Opening Open Space

Notes on the Grammar and Vocabulary of the Concept of Open Space

Jai Sen

Jai Sen, an activist, researcher, and installation architect based in New Delhi, India, has been involved in local community activism and international advocacy networking and in research on popular movement in India and the history of the globalisation of social movement. He has also been involved in several world social forums, and is the author and editor/co-editor of several books and articles on the Forum and the globalisation of civil movement, in-cluding *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires* (2004), *Are other worlds possible? Talking New Politics* (2005), *A Political Programme for the World Social Forum? Democracy, Substance, and Debate in the Bamako Appeal and the Global Justice Movements—A Reader* (2007) and most recently *World Social Forum: Challenging Empires* (2nd Edition 2008). He is now a Director of CACIM (the India Institute for Critical Action: Centre in Movement), based in New Delhi (www.cacim.net), and was visiting scholar at the Institute of Political Econ-omy at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, in the autumn of 2006 (www.critical-courses.cacim.net). jai.sen@cacim.net

About the Paper

Drawing both on the author's successive work in architecture, urban planning, socio-political movement, and the World Social Forum, and the work of several others, this paper attempts to critically engage with the increasingly-widely used concept of *open space* (which is what the protagonists of the WSF like to describe it as, as a mode of social and political organising). Arguing that open space, horizontality, and networking are now emerging as a general tendency in the organisation of human social relations, and that the WSF is a major historical experiment in this idea, but where on the other hand the practice of this concept in the context of the World Social Forum is under sustained and arguably increasing criticism – with the implicit argument that this major socio-political experiment should be abandoned - the paper seeks to open up the concept towards a more critical discussion and understanding of it – and also with the aim of not seeing the baby thrown out with the bathwater. While doing so, it attempts to explore the grammar and vocabulary of a practice of open space, and to draw out some organising principles for this practice, for discussion.

The sections of this working discussion draft / paper-in-progress include : A short history of open space; a discussion of the nature of open space; a major section towards opening up the concept of open space (New horizons of open space; Time and space; a quick survey of Earlier openings yet); a survey of some of the key characteristics of open space (The pregnancy of open space; Open space as emergence : Layers of exchange; Open space as opening space; and : Open space as cloud); a section on the contradictions of open space; and a concluding section towards a definition : Some organising principles of open space. Comments are very welcome !

Opening Open Space

Notes on the Grammar and Vocabulary of the Concept of Open Space

Jai Sen

August 2008 [May 2007]

Critical Engagement - CACIM's Publications Programme

Number : 2

Title : Opening Open Space : Notes on the Grammar and Vocabulary of the Concept of Open Space

Author : Jai Sen

CACIM'S work is about practising and promoting critical reflection and critical engagement, all towards promoting critical action. ***Critical Engagement*** is CACIM's publications programme and platform to periodically and informally publish and disseminate - in a range of formats and media - research outcomes, work-in-progress, and draft concepts and ideas coming out of or related to its various research and action programmes and also, from time to time, key documents authored by its associates or by others that are related to its programmes but not necessarily a product of its own work.

All the publications of CACIM are available for free download at **www.cacim.net.** For obtaining a hard copy write to us : CACIM, A-3, Defence Colony, New Delhi 110 024 India.

Opening Open Space
Notes on the Grammar and Vocabulary of the Concept of Open Space

Jai Sen, discussion draft 4 *modified*, May 17 2007 [1]
Available @ http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-read_article.
php?articleId=429

> If you remember that one small action, it symbolised the decline of the British Empire. We should safeguard the smallest of actions, the most open of spaces, and try and make as many open spaces as possible. We have to stand guard. We have to keep the space open because all the guards have proved to be useless.
>
> Ashok Vajpeyi[2]

Open space…. (A noun – a thing -, or a concept ?) A space. A culture. A way of doing things. A cultural practice. Social practice. Political practice. Networking. Horizontality. Structurelessness. Democracy. Anarchy. A way of relating. Uncertainty. Transparency. Openness. Closedness; closure. Public space. The commons.

Common property. Property. Intellectual property. Copyright. Copyleft. Safe space. Autonomy. Equality. Freedom. (Free trade ?) Fair trade. Tolerance. Discrimination. Inclusion and Exclusion. Boundaries ? Policies ? Rules ? Democracy. Hierarchy ? Open access. Open Source. Open plan. Open door policy. Open systems. Open society. FOSS – Free &

FOSS – Free &

Open Source Software.   Chaos.   Clocks and clouds.   Determinacy and indeterminacy.   Open-endedness.

Not object but subject : Opening space ?

The concept of *open space* arises in many fields, among them urban planning and landscape architecture, office and workspace planning, education and knowledge systems, social management, conflict resolution and transformation initiatives, and social and political practice. As the cluster of terms above makes clear, it is also closely related to a host of other concepts. It has come into increasingly intensive use in recent years however, perhaps especially in social and political practice, along with related concepts such as horizontality and networking, and has gained special currency by virtue of its use since 2001 in connection with the World Social Forum.[3] In some cases, there are cross-over applications, such as in the case of the WSF, which declares itself as an open space and where to help people understand this concept, one of its founders refers to it as a 'square' in a city (or *praça*, in the original Portuguese).[4]

On the one hand, this idea – and related concepts – has widely caught the imagination of people and organisations across the world, especially perhaps through the proliferation of the WSF that has taken place over these years.[5] Perhaps especially because of the rising complexity of society and politics today and because of the evident failure of conventional politics and community organisation techniques to cope, but also because of new cultures of doing things that are emerging in our times (as will be discussed below), the idea of 'open space' very widely appeals both to practitioners as well as concerned bystanders; it is easily read as offering (or seeming to offer) a possible way out.

But beyond this however, and more specifically, for many organisers and participants in the WSF process open space is, or represents, a new form of politics (or, more accurately, a form of organisation and structure, and a way of doing things, that allows a new form of politics); an *emergent politics*. The central idea here is that an open space, rather than a party or movement,

---

[3] For 'official' details of the World Social Forum process, see http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/, and for its own (very interesting) framework of how it sees the practice of an open space, see : World Social Forum Organising Committee and World Social Forum International Council, June 2001.

[4] Whitaker, 2004. The fact that Chico Whitaker is an architect by training however perhaps explains his use of this metaphor.

[5] For 'official' details of the proliferation of the WSF process, see http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/; and for an unofficial record and archive, see www.openspaceforum.net. And for ongoing activities and discussion, subscribe to WSFDiscuss - simply send an empty email to worldsocialforum-discuss-subscribe@openspaceforum.net.

Opening Open Space

allows for more and different forms of relations among political actors, while remaining open-ended with respect to outcomes. It is *open* in that encounters among multiple subjects with diverse objectives can have transformative political effects that traditional forms of movements, coalitions, and campaigns, with uniform themes and goals, exclude.[6] By the name itself, it also seems to offer scope for a much wider range of actors to take part in and contribute, including those not necessarily involved with politics or movement; so it is more inclusive.

On the other hand, the WSF's use of this concept of open space has been under intense debate right from its outset,[7] and the debate is today only intensifying. The openness of the Forum is seen as being responsible for it being not sufficiently effective in the struggle against neoliberalism and for its being used to advantage by those who do not believe in this (or do not believe in it so centrally). Both arguments are converging in an increasing demand that the Forum requires a clearer political programme.[8]

As this note will show, the debate in this area is similar to the intense self-critique that has taken place in similar experiments in the recent past, and this introspection is perhaps in the very nature of the idea.

Some critics of the concept and of the specific practice of the WSF also argue that the idea of open space has emerged and been popularised only in the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and see it as part of the ascendance of neoliberalism along with concepts such as *civil society*. This, along with the generous funding the WSF gets from Northern funding agencies, is seen as part of the politics of open space, to put a human face to neoliberal globalisation.[9]

This note seeks to open up the concept, towards a more critical discussion and understanding of it – and also with the aim of not seeing the baby

---

[6] This definition is taken from discussions within the EIOS (Explorations in/of Open Space) Collective, during 2005-6, as above; see http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=EIOSCollective. In the EIOS process, we have been looking at the question of whether and how effectively the notion of open space addresses the question of more democratic ways of conducting and understanding politics and organisation within movements, and to what extent it can also operate within more institutional political processes. We propose to now continue doing this through the CEOS (Critical Engagement with Open Space) process - http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=CEOSProcessIntroLetter.

[7] For instance, see : Sen, 2004b; and : Teivainen, forthcoming [2007].

[8] Sen and Kumar, compilers, with Bond and Waterman, January 2007.

[9] For instance : ILC - International Liaison Committee for a Workers' International, January 2002; RUPE (Research Unit for Political Economy), September 2003; and : James, 2004.

thrown out with the bathwater.[10] While doing so, it attempts to explore the grammar and vocabulary of a practice of open space, and to draw out some organising principles for this practice, for discussion.

A short history of open space

The concept and the practice of open space in social and political movement are not new. In many ways, the women's movement in North America, for instance, and elsewhere, practiced just this idea back in the early 70s,[11] and where this was also the subject of intense critical reflection within the movement – as above, itself a characteristic of the practice of open space - in terms of the tyranny of structurelessness.[12] This social experiment was not restricted to the women's movement (though arguably was most rigorously developed there); it was part of general articulation of a counter-culture in North America from the 1960s,[13] and also, for instance, in India in the 1970s, though coming from very different roots.[14]

There have been equivalents and expressions of this idea in many parts of the world and in many fields. Another vital expression was its exploration in education, best known through the work of Paulo Freire and his theory of conscientisation and a pedagogy of the oppressed, starting in Brazil but having impacts in much of the world.[15] And of central relevance to the WSF was the parallel articulation of liberation theology in the 1960s and 70s, which had profound influence on the evolution of social and political movements in Latin America, Asia, and elsewhere, and through this history, also on the ideology of the WSF.[16]

This experimentation continued right through the 1980s and 90s, and where there were waves of struggle within these and other movements, including centrally though the exploration of what can generally be termed open space. In each of these instances the concept of openness was rigorously practiced, debated, and critiqued. In other words, the idea and practice of open space is a generalised, widespread, non-centralised, and autonomous political-cultural phenomenon of the second half of the 20th century.

---

[10] I take as my point of departure the position we at CACIM took on open space for a workshop that we organised at the WSF at Nairobi, Kenya, on January 23 2007, 'In Defence of Open Space'. For details of our position, see http://cacim.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page= CACIMWSF2007Events.

[11] Hayes, December 2006.

[12] Freeman (aka Joreen), nd [May 1970/1971].

[13] Roszak, 1969.

[14] Sheth, nd; and : Weber, 1998.

[15] Education Encyclopedia - StateUniversity.com, nd.

[16] Levy, forthcoming (2007).

Opening Open Space

We therefore perhaps need to look elsewhere than where the critics point, to understand what is happening. As Rodrigo Nunes argues,[17] and as others have argued before him in terms of related phenomena such as transnational advocacy networking,[18] the recent intensification in social networking and in networked politics as a common social practice is a function of the major changes that have taken place in recent decades – in the same period as the explorations outlined above - in the material means of information exchange and communication and also of international travel. Nunes' argument is that the "… *large scale massification* of these media, and [the emergence of] a multipolar medium like the internet in particular, is … the chief material cause behind the 'renaissance' of openness and horizontality".[19]

Networking, the apparent horizontality of social relations that goes with this, and the openness that seems to be required, have therefore now become, in many parts of the world, the 'natural' and normal way for ordinary people – including but not only activists - to behave and to organise things, and to build social relations. Social movement activists have perhaps made among the most active and imaginative use of these new possibilities,[20] but this is a generalised situation and not restricted to social movement and politics; many fields, including the military, industry, and big business, have also found strategic value in using this approach, and where this fundamentally informs contemporary debate on science, knowledge systems, and intellectual property.[21] The concept of open space, and the contemporary rise of the concept and practice, must therefore be located in this much wider context and understood as the crystallisation of a new cultural-political practice.

The nature of open space

As will also be evident from the cluster of terms presented above, it is a term that belongs to a fairly extensive community and vocabulary of related concepts, ideas, and practices, and where some of the terms are also used interchangeably.

Partly as a consequence of being a member of a community of like terms and practices with much overlap, partly because of quite different

---

[17] Nunes, November 2006 [2005].

[18] For an elaborate early discussion of the material background to this phenomenon, and at an earlier stage (just ten years ago !, but where these ten years have been crucial in this field), see: Keck and Sikkink, 1998.

[19] Nunes, November 2006 [2005], as above. Emphasis supplied.

[20] Juris, Spring 2004; also : Juris, 2004.

[21] Lessig, 1999.

interpretations and uses of these terms in different fields and contexts, and partly because of very different social and material conditions that prevail in different contexts, there is no one definition of open space; as Nunes points out in terms of horizontalities,[22] there are many open spaces – and many meanings of open space.

This also means that the rather singular (and almost branded) definitions that have been developed and applied within particular practices, such as in terms of so-called 'Open Space Technology',[23] therefore contradict the very nature of the concept.

This plurality, and the ambiguity that goes with it, is in the very nature of open space, which is essentially a social and cultural construct – in all the fields it is used, and in all its meanings. It is therefore important to root and/or understand the use of the term in particular contexts and conditions.

> (What does open space mean to fisherfolk and to sailors ? To the Inuit ? To people living in deserts ? Or to nomadic peoples, for whom motion is constant ? What does open space mean to people living in deep valleys ? To a sculptor in front of a rock ? To someone composing a piece of music ? To the physically or visually challenged ? And to people dying of a terminal disease, or to someone on death row ?)

The fundamental nature of the concept of open space, in all the fields that it is used, is not only that of something that exists, or can exist, but also that of a symbol of possibilities; a metaphor. Its existence, and the possibilities of its existence, is as important as actually practising or experiencing it. Especially in today's conditions of closure however, as a function of the synergistic interaction of religious fundamentalisms, economic fundamentalisms, an imperialist power, and the so-called 'war on terror' post 9/11 and all its outfalls, every practice of open space and horizontality must be recognised as being a significant polemical challenge to empire and to hegemonic politics. In many ways and at many levels, the idea and concept of open space is deeply interrelated with human rights, democratic freedoms, civil liberties, and cultural expression. It is as relevant to science, education, literature, and art, and to the conditions of everyday life, as it is to politics and social movement.

> There is an open space in language and literature that exists despite the most adverse circumstances. As I say this, I am reminded of Boris

---

[22] Nunes 2006 [2005], as above.

[23] See : http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_Space_Technology. Also : Open Space World, nd.

Opening Open Space

Pasternak's famous poem, "The night is dark and it is bitterly cold, but we must at least keep a candle lit."

Ashok Vajpeyi[24]

Towards opening up open space

The emphasis of this Note is on the overtly social and political uses of the term, but I hope that the relevance of this discussion to the other uses will also be evident, throughout. In order to try to establish and retain this connection, I will open the discussion by looking at the urban planning definition of the term - and try and show how essentially the same politics apply.

In the field of urban planning the term 'open space' carries a physical and apparently apolitical connotation, of a relatively large, relatively open, unbuilt / 'undeveloped' space, usually but not always made available either for recreational or (in some particular contexts) agricultural purposes (though not always freely). See, for instance, the following definition :

Open space : In urban planning, 'open space' refers to publicly owned land that is preserved and protected from being built upon, as a commons. Open space is usually accessible to the public, but may also be leased out for agriculture. This concept is also used in political parlance, however…..[25]

Like many definitions, this usage is culturally very specific – and significant for what it does not say as much as for what it says. First, and by definition since this use is in urban planning, it refers only to urbanised conditions – which, spelt out, means conditions where most land is built upon and open space is the exception. This is as distinct from the tradition of a commons or common property prevailing in many rural / agrarian communities in the world, which is not residual space but an integral part of the local and wider social ecology and where such property and the rights of access to it is a function of traditional communitarian decision. This kind of 'open space' is not referred to as this, by locals.

This definition also largely comes out of a European / Northern and colonial tradition, assuming something of a welfare state in place that 'provides and protects' such space.

Second, looking at these conditions historically, it refers to a situation where under conditions both of capitalism and state socialism, agrarian land, both

---

[24]   From : Vajpeyi, forthcoming.

[25]   From : Sen and Kumar, eds, March 2006. This definition drew on the Wikipedia definition of open space and related terms, among other sources.

private and common (all agrarian cultures have some tradition of a commons / common property) has been taken over for urban or industrial use, its previous occupants or users displaced and scattered, and where the 'open space' in question is specially kept aside as part of social planning for the new occupants of the general space within which the open space is located. Some of the best-known examples are the parks in cities of the North (London, New York, Paris).

Such spaces are however created not only to provide relief and/or recreation but also to engineer, plan, control, and give order to societies. Many cities known in planning circles for their open spaces (Paris, Brasilia) are historically a result of autocratic and harshly exclusionary politics, and many urban open spaces now celebrated for their civic qualities were expressly created for military purposes. This dark side of planning continues to be an intrinsic part of contemporary life and politics in the world today, as has always been the case.[26]

And third, whereas openness and open space in cities are widely associated with grace and beauty, we need to read that these are socially constructed ideas. Our conditioned notions of what is beautiful are intrinsically linked to the imposition and establishment of (centralised) order; and conversely, we are conditioned to associate the lack of imposed order – implicitly, disorder – with ugliness.[27] It is not a coincidence that popular spaces – generally more open, random, and apparently unordered - are rarely portrayed as 'beautiful'. Beauty, grace, and order are therefore not only related but intensely ideological constructs.

One further point : Under contemporary conditions this process of appropriation of what was historically the commons – land - within processes of urbanisation is being dramatically widened. It is today being extended from a control only of land (including forests) to include water, air, and cyberspace,[28] and it is widely also no longer a question of expropriation by the state for socially planned use but a process of privatisation, for hand-over to private commercial interests.

On the one hand, it is important to underline that these conditions do not apply uniformly across the world, even within specific continental regions. We need therefore to not take this definition or the discussion for granted or to assume that they mean the same thing everywhere. On the other

---

[26] Yiftachel, 1998.

[27] Sen, September 1996; and : Sen, August 1999.

[28] For a contemporary discussion, see http://www.commoner.org.uk/.

hand, we must also read that what is referred to as 'planning' is very much a function and expression of politics.

A more accurate depiction of 'open space' in urban planning therefore, is of space that has been appropriated and then reserved for social uses but within a larger ideological vision and order; and in many contexts, existing open space is constantly under the pressure and threat of being appropriated and/or demarcated, towards greater order. Beyond this, certain crucial issues are therefore also missing in the conventional definition of open space - but where these questions are perhaps of relevance not only to physical open space:

- Who creates the open space (ie what are the relations of production of the space) ?

- Has the space involved been taken over from previous occupants ? If so, what was the process by which this took place, and what has happened to them ?

- Who now controls the space ?

- What are the rules of entry and usage ? Who sets these rules ?

- How are such decisions made (such as, who sets the rules for making the rules) ?

- What are the possibilities of those using the space taking part in setting the rules for how the space is to be used ?

- What are the implications of a certain space being declared 'open' ? Does declaring a space open, or creating an open space, imply the appropriation or enclosure of space and therefore its closure for others and/or displacement from it ? (As happened historically, for instance, in rural Britain, to enclose land for sheep rearing and then agriculture,[29] and continues to massively happen today in rural and urban areas in the South, contemporarily known as displacement and eviction.)

- What does open space mean in non-urban, non-industrial conditions and cultures ?

- What is the perception and meaning of open space by and for communities at the margins of dominant societies ? For transsexuals and the transgendered ? For religious minorities ? And for dalits in south Asia and for the indigenous and aboriginal peoples of the world, in general ?

---

29   For an overview, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enclosure.

> I suggest that the central meeting place of the Huadenosaunee (Iroquois) at Onondaga, about which I write in *Transcommunality*, was/ is very much like the open space that you describe. It was not a capital city, not the vertical place of the most powerful. Rather it was the horizontal place of agreement/disagreement worked out with the protocols of respect that I find so inspiring. Those protocols are another form of the organizing of chaos, I think.[30]

New horizons of open space

It is important also for us today to recognise that conventional visualisation of open space has fundamentally changed in the recent past, in four major ways : Cosmologically and existentially; ecologically; cognitively; and paradigmatically. As a species, human beings – with variations across contexts - today visualise and therefore conceptualise it very differently from just half a century ago. This is nothing less than an epochal change.

Following the first space flights in the 1960s, and especially perhaps since 1970 when humankind was for the very first time able to view and comprehend planet earth as a whole and as an object within a much larger universe, the meaning of 'space' – the vast and apparently infinite, so- called 'outer space' – has changed. It became familiar, a part of our everyday lives; visiting it has become part of human experience; and ordinary people have progressively become aware of the vastness of space and of our place in the universe, not only in a physical sense but also cosmologically, and therefore existentially.[31]

While some of this perception was available before this to specialists – astronomers, other scientists, religious thinkers, philosophers, writers and poets – it now became a phenomenon and perception available to the species.

Secondly, as a function of the progressively widening recognition during this period of the earth as a spaceship, we have also begun to become aware both of the Gaian nature of the planet, as a living organism[32] - where everything is connected to everything else. This is a consequence of the growing awareness not only of the environmental crisis that the planet is facing but of the systemic *ecological* crisis we are today facing, as a species, where life systems are breaking down. One crucial aspect of this has been

---

[30] John Brown Childs, April 2007 - Personal correspondence, April 5 2007, referring to Childs, 2003.

[31] Sagan, 1985.

[32] Lovelock, 2000.

in the recognition of the function in earth's ecosystem of open space in the planet (such as the oceans, the Siberian tundra, and the Amazonian basin), as organs that are essential for the life of the planet. Open space, locally and globally, has thus become more than something one can create / enter / use / inhabit; it is now understood as having an organic, ecological function, fundamentally interconnected with its surroundings.

Again, while this ecological understanding was available to some specialists before this, among them environmentalists and landscape architects and planners, it has now become common – even in the consumer goods that we buy.

Third, our visualisation and conceptualisation of open space has also been dramatically expanded by the invention of the worldwide web, with all its apparent open-endedness. Again very suddenly – in historical terms - yet another dimension of 'open', seemingly unbounded space has been added to our cognitive vocabulary. But beyond the openness, it is now common to see references to the Internet as the model on which social movement organisation is increasingly based,[33] and "… common to point to the practice of Free and Open Source Software communities as the 'vanguard' of this democracy-to-come".[34]

Unlike in the case of the more familiar physical and local open space however, we still have little vocabulary available for 'reading' these larger open spaces in terms of their political geography.[35]

Finally, we need to locate the concept of open space, and the new visualisations, in a longer political history of cyberspace – of virtual space. The invention of the printing press, and with this the invention of the idea of artificial *media* by which human beings could exchange ideas with each other at a mass level (and also create more permanent archival records) marked the first radical opening of virtual space in human history.[36] At one level, each successive application of this principle – leaflets, books, journals, newspapers, the radio, then television, and most recently the web – can be considered to have been steps towards opening new spaces. At the same time, as with physical open space, each of these steps was taken first by individuals, working 'locally', and in each case has been subject to challenge and (en)closure by either state or market corporatism[37] and/or by

---

[33] For instance : Klein, July 2000a, and Klein, July 2000b.

[34] Nunes, November 2006 [2005], p 2.

[35] In terms of cyberspace, see Sengupta, forthcoming [2007]; and : Raju, forthcoming [2007].

[36] Sengupta, forthcoming [2007], above.

[37] Sengupta, forthcoming [2007].

fundamentalist forces within societies, such as religious, caste, ethnic, and/ or nationalist power.

We therefore can and must equally ask the same questions as above of these other historically newer manifestations of open space.

Time and space[*]

A less generalised, and more specialised, but nevertheless crucial development in our understanding has also been the articulation, in the field of radical social geography, of the ideas that time and space are inseparable and that both are social constructs.[38]

This in turn has been a part of a wider critique by David Harvey and others of Marx's focus on time alone, and more generally, towards an understanding of "capitalism as the structure and process within which the salience of time is framed, and whose closing / opening of space we are pitted against".[39]

Earlier openings yet [40]

There have also been earlier openings yet, of this concept.

Four of these took place in the previous half century, the first half of the twentieth century, in the visual and then plastic arts; in (and with the advent of) movies; in music; and in what became the new field of cybernetics.

In the visual arts, and then the plastic arts, the emergence, articulation, and then exploration of cubism fundamentally challenged all previous conceptions of space and time in western art.[41] Completely new representations and explorations of space, and time, took shape.

Similarly, in music, the emergence and articulation of jazz from the early 20th century onwards, with its traditions of improvisation and, in John Brown

[*] This and the next section are work-in-progress. They are based on feedback I got from Peter Waterman and John Brown Childs on the second draft of this Note, and have been somewhat hurriedly inserted here only to give an indication of things to come - and to provoke thought.

[38] Harvey, 1996.

[39] Peter Waterman, March 2007 - Personal correspondence, March 20 2007. I am indebted to Peter for pointing this out to me, and in general for the content of this section.

[40] My thanks to John Brown Childs for reminding me of these dimensions, and for opening them for me so beautifully and meaningfully, with his comments on an earlier draft of this essay; Childs, April 2007, as above.

[41] Berger, 1977 [1972]; and : Berger, 1992 [1965].

Childs' words, of "…organized ambiguity and ambiguous organization" – opened up new dimensions of time and space.[42]

And the development of the field of cybernetics in the 1940-50s fundamentally reorganised our understanding of relations, process, and therefore also of space.[43]

> In the words of the great African American artist Romare Bearden, and focusing on his comments about the role of the horizontal in his work, and where he was influenced in part by jazz and also by Chinese Art, Indian art, Renaissance European art, ancient Greek art, Mexican muralists, African art, and African American culture :
>
> > When an artist decides on a *space*, we get a certain kind of space. When I say space, I am not talking about, let's say, distance; I'm talking about relationships... When you get that, it doesn't matter what you're working on…. (p 190)
> >
> > … It seems to be that verticality detests surprises, but, assuming a communally shared framework, horizontality surprises and enlivens.
> >
> > It is a question of collage... The thing is that the artist confronts chaos. The whole thing of art is - how do you organize chaos ? (p 197).[44]

The pregnancy of open space

Fundamentally, the idea of open space appeals to us as human beings because of the normative value that perhaps most cultures attach both to *open* and to *openness*, and to *space* in the sense of an expanse; and especially when the two words are combined. The conventional definition of the term, in all its variations, comes out of this underlying idea.[45]

Most crucially, the term *open space* is suggestive of freedom and liberty – on the one hand, of freedom of access and entry (and therefore without boundaries or gates), freedom of use, freedom of association and of exchange, freedom of expression, and freedom to leave (and to re-enter) at one's free will; and on the other of an indeterminate openness and elasticity. It is therefore suggestive of a condition of a certain kind of liberty, safety, and inclusiveness that is rare.

---

[42] Childs, April 2007, as above.

[43] Wiener, 1948.

[44] Childs, April 2007, as above, citing : Schwartzman, 1990.

[45] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_space.

The concept of open space can also be compared to the more specific term *open society* that was put forward and developed by Karl Popper in the 1940s as a philosophical and ideological critique not only of contemporary totalitarianism but also of what he saw as creeping state control all around him.[46] But as will become evident in the following paragraphs, the idea of open space transcends that of open society. Most especially, although also political in nature, it is not tied to or dependent on another concept (in the case of open society, the state); nor necessarily suggestive of a social collectivity (community, or society).

These qualities therefore also tend to make open space a space for learning – where we ourselves become more open, more receptive.[47]

Open space therefore becomes a very special kind of space – and when compared to the rest of our lives, where things are so structured, bounded, and/or divided / segmented, it becomes a liberated, and/or liberating, space. It reinforces our assumption, and our assessment of ourselves, however illusorily, that we are (or potentially can be) free human beings – and that open space offers the possibility of our realising our freedoms.

Beyond this, but implied within it, is also the unbounded nature of the space - the possibility of the unexpected happening. As vestigial wanderers and explorers, dating back from when humankind first emerged, this possibility is of enormous importance for us as human beings, even if for most of us now remaining in our subconscious.[48] What is open signals the (possibility of a) future.[49]

Finally, all these qualities – freedom, liberty, safety, a place where we can be more open and thereby exchange and learn more freely, the possibility of unexpectedness and therefore of unboundedness, and the possibility of another world – also hint at the possibility of open space being a space, a context, where we can authentically come into full and uninhibited contact with our environment, our surrounds, and therefore also with each other and with ourselves, as cognate and sensate beings; and self-actualise. A space where the separation between our environment and our bodies

---

[46] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Open_society; and for what is often referred to as the classic on this subject, Karl Popper, 1945 - *The Open Society and Its Enemies.*

[47] Andreotti and ors, nd, c.2006b.

[48] Sagan, 1985, as above.

[49] It is therefore not a coincidence that the World Social Forum, which declares itself to be an open space, has also coined as its slogan 'Another world is possible !'. Subliminally, it suggests not only that another world / other worlds are possible - other than the troubled and violent one we are in now - but that entering the (open space of the) WSF is a step to these other worlds.

dissolves; where we as human beings - as denizens of that open space - are momentarily united; and where the present comes into contact with and becomes the future. Where, as Erin Manning and Brian Massumi have suggested, perception becomes action and action perception, and where this cross-genesis of action and perception in time opens into thought.[50] And where, extrapolating their thoughts, the space offers us the rare possibility of authentically nesting; of housing our bodies, our minds, and our senses.

Open space is therefore, paradoxically, simultaneously a safe space, at a very fundamental level; an exciting, stimulating space; but also a possibly dangerous space, pregnant with the risk and chance of life.

In a sense, open space is like life itself (at least, for many of us – for all those not afflicted by a terminal condition) : Open-ended, seemingly boundless, but where we always (if usually only fleetingly) know that it is finite.

Open space as emergence : Layers of exchange

I suggest that open space – and especially major open spaces – also plays the vital role of being a context where we, as members of a biological species, can exchange pheromones (trace chemicals containing information about our past, present, and future) and through this gain a more complete organic understanding of our present condition and of how we, as individuals, can and should act.[51] This process takes place aside from, and above and below, the more obvious exchange of information, experiences, and ideas that (appears to) take place in such spaces.

I specifically suggest at this juncture of planetary and human history, where the human species has become conscious of the crisis that life as we know is itself facing and that it is therefore facing as a species, major manifestations of collective gathering such as the World Social Forum are playing precisely such a role, where certain sections of humanity, as we seek ways to address the crisis, are coming together to search for other futures.[52]

---

[50] Manning and Massumi, nd, c.2006.

[51] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pheromone. Although studies of pheromonic exchange have so far been largely limited to the behaviour of insects, they are gradually showing that this is true also of human beings. For a discussion, see : Johnson, 2002.

[52] Sen, January 2007.

I believe that the WSF is able to play this role because it offers a scale and a continuity of exchange that has, arguably, never happened before in history.[53] This, I suggest, is its real function and nature as an open space; and that it is this apparently random but internally ordered dynamic that gives rise to and sustains it as an open space. And in turn, it is precisely this empowerment through the exchange of pheromones that enables us as participants in such spaces to continuously expand them, giving them new shape and new inertia, and thus also to renew ourselves. This process of learning and self-organisation becomes articulated as a process of what biologists and others refer to as *emergence*.[54]

But – if true – then this proposition also radically redefines what open space is and how space becomes open; for here, rather than someone offering *a* space to others to converge (which is how the WSF is presented to the world, just as parks and squares have been, historically), space becomes open space precisely as a function of the fact of large numbers of human beings converging with this open-ended, primal purpose of exchanging information and thus giving order to their lives. This radical 'openness' of space thus becomes a function of its *open-enedness* - and of the equally open-ended, apparent randomness of the exchange, both conscious and subconscious, and of the myriad connections that get built and conspiracies defined[55] – as of the otherwise apparent 'openness' of the space in which all this takes place.

There are, thus, multiple layers of exchange that take place in open space.

By virtue moreover, of our taking part in this essentially biological process as members of a species, and therefore as equals, this also implies a radical equality to such spaces, a quality that is not available in other spaces.

Applied more broadly, this discussion then also perhaps give us some idea of why the idea of open space is of value in so many fields, from urban planning to conflict transformation to business management and office

---

[53] There are of course other and far more major confluences of humanity that also take place on earth, such as the annual hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca or the Kumbh Mela that takes place on the banks of the Ganges river in India, or the gathering at Lourdes in France; and it would be interesting to also try to understand those spaces in these terms. There are some fundamental differences however, insofar as all of these spaces are by and large limited to followers of particular faiths (and therefore less than open); and that they are limited to one place and time, and do not offer as widespread a possibility of confluence as the WSF does today.
For a discussion of the WSF and certain aspects of the politics of scale, see : Conway, February 2005.
[54] For a discussion, see : Escobar, 2004; and : Johnson, 2002, as above.
[55] Using 'conspiracy' in the sense of breathing and hoping together, as Brian Murphy has done : Murphy, 1999.

planning; for it would appear to offer a space for equality, a safe space where people can meet and exchange views, however temporarily, as equals.

Open space as opening space

The notion of open space thus also undergoes a fundamental change if one shifts from viewing it as something one gains access to and uses to something one creates, or expands. Something one acts on; something that gains its life from our acting. When open space moves from being a noun to being a verb. At another level, the shift also reflects moving away from seeing open space as being provided by others, to something one gives shape to through one's actions. Nothing is open by itself; it is open because we make it so.

All the same questions apply; but the shift is from passivity to activity, and from object to subject – and with this, comes the responsibility to ourselves confront and engage with the questions listed above. Where do we locate ourselves, in our answers ?

Open space as cloud

The fourth fundamental characteristic of open space is its random, open-ended, and indeterminate nature. The cultural logic of open space is in the nature of a cloud, and not of a (linear, determinate, programmed) clock. It is precisely this character – true also of larger public spaces and gatherings, and for which large cities have been celebrated[56] - that enables such spaces to become opportunities for open-ended biological exchange and emergence, and that makes it impossible for more programmed encounters to play this role.

Seen in this way, open space becomes a context of radical anarchy – of the absence of pre-ordained or hierarchical order, and of the presence of organic order.

Conversely however, and precisely because most of us are, in our more conscious actions educated and rooted in linear, hierarchical, and programmed processes and organisations, even as we are also conditioned by our contemporary experience of intense networking and the media to more open-ended exchange, the actual function and experience of open spaces to which we consciously go (though, according to the argument of

---

[56]   Jacobs, 1961; and see also Steven Johnson's discussion of Jacob's work and of cities in terms of self-organisation and emergence, in Johnson, 2002, as above.

this note, impelled also by deeper biological urges) is generally a mix of the programmed and the unprogrammed. More crucially, as a result of this mixed background we experience periodic reflexive reversions to the need for greater programme, and therefore periodic expressions of uncertainty about the nature of unprogrammed encounters, questions as to their effectiveness, and a desire to bring in greater programme.[57]

Although we do not think of it in this way, to act in a clockwork fashion and to believe in the efficiency of clock-like programmes and processes despite their obvious failings and contradictions is in reality a huge act of faith. It speaks for the degree of socialisation we go through, certainly in urban-industrial/post-industrial cultures. But given this intense conditioning, and despite the contrary contemporary conditioning as a consequence of the massification of media, as above, most of us still find it difficult to surrender ourselves to open-endedness and to believe in the open-ended outcomes of clouds and of self-organisation and emergence; that open-endedness can also be 'effective'. The criteria we use to make our assessments are always those of closed-ended systems.

Although this is changing, and we are gradually becoming accustomed to this openness – with all the freedom that comes with it - most of us, and especially those associated and working through / representing traditional hierarchical organisations, will continue to experience this uncertainty for some time to come.

The contradictions of open space

This said, the concept and practice of open space in politics and movement is nevertheless full of apparent and real contradictions. Many of these have been widely articulated over the past three decades (at least since the early-mid 1970s) – and even if they have been debated all too little, given how critical this concept has come to be in cultural-political practice. Although this discussion focuses on the social-political, the occurrence of very similar contradictions in physical open spaces and in management practices will be readily evident.

Most famously, and as already mentioned, the practice of open space (or more correctly, practice similar to this, then not yet called this) was analysed in the early 1970s by Jo Freeman in terms of what she termed "the tyranny of structurelessness".[58] (Though, as Nunes points out, her conclusion was

---

[57] For instance, with respect to the World Social Forum, see : Sen and Kumar, compilers, with Bond and Waterman, January 2007, as above.
[58] Freeman, nd [May 1970/1971], as above.

not to abandon the concept of openness and structurelessness, which is how her essay has been widely interpreted, perhaps because of its title, but to search for ways to address the contradictions.[59])

Within this, is the particular contradiction that Freeman pointed out, of the emergence and functioning of hidden elites or vanguards, and also of what Nunes calls "supranodes" and hyperconnectivity by a select few, thereby concentrating power in undeclared ways.[60]   More generally, there is the problem that those with resources will necessarily always have greater access to and influence over open space than those with less, which leads to the abuse of such spaces – but where this, as with the thrust of Freeman's essay – is widely misread as being a function of the open space itself 'failing' to be open, as if it has a life of its own.

As Nunes has pointed out, the conditions that make possible horizontality – and therefore openness and open space – in (most parts of) the North are widely not available in most parts of the South (such as resources, high mobility, and high technology and connectivity).   On the one hand, this underlines the necessity to comprehend the practice (and therefore theory) of open space differently, in different contexts, even as we attempt to articulate a vocabulary of such practice; on the other, it points to the contradiction of how important a role resource disparities play, even in something like an element of social and political practice.

A further contradiction is contained in the inherent dynamics of open space. Again citing Nunes, and carrying forward points made earlier on this note,

> The very idea of an 'open space' is contradictory – for it to be opened, it must be opened by someone, for some purpose and with some people in mind; no matter how open this first determination is, it always already creates an exclusion. This leads on to a larger problem: the fact that every determination is a closure – every saying 'this is the problem', 'this is where we stand', 'this is what we have to do now' narrows down the terms of a debate, and therefore (at least in thesis) excludes people who think differently in the same way that hallmarks, for example, do.[61]

There is also the contradiction that arises as a part of what Oishik Sircar terms the *liminality of open space*.[62]   In his argument, consciously constructed open spaces often deliberately make themselves visible, as a

---

[59]   Nunes, November 2006 [2005].
[60]   Nunes, November 2006 [2005]. For the manifestation of this power within the WSF, see, for example, Albert, 2004.
[61]   Nunes, November 2006 [2005], p 4. See also, in terms of the World Social Forum becoming a logo, Sen, 2004b, as above.
[62]   Oishik Sircar, May 2007.

political-cultural act; but by virtue of doing so and of the complex social dynamics involved, the inhabitants and practitioners of open spaces ironically often end up regulating themselves (and excluding others) by establishing norms of conformity to that political-cultural position. This pattern has also been observed in the case of the World Social Forum and of movements that consider themselves progressive.[63]

Finally, a quite common argument, especially by those in organised movements, organisations, and political parties, and especially of the more radical Left, is that it is precisely the indeterminacy of an open-ended process such as an open space that dissipates the energies of those who take part in such spaces, and therefore also the (radical) political potentials of such collective gatherings – thereby rendering them not just ineffective but even contradictory to change, let alone radical change.[64] In the case of the World Social Forum, while some have left this at the level of critique and opposition[65] others have argued that what is necessary is a much more defined political programme.[66]

Towards a definition : Some organising principles of open space

As Nunes also points out, while all of the above are true and relevant, the problem is the tendency to make these positions – for or against the concept - absolute and to fetishise the qualities of open space and of related practices such as horizontalism. It becomes a question of *all or nothing* (and all too often, of them and us), and when the ideal is not achieved, it tends to lead to paralysis and alienation.[67]

The fundamental problem here is of conceiving of open space as an object and as a fixed state of being. To the contrary, open space needs to be understood first as a *tendency* (as in open*ness*, open-ended*ness*) and as an *activity* such as dialogue, and not as a fixed state.

Second, a fundamental principle of organising and practicing open space is that all those who enter and take part are equal, and that their perception and contributions are equally valid. As Vanessa Andreotti has argued,

> (a) *Everyone has knowledge* – we all have our own lenses to look through at the world;

---

[63] Daulatzai, December 2004. Also, in Sen 2004b.
[64] Revolutionary Writers' Association, December 2002; and : James, 2004, as above.
[65] Anon, January 2004b.
[66] Sen and Kumar, compilers, with Bond and Waterman, January 2007, as above.
[67] Nunes, November 2006 [2005], p 5.

(b)   *Every knowledge deserves respect* – these lenses are legitimate, but they are constantly reconstructed and, moreover, bound to particular contexts;

(c)   *Every knowledge is partial and incomplete* – as the lenses are constructed within particular contexts they are informed by particular assumptions and lack information from other contexts and assumptions; and

(d)   *All knowledge can, and should, be questioned* – the assumptions that inform the construction of the lenses as well as their implications and other possibilities of assumptions should be examined.[68]

Although – given conditioning, as discussed above – this ideal is difficult to practice and achieve in reality, and may also be abused and taken advantage by some as a way of manipulating others, the principle holds true and is one we have to struggle to achieve.

Third, open space is not inherently open, neutral, or equal. The idea that an open space – in the sense of a space declared open by someone – is inherently or necessarily open, or is permanently open, is, even if alluring, illusory. Indeed, an uncritical approach to open space is liable to lead to disappointment and disillusionment.

Equally, we perceive (and are led to perceive) open space as being neutral (in the sense of a 'level playing field'), and equal. It is not. It is subject to all the same forces as exist in life in the society within which it is created or practiced, of segmentation, marginalisation, and exclusion, and of resource concentration, power play, and privilege. As discussed above, open space that is created is itself often the outcome of displacement and appropriation.

The only way to achieve equality in open spaces is to struggle for equality within them and in relation to them, and to take affirmative actions in support of it. Open space can only be open when we actually practice openness in a critical manner. Open space must be conceived, perceived, and practiced as struggle; as critical action. Open space – and opening spaces – needs to be seen as an insurrectionary act; as an insurrection.

Fourth, we need also to perceive that open space has a skin, and exists - like all live things – in dialectical tension with its surrounds, and to work

---

[68]   From : Andreotti, forthcoming (2007; and : Andreotti and ors, nd, c.2006b, as above.

with this reality. The skin is alive and permeable; but more, the skin is the point at which the inside not only meets and contaminates that which is 'outside' but also *becomes* the outside, and vice versa.[69]

Fifth, a fundamental characteristic of open space – of space that is open – is reflexivity on the part of participants. Precisely because of the presence of such intense contradictions and paradoxes, but also because of the organically dialectic nature of the phenomenon, open space is open only when it is a conscious, sustained critical practice.

Sixth, it is not the absoluteness or completeness of an open space that is important; it is its existence and the energy it radiates, and the influence it has on that which is around it – such as stimulating replications, reactions, or refractions – that is as important as what takes place inside. As much as anything else, open space is a symbol of what is possible, and especially in contexts of relative or absolute closure or of closing spaces, such as the times in which we today live.

As an example, on the one hand the WSF – and the disagreement and debate within it – has spawned what are arguably even more creative autonomous and/or alternative zones and spaces, outside the Forum.[70] In one sense, the formation and practice of such spaces is both a refraction and a fractalisation of open space. On the other, it was the waves of struggle and experimentation within the women's movement, including through the creation and practice of open spaces, that the movement advanced from what is referred to as the second into the third wave – again, a process of fractalisation.[71]

Seventh, open space perhaps 'works best' when there is a multiplicity of spaces and possibilities available within or in relation to the space, allowing participants maximum freedom of opportunity; and when it is large enough, and complex enough, to allow participants to be anonymous and therefore autonomous and free. Conversely, the smaller and more particular or singular the space, the more it becomes necessary to consciously aim to overcome this and to act in terms of all the other organising principles of open space.

Eighth, open space, and openness – as tendencies – need to be perceived not as ends but, like networks, as the *means* by which horizontal politics

---

[69] Extrapolating from Manning and Massumi, nd, c.2006, as above.
[70] Juris, 2005b.
[71] Hayes, December 2006, as above.

can be practiced and relations established.[72] It is only in open space that we can, as John Brown Childs has urged, move from a politics of conversion to an ethics of respect.[73] Indeed, creating an open space is one of the first steps in such a shift and in the practice of this ethic.

Ninth, although to speak of open space as structure and organisation might seem contradictory - because these terms are associated with hierarchy – this is precisely what open space does : It challenges and subverts the idea that structure and organisation are necessarily vertical or programmed. It offers an alternative. It contaminates and subverts conventional structure – and conventional conceptualisation.

Open space challenges all conventional organisational thinking in the civil world - certainly at the global level, which has tended to be either federative or associational - but also at more local and national levels, because it represents a vision that is radically different. It frees – and challenges - us to think and act freely. By virtue of its nature, it is, moreover, not just an organisational form. As I have earlier written in terms of the WSF, it

> …. places a demand on us that we keep the space free of control and resist temptations to try to control it. This poses a challenge not only to mainstream, orthodox, and conservative thinking and practice but also – and perhaps even more so - to all those organisations and initiatives that consider themselves to be 'progressive' or claim to be working in terms of 'alternatives' but that are doing so through forms and relations that remain conventionally bounded and territorial. It therefore represents a radical challenge to most existing organisations and movements at a very basic level.[74]

Tenth, we must recognise that open space, like networks, is inherently ambiguous :

> … on the one hand, they are what we perceive as the conditions of possibility of horizontality, the means by which it can be achieved; on the other, they are only partial actualisations of the idea they make possible.[75]

Eleventh, the fundamental participant in open space is, ultimately, the individual, as an individual and not in terms of communal identity or in representation. Open space, indeed, when open, tends to subvert communal and organisational identity – though equally, communal and organisational identity tends to subvert open space.

---

[72] Nunes, November 2006 [2005].
[73] Childs, 2003.
[74] Sen, January 2007, as above.
[75] Nunes, November 2006 [2005].

And finally, we need to recognise that as a consequence of the material conditions and general culture within which we today live, at least in many parts of the world, we are in the midst of a major process of reculturalisation. We are moving from a belief in linear, programmed, clockwork movement and politics (and life) to a far more open-ended culture, with a far higher degree of reliance on autonomy, self-organisation, and responsibility. We need therefore to reflect on our programmed tendencies to believe in linear programmes and organisations, and to consider a willingness to open ourselves to critically embrace the outcomes of open-endedness - of clouds.

*

To return to the beginning :

> The philosophy of the Upanishads emphasises that our perception usually encompasses only the world of variety and sensuous perception, and that there is a deeper and all pervading meaning that unifies this diversity. The entire changing relative world that we experience is but an expression of this unchanging absolute level. This all-pervading reality is invoked in the following passage :[76]

O Lord of Light, the Knowing one,
The Golden guardian, Giver of life to all,
Spread apart thy rays, gather up thy brilliance,
That I may perceive thy finest and most splendorous nature,
For I myself am That !

---

[76] From the entry on the performance by Madhavi Mudgal and her troupe in Sangeet Natak Akademi, nd, c.2007. The gender bias is there in the original…

Readings and References

Michael Albert, 2004 – 'The WSF : Where to Now ?', in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – *World Social Forum : Challenging Empires* (New Delhi : Viveka), pp 323-328; available at http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html. Edited version of 'The WSF's Future', on ZNet, February 2 2003; renamed 'WSF : Where to Now ?', on February 3 2003. http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm? SectionID= 41&ItemID=2956

Vanessa Andreotti and ors, nd, c.2006b – 'Critical Literacy – Independent Thinking – Global Citizenship - Global Issues'. OSDE (Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry) Methodology, Centre for the Study of Social and Global Justice, The University of Nottingham, @ http://www.osdemethodology.org.uk/keydocs/osdebooklet.pdf

Vanessa Andreotti, forthcoming (2007) - 'Creating Open Spaces', in Jai Sen, ed, forthcoming (2007) - *Imagining Alternatives,* Book 3 in the *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* series. New Delhi : OpenWord. Also see www.mundi.org.uk and http://www.osdemethodology.org.uk; or contact her directly, @ taxvoa@nottingham.ac.uk

Anon, January 2004b – 'mumbai declaration 2004 : declaration adopted at the end of Mumbai Resistance 2004 against imperialist globalisation and war - an event held parallel to World Social Forum at Mumbai'. January 23 2004. Accessed 051006 @ http://ireland.indymedia.org/article/63143

John Berger, 1977 [1972] – *Ways of Seeing*. London : British Broadcasting Corporation

John Berger, 1992 [1965] – *The Success and Failure of Picasso*. London : Granta Books

Marco Berlinguer, ed, forthcoming, 2007 - *Lessico di una nuova politica* ['Glossary of a New Politics', in Italian]. Transform! Italia/XL Edizioni

John Brown Childs, 2003 – *Transcommunality*, From the Politics of Conversion to the Ethics of Respect. Philadelphia : Temple University Press

Janet Conway, February 2005 – 'The empire, the movement, and the politics of scale : Considering the World Social Forum'. Paper prepared for 'Towards a Political Economy of Scale : Studies in Political Economy Conference', York University, Toronto, February 3-5 2005 (jconway@ryerson.ca). Available @ http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=159

Anila Daulatzai, December 2004 – 'A leap of faith : Thoughts on secularistic practices and progressive politics', in *International Social Science Journal,* Issue no 182, pp 565-576. Available at http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/servlet/useragent?func=showIssues&code=issj&open=2004#C2004

Education Encyclopaedia - StateUniversity.com, nd – 'Paulo Freire (1921–1997) - Conceptual Tools, Philosophy of Education, Criticism', @ http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/1998/Freire-Paulo-1921-1997.html

Arturo Escobar, 2004 - 'Other Worlds Are (Already) Possible : Self-Organisation, Complexity, and Post-Capitalist Cultures' in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – *World Social Forum : Challenging Empires* (New Delhi : Viveka), pp 349-358. Available at http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html

Jo Freeman (aka Joreen), nd [May 1970/1971] – *The tyranny of structurelessness* @ http://feminist-reprise.org/docs/structurelessness.htm and http://struggle.ws/pdfs/tyranny.pdf. Earliest version of this article as talk at conference called by the Southern Female Rights Union held in Beulah, Mississippi, USA, in May 1970. First official publication in *The Second Wave* Vol 2, No 1, 1972, authored by 'Joreen'. Different versions subsequently published in the *Berkeley Journal of Sociology,* Vol 17, 1972-73, pp 151-165, and *Ms* magazine, July 1973, pp 76-78, 86-89, and in *Radical Feminism,* edited by Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone, Quadrangle, 1973, authored by 'Jo Freeman'

David Harvey, 1996 - 'Space, Time, and Place', Part III in his *Justice, Nature, and the Geography of Differences.* Oxford : Blackwell; especially : 'The Space and Time of Social Life', Section 1 in 'The Social Construction of Space and Time', Chapter 9. For a preview, see : http://books.google.co.in/books?ct=title&q=Radical+social+geography+Harvey&btnG=Search+Books&as_brr=0

Emilie Hayes, December 2006 – 'Wading into the Waves of Feminism : Explorations in open space and dissent in the second wave feminist movement and its contributions to the emergence of third wave feminism'. Research paper for SOCI 5805, Carleton University, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, Fall 2006 - Challenging Empires : Open Space and Dissent in Movement

ILC – International Liaison Committee for a Workers' International, January 2002 – Open letter to the Trade Unionists and Activists Participating in the World Social Forum 2002 in Porto Alegre, Brazil : 'Is it possible to put a human face on globalisation and war ?'. Dated January 2 2002, posted January 8 2002. Signed by Julio Turra, National Executive Committee, CUT

trade union federation, Hélcia de Oliveira, Vice President CUT-DF, and twelve others

Jane Jacobs, 1961 – *The Death and Life of Great American Cities.* New York : Vintage

P J James, 2004 - 'World Social Forum's "Many Alternatives" to Globalisation', in Sen, Anand, Escobar, and Waterman, eds, 2004 – *World Social Forum : Challenging Empires* (New Delhi : Viveka), pp 246-250. Available at http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html

Steven Johnson, 2002 – *Emergence,* The Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities, and Software. Touchstone Books. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, and Singapore : Simon Schuster

Jeffrey Scott Juris, Spring 2004 - 'Digital Age Activism: Anti-Corporate Globalization and the Cultural Politics of Transnational Networking'. A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology in the Graduate Division of the University of California, Berkeley, USA. Committee in Charge : Professor Stanley Brandes, Chair; Professor Aihwa Ong; and Professor Manuel Castells. Forthcoming as book

Jeffrey S Juris, 2004 – 'Networked Social Movements : Global Movements for Global Justice', in *The Network Society: a Cross-Cultural Perspective,* Manuel Castells, ed. Cheltenham : Edward Elgar
Margaret E Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, 1998 - Activists Beyond Borders, Advocacy Networks in International Politics. Ithaca : Cornell University Press

Jeffrey S Juris, 2005b – 'Social Forums and Their Margins : Networking Logics and the Cultural Politics of Autonomous Space', in *Ephemera,* special edition on the World Social Forum, Vol 5(2), pp 253-272; Steffen Boehm, Sian Sullivan, and Oscar Reyes, eds; @ http://www.ephemeraweb.org/journal/5-2/5-2juris.pdf

Naomi Klein, July 2000a – 'Does Protest Need a Vision?', in *New Statesman,* July 3 2000

Naomi Klein, July 2000b – 'The Vision Thing', in *The Nation,* July 10 2000

Laurence Lessig, 1999 – 'Open Code and Open Societies : Values of Internet Governance', in Chicago-Kent Law Review, Vol 74, 1999, pp 101-116; @ http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/works/lessig/final.PDF

Charmain Levy, forthcoming (2007) – 'Brazilian Liberation Theology, the Progressive Church, and the World Social Forum : Influences and contributions' (tentative title), in Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, forthcoming (2007) – Volume 2 in the *Challenging Empires* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

James Lovelock, 2000 – *Gaia : A New Look at Life on Earth.* See also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaia_hypothesis

Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, nd, c.2006 - 'Housing The Body, Dressing The Environment', outline for Part 2 of 'Technologies of Lived Abstraction', a 4-part event sponsored by The Sense Lab (Erin Manning, Concordia University) and the Workshop in Radical Empiricism (Brian Massumi, Université de Montréal), to take place on August 24-27 2007 at the Society for Arts and Technology, Montréal. http://www.thesenselab.com/TechnologiesOfLivedAbstraction/HTB/call.htm

Odo Marquard, 1991 - *In Defense of the Accidental: Philosophical Studies.* Odeon / Oxford University Press

Brian K Murphy, 1999 – *Transforming Ourselves, Transforming the World,* An Open Conspiracy for Social Change. London & New York : Zed, Ottawa : Inter Pares, and Halifax, Nova Scotia : Fernwood

Rodrigo Nunes, November 2006 [2005] – 'Nothing is what democracy looks like : Openness, horizontality and the movement of movements', on Interactivist Info Exchange - Collaborative Authorship, Collective Intelligence http://info.interactivist.net/ , @ http://info.interactivist.net/article.pl?sid=06/11/21/2032250. Originally published in : David Harvie, Keir Milburn, Ben Trott, and David Watts, eds, 2005 – *Shut Them Down !,* The G8, Gleneagles 2005 and the Movement of Movements. Leeds : Dissent, and Brooklyn, New York : Autonomedia. www.shutthemdown.org

Open Space World, nd – 'What is Open Space Technology?', @ http://www.openspaceworld.org/cgi/wiki.cgi?AboutOpenSpace

Karl Popper, 1945 - *The Open Society and Its Enemies*

C K Raju, forthcoming [2007] – 'New Technology in an Old Social Order', in Jai Sen, ed, forthcoming [2007] – *Imagining Alternatives* (New Delhi, OpenWord, in press, 2007). Edited and developed version of : C K Raju, August 2005 – 'What we need to do to keep Cyberspace alive'. Complete

text of talk prepared for 'The WSF and New Internationalisms : The Culture and Politics of Cyberspace', Session 8 of the Open Space Seminar Series, 'Are Other Worlds Possible ? Cultures of Politics and the World Social Forum', held on November 25 2003 at Sarai, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Rajpur Road, Delhi, India

Revolutionary Writers' Association, December 2002 – 'Struggle Against Imperialism is neither Fun nor Picnic ! It is a Life and Death Practice !', in Sen, Anand, Escobar, and Waterman, eds, 2004 – *World Social Forum : Challenging Empires* (New Delhi : Viveka), pp 284-88. Available at http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html.   Originally issued as a leaflet, Andhra Pradesh, India, 4 pp, dt December 31 2002

Theodore Roszak, 1969 - *The Making of a Counter Culture,* Reflections on the Technocratic Society and Its Youthful Opposition. Berkeley : University of California Press

RUPE (Research Unit for Political Economy), September 2003 – *The Economics and Politics of the World Social Forum : Lessons for the Struggle against 'Globalisation'.* 'Aspects of India's Economy' series, no 35. Published by Rajani X. Desai for Research Unit for Political Economy, Ground Floor, Sidhwa Estate, N A Sawant Marg, Colaba, Mumbai 400 005, India. Ph 91-22-2281 7547; em : rupeindia@rediffmail.com. Available at : www.rupe-india.org

Carl Sagan, 1985 – *Cosmos.* New York : Ballantine Books. For Sagan's *Cosmos*, a 13-part series, see http://www.sciwear.com/pd_cosmos.cfm

Sangeet Natak Akademi, nd, c.2007 – *Nritya Sanrachna,* A Festival of Choreographic Works, Pragjyoti Auditorium, Guwahati, India, March 13-19 2007. New Delhi : Sangeet Natak Akademi

Myron Schwartzman, 1990 - *Romare Bearden : His Life and Art.* New York : Harry N Abrams

Jai Sen, September 1996 - Review of M N Buch, 1993 - *Environmental Consciousness and Urban Planning* (Orient Longman, Tracts for the Times, No 2), in *Seminar* 445, pp 74-77

Jai Sen, August 1999 – 'Where does beauty and ugliness lie ?', in *The Hindu Folio* on 'Urban Spaces', pp 10-13

Jai Sen, 2004b – 'How Open ? The Forum as Logo, the Forum as Religion - Scepticism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will', in Sen, Anand, Escobar,

and Waterman, eds, 2004 – *World Social Forum : Challenging Empires* (New Delhi : Viveka), pp 210-227. Available at http://www.choike.org/documentos/wsf_s315_jai.pdf

Jai Sen, January 2007 - 'The World Social Forum as an emergent learning process', in *Futures* vol 39 (2007), pp 505-522. Available through subscription @ http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.futures.2006.10.006. For an earlier, easy-to-access version, see : Jai Sen, March 2006 – 'Understanding the World Social Forum : The WSF as an Emergent Learning Process - Notes on the Dynamics of Change', in *Mainstream* (New Delhi), March 25 2006, pp 9-24; available at http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-download_file.php?fileId=34

Jai Sen and Madhuresh Kumar, eds, March 2006 – 'Contributions to a Political-Cultural Glossary on world movement', Part 1. Translated and published first in Hindi in : Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2006 - *Nayi Subah Ki Or* ('Towards a New Dawn', in Hindi), Volume 1 of *Bishwa Samajik Manch : Samrajya Se Sangharsh* ('World Social Forum : Challenging Empires'), Hindi edition of first part of Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – *World Social Forum : Challenging Empires* (New Delhi : Viveka). New Delhi : Prakashan Sansthan. Associate editors : Kishan Kaljayee and Madhuresh Kumar

Jai Sen and Madhuresh Kumar, compilers, with Patrick Bond and Peter Waterman, January 2007 – *A Political Programme for the World Social Forum ? Democracy, Substance, and Debate in the Bamako Appeal and the Global Justice Movements - A Reader.* Published by CACIM (Critical Action : Centre in Movement), New Delhi, India, and University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society (CCS), Durban, South Africa. Soft copy available @ www.cacim.net and www.nu.ac.za/ccs; hard copies from CACIM and CCS

Shuddhabrata Sengupta, forthcoming [2007] – 'The Politics of Knowledge Sharing', in Jai Sen, ed, forthcoming [2007] – *Imagining Alternatives* (New Delhi, OpenWord, in press, 2007). Based on talk at 'The WSF and New Internationalisms : The Culture and Politics of Cyberspace', Session 8 of the Open Space Seminar Series, 'Are Other Worlds Possible ? Cultures of Politics and the World Social Forum', held on November 25 2003 at Sarai, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Rajpur Road, Delhi, India

D L Sheth, nd – 'Micro-Movements in India : Towards a New Politics of Participatory Democracy', @ http://www.chs.ubc.ca/participatory/docs/sheth.pdf   and http://www.ces.uc.pt/emancipa/research/en/ft/futurodemocracia.html

Oishik Sircar, May 2007 – 'Open Space and Liminality : Notes on Sexualising the University'. Mss for chapter in Jai Sen, ed, forthcoming (2007) - *Imagining Alternatives*, Book 3 in the *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* series. New Delhi : OpenWord

Teivo Teivainen, forthcoming [2007] - 'Whose Civil Society ? The Charter of Principles and Boundaries of an Open Space', Chapter 5 in his *Democracy in Movement : The World Social Forum as a Process of Political Learning.* Unfinished draft, 18 March 2006, for book to be published in 2007 by Routledge, London

Ashok Vajpeyi, forthcoming - 'Giving birth to the world : The Power of Dreams', in Jai Sen, ed, forthcoming – *Imagining Alternatives* (New Delhi : OpenWord, 2007). Edited version of presentation at the Open Space Seminar Series session on 'Fundamentalism, Communalism, and Nationalism' on November 11 2003 at the Seminar Room, Ramjas College, University of Delhi (North Campus), Delhi, India

Tom Weber, 1998 – 'Gandhi is dead. Long live Gandhi :The post-Gandhi Gandhian movement in India'. La Trobe University, Australia, TFF (Transnational Foundation for Peace and Future Research) Associate. http://www.transnational.org/SAJT/forum/Nonviolence/2001/Weber_Gdead-live.html

Chico Whitaker, 2004 – 'The WSF as Open Space', in Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – *World Social Forum : Challenging Empires* (New Delhi : Viveka), pp 111-121. Available at http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html

Norbert Wiener, 1948 – *Cybernetics : Or, Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine.* Cambridge, Mass : MIT Press

World Social Forum Organising Committee and World Social Forum International Council, June 2001 – 'World Social Forum Charter of Principles'; dt June 10 2001. Revised and approved version of original April 2001 Charter. Available at http://www.forumsocialmundial.org.br/main.asp?id_menu= 4&cd_language=2

Oren Yiftachel, 1998 - 'Planning and Social Control : Exploring the Dark Side', in *Journal of Planning Literature,* Vol 12, No 4, 395-406 (1998), abstract @ http://jpl.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/12/4/395. See also http://www.geog.bgu.ac.il/members/yiftachel/lectures.html

Related Publications by CACIM Members and Associates

Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, eds, September 2008 – *World Social Forum : Challenging Empires*, second edition. Montréal : Black Rose Books

Peter Waterman, April 2008 – *Recovering Internationalism, Creating the New Global Solidarity : Labour, Social Movements and Emancipation in the 21st Century*. First Edition on the Choike Website: http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/6439.html

Jai Sen and Madhuresh Kumar, compilers, with Patrick Bond and Peter Waterman, January 2007 – *A Political Programme for the World Social Forum ? Democracy, Substance, and Debate in the Bamako Appeal and the Global Justice Movements - A Reader*. Published by CACIM (Critical Action : Centre in Movement), New Delhi, India, and University of KwaZulu-Natal Centre for Civil Society (CCS), Durban, South Africa. Available @ www.cacim.net and www.nu.ac.za/ccs

Jai Sen and Mayuri Saini, eds, March 2006 - *Nayi Rajniti* ('New Politics', in Hindi), Delhi : Prakashan Sansthan and CACIM. (Hindi edition of Jai Sen and Mayuri Saini, eds, January 2005 – *Talking New Politics*. New Delhi : Zubaan Books)

Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2006 - *Nayi Subah Ki Or* ('Towards a New Dawn', in Hindi), Book 1 in 4-volume expanded Hindi edition of Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – *World Social Forum : Challenging Empires* (New Delhi : Viveka); translated by Kishan Kaljayee. Volume 4 in *Samrajya Se Sangharsh* ('Challenging Empires') series, published by Prakashan Sansthan and CACIM, New Delhi. Associate editors : Kishan Kaljayee and Madhuresh Kumar

Jai Sen and Mayuri Saini, eds, January 2005 – *Are Other Worlds Possible ? Talking New Politics*, Book One of *Are Other Worlds Possible ?* series. New Delhi : Zubaan Books. http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Book:+Talking+New+Politics

Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2005 - *Sekai Shakai Forum Teikoku eno Chosen* ['World Social Forum Challenges to empire(s)', in Japanese], Japanese edition of World Social Forum : Challenging Empires (New Delhi : Viveka, 2004). Translation supervisors (*kanyakusha*) : Muto Ichiyo, Ogura Toshimaru, Toda Kiyoshi, and Oya Sadaharu. Tokyo : Sakuhin-Sha

Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, y Peter Waterman (*Editores*), nd, c.2005 – *El Foro Social Mundial : Desafiando Imperios* ('World Social Forum : Challenging Empires', in Spanish). Mataró (Barcelona) : El Viejo Topo

Taran N Khan, January 2005 – Opening Space. Film. 18 min. Available from CACIM (www.cacim.net) : cacim@cacim.net / Ph +91-11-4155 1521

Chloé Keraghel and Jai Sen, Editorial Advisers, December 2004 – 'Explorations in Open Space : The World Social Forum and Cultures of Politics', Issue no 182 of the *International Social Science Journal*. Contents of issue available at http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/118754213/issue and at http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/bpl/issj/2004/00000056/00000182;jsessionid=eom5nefy4vpt.alexandra

Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, Jai Sen, and Peter Waterman (Hrsg), 2004 - *Eine Andere Welt : Das Weltsozialforum* ['Another World : The World Social Forum', in German]. Translated from the original English edition (*World Social Forum : Challenging Empires*. New Delhi : Viveka, 2004) by Carla Krüger and Wolfram Adolphi of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. Berlin : Karl Dietz Verlag

Jai Sen, Anita Anand, Arturo Escobar, and Peter Waterman, eds, 2004 – *World Social Forum : Challenging Empires*. New Delhi : Viveka. Slightly reduced version available @ http://www.choike.org/nuevo_eng/informes/1557.html and @ http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=WSFChallengingEmpires2004

Jai Sen and Peter Waterman, with Madhuresh Kumar, December 2003 - 'The World Social Bibliography : A Bibliography on the World Social Forum and the Global Solidarity and Justice Movement'. Ongoing, 105 pp. Available @ http://www.openspaceforum.net/twiki/tiki-index.php?page=Explorations+In+Open+Spaces

Critical Engagement
CACIM's Publications Programme

1 : Kolya Abramsky, August 2008 - The Bamako Appeal and the Zapatista 6th Declaration - From Reorganizing the Existing World to Creating New Ones

2 : Jai Sen, August 2008 - Opening Open Space : Notes on the Grammar and Vocabulary of the Concept of Open Space

3 : Kolya Abramsky, August 2008 - Towards the Intergalactica - Beyond Networking : Building New Autonomous Global Relations of Production, Reproduction and Exchange'

4 : Susana Barria with Nelson O J, August 2008 - Main Debates Around the WSF 2004 in Mumbai

5 : Mayur Chetia, August 2008 - World Social Forum and the Reaction from the Indian Left

6 : Mamata Dash, August 2008 - The World Social Forum: Through the Eyes of Movement Groups in India

---

CACIM : India Institute for Critical Action - Centre In Movement

CACIM is an initiative towards cultivating and nurturing a culture of critical reflexivity and action in individual and public work. In principle we expect to work in many fields, but our focus at the moment is on activism, research, and publication in relation to social and political movement. We primarily work by creating, maintaining, and making available real and virtual spaces for fundamental research and critical reflection, exploration, action, and creation in the field of movement such as, Books, films, seminars, workshops, websites, listserves, newsbulletins, action alerts and web radio. Initiated in India in 2005, CACIM is transnational, intercultural, and interdisciplinary in vision and culture.