and information professionals) at the WSF in Mumbai 2004. Kay Raseroka, who gave the keynote speech, called upon all LIS to participate in the WSF together with the social movements and activists who gather at those events. Moreover, they should pull their straw to the stack. She proposed that the LIS engage in documenting the hundreds of international conferences, seminars and workshops of the WSF in their libraries.⁴

This proposal we continued to discuss in Bamako, and the discussion led to a decision: the documentation of WSF by the LIS shall begin during the WSF in Nairobi in January 2007. Shiraz Durrani deserves some credit for the progress from only saying it to actually doing it. The Progressive African Library and Information Activists

³ For background and reports, see <http://www.nigd.org/libraries/bamako-nairobi>

⁴ The library workshop at the WSF in Mumbai is documented at <http://www.nigd.org/libraries/mumbai>

Group (PALIAct), of which Durrani is a founder will be needed to push forward with the plan. (A main purpose of PALIAct will be to tackle the question of a "relevant" African public library service.)

In order to cover all the information from the mammoth WSF event in Nairobi 2007, hundreds of librarians must participate, says Kenya Library Association (KLA) secretary Esther Obachi, one of the speakers at the library workshop in Bamako. By consequence, Esther is now planning the "training of the trainers", a course for the LIS who are to organise the documentation of the Nairobi WSF.

The LIS will need to be introduced to the main themes of the WSF, which are mostly about understanding the connections between the causes of the local social and environmental problems and injustices on the one hand, and the policies and agendas of the global political and economical actors on the other hand. The lack of water, or the lack of relevant public library service, are examples of local problems. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) with its neoliberal regimes on trade in services and intellectual property rights, is a major example of the global structures which the WSF is setting out to challenge. The implications of the GATS and TRIPS agreements are especially important for the future of the libraries.⁵

In order to fulfil the task of documenting the WSF and presenting it in their libraries, the LIS may also need to improve their journalistic skills and to think through the ethical and juridical aspects. A formula for the preservation, presentation and dissemination of the information from the WSF in or via the libraries will have to be invented. This amounts to an ambitious agenda indeed. Especially as the funding of the project is still (March 2006) a question that remains to be answered.

⁵ See Rikowski, Ruth: Globalisation, Information and Libraries. Chandos. Oxford 2005.



Phone booth. On the road between Bamako (Mali) and Bobo-Dioulasso (Burkina Faso). Photo MB

Finished the library workshop in Mali, I stepped on the bus back to Accra (Ghana) via Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso). From Ghana, I was to return by air to Finland. During this journey I would gather some first hand information about the library situation in West Africa. Or so I thought.

Wherever I came, I saw the words telephone and telecommunication, often also the word internet, written on signposts and walls. However humble the house or the hut, yet it was a node in the global network of communication and information which helps the African to stay in contact with his millions of brothers and sisters in the diaspora. The modern library is also a particular node in that network. To me, therefore, all those phone- and internetbooths looked like as many potential libraries. I also got to see a number of libraries in the traditional meaning of the word. More about them later.

At the WSF in Porto Alegre some years ago I got acquainted with Clémentine Ouedraogo from Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, where she is leading the women's organisation Promo Femmes.

A colleague of Clémentine by the name of Agathe Ouedraogo functions as *animatrice* at Promo Femmes' film shows and discussions about womens' rights. One evening I accompany Agathe to Korom, a village some 30 miles from the capital.

When we arrive at 8 pm, the villagers have already gathered in the dark (the village lacks electricity) in front of the school. They are many: both men and women, the school's teacher and the school's pupils, the parents with their children.

While the generator is started and the film projector is rigged, Agathe shows me the results of the cooperation with the people in Korom. We take a look at the drilled well (*le forage*), the grainstore (*la banque de céréales*), the mill and the brewery where the women make *dolo*, the local beer. These small-scale constructions are run by

women's committees and financed by credits from Promo Femmes. The investment for the drilling of the well was made by Church World Service.

One more establishment has to be mentioned, namely, the "alphabetisation room" (*la salle d'alphabétisation*) in which Promo Femmes arranges courses of two months, six hours per day.

Tonight we see an amateur production of Promo Femmes on the movie screen. It tells, in tempo allegretto, about the prevention of a forced marriage between a young girl and a village chief. The message is received with spontaneous reactions during and a lively debate after the show.

Ask me what popular education is and I shall point to the activities of Promo Femmes in Korom.

But don't ask me whether popular education has anything to do with libraries. Because, then I'll answer that the questioner doesn't have an inkling of the precarious library situation in Burkina Faso (or anywhere else for that matter).



Emmanuel Tassambedo in his mobile library. Ouagadougou, Januari 2006. Photo MB.

The library is relevant for Africans, if only its animators find the right spirit. All libraries must be animated. All libraries need a spirit. The spirit of the libraries is not created by the books. It is created by the librarians.

I am looking for the spirit of the libraries in Ouagadougou. What do I find? I find a library bus which some citizens in the French city of Grenoble donated to the Burkinabe a number of years ago.

The library bus serves the colleges of the city. Here the college students may borrow French schoolbooks from the 1980ies and 1990ies, but also novels by Enid Blyton,

Honoré de Balzac, John le Carre and Rudyard Kipling plus the selection of novels by Reader's Digest (in French) from 1956, 1957, 1958... A strange collection of books from other times and other parts of the world! However, what is a library if it does not provide all kinds of books, including books of more or less dubious quality? Here is also *Le livre de Li Po, un des plus grands poètes Chinois, 701-762*. Did the great university libraries of medieval Timbuctu, the cradle of the African literary tradition, offer books from China to their visitors? Ibn Battuta, the 14th century traveller, would have stayed a week in Ouagadougou just to read these Chinese poems, I speculate.

The funny thing is that most of the books in the book bus are so tattered. The borrowers, the college students of Ouagadougou, have obviously read these books, and read them once again. The kids cry for new books, says Emmanuel Tassambedo, the symphatethic driver and animator of this mobile library. Cry? Yes they cry, he confirms.

All the books in the book bus carry a stamp: *DASE. Direction de l' Action Sociale et de l' Education de la commune d' Ouagadougou*. Emmanuel closes for the day and I go to DASE in order to find out more about the libraries of Ougadougou.

The official at DASE assures that each arrondissement of the city has its own library. There is also a central city library. I get the address.

The City Library lies further away than expected. It is already 4.45 pm when I arrive, and they are going to close at five. Today they are already closed. After all, is it really a library?

On the sign-board outside the library I read

COMMUNE DE OUAGADOUGOU
DIRECTION DES ARCHIVES
DEL LA DOCUMENTATION
ET DE LA BIBLIOTHÈQUE

The office of the library staff, thus, rather than the library itself. Library directors without a library, isn't that a little bit like generals without an army? Generals, however, are said to be able to create an army when they need one. Couldn't the library chiefs also find a remedy for the miserable situation? Start a library movement? PALIAct? WSF?

*

Back in Accra, I visit the *The George Padmore Research Library of Africa Affairs* in the hope that I would find relevant literature about African federalism.

The Padmore library is not in as good condition as it was when i went here for the first time in 1969. One cannot avoid noticing that it has not got internet, nor an online public access catalogue. But it certainly has got a catalogue.

I have to admit that I enjoy the silence which reigns in the reading-room of the Padmore



The reading-room of the George Padmore Library in Accra. - Photo MB, Febr 2006.

library. It is relishing to get away from the loud and big agglomeration that Accra has become. In these days, they are building so many new churches and mosques in Accra. I wish they would build new libraries instead!

The Padmore librarians help me to find interesting books about the attempt of Modibo Keita, Léopold Sédar Senghor and others to found the Mali Federation at the end of the 1950ies.

It would be important, today, to save the thoughts of such African leaders as Modibo Keita from oblivion, and to rethink the relations between European Union and Africa from a federalist and anti-colonialist perspective. Modibo Keita was the first president of the republic of Mali (formerly French Sudan) from 1960 to 1968, and the Prime Minister of the union between Mali and Senegal (the Mali Federation, 1959-60), which was originally planned to include several of the new independent states of French West Africa.⁶

Shiraz Durrani would probably agree, and maybe Kay Raseroka too. Kay Raseroka is right, of course,- I am now thinking about her story about "the finger socks". The time has not passed for the enlightenment. The library can and it should continue to be of help to the peoples, directly and indirectly, in their effort to kill the pest and the war.

⁶ "The connotations of federalism could be both radical and conservative and depended on the user and the precise referent if, as was not often the case, this latter was made clear. As a subject for impassioned political oratory it was ideal; as a means of clearly delineating issues, it left much to be desired. *It soon became the dominant theme of French West African politics.*" (3) Cf. Foltz, William J.: *From French West Africa to the Mali Federation*. Yale University Press 1965, p. 68. Italics added.

*

The library knows no borders. The library is neither a European nor an African invention. Rather Africa and Europe, just like Asia, America and Australia were invented in the library. The library is as old as the society and the state. The names of the various parts of the world are of more recent dates, once they start to appear in the myths and in the literature.

The concept of federalism needs to be given clear meaning. The librarians should take the initiative by creating a world library, which helps humanity throw off the yoke of the empires and the nationalisms. The economic and technological condition of the world library is at hand. It is called the internet. The internet and the library are actually one and the same. Or, as Ranganathan wrote: the library is a growing organism. Internet is just the newest branch on the growing stem of the library.

The internet is cybernetic, it governs itself. To the extent that *internet governance* is needed, it is not a task for governments, nor for private corporations. That task, e.g. the management of the names and the numbers which bring order to the digital information, belongs to the library.



Esther Obachi (right) and Mary Wanjohi from Kenya speaking at the library workshop of the WSF in Mali, Jan 2006. Photo MB



World Public Library

Training the Trainers Workshop, 2006



Document:
**PROPOSAL FOR A TRAINING OF TRAINERS
WORKSHOP FOR LIBRARIANS ON THE WSF AT
NAIROBI SAFARI CLUB ON 19TH – 22ND MARCH
2006**

This proposal was written by Esther Obachi, the secretary of Kenya Library Association. The Finnish Embassy in Nairobi decided to grant support for the workshop from its fund for local cooperation, and the workshop was held at the Lenana training centre 3-5 July, 2006.

The World Social Forum is a global movement that addresses global social injustice. It was established in Brazil in the year 2000. It holds annual conferences that bring together groups and individuals that fight for social justice. Social injustices are committed in every community in the world. Highlighting these injustices may deter the perpetrators or even stop them all together. Disseminating information on the same to the population can also empower them to fight the injustice.

The role of librarians is to gather, organize and disseminate information. The current librarians, especially in Africa, have shunned the first step – gathering information and dwelt on the last two. In the 2004 WSF the then president of IFLA, Kay Raseroka promised participants that Librarians would take part in the WSF process. However, no librarian took part in the 2005 conference. In the 2006 WSF conference that was held in Bamako, Mali, NIGD sponsored a library workshop to deliberate on the role of libraries in the WSF process. In the workshop, participants agreed that libraries have a major role to play in the WSF as they are the links between the forum and the world population. It was also noted that just as the Translators call themselves “Babels” the Librarians could also have the “Bibles” so as to collect information, organize it and disseminate it for posterity and empowerment of the people. Unlike journalists whose information is only valid for a few days and there after discarded, librarians could gather information in all formats, store it for posterity purposes and disseminate it to those who the WSF represent in the conference – the marginalized groups.

Therefore, participants resolved that there is a need to sensitize and integrate librarians in the WSF activities so as to be involved fully in the process. The two librarians from Kenya, three from Mali one from Malawi, a journalist and web designer from Nigeria and other friends of the library who were in the forum agreed that a workshop to induct librarians into the WSF in preparation for the 2007 WSF that will be held in Nairobi be organized in Nairobi.

The WSF conference is a mammoth activity that has several workshops and other activities running concurrently for seven days. For librarians to cover all these activities fully, one would need not less than 600 librarians. Since it is not possible to train six hundred people at once, it is necessary to train just a few

who will train others in turn.

It is on this note that Kenya Library Association wishes to take up the challenge and organize a training of trainers' workshop for librarians in Nairobi in preparation for the 2007 conference. The training aims at inducting librarians into the WSF. It will also train librarians on how various activities can be covered and information collected from the forum be disseminated.

1. The training will involve introducing participants to the WSF activities
2. Training librarians on basic journalism skills
3. Basic media technology: Information equipment like digital cameras, and video camera
4. Ethical considerations for journalists and librarians
5. Filtering facts from fiction.
6. Information legislation
7. Management and dissemination of the WSF information

Because the WSF covers topics in all aspects of life, it is not advisable to have any librarian covering any activity. Therefore, subject librarians will be needed to cover areas of their specializations. Kenya Library Association intends to hold this workshop in June 2006.

**Document:
WSF WORKSHOP FOR LIBRARIANS
AT THE LENANA CONFERENCE AND TRAINING
CENTRE**

Rapporteurs' Reports

Rapporteurs: **Jane Sang & Fred Kachero**

Day 1

Session 1

10.00a.m. – 1.10pm, Monday, July 3, 2006.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

After introductions by participants, **Esther Obachi** (KLA Sec.), who chaired the morning session, explained the purpose of the workshop, viz: preparing and training librarians for the coming World Social Forum.

In welcoming the participants, **Rosemary Gitachu** (KLA –Chair) pointed out the mandate of the WSF in the workshop, the need to document WSF information and the importance of librarians being trained and prepared in order to fully participate and gather all necessary information during the WSF conference to be held from 20th – 25th January 2007.

WSF PART 1

Mikael Bök explained the origins of the WSF and the theme of the workshop, viz: the preparation and training of librarians for participation in WSF conference; help speakers of different languages to understand each other; to train the participating librarians to train other librarians; publish articles and spread news from the WSF to audience.

Bök pointed out that WSF is against the downplaying of the role of the library, Internet laws that hinder flow of information, the imbalance in trade as espoused by the WTO and proposes the Currency Transactions Tax (CTT).

Expectations at the end of the workshop were:

Librarians to participate in the WSF,

Network among those participating in the workshop and their participation in Nairobi 2007 WSF,

Manuals (set guidelines/solutions on participation of librarians in WSF).

Participants wanted to know more about the WSF and its objectives and the role librarians can play in their attainment. It was pointed out that Libraries could play an important role in society by:

Introducing WSF,

Introducing WSF to librarians,

Provide access to information resources,

Create space through communication between readers and books and other non- book materials.

THE KENYA SOCIAL FORUM AND THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE WSF IN NAIROBI

According to the WSF (K) secretary, **Mr. Onyango Oloo**,

WSF: Is a process and an event; Has social justice foundations; Is organized by the International council of the WSF; Emerged as a reaction to domination of the world by the rich nations; Is a forum; not a world political party; not a world revolution; Concerns include equality (including gender equality), empowerment of youths, minority and marginalised groups (such as the pastoralists), the supply side (not just the demand side) of corruption; Originated in South America (Brazil)

DISCUSSIONS AND CHALLENGES

Relevant concerns in Kenya would include: the landless, squatters, Aids victims, the marginalised groups (pastoralists) and increasing poverty, etc.

Social change and justice as advocated by WSF requires information literacy, which infers content and even a change in the information format (such as video, internet, use of CDs and more appealing presentation other than just text), making it more important for librarians.

Where does that place the participant?

Register as a participant in the workshop and be part of the Forum by contributing to discussions on the floor.

Session 2 2.00pm –4.30pm

INFORMATION AND GLOBALISATION

In a paper on 'Information and Globalisation", **Shiraz Durrani** said that the WSF fights:

Imperialist globalisation

Inequality in division of power

Unequal exchange of ideas

Unequal trade

The current globalisation is based on exploitation where information is monopolised and driven by corporate interests (profits). Capital and Industries can move anywhere to get cheap labour, but labour movement is restricted. It perpetuates and intensifies exclusion then marginalizes majority.

Its tools are: World Bank, World Trade Organization (WTO), privatisation and de-regulation, divide and rule, home guards, wars and dictators, attacks on organizations such trade unions in addition misinformation.

It results in Control of technology, Economic exploitation and Social oppression based on race, gender, age, disability, religion, unfavourable terms of trade, international corruption with Multinationals, national and international wars, suppression of people's cultures, technologies and industries. Our discoveries are patented in the West.

Globalisation is a stage of capitalization driven by corporate interest (i.e. after profits) – "The microchip gives you a society with a global capitalist".

Characteristics of globalization

Interdependent world – Production anywhere in the world and consumption anywhere in the world.

Capital and industries can move anywhere to cheap labour and resources. But there is restriction on movement of labour

Globalisation and exclusion

It perpetuates and intensifies exclusion. While it may result into economic growth to some states, it exploits others to poverty.

Globalisation and contradictions

The world's three (3) richest men own more than the GDP of 48 poorest countries. Thus, there are possibilities of a better life for all yet globalization marginalizes and excludes the majority.

Globalisation Resistance ("Returning a stare")

Struggles for power and liberalization

Resistance confronts domination

Combatants are peasants, workers, intellectuals and academics

Ideologies are developed and disseminated

National and international forces unite

Use Information Communication Technology (ICT), traditional and oral media.

DISCUSSIONS AND CHALLENGES

In the next 20 years, the world will witness the rise of critical countries- Brazil, China, India, and Cuba. China's unique ways, that does not involve going to the West, will be a basis for its strength.

There is another way for handling information for librarians. This is through PALIAct (Progressive African Librarian Activist), which looks at the librarian as an activist.

Activity – Assess the impact of globalisation in the 5 years in your work or personal lives.

Ways of organizing Libraries

Librarians as activist – breakdown barriers

It's high time we liberated ourselves.

Librarian/ Globalization – There is a need for librarians to participate in the era of globalization.

Information Society

Refers to how people live, learn work and communicate. All this is being changed.

Creation, distribution and manipulation of information is the most significant economic (cultural) activity in an information society.

Characteristics of information society

Key tools: computers, telecommunication,

It changes people, organizes the social people and personal lives,

Improves economic and social well-being,

It increases productivity.

ICT possibilities

While ICT increases productivity, growth, job creation, employability and improves quality of life and promotes dialogue among people and nations, it can also marginalize and lead to poverty resulting in information rich and information poor.

Contract

In societies where economies are based primarily on the industries/agriculture, there is need for an emerging network of economic and knowledge based information society.

Causes of Digital divide

Inherent in capitalists' societies, information is a commodity for profit. Causes of digital divide include: Cost of communication, Infrastructure, Lack of skills in using technology, High cost of internet and Market trends.

Information society and cultural diversity: -

In conclusion, we need to partner and also orientate ourselves.

Libraries can play an important role in society by introducing WSF.

Vision of fair information society (WSIS): It should be people-centred, inclusive, development-oriented.

Activity: Assume you have unlimited resources: what would your ideal information service look like?

DAY 2

Session 3

Chairing: Reuben Mwisati

8.35 – 8.40: Rapporteurs' report of the previous day's activities.

8.45 – 10.30am

LIBRARY AND INFORMATION ACTIVIST

In her paper on 'Library and Information Activist', **Mary Wanjohi** pointed out the role of librarians: To collect and disseminate information.

Type of service and the people to be served:

There's no fixed content for particular groups,

Information needs change from one point to another,

Their needs depend on the division of labour

Current services: Libraries serve the elite and the students who find them important to pass exams. They ignore rural areas and other marginalized groups including the slums in the urban centres. Other poor workers are also ignored despite their plight being highlighted in the media.

Information is available, but librarians are not availing it to those needing it and in a language they can understand. For example:

How can the fisherman, the farmer, and the pastoralist benefit from libraries?

Why should there be famine when researches have been done and are available in libraries to correct this?

A relevant library should serve the needs of the people it is serving. The failure to do that implies that the information availed by the librarian is not in the form suitable to the people; or, librarians do not reach the people to whom the information is most relevant.

Solution: Change the training of librarians and/or the language used to reach the critical people.

Note: Information is power; development is based on information, not necessarily resources.

Discussions and challenges

Rural does not imply illiteracy, nor does urban imply literacy. All those in disadvantaged positions need access to information. There is need for an information desk in every village, networking with NGOs and for librarians to fight to get information and avail it to those in need of it.

WSF PART 2

Mikael Böök reiterated the purpose of the workshop in his second presentation.

Purpose: Librarians to be motivated and committed to participate in the WSF conference to be held between 20 – 25 January 2007.

Participation: After the workshop, librarians shall feel obliged to attend the conference.

Set up a network:

- That there shall be a mailing list and a website with all the materials of the forum
- There shall be documentation that shall help those trained to be trainers.
- Manual: guidelines and instructions on how we shall carry out the documentation.

Session 4

(Part 1)

Chairing: Jane Grace

2.40pm

SELECTION, CLASSIFICATION, CATALOGUING, PRESERVATION AND DISSEMINATION WSF

In the above paper, **Esther Obachi** started by pointing out that:

Selection - in this context referred to the role the librarian would play concerning existing information at the WSF, January 2007.

That information existed mainly in the Internet thus; it has not been adequately documented.

Librarians should prepare to collect information during the coming conferences.

Hard copies

There are very few copies in libraries.

The World Social Forum (WSF) is not used in our libraries as a subject heading.

Some of the challenges that librarians will face at the conference include:

There are only 30 participants in this workshop at the moment. The WSF conference will have 50,000 participants. The 30 cannot cover all the groups involved. It may require that we determine what ought to be documented.

The January conference will cover many issues, hence the concern will be:

To cover issues that affect East Africans

Identify regional issues\deal with specific local issues

Classification and Cataloguing

Use:

Simple classification system by subject headings

Simple terminologies e.g. poverty, water, incest, etc.

Preferably in-house system

Use boxes for pamphlets

Bigger volumes to be given simple class No

Preservation

Use Polythene, Lamination, Microfilming and Backs-ups

Dissemination

Dissemination centre –e.g. KNLS, University Libraries

Dissemination centres

Publicity (WSF)

Dissemination Centres

Community based organizations (CBO's), Universities Libraries, Social Halls, Churches, Dissemination format, Films, CDS, Videos, Paper format.

Discussions and Group work

There were four groups: -

Acquisition and selection

Classification and cataloguing

Preservation

Dissemination

Group 1

(a) Acquisition and selection: -
Internet

Everything be documented then analysis specific groups (WSF) and get relevant information.

(b) Acquisition

Attend conferences

Visit (WSF) websites /contain relevant information

Visit depository centres, documentation centres

Visit libraries, Academic / special

Publishers

Liase with the NGO' s by forming partnerships alliances for information sharing

Making reviews relevant to social change

Group 2

(1) Classification and cataloguing: Materials are acquired in different formats, such as Pamphlets, CDs, Magazines, Disks/Flash disks, Films /Videos, Photos and Audio cassettes.

(2) How to classify and catalogue

Establish a WSF corner where such information materials are kept

Pamphlets

Put them in a box

Label the boxes WSF, then subject areae.g WSF: Poverty

Inside the boxes arrange the pamphlets alphabetically according to title

Arrange the boxes alphabetically CDs, films, Videos, Audio cassettes diskettes and Flash disks

Come up with an index of the titles of CDs

Place the list in the WSF corner but let materials in the Virtual sections in the library indicate this in the index.

Photos

Numbers of photos are put in the volumes and labeled in the cardex showing which album has which photos.

Books

Classify and catalogue the books the same as general collection. and arrange the books in the WSF corner

Group 3

Dissemination

Dissemination is the key to this activity. You may have a lot of information but unless it's disseminated it will be useless

Dissemination centres: -

This can be done through a centre or through a group category users: -

KNLS

At provincial level, District level and Community level

Activity centres

- Churches
- Social halls
- Barasas (community gatherings)

University Libraries/ other learning institutions: -
University, Schools, Colleges and Polytechnics.

NGO Centres (Recognized government approved community based NGO's)

- Environment
- Health based
- Education based
- Gender based

Dissemination formats:-

Electronic formats: -CDS, Audiotapes, Videos, Diskettes, Websites pages/sites

Print formats: - Hard copy reports, Pamphlets, Posters, Newsletters

Oral: -Demonstration, Chief's Barasas, D.Os, Headmasters, principals, Government staff

Media: - Newspapers, Radio and Television

Internet: -Use of websites

(3) Publicity

The way to create awareness in the communities we use is by use of media. This include Radio talk, Talk show, Advertisements, Editorial –newspapers, Oral speakers (lectures) in meetings, Documentaries on T.V, radio, Person to person dissemination, Exhibitions-National /International fairs, SDI-Specific groups, Drama-plays, poetry, music skits.

Group 4 – Preservation

Formats: - There are two types materials to preserved – Printed and Non-print.

1) Printed: - Includes Books, Pamphlets, Fliers, Banners, Reports and Newsprints

2) Non-print: - Includes Tapes, CDS/DVDs, Films/microfilms, Diskettes, Visual Tapes (such as Film, Photographs, Drawings, Artifacts and Oral presentations).

Preservation

Print: -

Books: - In well maintained documentation centres

Pamphlets: - Archival pamphlets boxes fliers

Reports: - Bind and preserve as books

Can microfilm

Can digitize

Posters: - Laminate

Newsprint – Microfilms

Banners - use of drawers

Oral - Film/Photograph

Non- print

All need controlled environment or environmentally friendly storage

Tapes: - Use cabinets

Microfilm: -Use cabinets

CDS: - Use racks

Whereas most of these can be digitized, there is a problem of keeping up with changing technology.

Discussions and challenges

There are costs involved in all this and therefore there is need for special conditions.

In most places, there is lack of electricity and equipments. Skilled manpower is necessary but there is also the challenge of rapid technological change.

Costs can, however be shared e.g. costs of microfilming (which makes storage easy and manageable). You can have back- ups and do most of it in groups or consortium..

Session 4

(Part 1)

Chairing: Jane Grace

2.00 2.40pm

TAX JUSTICE NETWORK

In her presentation, **Emma Lochery** stated that tax evasion has its serious ramifications. For example in Kenya (Sunday Nation), Sh. 18b tax was evaded, yet the country set aside 15b for roads – Suppose there was no evasion?

Importance of tax

Revenue - for public utilities such as health schools, etc.

Redistribution – relieving money from the very rich to the very poor, i.e. equality

Political representation – government is held responsible to the people who need accountability of the taxes they pay

Global taxation problems

Only a few people pay taxes. Most Multinational companies (MNCs) and the rich don't. For example, a few people who hold their wealth in countries that have lax tax rules hold \$11.5 trillion. MNCs place their capital in countries that give them a tax haven, but shift profits to their parent countries. Banking secret systems encourage tax evasion and avoidance.

Goals

TJN wishes to break down financial secrecy especially among the rich and the MNCs and eliminate cross border evasion and avoidance.

Action

Public disclosures on taxation, national statistics on financial services, exchanges of ideas and sharing between tax authorities and probably have accountants without borders.

Conclusions and challenges

Papers that disclose this type of information needn't be sold but given to libraries free in order that people can be enlightened. Tax evasion affects usually the powerful, in whose toes it is dangerous to touch, but there still is need for sensitization. There are also countries that will lower the tax rate in order to spur economic growth.

HOW TO COVER "A REAL EVENT"

In his presentation on how to cover a real big event, **Mikeal Book** pointed out WSF has many groups ATTAC (which operates in fifty countries). It concerns matters such as those of World Public Finance, which is emerging initiative that deals with tax justice, debt cancellation, trade and financial crises etc. It concern with education including adult education intellectual property i.e. copy rights, patents indigenous

knowledge, software and commercial services.

Preservation is a potential subject area for librarians in relation to the coming WSF conference in Nairobi, with regard to information society.

Group Discussion

Participants broke into groups to discuss about how to cover a real event and came up with different opinions:

Learn about the subject of the event

Arm yourself with necessary tools such pencils and pens, note books cameras etc

Take notes

Record the events

Take photos/ digital

Interview the organizers of the events

This requires skills such journalistic skills, interpretative skills or translators and tele-conferences. It emerged that most groups seemed to have misunderstood the group work.

Session 4

(Part 2)

Chairing: Jane Grace

4. 20 – 5.00pm

INNOVATIONS IN MANAGING THE WSF MATERIALS

Innovation and leadership:

In his paper 'Innovations in managing the WSF materials', **Shiraz Durrani** pointed out that innovation relates to new ways of doing things.

A leader needs to provide direction. It is the vision thing. To get a collective definition of success, leaders engage, motivate and animate people in their organizations. It isn't enough just to have the vision; they really have to engage with their people.

Leadership is a balancing act and involves communication. Your ability to lead is only as good as your ability to motivate. You earn leadership from those you lead.

Managing WSF material

Organization and management: Establish a WSF Information Resource Centre (IRC), elect an IRC committee, the scope, work plan with dates and tasks, email list of participants, discussion forums.

International aspects: a WSF IRC website content with a list of all participants, i.e. organizations and individuals: publications from each organization, list of all sessions to be held by each organization.

Dissemination: make available IRC information in other forms, e.g. print, email, DVD etc.; issue an IRC newsletter.

Kenya, Eastern Africa, Africa

Pay particular attention that local information and activities are adequately covered

Where a different format is necessary to reach the targeted group, change the format of the material to suit the group, e.g. putting a book on audiotape.

Discussions and Challenges

It was noted that creating centres is an important factor, but how to administer, structure and operate had not been exhaustively discussed. However when it is collectively done and liaised with Mr. Onyango Oloo, it will become a small matter.

Libraries need to be integrated into WSF in order to work effectively with it. It is also possible to establish a virtual library.

Day 3

Session 5/6

8.30a.m to 1.00p.m

The venue of this morning session shifted to University of Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library. Mikeal Böök led participants into hands-on practical linkage and connections to the different websites of the WSF and related organizations. Participants were led to WSF pages wikipedia and opened their Email accounts with WSF and also <http://www.nigd.org/libraries>. Blogs, wikis and e- books were introduced.

Session 7

2.00p.m to 3.30 p.m

JOURNALISTIC SKILLS

Mr.Nyakundi Nyamboga introduced his presentation on journalistic skills in two parts:

1) Covering a major event

What does it take to cover a major event?

Research – Research through the Internet, libraries about the subject (e.g. WSF) to know what it is all about before covering the event. Try to know the organizers and the participants.

Look for news value – Look for what the society would wish to know about the events and its value to the media's role. Media's role is to educate, inform and entertain. This means the technical aspects of the events may be ignored and instead an article may be used to introduce the subject.

Objectivity: - Be objective, which is a result of training, professionalism, and experiences. Look at the pitfalls or some other factors that may not be part of the event.

Interviewing skills – Depends on training and professionalism but should know how to approach persons. Try to know the answers to the questions you ask before hand for example open- ended which elicit more information.

Presentation – Present the information gathered in the best way possible this entails investigating who the audience is.

2) Responsible Journalism: -

Journalists are watchdogs of this society. Therefore they have a responsibility to the society to point out the ills that may be there even if it looks injurious. But don't manufacture or manipulate the power of the pen. Note that news is free, what buys is the adverts. Therefore correct information will earn itself a place

Ethics of journalists:

Journalists are guided by respect for human rights (Chapter 5 of Kenya Constitution) but also work in public interests

Discussion and Challenges

Right to privacy- Constitutionally this right is recognized. However the right is not absolute; thus, infringement can be effected without attracting litigation. The public right overrides private rights.

How is public interest measured? Some times journalists talk about public interests when they mean National interests, so that global interests are brought up, the media would be quiet if it is not in the interests of their countries despite the fact that the issue may be harmful to other countries e.g. tax evasion.

Concerning WSF Coverage there is need for sensitization and sponsorship of opinion pages. Note that negative coverage of the same item may have more impact than the positive of the same.

Journalists should be objective but it should be understood that sometimes the human element take over.

THE WAY FOREWARD

The various groups of participants were led by **Mikael Book** to come up with resolutions that could pave the way forward. Their way forward was: -

Local Working committee: Establish a local working committee of information specialists from this workshop to coordinate activities and liaise with the KSF before the conference.

Further training: There should be further training for these participants so that they can go and adequately train other librarians.

Draw a Programme: draw a time frame of what should be done and assign responsibility such as what ought to be covered and who should cover it.

Source for Funds: The proposed committee should look for finances for equipment, stationary, accommodation and transport.

Keep the fire burning: Keep the heat on in discussion groups by talking about WSF

Participation: Librarians, Documentalists, Archivists, Technologists, Information profession students should participate in the conference actively.

Networking: Participants should form networks with journalists, other librarians, NGOs etc. This can be done through discussions lists (e.g. KLA, Uganda Library Association (ULA) and Tanzania Library Association (TLA) – thus locally, regionally and internationally) emailing, list serve, telecommunication, fax letters, meetings, conferences, workshops, seminars etc.

Manual: Have a manual of classification, cataloguing, abstracting and indexing (which will give the key terms) of WSF materials

Coverage: Pre-collect information on social issues from libraries; carry out research; identify various events and venues, collect information in whatever format presented in the conference; collaborate with journalists in collecting information; come with fliers, posters, brochures with objectives of KLA and WSF.

WORKING WITH KSF

Onyango Oloo pointed out that the librarians would need to work with the organizing committee rather than just the Kenya Social Forum during the coming conference.

CLOSING OF THE WORKSHOP.

The workshop was officially closed at 4.45pm after Mrs. Gitachu, having thanked the participants and the Finish Embassy for the sponsorship, introduced Ms Maria, from the Finish Embassy, who gave the closing remarks in which she told the participants that life is a learning process all through. They should learn new skills and technology noting that a function in which new knowledge is generated but not documented becomes useless.

MANAGEMENT OF THE WSF INFORMATION

Esther Obachi



Esther Obachi giving her presentation on the management of the WSF information at the Training the trainers workshop, Nairobi, July 2006.
Photo M.B.

Esther K. Obachi works at the College of Architecture, Engineering and Design Library, University of Nairobi. She is the secretary of Kenya Library Association, and a founding member of the Progressive African Library and Information Activists Group (PALIAct) / Kenya.

1.1 Introduction

The World Social Forum (WSF) is a new global movement that believes that another world is possible. It started in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001 to counter the World Economic Forum. It provides an open space for free exchanges of ideas and debates, discussions and deliberations on issues

that affect humanity. The WSF has no common resolutions and no hierarchy but has regional secretariats that are autonomous. Issues for deliberation are agreed upon through consensus.

Therefore, the WSF brings together individuals, groups and organizations that fight against global injustice. It aims at linking the global activities with the grass-root population that subscribes to the basic principles of the WSF thus connecting the local population with global trends and events. It is opposed to the victimization of people through the neo-liberal system that entrenches violence, suffering, poverty and exclusion of a substantial number of the global population. It meets once a year on open space for debates and discussions but no common resolutions are passed . Participants have been meeting for the last 6 years at various venues as indicated here below.

2001- Porto Alegre, Brazil	10,000 participants
2002- Porto Alegre, Brazil	20,000 "
2003- Porto Alegre, Brazil	50,000 "
2004- Mumbai, India	100,000 "
2005- Porto Alegre, Brazil	150,000 "
2006- Polycentric meetings at Bamako, Mali; Caracas; Karachi, Pakistan	Various participants

1.2 The WSF Information.

Ever since inception in 2001, the WSF information has never been documented for posterity but for journalistic purposes. The WSF information can be located at various Websites and Blogs. Unlike World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other global organizations which have a tradition of publishing all their activities and produce annual reports, WSF does not have such a formality in its operations. Most of the knowledge and information gathered from the yearly Conferences and regional gatherings are posted to various websites and Blogs for whoever may access it. This is mostly done through individual efforts and for journalistic purpose.. There is no systematic documenting of the information gathered.

The information is mainly in digital form. There are also print materials from individual authors in the form of books, pamphlets, brochures etc. these, however, do not account for much of the numerous activities of the forum. Thus, information on activities of the WSF is gathered in diverse documents and stored halfhazardly. Therefore there is need for documenting, preserving and disseminating this pertinent information for the relevant users. Further, so much new knowledge is generated during the WSF conferences and related activities whose usefulness is impaired if it is not documented and disseminated. A gathering where new knowledge and information is created but not preserved for others loses value. Information and knowledge gathered from these activities ought to be acquired and disseminated by librarians and information workers.

This challenges the librarians and information workers to embrace new methods of preserving and availing information that includes digital preservation while contending with the prime causes of problems in digital

preservation. For example digital technological platforms are wonderful at making information more accessible but not so good at preserving that information for posterity. Whereas archive quality print paper can last unaltered for 500 years, a pdf- based institutional repository or a web-based set of html pages needs updating on a regular basis, for example, every time there is a new html standard and new browser software with limited backward compatibility (Joint, 2006).

1.3 The benefits of WSF information

The WSF information contributes to the observance and understanding of basic human rights that ought to be enjoyed by all. It is educative and helps in networking with other groups in the world with similar problems and concerns. This will help in alerting the population that they are not alone in their struggle for justice. It also creates solidarity within groups and gives an alternate platform for articulation of issues of concern among people that do not have a voice in international and national fora.

1.4 The role of the Librarian in the World Social Forum

Traditionally, it has been the role of librarians, curators and archivists to ensure long-term viability of and access to cultural heritage materials (Cantara, 2006)

The Librarian's role has always been that of a gatherer, organizer, keeper and disseminator of information and knowledge. In most cases the librarian has always skipped the first step of his/her role and wholly leaned on the other three steps; thereby leaving the first for other professionals. The World Social Forum is a platform that generates valuable information, which, if properly collected and utilized can change the world to be a better place to live in thus the catch phrase "another world is possible".

Most injustices are committed against the weak, the poor and the marginalized populations of the world. Since the World Social Forum is a platform for the deliberations of these atrocities, information generated from this platform needs to go back to the people at the grass-root. Hence, the vital role of the librarian. The World Social Forum information can be captured in all formats and disseminated to the population at the grass-root. In addition, the WSF provides an alternate platform for diversified views and ideas that can help reshape and solve the myriad social problems that afflict the disadvantaged in societies. This is in line with the true spirit that should be engendered in all librarians of providing relevant knowledge and information that solve current problems and enable the world to be better.

Access to information and knowledge is basis for sustainable human development and safeguard for human rights. Information and knowledge are crucial in the fight against poverty, which affect much of the developing world with Africa taking the lead. Yet, without careful planning, new technologies threaten to exacerbate the knowledge gap. This dilemma must be addressed systematically and cohesively. Hence, the need for effective management of the WSF information. Librarians

have an important role in applying their information management skills in this area to enable people to access alternate workable ideas for human and economic development.

It is envisaged that the 2007 WSF Conference in Nairobi will indeed serve as a unique forum for promoting regional cooperation in information management. It will foster partnerships in bridging the digital divide. An information gap or "digital divide" separates those most in need – particularly the poor and hungry that live in rural areas and the institutions who serve them – from the world's information resources. The introduction and use of new ICTs have exacerbated the already extreme differences between rich and poor countries, and created enclaves of information overloads within the poor countries. The digital divide is more alarming in the context of rural communities, which face further marginalization and widening information gaps when compared to communities in urban or peri-urban areas. Moreover, unless due attention is given to gender, these new technologies could very well further institutionalize existing inequalities. The above points underline the necessity for a specific approach designed to address and redress the rural digital divide. As already pointed out, much of the information generated at the WSF is enriched information owing to its varied formats. The challenge is to librarians and information scientists to gather, preserve and disseminate it in a manner most suitable for those likely to benefit from it.

1.4 How the information can be captured

The first step should be to attend the World Social Forum. Just as translators are referred to as the "Babels", the Librarians could be called the "Bibles". For information to be gathered one ought to follow the proceedings. Therefore, librarians ought to follow the events of the World Social Forum and participate in its activities. Each activity that takes place in the WSF can be captured, stored, organized and disseminated to all those who need it. Unlike journalists who collect information selectively and even discard it when it outlives its currency, librarians keep such information for posterity and reference. WSF information could be of valuable use to all the disadvantaged groups of the world if properly captured by professional librarians.. Information should be captured in all formats with the end users at the back of the librarians' mind.

2.0 Selection, Classification, Indexing, Preservation and Dissemination WSF Information

2.1 Selection

Librarians are aware that competing selection philosophies ("quality vs. demand") have been debated for a long time in the profession and complicate selection of information materials in libraries. This debate pits selection based on customer preferences ("demand") against selection based on quality materials ("quality"). The "demand" argument says that

since taxpayers fund public libraries, libraries should provide taxpayers with the types of materials they want. A collection based on "demand" may result in more "best seller" reading materials and other materials that are heavily influenced by popular culture rather than the "classics." Some argue that this type of collection will draw people into the library since the library contains the type of materials that satisfy the community's interests. Then, once you have the library users in the library, you can help "raise" their literary level by providing annotated bibliographies in different subject areas that may expand their horizons. The "quality" argument says that a public library should be a "people's university," providing people with materials to help them better themselves. All resources should be geared toward improving the cognitive level of its user community. However, this perspective suggests that there is a set of "best" resources. It is hard to agree on what the "best" resources are, since any two people are likely to disagree on what is "best." Some argue that a library basing selection solely on "quality" may end up with fewer users because people can't find what they want. In some senses, this is an artificial debate since most public libraries are going to strive for a mix of the two selection philosophies. Your ultimate goal is to provide a balanced collection that meets the needs of your community. However, to select well, one should know the following:

- The different literacy levels represented in your community
- The main occupational groups, hobbies, recreational activities, gender and businesses in your community,
- The socioeconomic status of the people in your community,
- The mean age of people in your community,
- The education level of your community,
- The ethnic groups (for language considerations) represented in your community (Evans, 1995; Rutledge & Swindler, 1987)

The above details will help the librarian to select the information that will be relevant to the user. During the Nairobi 2007 WSF, the East African Librarians will draw a priority list of the information they will want to document. Activities that will have relevant information for the people of the region will be given priority. Global and regional issues that affect the region will also be documented.

The existing information is mainly found at the Internet. This can be gathered and be systematically collated before it is repackaged in various formats for dissemination to the various users without forgetting the priority list.

2.2 Classification and cataloguing

Subject access to information has traditionally been provided by classification schemes that involve a system of controlled vocabulary

(Bates, 1998). The schemes that organize the subject access have evolved from hierarchical classification systems with notation to alphabetical indexing systems with sophisticated features for the representation of term relationships. Hierarchical classification involves a more philosophical approach based on a system of general to specific subject classification, establishing logical rules for dividing topics into classes, divisions, and subdivisions (Franklin, 2003). Some schemes are more adaptable to subject areas than others. Librarians are aware of the need to choose schemes that allow for flexibility and extensibility.

The cataloguing process goes hand in hand with classification. This process is concerned with creating entries for a catalogue. It usually includes bibliographic description, subject analysis, assignment of classification notation, and activities involved in physically preparing the item for the shelf, tasks usually performed under the supervision of a librarian trained as a cataloguer. A proper combination of these processes by librarians should ensure adequate access to WSF materials in order to make them reach as wide a readership as is possible.

It would also be advisable to develop an in house classification scheme with subject headings or key words that can easily be used by the community. In most Libraries, WHO, WTO, IMF, ILO, UN etc are used as subject headings. The WSF could also be given as a subject heading so as to easily assist the users to access the information on the same.

Information materials that are in pamphlet form can be placed in boxes that are labeled WSF as the main subject . Among the rural semi-literate population, colour codes could be used for easy identification of the information materials.

2.3 Preservation

Factors affecting the condition of library materials in print form are known to be light, temperature, relative humidity, pollution, inherent vice, biological attack, human error (including improper storage and handling), deliberate mutilation, and disasters (Greenfield, 1988). Prolonging the existence of library and archival materials by maintaining them in a condition suitable for use, either in their original format or in a form more durable, through retention under proper environmental conditions or actions taken after a book or collection has been damaged to prevent further deterioration is what is known as preservation. More emphasis, due to the type of material emanating from the WSF, should be placed on methods of preserving material in digital formats. The task here is the availability of the necessary tools, which is compounded by the fact that some digital storage media deteriorate quickly ("bit rot"), and the digital object is inextricably entwined with its access environment (software and hardware), which is evolving in a continuous cycle of innovation and obsolescence. As librarians and information workers, we can only say that digital preservation will need to be a distributed responsibility. This is partly because of the scale of digital material being produced, and partly because of the nature of digital technology. Decisions which will affect the long-term viability of a digital object need to be taken so early in the lifecycle, that those creating them are logically the ones best able to

undertake that initial activity Jones, 2004). Primary responsibility for initiating the life cycle management of digital resources to ensure long-term viability begins with the creator of the resource. As scholars create increasingly sophisticated multimedia research and teaching resources, they need to capture, collect, and create the documentation or metadata – descriptive, administrative, and structural – necessary to migrate, emulate, or otherwise translate existing resources to future hardware and software configurations (Cantara, 2006). Compiling this detailed information is a task outside the realm of expertise of librarians, but we are always ready to give the necessary support towards long-term preservation of digital material.

2.4 Dissemination of the WSF information

In almost all countries of the world, public libraries are the most widely spread and therefore, tend to serve a wider range of the population than any other type of library. These libraries have special collection sections like the UN collection/section, HIV/AIDS sections and Africana sections. This is so because these information materials are considered important and they have an intrinsic value to society. Each public library could also have a WSF collection section so as to enable a wider population to benefit from this information. The WSF information materials address relevant issues affecting the majority of our library users.

2.4.1 Benefits of disseminating WSF material

The paper argues that information from the WSF should be documented, preserved and disseminated because it is important especially for the developing countries, as it provides an understanding and empathetic approach to our situation more than other world bodies that deplete and abet the suffering through harsh conditionalities that disenfranchise workers, kill industries, exploit our farmers, enrich a few, to name but a few of the ills we have experienced. It is from this platform that it should be noted that the benefits accrued from disseminating the WSF information materials include:

- Human rights awareness
- Social, economic and political justice
- Education
- Networking
- Making people aware that they are not alone in their struggles
- Creates solidarity

3.0 Conclusion

The management of the WSF information is as crucial as giving treatment to an ailing patient. If documented and disseminated well, the information is capable of transforming the world, hence creating a new and comfortable world for every one to live in.

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How to Share Information and Ideas Worldwide Completely Free Using the New Information Wonder Called Blogs

Kingsley Oghojafor



**Kingsley Oghojafor at the hotel Le Loft in Bamako, January 2006.
Photo M.B.**

Kingsley Oghojafor is a writer and webdesigner who lives in Kano, Nigeria. He is the author of a book on Uganda, and of 'Ebook Publishing Success' (Chandos 2005; <http://www.EbookPublishingSuccess>) . Kingsley is a member of the Editorial board of ISC.

For various reasons it proved impossible for him to participate in the training the trainers-workshop in Nairobi, where his role would have been to teach journalistic work and to share his computer skills. This article on blogs is a later contribution to the workshop's reading materials.

Introduction

Are you an individual or member of an organization, association or club that has any information to share with the world via the Internet but you don't have the funds for buying a domain name for a website, hosting the website, paying a webmaster and generally maintaining the website?

You can still get your voice heard on a daily, weekly or however frequent you want, to as many people worldwide as possible without spending a dime in the process. This is possible with the new technological wonder called blogs.

Gone are the days when only the big companies or individuals with the funds could own and manage websites for making their voices heard worldwide. In those days the fact that one had to buy a domain name, design and host a website with a hosting company, pay yearly domain and hosting fees, hire web designers to handle uploading content to the website, etc all made the entire process of making your voice heard via the internet painfully expensive and stressful.

At such times even little associations and organizations that had helpful information to share with one another and the world had to grapple with either publishing the information offline in hardcopy or spend money to create and maintain a website.

But with the coming of blogs and the availability of free blogging software to make the process easy and convenient to handle, almost anyone with the most basic computer and internet knowledge can have his or her own blog and get his or her own voice heard all over the world - without spending a dime for buying domain name for website, designing the website, hosting the website, paying a web designer, etc.

Little associations, clubs and organizations without the funds for publishing hardcopy or creating and managing a website can now have their own blog on the Internet where they share information with their members and even people all over the world.

This article tells you more about blogs, the advantages of using blogs as against using normal websites, and goes further to take you through the step-by-step process of setting up your own blog within minutes using completely free blogging software such as Blogger.com.

First things first, what exactly is a blog?

According to Wikipedia, a blog is

"... a website where entries are made in journal style and displayed in a reverse chronological order".

Going further, it said

" Blogs often provide commentary or news on a particular subject, such as food, politics, or local news; some function as more personal online diaries"

"A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs, web pages, and other media related to its topic. The ability for readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. Most blogs are primarily textual although some focus on photographs (photoblog), videos (vlog), or audio (podcasting), and are part of a wider network of social media."

So, a blog is simply a kind of website that is easy to use with content arranged in chronological order with the most recent "blog post" (or entry) at the top of the main page and the older posts towards the bottom.

The term "blog" is just a shortened form of weblog or web log. Posting content to, maintaining or authoring a blog is called "blogging". And an individual who posts the content or maintains a blog is called a "blogger".

Before the advent of this new Internet wonder if one wants to make his voice heard on constant basis, he or she would need to have a website. And the stress, financial involvement and skills required for setting up and managing a website made it almost impossible for ordinary individuals to own websites for non-profit making purposes.

There are a lot of individuals all over the world that want to share valuable information with other people but don't have the funds for managing websites.

There are also organizations, groups, and associations that would love to share information such as their newsletter, day-to-day activities, etc with other people but also can't afford to maintain a webmaster and pay the costs of managing a website.

But with blogs, anyone can make their voices heard all over the world via the Internet without spending a dime to own or host a website.

Blogs have so many advantages that millions of people are reported to be blogging. With the ease and convenience of blogging, millions of people all over the world now own and manage their own blogs. According to Wikipedia, as of November 2006, blog search engine Technorati was tracking nearly 60 million blogs!

Below are some of the advantages of blogs over usual websites:

-- Completely free to own and manage. Unlike usual websites where you had to buy a domain name, pay for hosting and get a web designer to design and manage the uploading of content to your website, blogs are free and very easy to use.

-- You don't need web designing skills. everything is managed and handled for you whether you have any web designing skills or not. all you do is just type in your content using a "Microsoft word" like interface and your content is automatically converted into readable content on your blog. You can format the information anyway you like... all without having any web designing skills.

-- Blog content is automatically archived without your involvement. You just select the way the content should be archived and the blogging software will handle it for you. Readers can click on your archive to see content for previous week or month.

-- You can also automatically create category for your blog content. Anytime you want to post any information you then decide and choose which category you want the information to be posted under in your blog. Readers can decide to read content in categories that they are more interested in, instead of going through the entire blog.

-- Blogs, like usual websites, can be managed from anywhere in the world. You don't have to design the page from a particular computer like most usual websites. If you live in England and you are on a holiday in Finland, you can post content to your blog from any computer.

-- It's very easy to set up that even a child can have his own blog. This is the major reason why millions of people now have their own blogs. There is no web designing skills needed to create and maintain your blog.

-- Search engines love blogs more than usual websites. The fact blog content develop over time with content added daily, weekly or as frequent as convenient, search engines' robots keep re-visiting them to index the content for searchers to find information if contained in the blog.

-- Makes it possible for readers to add their comments unlike usual websites where this is not possible. Readers can instantly comment on any information they find on your blog. No matter where they are located in the world, they can let you know what they feel and their comments can be posted automatically for other readers to see.

-- Students, teachers, lecturers, librarians, social workers, information professionals, etc can all let their voice be heard all over the world and can build their own community of people through their blogs... all without having to pay money to create or manage.

-- Sharing information has never been easier. Gone are the days when the internet was dominated by the heavy players with money for website designing and hosting. now almost anyone with the most basic computer and internet knowledge can have his or her own internet presence via blogs

-- You can even use your own name or organization's name to create your blogs. for example, with Blogger.com or Wordpress.com blogs you will have the liberty to choose your own sub domain such as -

<http://MikeMorris.Blogspot.com> ,
<http://InformationForSocialChange.Blogspot.com> etc

-- If you want to earn some money to cover for, say, your internet access costs, etc you can profit from your blogs by putting adverts on the pages. Google.com makes this process very easy by providing bloggers with their pay-per-click advertising model. Popularly known as Google AdSense, this pay-per-click advertising model allows web owners, including bloggers, to put codes on their pages which are then converted into adverts related to the content on the pages. The owners of the blogs get paid anytime readers click on these ads. Whether or not the readers actually buy from the page they visit when they click is inconsequential.

For bloggers that have many readers they can use this to earn some money for offsetting certain costs such as cost of Internet connectivity or even as a source of getting extra money.

-- Information sharing is now possible for those who really should be sharing information - information professionals and social workers - not those that have the funds and means to manipulate the information they share. If you are a librarian and have a particular interest in a topic which you will love to write about constantly, a blog will help you get your voice heard, not only within your immediate environment, but also all over the world. The only thing needed for anyone to get access to the information on your blog is to type in your blog address in any Internet connected computer.

-- At last, the web can now be enjoyed completely free by those that it was made for in the first place. When Tim Berners Lee invented the web he made it and gave it for free so that everyone could have access and benefit from using the Internet. This incredibly talented man created the web in his spare time for his private use but was magnanimous enough to give it to the whole world completely free. He strongly believed the Internet should be free for everyone, that's why he didn't ask for any money for people to use the web. If he had asked for as little as a dollar for access to the web, he probably would have been ten times richer than Bill Gates today.

Update - Tim Berners Lee is now known as Sir Tim after he received a knighthood (Knight Commander of the Order of the British Empire -KBE-) for his services to the global development of the Internet.

There are now many blogging software that allow people to create and manage their blogs completely free. Below are the 2 of these that I highly recommend. Not only are they completely free to use, they are very easy to use that even a 10 year old can create her own blog within as little as 5 minutes.

-- <http://www.Blogger.com> - owned by Google.com. Very powerful, yet completely free to use.

-- <http://www.WordPress.com> - also very powerful yet completely free to use.

These blogging software have made the entire process of blogging very easy and the fact that they are completely free makes more and more people to own their blogs daily.

In case you still have doubts about starting a blog because you think it's complicated, below is a step by step guide on how to get a blog up and running with Blogger.com. Follow the below steps and you can get your own blog up and running within minutes with Blogger.com.

Step one - Open up <http://www.Blogger.com> . You will be presented with the home page where you can create your own blog account. If you are new to Blogger.com, I recommend you click on "Take A Quick Tour" first so as to familiarize yourself with how to create and manage your own blog account using Blogger.com.

The tour will take you through the process of creating and managing a blog with Blogger.com. Most people who have gone through the tour have experienced absolutely no problem, not just in creating their first blog with Blogger.com but also managing the blog on a daily basis.

The tour is not just plain text but also contains graphical illustrations on how to handle blogs on Blogger.com.

When you have gone through the tour, next you should follow the 3 easy steps to create your own blog. To get started with this, click the arrow at the bottom right on the screen titled "Create Your Blog Now".

Step two - You will be taken to the "Create An Account" page. This is the page where you will need to create an account for managing your blogs with Blogger.com.

You will be required to choose a username and password as well as the name you want to be displayed on your blog. You will also need to input your email address. Finally you type out the "word verification" and to accept the Terms of Service".

Then you click on another arrow at the bottom right that says "Continue".

Step 3 - Next step is to "Name your blog" with a blog title and blog address. The blog title should be any title or name you want to give your blog. The blog address (URL) will be the sub domain that will be used to access your blog. This will be anything like <http://YourBlogAddress.blogspot.com>. This is the address you will give to people for them to access your blog on the Internet.

When you are done you should click the arrow at the bottom right that says "Continue".

Step 4 - You will then be required to "Choose a template". This is the look of your blog. There are lots of templates to choose from depending on your preference. You can "preview" any particular template to see what it looks like before choosing it. Note that you can still change the template in future if you don't like the one you have chosen. When you have chosen a template for your blog, click the bottom arrow that says "Continue" .

Your blog would have been created at this point and you are now ready to start posting content to your blog. But before posting content you should create your personal profile that will appear on the blog which readers will see.

Posting content to your blogger blog is as simple as typing an email or using any word processing document. You don't need to know HTML or any web designing jargon. Just type the information you want to appear on your blog and Blogger.com will handle all the HTML and other web designing jargons. What will be displayed on your blog will be your information displayed with the HTML well taken care of. HTML is "Hypertext mark up language". This is the language in which web pages are displayed (including blog pages).

But with blogger.com software you won't be bothered with any HTML issues. Just type in your information and it will be displayed properly on your blog.

You will be able to add certain features to your content. The interface for posting your content is like your usual word document with options for bolding, italicizing, underlining, formatting and other features.

When you have made your first post, you simply click on either the "Save As Draft" button at the bottom of the page, if you want to save the content to post at a later date or the "Publish" button if you want the content to be published right away.

Congratulations, you have just made your first blog post and can be called a blogger.

So, if you have any information you want to share with the world, it is as simple as has been described above. You don't have to pay Blogger.com a dime for this. It is offered to you completely free.

Note that you can also post pictures and even videos on your blogs, completely free. Many people even use blogs mainly for sharing pictures with others within their immediate environment and even beyond.

Apart from just blogging for the sake of blogging, you can gradually create a community of like thinkers as your readers can leave comments in your blog and even tell others about your blog by simply giving them your blog address.

After creating your blog you should endeavour to post to it as frequent as possible. To get readers to visit your blog you tell as many people as you want to know about it so they can visit, read your content and leave comments if they want to.

Organizations can use blogs for posting relevant information to their members, sharing their newsletter information, etc.

Even schools, clubs, etc can have their own blogs and share information, either among the students, members or other readers worldwide.

Specifically, individuals, organizations, associations, clubs, etc in the third world that don't have a lot of funds can greatly benefit from blogs in making their voices and activities known all over the world. The barrier of costs of registering a domain name for a website, hosting the website, paying a web designer and generally managing a website have all been eliminated with the introduction of blogs.

I am sure Sir Tim who invented the web will be a very happy man knowing that not only is it a reality that people do not pay to access the information on the web, they also don't have to pay to put information on the web -- all thanks to blogs.

It is pertinent to add here that you can still spend money to buy a domain name for a blog and even still pay money to host the content of your blog on your own host server instead of using the sub domain name and host server provided by Blogger.com. If you have the funds to do this, go ahead. But if you would rather do this completely free, then stick to the above step-by-step guide to get your free blog account started.

Conclusion

Almost anyone can now benefit from the wonders of the Internet by not only having access to just about any information for free, but can also join in sharing information with other people within their nearest environment and

even all over the world... without spending a dime. All thanks to the new wonder called blogs.

The only most important requirement for taking full advantage of blogs is to get a basic knowledge of how to use computers and the Internet. If you can type and receive emails without any problems, then you can have your own blog and get your voice heard... all over the world.

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World Public Library

Preparing for Nairobi WSF, January 2007



WORKSHOP ON DOCUMENTING THE WORLD SOCIAL FORUM (WSF)

**EAST AFRICAN SCHOOL OF LIBRARY AND
INFORMATION SCIENCE
12TH-14TH DECEMBER 2006**

Notes by Joan Okune (abridged)

Ms. Joan Okune is working with the Community Based Rehabilitation African Network in Kampala, Uganda,

Day One 12th Dec 2006

Morning Session

The workshop kicked off on Tuesday 12th Dec 2006 a little behind schedule with many of the participants arriving late. The workshop was attended by 27 librarians. There were several Librarians from the NGO world, Various universities, Parastatals, Medical library, and other training institutions. We also had two professors from Makerere University School of Library and Information Studies who fully attended the w/shop.

The facilitators, Rosemary [Gitachu] and Esther [Obachi], started off by taking the participants through the explanation of why it is important to document the World Social Forum. Next there was a session on library activism facilitated by Godfrey Luyimbazi.

It was explained that the WSF is a mammoth event that brings together thousands of people from all over the globe annually to deliberate upon issues that affect humanity and as such, needs to be documented and put in libraries. At a WSF Africa meeting in Bamako, Mali in 2006, a website designer from Finland noted with growing concern that the meeting was only attended by five librarians, three of whom were local librarians from Mali. Since the next WSF was scheduled to take place in Nairobi in January 2007, the East Africa Book Development Council was approached to help with sourcing of funding to finance a workshop on documenting the WSF for librarians in Kenya. The funds were secured through the Finish Embassy in Nairobi which was also later approached to fund a similar workshop for librarians in Uganda.

It was discovered that the NGO Forum of Uganda is the WSF secretariat in Uganda and could be approached for sponsorship for other members that may not be catered for.

Since the WSF focuses on real issues affecting the common man, the facilitators explained that the sole objective of the workshop is to have librarians document information on WSF for the people that deserve and desire the information. The resolution on this was:

- To have librarians gather, store, organise and disseminate WSF material. On this note a question was posed as to how many librarians are actually involved in information gathering and to what extent they are involved in the formulation of content of the information materials and not just taking what is already in existence.

Realising that this is not being done by majority of librarians, there is a need for librarians to behave like journalists and be involved in gathering information, formulating content and disseminating it to the people that need it. However, the distinction here would be that whereas journalists employ a style of sensationalism, the information gathered by librarians would not be having information that's here today and gone tomorrow.

To be able to do all this effectively, participants noted that librarians should have the political will to participate in the process. They should also be able to use more facilities like Internet and digital equipment to gather information i.e. it is imperative that they be part of the ongoing technological changes in the information sector world wide.

Participants shared some of the social injustices that characterise their communities

- In Kalangala district, an island on Lake Victory for example, people are faced with a lack of access to information. There is only one library, one radio station and these people are isolated from the rest of the world. They are disadvantaged because they cannot access information.
- In other parts of the country, people are faced with situations of low levels of education, refugee status, war, floods, exploitation by world intellectual property organisations, some of who are making information access even more expensive for Africans.
- Injustices against librarians include the activities of multi-national publishing companies like McMillan and Longman who are suffocating local publishing industry by importing their own books and having national/local labels on them.

However, it was also realised that, in spite of all the opportunities to document social issues, librarians in Uganda have not taken centre stage in storage/keeping of information for access by those who need it. This fact was heightened by the fact that an online law library had been initiated without any involvement of librarians. It was noted that librarians need to become

proactive and have self initiative to become information entrepreneurs; multi-skilled and talented people.

Librarians cannot afford to remain the same. The challenges of the time are demanding us to reinvent ourselves. The greatest concern is how do librarians make themselves useful before they are 'deleted from the map'. Librarians should overcome the 'silence in the library, silence every where' notion. There are too many threats for librarians as professionals but we must turn these into opportunities. It is important for librarians to aspire, always to learn new things since 'in the world you do not get what you deserve, you get what you bargain for'

Still, not all hope is lost. Just as WSF believes that 'Another world is possible' participants agreed that 'Another information professional is possible'

All this has to be done with involvement of the community for example finding out from the community what should be done about the problem i.e. emphasising participation and ownership of programmes meant for them.

What do we mean by community?

The place where I live, work or stay. A social system, with different people, having common traits within the same space.

In the context of the WSF, prioritisation will be in terms of social issues pertaining to our region i.e. East Africa e.g. issues of 'injustices' against homosexuals would not necessarily be a priority to us.

How do we make the people wake up and how do we address the issues?

There is need to have a deliberate documentation strategy that covers the following points keeping in mind that 'adults learn what they want to learn'

The possibilities are endless, all that librarians have to do is 'take it beyond the four walls of the library' and not accept things the way they have always been.

Afternoon Session

Participants were asked to form discussion groups and assess the impact of globalisation in the last five years in their work and personal lives.

Questions that were discussed: What do participants understand on globalisation as a concept? Does globalisation mean that we are moving towards equality?

- We don't have equal access to information much as we are benefiting from globalisation, this is only for a few considering that majority of the people can not use a computer let alone use the Internet. There is need

for Governments to invest in technological skills to address this. Unless we have the necessary infrastructure then globalisation remains a dream.

- An example of a contradiction of globalisation is that 'when it comes to ICTs Africa is ahead with mobile phones but when it comes to other ICTs Africans are behind every thing else'
- Another thing to be cautious about is the context of information spread using ICTs. I.e. is it timely, relevant and in the right dosage? What about issues of computer literacy, computer viruses, costs, security, plagiarism and the ability to support and maintain the ICT infrastructure vis-à-vis Government support?
- The divide is not only global; it is also regional, national, sectoral. Gender, ethnical, village, family etc.

To address some of these issues participants felt it important to know 'who draws the agenda?' It comes from the developed world which uses it to exploit the developing world which supplies the information that the developed world processes and use for its own benefit. This is because the developed world has the advantage of the power of information. You do not exist if you are not reported; this is the disadvantage that the developing world faces.

Day Two

Morning session

The morning session started late at 10:00, mainly due to disorganisation by the rain.

Management of the WSF information (Presentation by Esther Obachi)

[the content of this presentation is covered in Esther Obachi's article above, under "Training the trainer's"].

The difference between tacit and explicit knowledge (Presentation by Prof. Ikoja-Odongo)

The weakness of human mind made libraries come up.

Tacit knowledge – the wisdom within ourselves – it can not be seen or touched, it is indigenous knowledge but once we transfer it from our minds to holders like computers then it becomes explicit knowledge. Indigenous knowledge is knowledge with the people bound to geographical area. It is specific to people within a certain location, traditional ecological knowledge, and folk knowledge e.g. traditional knowledge.

Indigenous knowledge relies on ordinary objects of the world – earth, food, water, human being. It is contained in community customs e.g. taboos, story telling, informal education (networking on way to well)

Classes of tacit knowledge

- Ecological
- Spiritual
- Astrological timelines

Indigenous/tacit knowledge occupies very important part in our daily lives for survival.

It's a method of conserving our traditions yet today's libraries don't use it as they should use it to supplement explicit knowledge. People in villages are not ignorant; they have a lot of knowledge.

Names are tacit knowledge; they tell us where we belong. The basis of knowledge world wide is on indigenous knowledge got through observation of nature and the world as it is.

Our role – appreciate that knowledge which is not written should be captured in our resource centres in the local communities.

Indigenous knowledge is a source of commerce.

What other countries have done

- Uganda Geographical indicators bill on conservation from plants that aren't any where else in the world.
- Poem recitations are recitations of wisdom

Afternoon session

Journalistic Skills (Presentation by Rosemary Gitachu)

Why should we as librarians be concerned with journalistic skills? Why journalistic skills?

- Journalists collect information and report it, we as librarians are going to an event to report an event and document it. Its important how we gather the information and best package it for dissemination
- Highest quality of news reporting of the WSF to the public
- Timely distribution of information in service of the public interest even as the conference proceeds where it will be posted on websites

Ethics

It is the study of value or quality and covers the analysis and employment of concepts such as right, wrong, good and responsibility (gather information responsibly)

'Public enlightenment is the forerunner for justice and democracy...the duty of the journalist is seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues'.

Be conscientious and strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty and integrity is the cornerstone.

Journalism Ethics and Standards

Ethical concepts: Freedom of access to information for all, Honesty, Privacy, Truth and

Objectivity but even these ethical questions focus on one issue: maintaining the quality of information.

Core ethical values:

- Objectivity: separate news and opinion. We are not going to the WSF to share our opinions, we have to delete ourselves. Document the knowledge as you get it, don't add your opinion.
- Make a separation between advertising and news, don't fall into the trap of people trying to popularise themselves
- Avoid conflicts of interest – avoid incentives to sell someone's story, no taking bribes, avoid stories that affect the reporter's personal, economic or political interests. For us this is different because we are getting information for posterity and the stories must be really valuable.

Sources:

- Written and electronic sources as well as interviewing, you should keep confidentiality of anonymous sources
- Avoid anonymous sources because you can be pinned down for it. Also how impeccable or reliable is your source
- Accurate attribution of statements made by individuals or other news media
- Pictures, sounds, quotations for comprehensive coverage. However, these may not be taken in a misleading context. Avoid simulations, re-enactments, alterations, and artistic imaginations must be clearly labelled. E.g. if you take a picture of two people talking and you say they were negotiating a deal yet you don't really know.
- Get permission before you take any one's picture – privacy of individuals
- Ask yourself 'if I used this story, what is the effect out there?' you might be opening a can of worms. Avoid infringing on people's personal rights because you might be sued for defamation. (A right is behaviour that is acceptable within a prescribed community)
- It's a forum from all corners of the globe, we should be sensitive towards what other people believe, condone or are acceptable in their communities. We are to report things as they are but we should stick to our prioritisation.
- Plagiarism is illegal, don't get tempted
- Actual and factual reporting
- Events with a single eyewitness should be reported with attribution. Events with two or more independent eye witnesses may be reported as

fact. Controversial facts are reported with attribution. (your report is attributed to someone's statement or another situation...also be able to justify your statements)

Legal considerations:

- Avoid mud slinging, slander and libel. Reporting the truth is never libel but you have to be accurate and make clear attributions.
- Private persons have privacy rights that must be balanced against the public interest as long as you have the facts (activities that you are doing in public will negatively affect the public) in reporting information about them. Public figures have fewer privacy rights because as public figures they are accountable to the public
- Harming limitation principle: Some weight needs to be given to the negative consequences of full disclosure, creating a practical and ethical dilemma. Should one report every thing learned
- Presentation: don't confuse ethical standards and standards of quality of presentation which are:
 - Correctly spoken or written
 - clarity
 - brevity
- Violations and Contractions: Each country is governed by its own laws but there are several charters that are global or regional.
- Laws with regards to personal privacy, official secrets, and media disclosure of names and facts from criminal cases and civil lawsuits differ widely from country to country, and journalistic standards may vary accordingly.

Journalistic skills

- Research skills through internet, libraries, about the subject (WSF), know who is doing it and their background
- Reporting: Look for news of value with the aim of informing the public, objectivity
- Accuracy
- Listening skills
- Writing skills
- Critical analysis skills – be able to read between the lines
- Responsible reporting – have responsibility to the society to point out social injustices so people are empowered to get out of their circumstances.

The three main goals of a journalist are to inform, educate and entertain. At WSF the librarians will be to inform and educate. Decide how best you can present the information.

Group discussion

What does it take to cover a real big/major event?

The Khanya College Resource Centre – education and information for liberation and social change

Andi Kaiser

Andreas Kaiser works as librarian/resource centre manager at the Johannesburg-based NGO Khanya College. Khanya College is part of the coordination of the South African participation at the WSF within the social movements.

Khanya College is a South African non-governmental organisation (NGO) based in Johannesburg. Khanya's roots are to be found in the struggle days of the 1980s when its aim was to provide education to the oppressed and disadvantaged people of South Africa. Even though the political and institutional circumstances have changed, Khanya's mission remains a similar one until today: the education and liberation of disadvantaged communities by strengthening organisations and groups from those communities as well as trade unions, student and youth organisations, emerging new social movements and other non-governmental organisations. In July 2007 Khanya College will celebrate two decades of work for the empowerment and the liberation of the poor and oppressed people of South Africa by hosting a week-long 20th anniversary conference under the motto "Education for Liberation".

The increasing political, social and economic integration in the Southern African region in the last decade lead to a broadening of Khanya's work to include facilitating links and solidarity among the new social movements and mass organisations in the region. Khanya's dedication to contribute to social change and development made it an active participant in the World Social Forum (WSF) movement since its emergence. Khanya College is one of the organisers of the participation of the South African social movements at the WSF in Nairobi in 2007, arranging the logistical preparations, establishing the contacts to the Kenyan organisers and the East African counterparts in the social movements and NGOs as well as coordinating the South African contributions.

Part of Khanya's educational work is the provision of information and knowledge through the Khanya College Resource Centre. The centre was formed a few years back through a strategic partnership with the Workers' Library and Museum (WLM). The WLM was founded in Johannesburg in the 1980s, the library section of it providing literature and information to workers

and other disadvantaged people in the then apartheid South Africa. Since the early 1990s the WLM was based at a workers' compound, an all-male workers' hostel, in Newtown, central Johannesburg. The compound, being an important site for the South African working class and a historical monument of the apartheid migrant labour system, couldn't have been a better place for the workers' museum and the library. During the 1990s, museum and resource centre were part of the lively Newtown cultural precinct, the library therefore not only being a place for reading and studying, but also a venue for book launches, political discussions and other events, highly popular with a large number of people who otherwise wouldn't have had access to books, information and space for cultural activities.

Due to financial and structural problems in the non-profit sector in the late 1990s the Workers' Library and Museum and Khanya College formed a partnership. The resource centre survived some turbulent years, but wasn't functioning in the same way as before any more. Khanya College's decision, after years of fighting and under threat of getting evicted by the Johannesburg Development Agency, to move from the historic workers' compound to a newer, larger building in the nearby Johannesburg Central Business District (CBD), offered the opportunity to overhaul and reopen the resource centre with renewed enthusiasm. Due to lack of funding the resource centre had been run for a number of years by casual staff, new acquisitions of books and journals were rare, the once-existing library card catalogue and the classification of the books were abandoned. In that situation Khanya College decided to employ, with the assistance of one of its main foreign donors, the German Church Development Service (EED), a librarian or information specialist for a certain amount of time to get the library back on track.

My engagement as the Khanya College Resource Centre Manager started in January 2006. The main tasks for the next two years were defined as follows: the selection of a new library software, the set-up of an electronic online-public-access-catalogue, the classification and indexing of the documents, the provision of the whole collection in a user-friendly environment, the development of an out-reach programme, e.g through book boxes or a book bus, the conception of educational and readers' programmes and workshops.

In short: the mission is to revive the spirit of the old workers' library, to create a resource centre that will function as a readers' library for the large number of communities and people who are still disadvantaged in the new South Africa and who need every possible access point to information and knowledge, but also to serve as an NGO library for Khanya College and a number of other social movements, non-governmental and mass organisations that are expected to move into our new "house of movements". And finally, to form part of a wider network of resource centres through resource sharing with an online union catalogue and virtual collections in South Africa and beyond.

The first year of my work at the Khanya Resource Centre was dominated by the move of the whole college to its new premises. That gave us the opportunity to reorganise the books and journals collections and to prepare them for the later cataloguing and processing. We had to move the books and other materials earlier than expected, because of a two-month-long security guard strike, which led to a number of break-ins and made us fear not so much the loss, but the damaging of books. As a result the new library floor wasn't ready yet and we had to put up our old book shelves for the meantime on another floor. In the last few months I had the exciting task and rare opportunity to plan and design our new library from scratch together with our architect Nicholas Whitcutt. The new resource centre will have space for our more than 6000 books, 2500-strong articles-and-pamphlets-collection, hundreds of journals and newsletters, audiovisual material and poster collection, covering a wide range of subjects from the political and social history of the old South Africa and the anti-apartheid struggle to the politics and economics of present day South and Southern Africa, to labour and trade union issues, land, water and housing rights, social movements, etc. We also still hold a large fiction section from the reading library's days. There is enough space for growth and to accommodate other institutions' collections who are going to move into the building and hopefully will be sharing their resources and the centre with Khanya.

Besides the move and the planning of the new library our key projects in 2006 have been the research and selection of a suitable library software, an appropriate classification and indexing system. Essential for that research were a number of visits and contacts to resource centres and libraries of social movements, non-governmental organisations and other institutions. I learned a great deal about library software, cataloguing standards, classification and indexing systems in South Africa, especially within the alternative library and information sector. The Khanya College Resource Centre will follow the widely used bibliographic standards (i.e. Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules, Dewey Decimal Classification, Library of Congress Subject Headings) to make our data easily accessible and exchangeable on the national and international level.

But the visits and contacts also served the purpose to (re-)establish the cooperation and coordination within the South African social movement and alternative NGO sector. The solidarity was certainly stronger during the last years of the anti-apartheid-struggle and the first years of the transition period. The early 1990s saw a number of meetings and forums of the South African resource centre scene, a directory of resource centres listing more than 100 institutions was published in 1992. Maybe the crisis of the social movements in the late 1990s is mirrored in the decline of resource centres' activities and their networks, too. The second and so far last edition of the directory of South African resource centres was published in 1999, the once very active Library and Information Workers' Organisation also ceased to

exist. It would be interesting to investigate similar developments in other countries and regions.

I only learned about the library-related activities and workshops at the WSF since working for Khanya College and being involved in the preparations. Part of Khanya's activities preceding the WSF this year has been its annual winter school in July, which functioned as a preparatory workshop ("Building solidarity across borders"). I have tried to inform as many of my South African library activist colleagues as possible on the planned activities. Only very few knew about the workshops in the library and information sector, even though many of them work for organisations that have been participating in the WSF in the past. The same must be said concerning the knowledge of the PALIAct (Progressive African Librarian and Information Activists' Group) project. But maybe the South and Southern African resource centre scene will be encouraged by projects in other African regions and by the worldwide support and solidarity within the library and information community, and the WSF will be the starting point for a revitalisation and a stronger cooperation of the alternative South African library and resource centre scene.

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On “diffusion” and making distinctions

Alan Story

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About a month ago I was rather surprised about what I discovered on the World Social Forum Nairobi website when I visited it to officially register the Copy/South Research Group as a participant. I started to tick off and fill in the various boxes --- where our group is based, what type of group we are (advocacy, community, research), our e-mail address. etc., etc. Everything was going fine until I came to the pull-down menu asking in which field of activism we worked. Our small informal group of activists and academics (located both in the North and global South) do research work in the field of copyright issues in the global South and so I thought “intellectual property” was the correct box to tick. But, just as I was about to do so, I noticed --- to my astonishment --- that the “intellectual property” tick box occupied the same box as “Creative Commons.” The clear implication was that if a group worked on “intellectual property” issues, it also necessarily also worked on -- and supported the concept of --- “Creative Commons.”¹

This personal --- and seemingly quite trivial ---- experience with what we could call “the politics of the classification” got me thinking about how ideas such as Creative Commons (and others) spread and become implanted as unchallenged and seemingly progressive approaches in our movement opposed to neo-liberal globalisation. On the one hand, there is no doubting that Creative Commons (henceforth CC) is becoming popular in certain circles, especially in the North, but more and more in the global South.² Although launched just only three years ago in California, USA, a June 2006 weblog report from CC suggested that there were now 140 million pages of CC licensed content available on the Internet.³ Indeed in certain circles, CC is definitely “the flavour of the month” and during a conversation at a recent

¹ The basics of the Creative Commons approach to copyright licensing can be found on the home page of Creative Commons: <http://creativecommons.org/>

² Mind you, as the overwhelming majority of CC material is accessible only on the Internet, the radically disparate level of Internet access in the South and North rather privilege Northern CC users and CC content.

³ Mike Linksvayer, ‘Midyear licence adoption estimates’, <http://creativecommons.org/weblog/entry/5936>

intellectual property conference in Caracas, Venezuela, one information activist was quite astounded that I had any criticism whatsoever of CC and its approach to the use, by contractual licenses, of what copyright lawyers call expressive “works” (books, artworks, music and the like.) At the same time, our growing movement is a transnational one and what academic theorists of global social movements call the cross-national “diffusion” of approaches and tactics is one of its defining characteristics.⁴ Cheap international air travel, NGO growth in the South (often funded by Northern-based agencies), and the growing access to the Internet in the South mean that it really should not surprise us that those organising the WSF registration and group categorisation process would conflate activism around intellectual property issues, such as that undertaken by Copy/South and other groups, with CC.⁵

Yet, on the other hand, *before* any tactics or strategies or approaches are adopted by our movement through this process of “diffusion”, it is *critically important* that they are analysed and debated in great detail. Despite the use of what may appear to be fine-sounding words, such as “open access”, we need to ask a number of questions about any proposed forms of contestation and challenge to global capitalism, including in the field of information and its access. Surface appearances and “spin” simply aren’t good enough when the stakes are so high and the chances of chasing after “false dawns” so numerous.

Among the questions we might ask: What are the ideological assumptions underpinning a particular tactic or approach? Is there a danger that, by embracing a particular approach as a mere short-run tactic, we may “get stuck” within the limitations and supposedly “common sense” assumptions of that approach --- in other words, the practices of that tactic may become naturalised as supposedly “the only way to do things” --- and, as a result, we never emerge out the other side? Although a particular tactic may be reformist, can it work, in time, to build the forces and alternative ideology needed over the longer term “to destroy the capitalist cage?”⁶ Who is

⁴ “Diffusion is the most familiar and the oldest form of transnational contention. It need not involve connections across borders, but only that challengers in one country or region adopt or adapt the organisational forms, collective action frames, or targets of those in other regions.” Donatella della Porta and Sydney Tarrow eds., ‘Transnational protest and global activism’, (Lanham, USA: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005) p. 3.

⁵ To this list of factors, we could add --- and I am certainly NOT lumping WSF organisers into this camp --- “up and comers” from the South who see they can make a career out of becoming (chiefly because of where they grew up) supposed Southern “spokespersons”, message carriers, and habitual attendees on the mostly Northern-funded activist conference circuit. Recently a leading member of one such Southern-based group, which has a “watching post” in Geneva at the WTO and WIPO, told a conference that “We (that is, WIPO) need your input on this issue.” Such self-identification with those with whom one rubs shoulders and breaks bread with on a daily basis is a particularly dangerous phenomenon among some NGOs.

⁶ “Our vision for the WSF in Africa [should be] to destroy the capitalist cage which imprisons Africans and all of humanity’s social, economic, political and cultural development.” Trevor Ngwane quoted in ‘A Freedom Song’, WSF 2007 Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 2, 16 November 2006. <http://www.wsf2007.org/wsf07%20newsletter2.pdf> (Brackets in original.)

supporting this approach and who is against it? And finally --- and certainly not least importantly --- in the case of orientations first developed in the North, how applicable are they in the global South? ⁷

In short, we need to ask many tough political questions, ***we need to make distinctions between tactics which lead us into dead ends, unnecessary detours, and cul-de-sacs and those which confront and weaken our enemies and their pervasive ideologies.***

There is not the space here to do a full-scale analysis of CC.⁸ Briefly, we can say here about CC: Yes, we need to recognise and appreciate that those who decide to make their stories and articles and songs available to the public through the use of CC contractual licences demonstrate a positive attitude to sharing. As well, many proponents and users of CC licences are, in their own individual way, implicitly trying to make some kind of a well-intentioned statement against the traditional model of copyright ownership and control that vests such overwhelming power in the hands of publishers, recording companies, and other multi-national rights holders.

But, at the same time, the CC approach works in various ways to normalise and naturalise the copyright system as the one --- and only --- way to create and to use written, musical and other types of work.⁹ The founder of CC, US law professor Lawrence Lessig is a strong advocate of copyright laws, the market, and property rights as key pre-requisites for creative work to be produced. He has written, for example, that “[C]opyright is a critical part of the creativity; a great deal of creativity would not exist without the protection of the law ...And as it (copyright) has expanded, it has expanded the opportunities for creativity.”¹⁰ (Such a view rather diminishes the tremendous sweep of creative works produced across Africa and the South generally, today and in the past, that had nothing to do with the laws, “incentive”, and ideology of copyright.¹¹) As for the supposedly positive role

⁷ Writing here as a Canadian who has lived in the UK for more than a decade, I would add that the location --- North or South --- where a concept has first been articulated and “diffused from” is definitely a secondary question. Yes, it is an issue we definitely need to be sensitive to, but we need to avoid the narrow nationalism and parochialism that dismisses the ideas of those from the North as “not relevant to us in the South” or to claim, on the other hand, that Southerners necessarily know best. Those in the South have had to confront many Southern-borne traitors and false prophets.

⁸ For a fuller and more developed critic of the concept of Creative Commons, see pgs. 167-170 in the Copy/South Dossier (www.copysouth.org)

⁹ Is it only a coincidence that copyrighted works in many countries are so designated by the well-known symbol ©, while CC uses CC?

¹⁰ Lawrence Lessig, ‘The Future of Ideas’ (New York: Vintage Books, 2002).p. 107-108.

¹¹ “In traditional African societies, information and life skills have always been passed on from generation to generation, through oral traditions and folklore for the good of the whole society. With the new trade agreements being negotiated and drawn up under the Trade-Related aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), the World Trade Organisation (WTO), and the World Intellectual Property Rights Organisation (WIPO), African Societies are required to adopt copyright regimes that are contrary to the African understanding of information sharing.” **Gertrude Kayaga Mulindwam, Chairperson – Organising Committee, African Copyright Forum Conference, Uganda, November 2005. (Quoted in ‘Copy/South Dossier’, p. 84)**

of the market system and property rights, Lessig has written: "I am fanatically pro-market, in the market's property sphere. I don't doubt the important and valuable role played by property in most, maybe just about all contexts."¹² (A rather worrisome quotation to put on the banner of information activists wanting "to destroy the capitalist cage which imprisons Africa...")

Specifically about the CC approach to copyright, we can also say: 1) CC licensed works are still commodified works, "albeit ones that the creator can decide (or not decide) to make accessible, much like a person can decide whether or not to invite someone into her or his house."¹³ 2) Reinforcing the much discredited romantic notion of the author as an individual self-directed genius, CC licences give no additional contractual rights to users; again, it is the author who decides who gets to read and to listen; 3) CC licences give us no keys to unlocking the existing stock of *already* copyrighted and propertised books and other information...nor material locked up behind "user pay" toll booths on the Internet. 4) CC tries to impose and import a pro-copyright template into many parts of the world where it does not exist or exists only peripherally, including in the global South.

As for its supporters, yes, there are hundred of writers and musicians and other creators who endorse CC, but when CC leaders such as Larry Lessig tell us that they were "incredibly excited" when Microsoft endorsed CC in June 2006,¹⁴ one can only wonder how many free software activists asked: is CC so desperate for support that they need an endorsement from this predatory software monolith, itself a staunch opponent of accessibility to its own proprietary software?¹⁵

And finally, there is the wider strategical question we need to ask: will individual CC licensing by well-intentioned "good guys" be the catalyst to mobilize both CC proponents and users of CC licensed content to develop a wider collective challenge to the oppressiveness of the entire copyright edifice? This is really the key question: will this reformist tactic of CC create the conditions for a longer term and far wider struggle? CC only calls for individual "good guy" action; there is no link or call to wider collective action to erode the far wider havoc caused by copyright ideology than whether author or musician X gets to have a greater say over the use of particular copyrighted works. CC emerges then as "feel-good copyright" and analogous to believing that buying "fair trade" goods will bring down imperialism.

These same types of questions come up, again and again, in other key issues for information activists, librarians and others working --- some with

¹² Lessig, p. 6.

¹³ 'Copy/South Dossier', p. 168

¹⁴ Becky Hogge, 'What moves a movement', Open Democracy, 27 June 2006.

http://www.opendemocracy.net/media-commons/movement_3686

¹⁵ It is worth noting that leading CC organisers in the South were not consulted in advance about getting Microsoft's endorsement as I learned in a recent discussion in Caracas.

admirable passion and some with success --- to open up badly needed access for educational and other purposes across the South. Take the question of lobbying for the inclusion of “fair dealing” or “fair use” clauses in the copyright statutes in the global South.¹⁶ Numbers of countries in the global South still lack statutory “users’ rights” in their domestic copyright legislation and, in this regard, they trail far behind the situation prevailing in Europe and the United States. (A brief background: until quite recently, copyright statutes in many ex-colonial countries, including many parts of Africa, such as Kenya, were enacted as almost word-for-word, carbon copies of statutes which existed in the “homeland” of their then or previous colonial masters, such as the United Kingdom; however, in this malicious “legal transplantation” of British copyright clauses and concepts to Africa, British “fair dealing” clauses were curiously omitted as a necessary requirement for its colonies and ex-colonies¹⁷).

Facing such a glaring legislative omission in the copyright statutes of the global South, it is certainly worthwhile for librarians and information activists from the South to organise to have “fair dealing” provisions included in all copyright statutes across the globe, including in the global South.¹⁸ In the global South, the current access needs of users are legitimate and pressing and cannot be put off until some future date when the global neo-liberal colossus crumbles. Yet, at the same time, to focus our lobbying and activist efforts solely on such limited goals is to lack ambition and to lose sight of the bigger access picture. In truth, the inclusion of “fair dealing” clauses in African copyright statutes will actually do very little to create global information justice. First, what might be considered “fair” by some in the United Kingdom or the United States is not “fair” for those in the global South; the information and access needs are radically different. Second, the amount of printed material that can legally be used under “fair dealing” provisions is pitifully limited. Instructors in literacy programmes need entire books for their work, not merely the use of a few isolated paragraphs that “fair dealing” provisions legally allow. Third, even the best “fair dealing” clauses on the globe do not meet the access needs of the visually impaired which current copyright laws cruelly restrict.

¹⁶ “Fair use” clauses (as they are called in the US) or “fair dealing” clauses (as they are called in most other parts of the world) allow a user to legally access and use strictly limited sections of copyrighted works without the permission of the copyright owner and sometimes without the payment of any royalty fees.

¹⁷ Perhaps this omission was not so curious after all, but more a question of self-interest for colonial powers and rights holders in the European homeland. Including “fair dealing” clauses in the copyright laws of countries such as Kenya would have given Kenyans some minimal rights as users wanting to access books which, in colonial times, (and still today) would mostly have been copyrighted by British rights owners; there was no point in putting a small dent in their balance sheets with the inclusion of “fair dealing” clauses.

¹⁸ Significantly, the leading global copyright agreement, the Berne Convention, does not require that its member countries, now numbering more than 160, to include “fair dealing” provisions in their own domestic statutes.

Again it is question of **making distinctions**, of appreciating the relationship between short-term tactics and the wider, longer-term struggle, of understanding what approaches should be “diffused” and which should not.

* * *

The upcoming WSF in Nairobi will be the first WSF I have ever attended...and as I write this nearly seven weeks before it starts on 20 January 2007, I am already getting quite enthused. Our small group is co-sponsoring a joint event, entitled “**Unlocking the Global Information Fortress**”, with PALIAct Kenya and NIGD (the Network Institute for Global Democratization.) The date and time are not finalized, but it should not be too difficult to find our workshop on the WSF website or on the WSF site itself. You're most welcome to come; there is much to discuss and debate and to learn from each other.

Copyrights, author's rights and fair use

Mikael Bök

ISC has already published a presentation and review (by Ruth Rikowski, in ISC 23) of *The Copy/South Dossier, Issues in the economics, politics and ideology of copyright in the global South* (ed. by Alan Story, Colin Darch and Deborah Halbert, <http://www.copysouth.org>).

I shall just add a comment to this particular passage:

" One continuing colonial "relic" in the countries of "French-speaking" West Africa is that they still use a "droit d'auteur" copyright system which privileges the so-called "moral rights" of authors; this system significantly reduces what are called "fair dealing/fair use" exemptions. It has been reported that photocopiers at a university library in one such country were being used for unauthorised copying and that when the university was having its annual inspection as a university, conducted by the "mother university" in the United States, this fact was revealed. The African university was evidently told that this had to be corrected by the time of the inspection in the following year or it might lose its accreditation. As a result, a senior university official reportedly had all of the public photocopiers removed from the library. "

(The Copy/South Dossier, p 110)

It might be noted that the concepts of copyright and droit d'auteur reflect two different traditions, the Anglo-Saxon and the Continental. ¹

The French - and more generally, continental - approach to moral rights and fair use is quite different from the Anglo-Saxon. The continental tradition emphasizes the importance of the moral rights, which belong exclusively to the author (auteur, Urheber), and can therefore not be traded (sold) to another "rights holder".

The Anglo-Saxon idea of the copyright, on the other hand, stresses what the word says: it is the right to copy. This is a tradable right, which the author can sell to a publisher, or any business person who wants to try to make a profit out of the work of the author by copying and selling it.

The concept of the moral rights has been marginalised for a long time now, because of the intense pressure from mainly American media conglomerates. The general tendency today - which was codified in the TRIPS agreement of the WTO 1995 - is to get rid of the moral rights of the author and thereby to complete the separation of the intellectual or cultural product from its producer(s).

In order not to create too exclusive monopolies, and to establish some "user rights" that are parallel to the rights of the "rights holders", the Anglo-Saxon concept allows for provisions of "fair use" of copyrighted materials. (The quotation I made above, for example, is a "fair use" of a text.)

But the idea of the "fair use" is weak in the Continental tradition. For reasons that are not quite clear to me, but which might need to be discussed and clarified, the French defenders of the *droit d'auteur* sometimes even adopt a rather fundamentalist attitude *against* "fair use" (although they allow exemptions for reproductions which are reserved for the private use of the copier).

That aversion against "fair use" may be of significance in the case of the photocopiers that were removed from the West African university. It would seem that we have here an unhappy *combination* of French opposition to "fair use" (maybe with neo-colonialist overtones) and American power to police anybody who does not conform to their view of copyrights.

In my view we ought to support and defend both the rights of the authors (creators) and the rights of the users. About the copyrights, I am of the same critical opinion as the authors of the Copy/South Dossier.

The term of the copyright on literary and artistic works, for example, must not be extended. On the contrary, the time has come to make it shorter. An editorial of the magazine "The Economist", which described present copyright law as "worse than anachronistic in the digital age" (quoted in the Copy/South Dossier, p. 17) proposed that the term of the copyright be again limited to 14 years, like it was during the reign of Queen Anne. I support the proposal.

The distribution of written works via the internet should henceforward be controlled directly by the authors. Scientific and educational works by salaried academics ought to be distributed for free over the internet.

1 Paul Goldstein describes these two cultures of copyright from an American perspective in *Copyright's Highway. The Law and Lore of Copyright from Gutenberg to the Celestial Jukebox* (Hill and Wang 1994, ch 5). Illuminating material on the birth of the *droit d'auteur* is found in Carla Hesse: *Publishing and Cultural Politics in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1810* (University of California Press, 1991).

UNLOCKING THE GLOBAL INFORMATION FORTRESS

Conference at the World Social Forum in Nairobi, January 2007

Organised by:

The Progressive African Library and Information Activists' Group (PALIAct), the Network Institute for Global Democratisation (NIGD), the Copy/South Research Group, and Innovations in Civic Participation.

Main themes:

1. Library and information policy for Africa (PALIAct)
2. Critique of the global intellectual property regime (Copy/South)
3. The contribution of the libraries to the WSF process and global democratization (NIGD)

Background papers and materials:

Information for Social Change, No. 24, Winter 2006-2007
Special Issue: Libraries & Information in World Social Forum context (will become available before the Nairobi WSF).

The Copy/South Dossier. Issues in the economics, politics and ideology of copyright in the Global South. Edited by Alan Story, Colin Darch and Debora Halbert, Canterbury 2006. Can be downloaded at <http://www.copysouth.org/>

Related to:

Documenting the WSF in libraries

Preliminary date:

Monday 22 January Duration: 3 hours. Target groups: librarians, information activists, documentalists, computer networkers and nerds, continuators of the WSF as an open space.

Aim of the activity:

Reinforce the cooperation between social movements, librarians, library associations, information activists, researchers and the computer programmers. Make resistance against the new information enclosures. Create the conditions for the extension of the social forums to the public libraries. Another information society is possible.

Partners:

We are looking for partners among, for instance, library associations, university and educational networks for civic participation and social

responsability and software developers.

Contact:

Esther Obachi, Kenya (), Mikael Bök, Finland ()

Please join the mailing list lib-wsf@sympa.kaapeli.fi via
<http://sympa.kaapeli.fi/sympa/info/lib-wsf>

Prepared by the Group The social forum goes to the library.

Documenting of the WSF information

The Social Forum needs to extend to the library. Let the public libraries become "depository libraries" of the social forums. This activity is a Pilot Project of Kenya Library Association, in cooperation with the Network Institute for Global Democratisation, whereby library and information specialists initiate the documenting of the WSF information before, during and after the WSF event in Nairobi.

1. The librarians and the libraries can help the WSF to get rooted in ever wider circles while at the same time defending and developing their own important public service in cooperation with the global justice movement.
2. Librarians are invited to collect, organise, present, disseminate and preserve the information that is produced by the WSF-process.
3. Social forums, libraries and the internet, open spaces of humanity, unite!

The public libraries and the social movements grew together, in cooperation. They need to reconnect with each others.

The public library system is threatened by the neoliberal globalisation, The librarians are becoming aware of the dangerous implications of the GATS and TRIPS agreements. The WSF process can help the libraries to fight the threat.

Background information is found at <http://www.nigd.org/libraries> and <http://www.libr.org/isc>

Since the library is a universal institution and literacy is the predicament of mankind, this activity should extend to your village or town.

The objectives of this pilot project are to create a documentation of the WSF by librarians in libraries in order to:

1. Guarantee the continuity of the WSF process;
2. Disseminate information about the WSF and its debates to groups which are otherwise marginalized;
3. Improve the librarians' links to both the local and international social movements.

Learning by doing; the participating librarians and information specialists will develop practical methods and solutions for the documenting, the preservation, the presentation and the dissemination of the (world) social forum information in libraries.

The Embassy of Finland in Nairobi sponsors this activity economically through its fund for local cooperation.

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Further Reading

Issue no. 2 of "Information Equality, Africa"
Relation: formerly "PALIAct Ideas & Action"
URL: <http://www.seapn.org.uk/PALIAct-new.html>

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Writing and reading more together

Library Success: A Best Practices Wiki
Starting from Esther Obachi's article on The Management of the WSF Information in
ISC 24 (this issue)

URL:
http://www.libsuccess.org/index.php?title=Management_of_the_WSF_Information



Equality & Social Justice



THE IMMIGRANT AND “BRITISHNESS” IN BRITAIN

Ronald Elly Wanda

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The contestation of multiculturalism in Britain is not as new as “multiculturalists” would have us believe, in actual fact, it has always been around. Nonetheless, politicians in their attempt to please “middle England” (an imaginary social constituency) tend to amplify it by mistakenly concocting it (as if indistinguishable) with immigration and asylum-seeking. As for political and social observers (including right wing media houses), they tend to deny its relevance by simply diminishing it to a “conceptual” exercise. Calculatedly, they collectively seem to forget that Britain has always been a country involved in migration, although in recent centuries emigration has been far more important than immigration. Indeed a fresh report by University College London (UCL) titled “*Migration Matters*” revealed that in 2003 alone there were 191,000 Britons who emigrated from Britain whilst the number of those who returned from Abroad was only 106,000. The report which came out in May 2005 explicated that in spring of 2004, just before European Union (EU) enlargement there were 2.857m foreign nationals living in the UK, 4.9 percent of the total population. Forty three percent of them were European, of which 79 percent were from European Economic Area, within which citizens have the right to move freely between countries and take up work. Around quarter were Asian, 17 percent African and 10 percent were from the United States. Women were more than men (53 percent) the report said. Researchers John Salt and James Clarke who wrote the report moreover noted that: “UK has a modest size of foreign population when compared to countries such as Austria, German and Spain, but it is second to Germany in numbers of those emigrating”. According to the report, there were more people who left Britain than those who came in during the 19th and 20th centuries. Even at the present moment, the Home Office itself admits (though reluctantly) that net flow of immigrants and asylum seekers to the UK has been on a downward trend for years. So why then, as well one might wonder does the African community still incur the continuous victimisation under the pretentious label of multiculturalism.

For registered Africans dwelling in the UK (these days baselessly and pompously labelled [BBA] Black British Africans by Home Office’s statisticians) in sub-zero London, If asked, as well one might, why multiculturalism matters, and why Africans matter in particular, I think one would have to shallowly reply: were it not for them would the debate subsist today? I mean does *Wanda* fit in Wimbledon, *Kinuthia* in Kensington or how about *Nagudi* in North Yorkshire? On the face of it this may seem an odd ponder, but for me this ought to be the “real”

contestation of multiculturalism. Unencrypted, multiculturalism means a mutual cultural respect for all communities in a given locality- this, however, has never been the case for the African community in Britain. This is because it is often supposed that the African community in Britain came here after the period following the Second World War. This is not true. There is indeed strong evidence that suggests that before the European colonial encounter in the 15th century, there was an African presence in Britain as far back as the 9th century, some historians have even traced black presence here much earlier than that.

One obscurity about the multicultural bandwagon is that it consciously fails to acknowledge this historical fact and subsequently denies Africa's and Africans input in British society. Globalization (*the interconnectedness of the world; the flow of ideas, criminal activities, goods, images, weapons and a world wide flow of capitals and so forth*) now being a poignant reality means that almost every cultural community exists in the midst of others and is resultantly inescapably influenced by them. As such, in 2006 it is almost impossible to think of a culture except perhaps for the most primitive and isolated that is not influenced by others. Perceptively, I concur with the Labour peer Professor Bhikhu Parekh in his respected testimony *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (commissioned by the government) when he termed United Kingdom a "community of communities". The disposition, however, is made stickier because cultural as well as the political and security establishments are culturally drunk with imperialism in still naively subscribing to the mythical notion that Britain is still a homogeneous society (if at all it ever was).

In this connection, it is just to pronounce cultural imperialism, deep rooted in British political and cultural veins, as one of the obstacles that is hindering equal cultural respect by suffocating recognition of Africa and Africans countless contributions to British society. As far as the African community is concerned, the UK government (regardless of its political ideological manifestation or disguise) as well as politicians, neo-fascist political organisations, the mass media, employers, institutions representing the labour movement and sections of the British working class have all acted upon and articulated racist beliefs, and by doing so they have identified africans and collectively the (BME) Black Minority Ethnic groups as an excluded lot and as such crucified them enduringly on the periphery of society.

Nowadays the registered African specie armed with his British citizenship (virtue of birth or naturalisation) find himself with legal rights and responsibilities to the state, yet he remains culturally an alien to society and the country regardless of his nationality status. For most young Africans born or brought up in the diaspora (or to solicit the trendy Home Office lingo: black British Africans) the notion of culture has to a degree been problematic, because they find themselves caught up between two cultures- the static and unyielding parental culture (whereas when we were growing up, receiving the occasional smack for displaying anti-African behaviours was perfectly customary) and the dubious freedoms of Britishness (where almost everything is seen through legal lens. For instance, at school and the outside world what we at home understood for generations as our parents rights to discipline us was rearticulated to us as either child abuse or domestic violence. No other categorization was given) - leading to cultural conflict and not (as many would rather we say) an identity crisis. We have, however, been caught up in a double blind-damned for having not enough culture or for having too much. On the

contrary, when visiting my ancestral homes in East Africa, as often I do, natives are often astonished by my cultural simplicity, especially given that I am inexorably subjected to hybridism – proudly embedding chunky parts of africaness as well as inevitable elements of britishness.

Paradoxically, it is almost impossible to tell apart the local youth culture from that of London, New York, Paris or Berlin. In the past few years, whilst on visits to several African countries this has always been the reality. Instead of burgeoning culturally through an African vein such as *Nairobisation, Durbanisation, Kampaliation, Sowetisation* or *Dar-Saalamisation* the local urban youth culture has at best hurriedly adopted aggressive unmistakable junky American popular culture and at worst seem to have accepted the false hypothesis of westernisation as modernisation by localising the imposition.

From an African diasporal lens, given such a racially categorised background, it is thus non-toxic to avow that were it not for the wealth violently extracted largely from Africa and a small portion of it from parts of the developing world that were subjected to the phases of slavery, imperialism, colonialism, and now globalization (all dedicated to the erosion of human dignity) by Britain alongside her other European partners in crime, Brutish Britain would not have imperially graced herself "Great Britain". Hence, the impact of migration and immigration has been and continues to be one of unswerving gain to the UK. For instance the Commonwealth (a club that consists of former British colonies headed by her Majesty Queen Elizabeth), in the 1950's was an important cornerstone of foreign policy in British politics, and its trade and support were of vital importance to Britain's survival, perhaps more crucial than is the EU to Britain in today's geopolitics. In the Commonwealth were the considerable economic advantages of colonial immigration that resolved the problem of acute shortage of workers which recruitment from Ireland and southern Europe were unable to remedy at the time. The benefits have not only been of an economic nature, they have also been cultural, spiritual as well as intellectual in nature. The most conservative estimate of the debt that Britain owes to Africa was recently made by Dr Robert Beckford's documentary "*The Empire Pays Back*". The programme intrepidly broadcasted by Channel 4 on the 15th August 2005 approximated Britain's debt to Africans (in Africa as well as in the diaspora) to be in trillions of pounds.

Today it is the African physicians and nurses as well as the carers and cleaners input on the National Health Service (NHS) that is keeping Britain's population alive, healthy and prosperous. The Prime Minister Tony Blair during a speech last year was strained to confess that were it not for them the NHS could have collapsed due to staff shortage and lack of expertise in some areas of the medical profession, where it is estimated that nearly 40 % of all NHS doctors and nurses are from an ethnic minority, of a predominant African and Asian origin. The input is also visible in the arts and sports as well as in the academic world- where it has been approximated that over 50,000 African PHD holders are operational in the western world. The debate on brain drain goes on. Yet again, due to reasons that can only be described as cultural imperialism (another form of domination); one finds that there is a real reluctance in acknowledging African efforts in British society, however tangible they are. Britain's wealth is dependent on the continuous exploitation of Africans and other "economic immigrants" who provide cheap labour by

accepting jobs that white Britons do not want and are inappreciably exploitatively remunerated.

The African community continues being hammered by racism and prejudice even when it tries to better itself in order to continue contributing evocatively to British society. A recent report by the Racial Equality Council (formerly the Commission of Racial Equality), concluded that there is great under-representation of ethnic minorities across all public sector institutions. In specific, the report noted that "ethnic minority unemployment is around three times that for white people. African graduates find it seven times harder to get a job, in particular, African men with degrees are seven times more likely to be unemployed than white males graduates."

In spite of all the negative vices calculatingly calibrated by British institutions to permanently keep the African specie at bay the African community has somehow managed to progress. This is owed to the fact that the African community has had to invent physical as well as psychological instruments to deal with snags it culturally encounters in its daily struggles, when not doing insignificant and low paid jobs, Africans have ventured into self employment; thriftily, all helping towards quantifying the ethnic minority spending power that currently stands at a healthy 40 billion pounds a year!

Francis Fukuyama in his controversial yet winning 1992 thesis *"The End of History and the Last Man"* agreeably observed of inequalities due to convention rather than nature, or necessity, that the hardest to eradicate are those arising from culture. His interpretation of the black communities' exertions of the US bears resemblance (though not exclusively) to the situation facing Africans in the UK. He contended that the obstacles confronting young black persons growing up in Detroit or the South Bronx begins with substandard schools, a problem which could in theory be remedied as a matter of public policy. In a society where status is determined almost entirely by education, such persons, he argued, are likely to be crippled even before they reach school age. Professor Fukuyama argued that lacking a home environment capable of transmitting cultural values needed to take advantage of opportunity, such youngsters will feel the constant pull of the "street" that offers a life more familiar and glamorous than that of middle class America. Fukuyama observed that under such circumstances, achievement of full legal equality for black people in America, and the opportunities provided by the US economy will not make terribly much difference to the lives of such people. 14 years later, Fukuyama's "endism" analysis is today exemplified by the recent social upheavals in south of Paris by ethnic elements. Africans in Paris as in London faced by poor housing; unemployment, social exclusion, police harassment, politically unrepresented, feel they have nothing to lose by taking to the streets following Nicholas Sawkowsky's under the weather comments as well as proposing a law that effectively says that anyone under the age of 26 can be fired from a job without a reason. As far as I am concerned, the ongoing Paris suburban revolts are perfectly justified. For a simple reason; when all non-violent, democratic means of achieving a just end are unavailable, exhausted, redundant- what else is there for one to do? When state agencies charged with protecting communities fail to do so or actually attack them, self defence becomes necessary, and as Fredrick Douglass (the black American writer) once fittingly remarked: "where there is no struggle there is no progress".

On a conclusive yet semi-positive note, the 2002 Race Relations Amendment Act in Britain, which requires service providers to engage with communities such as ours, has to a degree been helpful to us. But on too many occasions one finds that it is the public sector which decides what the consultations with the African community should be as well as whom the black community representatives are. These have often been flatterers such as Trevor Phillips (chair, Racial Equality Council), David Lammy (Tottenham MP), Dianne Abbott (Hackney MP), Dr John Sentamu (Archbishop and Church of England's number two in command), to mention but a few, who have little credibility in the grassroots communities, and have no links to the neediest, this has meant that any new resources ends up not reaching those who need it most in our community.

As such, It is thus in the government as well as British institutions and the public's interest to rid itself the cultural subordinations of ethnic minorities in this country. If we are to have a constructive debate on multiculturalism, the voices of ethnic minorities needs to be heard and their grievances resolved whilst acknowledging their achievements and contributions in this society. Rather than having western and westernised armchair professors of cultural studies and politics mimicking out what is best for us. For the arguments are simple, making mistakes that upset individuals or groups can be costly. Failing to rectify those mistakes or providing the opportunity for them to be rectified can be disastrous, both in terms of maintaining legitimacy and in terms of efficient delivery of services and programmes to all communities. The multicultural bandwagon ought to be an inclusive circle and not an exclusive one as is the presence; unless this changes I remain irked.