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How Global Public Debates Enter National Contexts: The Case of Finnish Associations at the World Social Forum

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Abstract

The World Social Forum, the largest annual world meeting of NGOs and social movements, can be understood as a host of publics; it is where these different actors come together to take part in global public debates. In this paper I examine some of the factors that make possible such debates and, in particular, the ways in which these debates enter national contexts and influence decision-making on the national level. I do this through three examples of debates participated in by Finnish associations at the WSF: The debate on global democracy initiatives participated in by the Network Institute for Global Democratization, the debate on worker's rights in the globalizing economy participated in by the Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland and the debate on taxing global currency transactions participated in by Attac Finland. The existence of these global debates is made possible by global networks of associations. Their means of exerting influence seem to be twofold. On the one hand they aim at influencing public opinion through presence in the media, and on the other hand influencing decision-makers more directly through what I call the development cooperation policy network. This network acts not only as a channel of influence but also as a provider of resources for organizing global public debates. As national media institutions are still relatively important in comparison with the global ones, and global democratic decision-making structures and related policy networks are lacking, much of the influence of global public debates passes through the national level.

Introduction: The World Social Forum as a Host of Publics

The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulation of proposals, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any form of imperialism (The World Social Forum Charter of Principles 2001).

The World Social Forum is the largest annual world meeting of social movements and NGOs, held for the 3rd time in 2003 at Porto Alegre, Brazil. The WSF can be understood as a host of publics, engaged in global public debates. The WSF does not have a single unifying political goal or even a programme consisting of various goals. It is not, therefore, a pressure group or a transnational advocacy network (in the sense of Keck and Sikkink, 1998), even though it may be thought of in a way as a network of various such networks. Nor is the WSF a social movement. The most commonly accepted definitions of a social movement converge in seeing collective action for achieving a common goal as the central feature of movements (cf. della Porta & Diani 1999 14-15; Tarrow 1994, 3).

It is true that the organizing of the WSF can be seen as a part of what is often called the Global Justice Movement, which emerged from the massive street protests and other forms of collective action from Chiapas to Seattle to Gothenburg to Genoa. It is equally true that the WSF itself exhibits various demonstrations and other features of collective movement action – including the huge inauguration march each year – and the forum’s participants represent organizations that function as parts of various social movements. I would still like to argue, that treating the WSF in its present state a social movement would amount to missing something important about the phenomenon. Rather, at the core of the WSF seems to be the appeal to the idea of public debate as an essential part of democracy, and the attempt to conduct this debate globally.

The emergence of the idea and institutions of the public sphere in 18th century Britain is traced by Jürgen Habermas in his modern classic *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989 [1962]). The bourgeois public sphere emerged to challenge the societal order of the era of feudalism, based on hereditary relations of power. These relations were to be replaced by political decisions based on rational public debate between equal citizens. The central idea was to bracket out the differences of status between the participants of the debate and have the best rational argument carry the day. Domination was to be replaced by reason.

The World Social Forum appeals to this idea of public debate that came about with the birth of modern democratic nation-states. But the WSF does not differ from the 18th century national bourgeois public spheres only by being global in its reach. The self-understanding concerning the nature and norms of debate also seems to be different. The norms of debate stated in the WSF charter of principles and the practices used to enact them convey a conception of public debate that is far more conscious of the power relations inevitably present, and less universalistic in its claim to rationality than the 18th century conception as presented by Habermas. Debate is no longer understood as means of doing away with power relations, but rather as means of continuous thematizing of those relations and thus at the same time questioning them and acknowledging their presence as a context for the debate.

If this is true, the notion of *counterpublics* as developed, among others, by Nancy Fraser (1992) and Michael Warner (2002) provides a fruitful perspective on the WSF. Publics, to begin with, may be defined as “self-organized social spaces constituted by circulation of discourse, that consist of relations between strangers”¹. The public sphere of society, from this perspective, consists of various such spaces, constituted by circulation of discourse concerning a certain political issue. The opinions formed during the circulation of discourses by different publics often conflict

¹ This is my adaptation of Warner’s much more elaborate, seven-part definition laid out in an entire essay (Warner 2002, 65-124).

with each other and the conflicts pertain not only to differences in opinion about particular policy choices. Often the norms of the debate themselves are questioned. This is true in particular with regard to the norms concerning which things are to be subject to public debate and which are left in the private sphere, and who are the legitimate participants in public debates and who are not.

Counterpublics, according to Warner (2002), are those publics who question the limits of public/private issues and legitimate/non-legitimate participants. For example, some publics at the WSF challenge the doctrine of economic neutrality of the international financial institutions, and claim that economic matters are not private or apolitical, but ought to be subjected to democratic control and public debate. Besides the limits of public and private, the limits of the group of legitimate participants are questioned. It is insisted that that not only economic experts, but in principle all citizens, should be considered legitimate participants of the debate about economic issues. To take another example, the feminist counterpublics of the WSF insist that violence towards women should not be left a private matter, but made public and questioned, and that women should be considered legitimate participants of public debate.

The objective of this paper is to analyze some examples of the counterpublics of the World Social Forum. But rather than providing a detailed analysis of their discourses, I have chosen to concentrate on the institutional arrangements that (1) make possible their existence and (2) provide them with the means for influencing political decisions.

I shall examine three examples of debates participated in by representatives of Finnish associations at the WSF 2002. This provides a possibility to concentrate, in particular, in the interaction between global debates and Finnish national policy makers. My argument is (1) that the existence of global publics depends on the existence of global networks of different kinds of associations, from think tanks to trade unions to social movement organizations and (2) that their means to influence decision-making are on the one hand influencing public opinion through presence in the media, and on the other, at least in the case of Finland, by national policy networks.

I shall proceed by first presenting the concepts of networks of associations and policy networks and the ways in which they are relevant to the analysis of global public debates. Then I move on to analyze three examples of debates participated in by Finns at the WSF and the global networks of associations that these debates are built on. Last I shall examine what I call the Finnish development cooperation policy network as a provider of resources to the publics in question, and in particular as a channel of influence through which global publics and the Finnish national system of governance interact.

Publics, Networks of Associations and Policy Networks

Networks of associations have always provided a necessary basis for public debate. Although Habermas' original analysis of the bourgeois public sphere does not account for this fact, later research has pointed out the importance of voluntary associations as the breeding ground for critical publics. For example Eley (1992) shows how the clubhouses and libraries of bourgeois cultural and philanthropic associations were centers of local political life in various settings around Europe, and how the associations formed networks that were often later mobilized for more explicitly political purposes.

Today, those theorists of democracy who emphasize the importance of public debate for democratic governance generally acknowledge the importance of networks of associations as a basis for debate. This is true of Habermas' later writings (cf. Habermas 1992; Habermas 1996), but also of many others, including Cohen & Arato (1994) and Mark E. Warren (Warren 2001; for a brief overview, see Fung, 2003, 524-526).

Networks of associations have, starting after the Second World War and especially during the last two decades, become increasingly global. Especially in the global south the networks of associations have strongly developed since the 1980's (Rucht 1999, 210–211). The sole task of these associations or NGOs is rarely engagement in public debate. For example, some associations present at the WSF, like Oxfam and others, concentrate chiefly on implementing concrete develop-

ment cooperation projects. Others, like trade unions, aim at betterment of the position of their members and exert pressure towards employers and governments by many other means besides speaking out in public. Yet others state “research and advocacy” as their objectives, and are thus more oriented to gathering information and using it to participate in public debates.

The WSF is where these various kinds of associations with different aims and different ways of trying to reach them come together to debate. On the one hand these debates aim at forming opinions and possibly finding common aims and means for achieving them for the multitude of different actors that the WSF brings together. On the other hand, the debates are meant to be distributed outside the forum itself, and so bring the issues to the agenda of political debate and decision-making in different parts of the world. For this reason, the organizers of the WSF seem to go through a lot of trouble to attract media attention – and seem to be doing reasonably well in gaining it. But there are other ways for the debates at the WSF to spread outside Porto Alegre and influence decision-making.

Policy Networks: Where Networks of Associations and Decision-Makers Meet

Policy networks form one channel through which debates of various publics can reach the ears of those who have the power to make political decisions. On the other hand, they may provide resources needed for conducting debates.

Research on social movements has pointed out the increase in number and importance of different institutional arrangements through which groups of citizens may get their voices heard. Expert commissions set up as a result of demands by the environmentalist movement and official committees for gender equality where women’s movements and associations are represented are examples of these arrangements (cf. della Porta 2000, 243-245; della Porta & Diani 1999, 273-241; Rättälä 2001).

Policy networks can be seen as one of such arrangements. They can be defined as “(more or less) stable patterns of social relations between interdependent actors, which take shape around pol-

icy problems and/or policy programmes” (Kickert, Klijn & Koppenjan 1997, 6). Policy networks have been formed during the past two decades in policy sectors such as agricultural policy, housing and social service provision. The networks usually consist of governmental or administrative bodies (local, national, global) NGO’s, experts and research institutes and private enterprise. Besides debating on policy guidelines, the networks also engage in implementing policies. For example a housing policy network may include the city administration, residential district associations and construction companies, who together design and implement a construction project. The implementing role may be taken not only by a private enterprise, but in some cases, such as social service provision or development cooperation projects, by non-profit organizations.

Policy networks are not necessarily sites of equal debate open to all citizens’ groups – often to the contrary. The emergence of policy networks has been associated with the neo-liberal policies of the Thatcher and Reagan administrations and so-called new public management, that “stress a businesslike approach to government focusing on performance indicators, deregulation and privatization, and making government 'function like a firm'” (Kickert et al. 1997, 3). In the local networks studied by Cole (1999) for example, business interests play a strong role, and rather than subjecting policy decisions to debate and control by citizens, take them to the shelter of closed cabinets.

Global policy networks often display similar tendencies. For example the Global Development Network put together by the World Bank is assembled together with the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE) run by the US Chamber of Commerce. The members of this network belong CIPE’s Economic Freedom Network, that states as its mission to “advance the cause of economic freedom, democratic consolidation and business development” (www.cipe.org/efn, cited in Stone 2000, 170). “Cooperation with civil society” turns into letting business interests set the agenda.

But as I aim to demonstrate in this paper, policy networks are not only a way of outsourcing state functions to private enterprise and to increase the influence of business interests in policy mak-

ing. The Finnish development cooperation policy network provides resources for organizing global debates participated in by various associations, and acts as a channel through which these debates can influence Finnish national policy making. Such networks could, in principle, be a step from a centralized and heavily bureaucratic state towards openness and more active citizen participation.

Three Examples of Global Networks of Associations as the Basis of the Debates at the WSF

The first edition of the WSF in 2001 attracted only a few Finnish participants representing the Network Institute for Global Democratization (NIGD). In WSF 2002 the Finnish delegation consisted of 16 people. Six were representatives of the NIGD, two of the Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland (SASK) and two of the Advisory Board for Development Cooperation, an advisory body for the Department of Development Cooperation of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

One delegate represented each of the following: The Service Centre for Development Cooperation, a central organization that coordinates the development cooperation of Finnish NGOs, The Workers' Educational Association and Attac Finland. Three members of the delegation were journalists. The delegation in 2003 was rather similar in composition, but its size had increased to 21 persons.

To illustrate the role of networks of associations as the basis of debates at the WSF, I shall take as examples three of the above-mentioned associations, namely the NIGD, SASK and Attac. I shall provide a brief description of one debate that each of these associations has participated in at the WSF by outlining the *issue at stake* in the debate, the composition of the *network* of associations engaged in the debate and the means by which each of these debates aims to *influence* decision-making.

NIGD: North-South Dialogue on Global Democracy Initiatives

The NIGD is a think tank that “aims at promoting global democratization by producing and developing emancipatory knowledge for democratic movements, organizations and states.” (Network Institute for Global Democratization - Goals, 2003). The institute was set up by a (Finnish) profes-

sor at the Nottingham Trent University. It is organized as a network of researchers based in Finland, Peru and India.

The *issue* at stake in the debates organized by the NIDG at the WSF was identifying and evaluating different initiatives towards global democratization. The initiatives were 1) global taxation (on currency transactions and carbon monoxide emissions), 2) UN reforms, 3) democratization of the Bretton Woods –institutions, 4) a north-south truth commission and 5) strengthening the World Social Forum. The aim of the project was to bring out views held by actors in the global south in debates on global governance that are often, according to the project report, “heavily dominated by the northern/international research institutes in general, and by Anglo-American writers in particular.” (Rikkilä & Sehm-Patomäki 2002, 15).

The *network* that acted as a basis for the debate consisted of associations based in the global south that mainly concentrate on research but engage also in other actions. The four associations were the *Forum du Tiers Monde*, based in Senegal but networked to Asia and Latin America, the *Centre for the Study of Developing Societies* in India, the *Centro Flora Tristán* in Peru and the *Instituto Brasileiro de Análises Sociais e Econômicas* in Brazil (Rikkilä & Sehm-Patomäki 2002, 16).

The *means of exerting influence* were twofold: media presence and the Finnish development cooperation policy network. To gain the attention of the representatives of the global media present at the WSF, a large conference on global democracy initiatives was organized besides the smaller-scale debates held among the representatives of the different organizations that took part in the project. As a member organization of the International Council of the WSF the NIGD was in a position to put together an event in one of the larger arenas and with such superstars of the Global Justice Movement as Susan George and Walden Bello. The conference attracted a large number of participants and managed to gain attention from the press of different countries – though not the mainstream media in Finland. Some media attention in Finland was gained later when the project report was published.

Perhaps more important, however, was the effort to influence those who make decisions concerning Finnish development cooperation. The North-South Dialogue –project was launched before the WSF with a workshop in Helsinki, organized jointly by the NIGD and the Department for Development Cooperation of the Finnish Foreign Ministry. Representatives of the organizations participating in the project were met by the minister of foreign trade and the the minister of environment and development cooperation, many officials, plus the former president of Finland Martti Ahtisaari who before and after his term in office has worked in various UN missions of development cooperation and related issues. This workshop and the seminars organized in Finland after the WSF, when the project reports were published, aimed at making the global democracy initiatives and southern organizations that promote them known to the civil servants and the representatives of the Finnish government.

SASK: Workers' Rights in Multinational Corporations

SASK, The Trade Union Solidarity Centre of Finland, implements development cooperation projects that mostly aim at strengthening trade unions in countries of the global south. The centre is affiliated to the central confederations of the Finnish trade unions. SASK sees its projects not only as aid for those less well off, but as “a way of securing workers rights globally” that is taken to be to the advantage of workers both in the north and in the south (SASK 2003).

The *issue at stake* in the debates that SASK participated in at the WSF, thus, is workers' rights in the globalizing economy. The specific objective was to organize the monitoring of working conditions at the plant of Nokia, a Finland-based multinational telecommunications company, in the free trade zone of Manaus in Brazil. Nokia controls over 50% of mobile phone sales in Brazil and is the largest employer in the free zone of Manaus. The working conditions were to be checked against five criteria set by the International Labor Organization: 1) the right to unionize, 2) the right to collectively bargained contracts, 3) forbidding child labor, 4) forbidding discrimination based on

ethnic origin, gender, or political opinions or religious belief and 5) protection from accidents at the workplace.

The *network* that the public in question builds on consists of labor union related organizations in south and north. The research institute conducting the monitoring process, the *Observatorio Social* (OS), is affiliated to the *Central Unica dos Trabalhadores* (CUT), the Brazilian confederation of trade unions. CUT is the largest and the best-resourced of the Brazilian organizations that took the initiative to organize the WSF. OS was created as a result of a project of cooperation between the CUT and German and Dutch labor unions, to monitor the working conditions in Brazil in plants operated by German and Dutch multinationals.

The global networks of labor union related organizations have brought actors from other countries to work with the OS. In the seminar organized by the OS at the WSF there were for example representatives from the US trade union confederation AFL-CIO, who are interested in setting up a similar monitoring system in plants owned by North American companies in the maquiladora zones of Mexico. South African trade unionists were also present and are planning to establish an institute similar to the OS. In cooperation with several European trade unions, and with funding from the European Commission, the OS is also establishing an office in Brussels to enhance its capabilities to monitor European companies.

As in the case of the NIGD, the *means to exert influence* were based on the media on the one hand, and networks reaching to the national level in Finland on the other – but in a configuration rather different from the previous case. The strategy was to produce a research report on the working conditions in the Nokia plant, and in case the results were not favorable, tell the company that if no improvements were made, the report would be made public. As mobile phones are a heavily branded product, unfavorable publicity would have the potential to greatly damage the company. The publication would first take place in the home country of the company, Finland, where a na-

tional public debate on the ethics of the largest company in the country could, it was thought, force them to act in case violations of the ILO conventions were to be found.

The trade union networks in Finland would not only take care of making public the report but also act as a means to exert influence on Nokia themselves. If necessary, the strong trade unions of Finland could use their floor-level organization in Finnish plants of the company to put pressure on them to improve working conditions in Brazil.

The research was conducted, but the negative publicity campaign or the trade union pressure actions never took place – because no violations of the ILO codes were found. The wages, benefits and working conditions in the Nokia plant of Manaus were, to the contrary, well above Brazilian minimum requirements. The report was published nevertheless; it is a part of the strategy of the OS to give positive feedback when it is deserved. The workers in the Manaus plant were familiarized with trade union activity and the company became conscious that they are monitored as a result of the project.

Attac: The Global Currency Transaction Tax

Attac (*Association pour la Taxation des Transactions Financières pour l'aide aux Citoyens*) was established in France in 1998, and rapidly spread to some 50 countries all over the world. Attac now has tens of thousands of members worldwide, 2500 of whom belong to Attac Finland, established in 2001. The association was born in the course of public debate on the drawbacks vs. the benefits of economic globalization, as a result of the proposal by Ignacio Ramonet in the French periodical *Le Monde Diplomatique*. Attac was one of the most important organizations in initiating the WSF, in particular creating ties of cooperation between the Brazilian organizers and the participants from the North.

The principal issue at stake for Attac is the establishment of a global currency transaction tax (CTT). The CTT, also known as the Tobin tax, would be a small tax levied on currency transactions. Its purpose is to stabilize the rapidly growing and increasingly volatile global financial mar-

kets, to decrease the structural power of transnational financial capital vis-a-vis states and to provide tax revenue that could be used to finance development in the poorer regions of the world. At the WSF many debates on this theme have been arranged, the latest being the workshop debating and improving the Draft Treaty for an international agreement on the CTT at the WSF 2003. The workshop was organized jointly by Attacs of different countries, including Finland, and the NIGD.

The network at the basis of this debate is the global network of national and local chapters of Attac itself. In many countries, like France and Germany, other organizations that support the CTT have become members of the Attac network. In Finland Attac accepts only individuals as members. Other associations besides Attac have also been campaigning on the CTT. These include the Canadian Halifax initiative, the US-based Tobin Tax Initiative and War on Want in the UK. Of intergovernmental organizations the United Nations Development Programme has worked on the CTT, but has been forced to back off under pressure from the United States (Patomäki 1999).

The means to exert influence of the CTT campaign pass, again, largely through the national level, and include both media presence and less open lobbying. The importance of influencing decisions in the national level stems from the fact that the intergovernmental bodies that might, in principle have the mandate to further the development of global taxation – like the IMF, World Bank, G8 or even the European Union – are in practice unwilling to do so. The aim of the campaign is, therefore, to find a state that would be willing to organize an international conference, as a result of which a number of countries would sign a treaty to implement the tax. This, in turn, would require that a certain number of countries would, in advance, express their willingness to sign the treaty.

At the height of the global public debate on the CTT, in the wake of the Asian economic crisis of 1997, leftist and green parties in various countries expressed support for the tax. Some parliaments, for example in Canada, passed a bill that required the government to take the initiative to promote the CTT internationally. (Patomäki 1999, 51-52.)

In Finland, the NIGD and the NGO Service centre for development cooperation, Kepa, launched a campaign for the tax in 1999, well before the establishment of Attac Finland. The campaign included research work by the NIGD and a publication of a book on the subject. Media attention was gained by interviews given by the researchers, and by some journalists of the top papers in the country investigating into the subject. Kepa set up a web discussion forum and printed material on the CTT. An opinion poll was conducted by a tv-channel, with the result that over seventy per cent of members of the Finnish parliament were in favor of the tax (Eduskunta Tobinin veron puolella 2001). The connections of the campaigners to the Green and the Allied Left parties, which were part of the five-party “rainbow coalition” government, were actively used to promote the tax. “Charting the possibilities to curb international financial speculation” was put on the agenda of the newly elected government.

The possibilities were charted in a report commissioned by the Ministry of Finance. The group of economists writing the report concluded the CTT to be an inefficient, unrealistic project that would hinder the beneficial workings of liberalized financial markets (Ministry of Finance 2001). Kepa and NIGD produced their own counter-report (Kepa 2001), but in vain. The government concluded that no further action needed to be taken. The following year a report commissioned by the German Ministry of the Environment, also produced by an independent working group of economic experts, concluded the CTT to be both efficient and feasible (Spahn 2002).

As regards the relation of global debates and national decision-making, a further interesting fact is worth noticing. The national CTT campaign in Finland was started as a result of global debates concerning the tax. Even though this campaign in Finland produced no political decisions, it did produce material on the subject that entered back into global debates. The book on the tax in Finnish was published in revised form for the English-speaking audience (Patomäki 2001). Parts of it were also published in Brazil (Portuguese) and Indonesia (Indonesian).

In 2002 NIGD took the expertise gained in the Finnish debate and produced, together with Belgian colleagues, the Draft Treaty, that is meant to serve as a basis for a global campaign for the CTT (Patomäki and Denys 2002). The global debate on the CTT has also served as a focal point in the process that produced a network of Attac chapters all over the world, that now take on many other tasks besides campaigning on the CTT – including their important role in the creation of the World Social Forum.

The Finnish Development Cooperation Policy Network as a Provider of Resources and as a Channel of Influence

All of the three associations examined above belong, in one way or another, to what I call the Finnish development cooperation policy network. The network is formed around the Department of Development Cooperation of the Finnish Foreign Ministry, and consists of associations that take part in formulating development cooperation policies and implementing development projects funded by the ministry.

As demonstrated above, the network provided both the NIGD North-South Dialogue – project and the Attac-NIDG-Kepa –initiated currency transaction tax –campaign with possibilities to make themselves heard and potentially influence decisions. With SASK this was not the case. No talks with the representatives of the Finnish or Brazilian administrative bodies were conducted; the means of exerting influence were, in addition to the media, trade union networks inside the Nokia Corporation.

But in all three cases, the development cooperation policy network provided the associations with resources to take part in the debates at the WSF. The NIGD North-South Dialogues were for the most part funded by the Foreign Ministry. Most of the money was used for travel costs of delegates from the global south to the WSF. Roughly two thirds of SASK's funding comes from the

Foreign Ministry, the rest being provided by trade unions². Attac also received a small sum from the ministry to pay the way of one of their own delegates as well as four delegates from their southern partner organizations to the WSF.

It has to be emphasized, however, that none of these associations were established to work for the Finnish government, nor are they exclusively dependent on state funding. The NIGD's base funding comes from the Nottingham Trent University and projects have been funded by many different foundations and institutions besides the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. SASK, though most heavily dependent on the state of these three organizations, still receives a third of its funding from the trade unions that have established it. Attac Finland has been established as an association that relies for its funding on the fees paid by individual members, and the only funding it has received from the Finnish state was the small sum granted for participation at the WSF.

Besides these three examples, most of the other Finnish participant organizations to the WSF have been involved in the development cooperation policy network. Kepa, referred to above, is a node in this network, a central organization that other Finnish organizations involved in development cooperation belong to as members. Kepa receives funding from the Foreign Ministry. The Workers' Educational Association, besides their activities in Finland, implements development cooperation projects funded partly by the state. The Advisory Board for Development Cooperation is one of the important elements in the policy network that fosters dialogue and exchange of resources between NGOs and the administration. It acts as an advisory body for the Department of Development Cooperation of the Foreign Ministry, and its members represent political parties, trade unions and employers' organizations, research institutes and NGOs.

² SASK is one of the seven associations that receives funding from the ministry for four-year periods. These seven associations together share half of all the funds provided for development cooperation purposes for Finnish associations by the Foreign Ministry. The other half is shared by hundreds of small organizations.

The Finnish participants to the WSF have, then, represented mostly organizations that are fairly well established and belong to the Development cooperation policy network. This inclination can partly be explained simply by the high cost of travel to Brazil. It takes an established organization to whom meeting southern partner organizations is important to have the resources and to be willing to spend them for expensive flight tickets. This is not to say that the whole WSF process would be, from a Finnish perspective, a project reserved for a well-resourced elite of professional activists: The European Social Forum 2003 in Paris, much closer and cheaper to get to, gathered a couple of busloads of Finnish participants from environmentalists to trade unionists and anarchists to young politicians.

In development cooperation, like in many other policy sectors, the trend seems to be from policy programmes centrally planned and implemented by the state towards network-like arrangements where different types of actors participate. In Finland, state funding of development cooperation projects implemented by NGOs began in 1974. The funding was multiplied by ten during the first six years and by ten again during the period of next eight years (Rekola 1994, 86-102; 152-155). From the beginning of 1990's the share of NGOs from the development cooperation budget of the Finnish state has been around ten per cent.³ According to the annual report of the Foreign Ministry on development cooperation, experiences from projects implemented by NGOs are positive, and there are plans to further increase the share of the budget dedicated to NGOs (The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2002, 150).

Outsourcing state functions to private enterprise has, on various occasions, proved problematic: One well-known example is the privatization of British Rail that led to poor quality of service and accidents and led to re-nationalization of parts of the enterprise. Another one is the privatization of water companies in South Africa that left the poor with no water to drink. On the other hand,

³ In 2002 the development cooperation budget of the Finnish state was 479,2 million euros, out of which the share of NGOs was 40,7 million (The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland 2003, 42).

groups that have brought to light these problems related to privatization, especially as caused by multinational companies in the global south, may have, somewhat paradoxically, benefited from the same trend of states willing to decentralize their functions. In which ways these two trends – the decentralization of the state’s economic functions by outsourcing to private companies and the decentralization via policy networks that include NGOs and other such actors – are related, remains a question open to further research.

One thing, however, seems to be clear: By encouraging the formation of policy networks like the one described above, states do not only buy services, such as implementation of development cooperation projects, form non-governmental organizations. They also support structures that can act as a breeding ground for critical public debates. If offered the possibility, the organizations involved in implementing partly state-funded projects do not settle for just implementation. They also engage in debates to influence policymaking in their particular policy sector, and this debate is conducted, besides meeting rooms, also in the mass media. Policy networks can act as channels through which the voices in these debates that sometimes take on a global dimension can enter national decision-making structures.

But is providing support for associations a phenomenon limited to the well-off social democratic corporatist states of the North? The case of the World Social Forum seems to illustrate the contrary. The WSF has been supported financially and organizationally by the governments of the state of Rio Grande do Sul and the city of Porto Alegre, controlled by the Brazilian Workers’ Party, PT⁴. And there are other types of contact between the party-political apparatus, the administration

⁴ In 2002, the financial support of the two governments to the WSF was 1.300 000 USD, compared to the 385 000 that was collected as fees from the participants (Teivainen 2002, 624; Nisula & Sehm-Patomäki 2003, 5). In 2003, the government support fell to 600 000, with participation fees covering 800 000 and sponsorship from foundations and enterprises (The Ford Foundation, Petrobras, Banco do Brazil etc.) the rest from the budget of 3,5 million USD (The World Social Forum Circulates...2003). Compared to its counterpoint, the World Economic Forum, the WSF is cheap.

and the associations organizing the WSF. For example, The Confederation of Brazilian Trade Unions, CUT, that is the largest organization involved in organizing the WSF, also has strong connections to the Worker's party, PT. The president of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, of the PT, began his political career as a trade union leader in the CUT.

Some observers have critically pointed to these links and expressed disapproval of the strong (at least visual) presence of the PT at the WSF. However, rather than a single annual event, the WSF is a continuous global process: Continental forums have been organized in Asia, Africa and Europe, many countries are now holding national social forums, and the main WSF event in 2004 will be organized in Mumbai, India. The connections between the participants of some of these events to some national political parties or administrative structures cannot, therefore, lead to a takeover of the whole WSF process by any such party or administration.

Conclusion

The World Social Forum can be seen as a host of publics; it is where NGOs, trade unions, social movements and various other types of actors come together to take part in global public debates. In this paper, I have examined some of the factors that make possible such debates and, in particular, the ways in which these debates enter national contexts and influence decision-making on the national level.

Like the bourgeois publics of the era when the idea and institutions of the public sphere developed, the publics of the World Social Forum are based on networks of associations. Global public debates are made possible by the increasing global interconnectedness of such networks. The network of research institutes that the NIGD belongs to, the trade union network that SASK is a part

In 2002 the security of the WEF alone cost taxpayers of New York over three times the budget of the WSF, 12 million USD (Väyrynen 2002).

of, and the global network of national Attacs are examples of these. At the WSF, members of these networks come together as publics, each to deliberate upon a particular issue.

The means of exerting influence of these global publics seem to be twofold. On the one hand they aim to influence public opinion through presence in the media, and on the other hand influence decision-makers more directly through policy networks. Both ways of influencing could, in principle, be used in the global level. There is some sort of a global public sphere, existing through global media institutions, from news agencies to satellite TV to websites that are followed around the world, where debates can be said to circulate globally. There are also some global decision-making structures, such as intergovernmental organizations, and policy networks that are formed around these, and could be used to bring opinions formed in global debates to the ears of decision-makers.

However, in all three cases I have examined, the means of influencing both through the media and policy networks seem to pass to a large extent through the national level. The importance of the national level stems from the fact that both the public sphere and democratic decision-making structures on the global level still are far from what they are nationally.

Despite the above-mentioned global media institutions, the global public sphere consists mainly of individual national and local public spheres. Discourses spill over from one of these to the others and back, but as media institutions are still mainly national, and work in national languages of different countries, truly global debates that would be participated in by people from all parts of the world are, on the level of mass media, still weak compared to national public spheres. Publics where people participate in from around the globe may be formed through arrangements like the WSF. But when the scope of circulation of discourses of these publics is widened to include larger numbers of participants, this seems to occur by everybody going back to their home countries and trying to bring the debate with them to the agendas of national media.

But it is not only the strength of national media institutions in relation to the global ones that contribute to the importance of the national level in finding channels of influence for global debates. More important, perhaps, is the lack of global democratic decision-making structures. Global political decisions occur in intergovernmental institutions, where citizens are not represented directly, but by their country. The UN general assembly, where the decision-making procedure is based on the principle of one country/one vote today has very little power. International financial institutions (IMF, World Bank), where the principle is one dollar/one vote and the WTO where large and wealthy countries have in practice dictated the decisions play a much more important role (Patomäki & Teivainen 2003, 30-32, 38). The degree of responsiveness of these institutions to the views presented in public debates is not clear (see cf. Brown & Fox 2001, 43-45), but it seems, in any case, to be far from that of national decision-making structures.

At the national level, in the context of multi-party democracies and more inclusive policy networks, the number of different channels through which opinions formed in global debates can enter decision-making structures, are more multifaceted. Of my three examples, the best illustration of this phenomenon is the case of Attac and the debate on the currency transaction tax. As the international financial institutions or other intergovernmental organizations do not seem to be responsive to this type of initiatives, both media debate and influencing through policy networks are practiced at the national level. Existing institutions and networks, in this case Kepa and their connections to administrative structures and some political parties in the government were used for this purpose, fostered by the media debate initiated at the same time. The NIGD's North-South dialogue project equally focused on influencing Finnish decision-makers and bringing opinions from the global south to their ears. SASK, in its turn, was prepared to launch a media debate and a trade union pressure campaign in the home country of the Nokia Corporation, had the result of the OS evaluation been less positive.

But the role of national policy networks is not limited to the ways in which they may act as channels of influence. As all three of my examples show, they can also provide resources for the organizing of global public debates. The extent to which administrations choose to encourage the formation of policy networks to provide groups of citizens with resources and means of influencing policymaking of course varies from one country to another. Furthermore, the interaction between associations (and the publics that they give rise to), the party system and administrative structures is a tricky terrain. Administrations may choose to include in policy networks only certain types of actors holding certain types of views instead of keeping them open to a diversity of participants, political parties may attempt to turn events like the Social forums to sites of their electoral campaigns and so on.

However, these and other possible risks involved should not lead us to take the interaction between associations, publics, parties and administrations as a problem, but rather, so some extent an inevitable fact that should be an object of sociological analysis. Is the Finnish case I have presented an exception? Do comparable policy networks exist in other countries, and what is their role in providing resources and channels of influence to the global publics of the WSF? How do different decision-making structures and national political cultures affect the reception of global debates? Comparative research on how global public debates enter national contexts and influence national decision-making structures is needed in order to better understand the globalization of public debates as a part of the process of globalizing democracy.

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