

## **Un-ordered Organisation: Exploring Processes in an Emergent Social Movement.**

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### ***Abstract.***

*This paper uses concepts from complexity theory to metaphorically frame an exploratory analysis of emergence within a social movement. In particular un-order, self-organisation and global – local linkages are used to conceptually frame the social forum. The Sydney Social Forum (SSF) represents one of many emergent, self-organising units within the global social forum movement. Preliminary results from nine interviews with social forum participants are then explored to examine some of the organizing processes. Some of the organisational characteristics of an this emergent social movement are discussed specifically in regard to consensual decision-making, online communication, identity formation and action in absence of structure and role definition. We find that some of the processes suggest (dis) organisation and are similar to processes identified within the New Social Movement (NSM) literature. These emergent movements are creating a new voice for exploration of social and environmental issues and an understanding of the way in which they operate is useful in breaking down barriers to encourage wider participation in such movements with the aim of creating alternative solutions.*

### ***Introduction.***

This paper is an exploratory introduction into the findings from a case study examining the emergence of social movements. Firstly, social complexity theory is introduced as a framework for the analysis. Secondly, the global social forum movement is framed within this paradigm. The Sydney Social Forum (SSF) is introduced as the site for an in-depth case study of a local Sydney formation of the global social forum movement. Field work and interview notes are thematically analysed and the results discussed in relation to the processes for organisation in the SSF. Findings are then framed within the theoretical framework. The complexity metaphor is a useful device for understanding the organisational processes of the social forum. Further analysis of the research data may evolve new ways of understanding agency and collective processes for new social movements operating in a complex environment.

### ***The Social Forum as a Complex System.***

#### *What is social complexity?*

This paper utilises a social complexity perspective, which considers the unique characteristics of human systems as opposed to other mechanical and natural systems. ‘Contextual complexity’ considers three unique mechanisms of human systems:

- I. Human behaviour encompasses ‘multiple dynamic individual and collective identities acting simultaneously and representing all aspects of perception, decision-making, and action’.
- II. Collective decisions, unintentionality and free will can overthrow predetermined rules and make human behaviour unpredictable.

III. Humans have the capacity to act out of perception of large-scale and abstract global phenomena.

(Kurtz and Snowden 2003: 465).

These create a presumption that human systems can be unpredictable. While patterns of behaviour can be observed there is little way of systematically defining how a social system organises. As a paradigm for investigation social complexity assumes an ontology of unordered and a heuristic epistemology. These relate closely to an assumption that human behaviour is highly changeable and often unpredictable. Unorder implies:

*'A new understanding of systems in which causality is anything but stable and while relationships may be coherent in retrospect, they do not form a basis for action or prediction' (Snowden and Sandbridge 2004).*

Due to the complexity of social relationships it is difficult to predict the ways in which these relationships will emerge in an organisational form a priori. As a point of departure upon these assumptions, a prescription for the ways in which emergent social movements organize is not pursued. Yet, this research does seek to describe the emergence of one self-organising group within an global movement using the principles of complexity.

*Principles of complexity.*

*'The Dissipative social systems paradigm assumes social order is not always possible, nor is it necessarily desirable.... It addresses the perplexing question, 'How do the mechanisms producing social order, periodically produce chaos and pave the way for radical social transformation' (Harvey and Reed, 1994:390).*

In recent times many theorists have attempted to encapsulate complexity concepts from the natural sciences (Byrne 1998, Cilliers 1998, Urry 2003, Snowden and Stanbrigde 2005).

While these interpretations may differ in relation to their theoretical assumptions there is general agreement concerning the basic principles of complex systems (see table one, below). In particular complex systems consist of many self-organised groups, operating in ‘un-ordered’ spaces within some global-local linkage.

**Table 1: Principles for Complex Systems.**

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Description.</b>
<i>Multiplicity of Legitimate perspectives</i>	Analysis needs to account for multiple stakeholder viewpoints.
<i>Non-Linear Reality.</i>	Relationships are non-linear resulting in a magnitude of effects not being proportional to the magnitude of the causes.
<i>Emergence.</i>	The ‘whole is more than the sum of its parts... True novelty can emerge from the interaction between the elements of the system’.
<i>Self-Organisation.</i>	The phenomena by which interacting components compete to produce large-scale coordinated structures and Behaviour.
<i>Multiplicity of Scales</i>	Each element of the system is a sub-system of a smaller-order system, and the system itself is part of a larger ‘supra-system’. There may be strong interactions between levels and different rates of change within levels. Implying plurality and uncertainty.
<i>Irreducible Uncertainty</i>	Reflexive social systems are capable of their own observation and analysis becoming part of the activity of the system, but also capable to influence it in certain ways. This may be through purposive, deterministic Behaviour, or less predictable chaotic forms.

(Adapted from Gallopín, et.al. 2001:225).

When analysing the social system, Cilliers (1998) focuses on the need to examine the connectedness or dynamic flows between systems. A ‘connectionist approach’ is where the important characteristics are ‘distributedness, self-organisation and the operation on local information without central control’ (Cilliers, 1998:141). This connectionist approach is significant as it emphasises the significance of networks at all levels of the system and decentralized or ‘dissipated’ control, which enables emergent self-organisation. Generally, the capacity of complex systems for self-organisation is one of the key attributes, which explains its capacity to change and adapt to its external environment. We find within a complex system many networks of localised interactions enacting organisation upon local information without

intentionality of creating global patterns of behaviour. Inversely, this very interaction creates global patterns, yet some centralised global driving force does not enforce these.

Inferred in this is a key principle for the relationships between local and global networks. The self-organising nature of the local network enables organisation formation without direct knowledge of the global level. While there is a connection between the global and local levels, the local network is able to operate within the global system without control or direction from the global level. According to Gallopín et al (2002) this interrelatedness between network levels is symptomatic of systems approach thinking:

*'Connectedness, relationships and context... the essential properties of an organism, a society or other complex system, are properties of the whole, arising from the interactions and relationships among the parts. The properties of the parts are not intrinsic, but can only be understood within the context of the larger whole' (2002: 223).*

This is a useful framework for understanding the global social forum movement.

*What is the social forum movement?*

Continuous debate surrounds the definition, direction, and purpose of the World Social Forum (WSF)<sup>1</sup> (Marcuse, 2005; Allahwala & Keil, 2005). Leite (2005) provides a comprehensive chronology and description of the WSF. In particular Schonleitner (2003) provides an excellent background and critique of the limitations of the WSF which according to this author revolve around 'three internal tensions:

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<sup>1</sup> See the various contributions in the Special edition on the World Social Forum of the *International Social Science Journal* (2004) and *The International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (2005) 29(2).

- The contradiction between “market-based” political entrepreneurship and democratic representation.
- A civic versus a political process; and
- Diversity versus convergence (which derives from the second tension)’.

Due to this final point Schonleitner (2003) believes the WSF evades the definition of a ‘movement’ as it lacks a cohesive identity and does not specifically aim for mobilisation. However, the definition of a ‘social movement’ varies according to a plethora of schools of thought within the social movement literature. Diani asserts common threads join these diverse perspectives deriving a definition of the concept of social movements as:

*‘Consisting in networks of informal interaction between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in political and/or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity’ (1992:3).*

Diani admits that this ‘shared collective identity’ is problematic and this is further explored by Melucci (1996) who problematises identity exploring the multiple layers and the reflexive nature of individual and collective identity. In this regard he points to the significance of focusing upon the processes of identity creation and of collective action.

According to Melucci collective identity is the central measure of collective action and is defined as:

*‘An interactive process through which several individuals or groups define the meaning of their action and the field of opportunities and constraints for such an action’ (1995:67).*

Within his definition of collective action is a temporal form character, whereby:

*‘Collective action is a set of social practices (i) involving simultaneously a number of individual groups, (ii) exhibiting similar morphological characteristics in contiguity*

*of time and space, (iii) implying a social field of relationships and (iv) the capacity of people involved of making sense of what they are actually doing' (Melucci, 1996:20).*

An extensive definition this implies both a temporal and contextual characteristic of the particular action. Additionally the final characteristic implies a degree of reflexivity on behalf of the social actors and a capacity for sense making within the bounded time and space of their action. These themes are reflected in the components of complexity theory earlier outlined. It is suggested that rather than assume collective identity a priori, the research should uncover the collective processes and seek to explore the dimensions of identity of and between the individuals that enact these processes. The SSF case study uses such a constructionist. But, we first discuss the development of the WSF to provide a context in which to examine the emergence of the SSF.

*World social forum: the global context.*

The WSF began in Puerto Allegre, Brazil in 2001 as an 'open meeting place' for discussion around the slogan 'Another World is Possible'. It emerged in direct opposition to the gathering of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos as a deliberate forum for discussions surrounding those who are excluded from the economy and for discussions excluded at the WEF. Since its inception smaller regional and urban social forums have self-organised globally such that the 'Social Forum' is best understood 'as a world-wide, movement-based, multi-scale and multi-sited cultural process' (Conway, 2005). Thus while the WSF 'began as a counter-balance to the World Economic Forum....social forums are an attempt to go beyond this, to investigate and make concrete moves towards alternatives' (SSF, 2006). Implied in this stated purpose of the SSF is a concrete call to action for those involved the social forum process.

### *Complexity and the social forum.*

The social forum exhibits properties of a complex system, in that direction is not provided from a centralised source and people are given autonomy to self organise in their local contexts. In each local setting the social forum then takes on unique characteristics, yet there remains an abstracted connection with the WSF. Individuals who form a collective to host a regional or urban forum decide the direction of the social forum at the local level. Given the assumptions of social complexity discussed earlier, we can see the social forum as a whole system of affiliated networks. Given local autonomy, there is not necessarily a systematic order or structure to these networks. Variation occurs between networks that can themselves change independently and unexpectedly over time.

### *The Principle of Emergence.*

Emergence is one of the key properties of a complex system, yet its nature and causes have been widely debated (Seel, 2006). Emergence is a complex phenomenon, which describes a process that is constantly coming into being. Many have struggled with a definition of emergence (Seel, 2006), while others have been able to put words to the definitive characteristics of emergence in particular:

*'Emergence is the production of global patterns of behaviour by agents in a complex system interacting according to their own local rules of behaviour, without intending the global patterns of behaviour that come about. In emergence, global patterns cannot be predicted from the local rules of behaviour that produce them. To put it another way, global patterns cannot be reduced to individual behaviour' (Stacey, 1996:287).*

Emergence is also the act or process of becoming an emergent system. Again this implies that emergence is not a stable state. It is a system of constant becoming in relation to the environment and the individuals that act together in some form of collective behaviour. This concept seeks to explain what a system does by virtue of its environment that it would not do by itself. Hence we can view the emergence of the SSF in relation to its local environment, but within the complexity of the social forum.

*What is the SSF?*

*'(The SSF) aims to facilitate discussion of the nature and significance of the international social forum movement....The SSF sees itself as part of a world-wide movement' (SSF, 2006).*

A local Sydney formation of the WSF, the SSF held its inaugural gathering in September 2002. Four annual forums have been hosted through the SSF, each guided by different themes of contemporary relevance. Meetings of the voluntary Organising Group are held every fortnight for the purpose of hosting an annual forum which 'is a space created for and by the participants' (SSF, 2006).

**Table 2: SSF Organising Group Purpose Statement.**

*The purpose of the Organising Group is to facilitate (and be a nucleus for) the ongoing process of the social forum momentum by creating space, networks, and activities that will promote the existence of a diverse and truly representative Sydney Social Forum.*

*The organising group is informed and motivated by the experiences of past social forums, the processes of transparency, democratic organizing, and the reality of the Sydney social/political climate.*

*The organising group also spends time discussing the many theories and philosophies of the social forum concept, therefore becoming a comfortable and safe space for discussion of goals and ideas. This serves to inform the work we do in creating the "space" for the social forum to blossom. Ultimately, the Sydney Social Forum is not the organising group, it is instead what is created by a diversity of groups and individuals in the community who utilise the tools the organising group attempts to put out' (SSF 2003).*

**The SSF Organising Group agreed on this stated purpose on 22 May 2003.**

The purpose statement of the organising group embodies the principles for participation and the SSF is clearly defined in the final sentence (see Table 2, above). Through democratic

processes the organising group decides the themes, organises the keynote speakers and provides outreach to encourage participation in the SSF. In essence this group shapes the SSF, but at no times is definitive of the entire purpose of the SSF. Primarily this analysis examines the collective processes of the organising group in their organisation of the annual forum and also considers some of the ways in which these processes fit within complexity theory.

### *Methodology.*

The SSF was selected as a site for investigation as guided by a 'purposive' sampling technique that encourages identification of potential cases that seemingly exhibit characteristics of the theoretical framework (Silverman, 2000; 104). Participant observation and in-depth interviews were used to collect data to build the case study. The researcher was an active participant in fortnightly organisation group meetings for 12 months and a latent member for a further 12 months. During this time field notes and email correspondence were recorded, as well as secondary materials such as meeting minutes, information sheets and media releases collated. In total nine, one hour interviews were conducted. Semi-structured interviews were initially conducted with four core active members of the organising group around a pre-devised schema derived from the literature review. Questions were loosely designed, enabling participants own interpretations to emerge to extract information regarding their understanding of the way in which the collective and the forum operates, their understanding of the collective processes and the ways in which they identify with the movement. Such questions aim to build a collective understanding of the processes through which an emergent movement organises and to see if those interviewed identify with 'the movement' in similar ways.

While transparency of the organising group facilitated detection of interview participants, it is problematic to identify latent members or those who may attend annual forums and other regular awareness raising events, but are not active in the organising group. Diani (1992) observes: 'little or nothing will be known about the networks of those who feel part of the movement and may often participate in single actions, yet do not join any group or organisation on a permanent basis'. In this regard 'snowball sampling' was used to identify people in the latent networks of the active organising group to build information about the overall structure of the latent network. Five of those interviewed can be considered latent members. The following discussion reveals preliminary findings from the interview summary sheets and observations extracted from field notes. In particular these findings discuss the organisational processes that occur within the regular meetings of the organising group.

*'Organising' in 'Un-ordered' Space.*

The majority of those involved in the organising group for the 2004 forum had no prior involvement in such a process. Some participants had not attended a social forum; indicating the 'organisers' were operating in an environment of uncertainty over the form, content and desired outcome of the annual forum. Initial meetings were consumed with building a collective understanding of the way in which both the organising group should operate and the form of the annual forum; essentially an attempt to build a collective understanding of what is the SSF? Participants were navigating uncertain waters and were unsure of their individual involvement, as well as the collective capacity of the group to execute a large-scale forum. Through experience and reflection upon the ways in which the last meeting worked, a pattern of interaction began to emerge within the group based upon consensual decision-making. Periods of conflict and debate, open dialogue and consensual decision-making enabled a collective understanding of the proposed themes for the annual forum.

Identification of tasks to be completed in order to achieve this vision were subsequently attained. As time restrictions became a factor in the weeks preceding the forum, smaller working groups of self-nominated interests formed around essential procedures such as awareness raising, venue layout, facilitation, coordinating volunteers, infrastructure, fundraising and organising workshops and plenary sessions. These formed after consensual agreement that this was a necessary task. While one combined planning session was eventually organised to map out what needed to be achieved, action largely occurred in emergent manner whereby patterns could be seen in retrospect. At the debrief meeting after the 2004 forum there was a sense of excitement and wonder that out of the disordered organising emerged such an organised forum.

### ***Organisational processes within an Un-ordered System?***

#### *Collective Identity.*

All but one respondent identified with the forum in similar ways. Firstly, they spoke about their personal involvement through some social contact. This occurred due to their peers' involvement, an interest sparked through their other activist networks or because the organisation for which they worked had some connection with the forum. Social connections were an inherent trigger for involvement in the organising group. They also identified their participation in the forum with a global movement, either the 'anti-globalisation', 'anti-corporate', or progressive movements of the left, or with the WSF. Some responses identified the 'open space' of the forum as providing a space for connection and coalitions to build the strength of the progressive movements in Sydney and globally. Several respondents had felt inspired from their involvement in the SSF to participate in the European Social Forum or the WSF. In this sense those interviewed felt a connection with others in the SSF in that they were engaged in similar social or environmental struggles in much the same sense as a

collective 'movement' identity. Some even referred to their involvement with the 'social forum movement'. One respondent proved the exception. Although this respondent had been active in the organising group they were unable to identify with the forum due to the lack of a strongly stated cohesive direction or purpose.

While most participants recalled similar identification with the SSF, they generally felt there was no need for the forum to have cohesive aims or a stated plan for future direction. One respondent described how the forum is not clearly directed a priori. Individuals and groups, by virtue of their participation, bring their desires for discussions at the forum to the organising group. Through consensual decision making processes the forum takes the collective shape of these combined ideas. In this sense the forum is a reflection of the locally situated current political, social or environmental struggles, and its direction is changeable dependent upon representation and participation of people from those movements and groups. The forum is a mirror of contemporary movements in Sydney. Direction emerges and aims unfold within the process of organisation and these are temporal in relation to the dynamic external environment. Through this means, the forum is constantly able to adapt its purpose.

Yet within this there is an implied stability of purpose:

*'The SSF also aims to provide a platform for proposals of action, and concrete inter-linking of campaigns. We encourage as many individuals and groups as possible to use the opportunity to participate, meet and discuss strategies' (SSF, 2006).*

It is clearly stated that the 'open space' of the forum intentionally provides a platform for building networks across these movements and organisations. Thus the direction of these networks is not centrally directed but emergent within each forum, yet the provision of open space to encourage interactions for network formation is a stable purpose of the forum.

Interviewees also identified this common purpose as a desire to build networks and coalitions, provide outreach, raise the profile of their associated social movements and strengthen the progressive movements within Sydney, Australia and the world.

Again, there was one exception to these general perceptions. This interviewee felt the forum lacked a cohesive direction and needed strong leadership with a stated purpose. 'Another World is Possible' is meaningless without clear identification of these possibilities. According to this interviewee the lack of direction rendered the forum meaningless and that absence of intended outcomes or aims meant the forum was incapable of attaining real social change. It was the perception of this interviewee that a lack of structure without defined roles and leadership was inefficient and potentially ostracised willing participants. Unclear roles and responsibilities created replication of tasks between individuals and left some unsure of their contribution to the organising group. Newcomers unable to understand the absence of delegated responsibility may lack confidence to 'self nominate' for tasks and subsequently leave the group without being able to contribute. Finally this interviewee felt that those with the most knowledge, experience, confidence and informal power in the group tended to 'unofficially' control the leadership of organising meetings and hence the direction of the forum.

*Self-nominated roles and decentralised control.*

The majority of respondents did not share these perceptions. Generally, they expressed support for the lack of hierarchy and the absence of official leadership or roles and responsibilities. There is no centralised leadership or officially elected leader, which enables plurality in terms of the way things are done. But also this enables constant experimentation with different forms of organising. Generally, there is a facilitator who aims to enable equal

participation in discussions, and consensual decision-making when there is a call for a decision to be finalised. People self-nominate to enact tasks within the organising group and within the self-organising sub-sets. These groups form within the organising group and then continue their self-nominated tasks facilitated through the Internet list serve and volunteer time outside of the organising meetings. Interviewees generally commented that self-nomination was effective. People contributed in areas where they had previous experience or where they wanted to gain new knowledge. Additionally, people only had to complete tasks in which they felt they had capacity and time. Some did observe that the lack of enforced commitment meant the responsibility for some tasks did seem to fall with a small group of more committed individuals. However, necessity entailed essential tasks were preformed without need for top-down delegation and control. This un-ordered organising space provides opportunities for self-organised order to emerge without centralised direction and provides a basis for consensual decision-making processes which enabled open and equal participation in all aspects of the way both the annual forum and the organising meetings run.

#### *Consensual decision-making.*

All interviewees commented on the effectiveness of consensual decision making for enabling participation in organisational proceedings. Decision-making in meetings occurs through a free-flowing conversational style for action-oriented decisions as well as for setting tasks such as deciding meeting agendas. Simultaneously, interviewees made commented on the time consuming nature of the process; one noted that half a meeting could be taken just trying to get everyone to agree over the agenda. Given this constraint, they emphasised the positive aspect of as the eventual outcome has maximum satisfaction and commitment from all those present and enables understanding of diverse views. One interviewee noted that during this discussion time issues are negated and this allows one to build support through dialogue for

one's own position. Eventually discussion reaches a point where someone will make a call for action and consensus is taken whereby no one in the room expresses dissent. One interviewee noted the relative effectiveness of the technique is dependent upon the number of people present at the organising meetings. Either extreme of numbers tended to confound the process, but a group of about eight seemed to work very efficiently. While they all supported the decision making process they felt that there might be times when others felt frustrated and this could be isolating for new people who come to the meetings.

*Internet facilitated communication.*

Where there is restriction of time or substantial disagreement over topics, they are left for discussion after the meeting and put to the list serve<sup>2</sup> for discussion. All interviewees emphasised the significance of the Internet to facilitate communication and provide a space for discussion. During the weeks leading up to the forum this list was very active with up to 20 messages per day. Discussions on the list serve surround issues related to organising the forum as well as specific tasks such as combined contributions toward mail-out communication or the wording of themes to be selected for the forum. Additionally, the Internet proved a networking tool whereby people could seek information and provide connections between those interested in similar areas of the forum. For example, when organising a workshop session for the annual forum people often put questions to the list regarding possibilities for potential speakers. In this sense the Internet allowed access to the collective networks of all the participants.

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<sup>2</sup> Members of the OG subscribe to the list serve. It is an Internet based email service which facilitates group discussions and decision-making. It also enables those who are not able to attend meetings to participate on the OG.

### *Network creation and the annual forum.*

The forum strengthened networks both within the organising group, but also between the hundreds of participants at the annual forum. All interviewees highlighted the importance of networks as both an outcome and a means of organising the forum. According to one interviewee, the annual forum provides a neutral space for people to create connections for social progression, a joining of diverse networks from the environmental and social movements. Action may not occur at the forum, but this open space provides a springboard for connections to be maintained and propelled into action at some later stage when there is a call to action. One interviewee noted that these connections could remain latent for some time and then spring into action as required due to the connections made through face-to-face contact and open discussions at the SSF. In this way another interviewee described the way in which the annual forum itself may not 'achieve' a direct outcome, but was successful in this networking capacity to connect those who would otherwise not meet.

### **Discussion: Significance of the Complexity Metaphor.**

*'A collective action may present itself as an empirical unity (a 'we') but it is a complex system of processes and actions' (Melucci, 1996).*

### *The SSF organising group: an emergent, self-organising unit in a complex system?*

These preliminary results suggest a new means of collective organisation within a complex system. This organising is based upon decentralised control, un-ordered organisation, and connections between diverse networks. While there is a symbolic linkage with the WSF, the SSF is autonomous self-organising group, which decides its emergent direction through consensual decision-making processes. The social forum is decentralised on both a global scale and within the local formation.

Complexity is important as it indicates the significance of decentralised control and provides space for prospective emergent forms to self-organise within local contexts with possibilities for local organisations to have impact upon the whole system. In the context of complexity Escobar believes anti-globalisation social movements:

*'May already be seen as fostering a sort of "emergence" in their attempt to counter the deadening, hierarchy-laden systems of neoliberal globalisation... (they) can be thought about in terms of self-organising networks (a meshwork) of movements that produces behaviour that goes beyond each individual movement' (Escobar, 2003:353).*

The social forum movement does seem to fit this description. The preliminary analysis of the SSF indicates the ways in which these 'self-organising networks' are facilitated through the organising group and the forum and this is significant as it enables others to understand such processes and how they fit within the global 'meshwork'.

Fundamental to the global social forum movement is an ongoing dialogue concerning the capacity of the WSF to remain truly open and all-inclusive. Transparent processes and the use of open space for the emergence of self-organisation are viewed as crucial in this respect (Sen, 2003). The results of this preliminary study revealed an unexpected finding in the critical nature of some responses in relation to the openness of the SSF. In particular, some respondents identified that the lack of clear expression of the organisational processes was in itself exclusionary. For this reason it is significant to understand and describe the 'open' processes through which the SSF and the global social forum movement organises.

It is also important in this regard to understand the significance of the local formation without convergence with some centralised guiding identity or purpose. Here Escobar highlights the warning of Adamovsky (2003) whom sees that:

*“the danger could start if and when those facilitating the process... attempt to create a structure that claims to represent “the Totality” of the social movements, or impose agendas instead of letting each node enter and exit network coalitions in terms of their own interests and needs’ (Escobar, 2003).*

This again signifies the importance of understanding the operations of the local formation such as the SSF and using the complexity metaphor to describe the operation of the system rather than seek to encapsulate all local forums within a centralised organisation. The means through which the SSF participants identify with the worldwide social forum movement or with the ‘anti-globalisation’ movement yet enact a autonomous formation of this through their actions within the local SSF indicates the significance of this global-local interconnection.

On a practical level, those interested in participating in such forms of organising may find beneficial knowledge regarding the organisational processes. Most respondents highlighted how new comers or people unfamiliar with the way the forum operates may feel ostracised. In this regard they may not understand their capacity to self-nominate for tasks, they may lack confidence to voice their opinions in the decision-making processes and finally they may not understand the way in which the direction of the forum is decided by its participants. These important findings emerging from the data suggest an important role of individual and collective agency in the social forum movement and open an avenue for future investigation.

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