

A Liberatory Space? Rumors of Rapes at the 5th World Social Forum, Porto Alegre, 2005¹

By Sara Koopman²

Abstract:

Rumors were that 90 women were raped in the youth camp at the Fifth World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, in January of 2005. Later reports were that there had been two. Yet the rumors speak to how the space of the forum is socially produced and what sort of space it is. How does space then shape the forum and what we can do from there? Lefebvre argues that revolutionary festivals are an important challenge to the abstract space of capitalism. Revolutionary festivals can liberate us, but our bodies must be free if we are to create a revolutionary space, another world. We need *freer* revolutionary spaces from which to nurture our struggles for freedom. Another forum is possible. Honoring our bodies, and making room for pleasure, is a way to create a freer forum. It is also an effective strategy for building that other world that we know is possible.

Keywords: space, bodies, pleasure

Introduction

“Our capacity to build another world is also dependent on this: social movements must commit to challenging the unequal relations between women and men; they must undertake to incorporate in their analysis the links between capitalism, sexism and racism; they must demand respect for women’s rights and commit themselves to challenging the culture of violence in both individual and collective practice. It is only by so doing that we have a chance of shaking the foundations of patriarchy and liberal globalization”

- World March of Women (p. 233)

“We must live the change we want to see in the world”

- Mahatma Gandhi

Do we live the change at the World Social Forum? In some ways, yes. The way we do things at the Forum is as, if not more, important than *what* we do. The forum is horizontal, and it is from the bottom-up that we weave new alliances and networks for peace, justice, and liberation. But is it a liberatory space? Freeing for whom? It seems not for all. Rumors flew at the Fifth World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, in January of

¹ I would like to thank Derek Gregory and Gaston Gordillo for introducing me to these theories. Many thanks to the reviewers and editors for their hard questions and suggestions. Of course, all errors remain my own.

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2005 that 90 women were raped in the youth camp, an area within the forum grounds where roughly 40,000 of the 160,000 participants were camping. Later reports were that there had been two. There is still little clarity as to what happened. Yet the rumors speak to how the space of the forum is socially produced and what sort of space it is. How does space then shape the forum and what we can do from there? How can we change the way we create the space of the forum so that we all feel safe and free in this place? This paper asks these questions in the hopes of contributing to ongoing discussions in our movements about how best to live the change that we want to see.

What Happened?

I came to the forum not as an academic, but to volunteer my services as a professional Spanish interpreter and as a long-time international solidarity activist. I did not stay in the youth camp, but at a local home, arranged for me by Babels, the forum interpreters collective. I first heard the rumors of rapes during a Women in Black candlelight vigil on the fifth night of the six day forum. Women from 22 different countries who stand weekly silent vigil against war were one by one telling us about their vigils, their struggles, when a woman interrupted to tell us that there had been 90 rapes in the youth camp, that a group of women were gathering to march through the camp in protest and reclaim the space, and urged us all to join her. The women at the vigil felt it important to give the women from the countries who had not yet spoken the floor, so we rushed through the other countries and then some 50 of the 80 or so of us who had been at the vigil marched off to the camp (figure 1).



Figure 1: Marching towards the youth camp, photo by author

We chanted “No to rapes in the youth camp” in Spanish and Portuguese as we walked across the large grounds along the waterfront. The largely male onlookers, most of whom were drinking at the street stands, looked confused and did not reply or engage much. It took half an hour to get to the camp. I had not been in the camp yet and was scared and exhausted from a very long day of interpreting. Just before getting to the camp I caught a taxi back to the house where I was staying. From word of mouth, reports on the Brazilian and Argentinean Indymedia sites, and a reviewer, I heard both that by the time the march I was with arrived the other march had ended, and that some time and many cell phone calls later they did find the other women’s march, and together they were a couple of hundred women (figure 2).

All of my information on the march through the camp is from reports on Indymedia, where participants reported that the women’s march through the camp was



Figure 2: Women’s march through the camp
photo from Indymedia

verbally supported by a few, but harassed by many more of the men in the camp - who eventually formed a competing march in which men called for “sexual liberation” and in which many men marched naked. The men’s march started small and reached nearly 100. One report on Indymedia said that the first march was actually called by the World March of Women the day before at the workshop “Mercantilização do Corpo Feminino” (Marketing of the Female Body) where it was said that women who had been raped and sexually assaulted and harassed began to give their testimonies. The rest of that night and the next day women wearing lilac armbands moved in groups through the camp, serving as safety chaperones for other women.

There generally seems to be a “will to forget” these events that seem so contradictory to the image, the discourse, and the

ideals of the Forum. The rumors of rapes and the protest march against them were largely invisibilized. That is to say, I could find no

public statement, made during the Forum or after, made by the International Council of the Forum, the Central Organizing Committee, nor the Youth Camp organizing committee about the rumors of rapes. None of the several daily newspapers of the forum

that I collected onsite mentioned the rumors or the march. Still today neither the forum nor the youth camp web sites make any mention of either. Despite much searching on the web and through social networks I found only one brief mention in English about the rape claims (in an interview of Ticiana Studart from the World March of Women on the women's human rights network site³) and nothing in Spanish or Portuguese outside of the Indymedia sites mentioned, which contained no direct testimony by a rape or sexual assault survivor. Studart, in her interview, says that most women chose to remain anonymous, but that one woman did file a report with police, and that one perpetrator was arrested. One Brazilian activist with the World March of Women confirmed in personal communication that as a nurse on-site she treated two rape survivors.

Were there two rapes? Were there 90? It seems unlikely that there were 90, but whether or not *any* rapes happened, the rumors speak to a deeper truth. Women in the camp did not feel safe. Indeed, many women felt under sexual attack, and this changed the space of the forum for women, and ultimately for all of us. The rumors themselves then likely served to amplify that situation, leaving women who heard the rumors feeling less safe. One Argentinean Indymedia post also mentions several attacks on gays and lesbians⁴, and it seems likely that many queer folks also did not feel safe.

I am stunned, by the rumors *and* by the silence and the continuing lack of clarity, which is to say, the lack of any sort of formal inquiry or report or statement about the rumors and allegations of rapes at the forum in 2005, by any organization or entity of any sort, be it formally associated with the forum or not. Even two rapes are deplorable, but of course 90 would reflect a problem of even greater magnitude. We need to have a better sense of what did, or did not, happen.

I turn now to theory to make sense of the rumors and the silence. But let me clarify that as much as I believe we still need such, I am not issuing a fact-finding report. I use theory not to lift some curtain and see what is "really" happening, but as a tool for shifting around to see in new ways. I believe these rape rumors are telling, a key point-of-entry for thinking about the space and place we are creating at the forum - and how it works, or does not, to create another world. I believe that discussing this incident openly will be useful to the movement of movements that is the forum, and I open this discussion because the forum is a process that I remain committed to and inspired by. We can learn from these events. Another forum is possible.

Place

In the common sense use of these terms, space is very general and place is a specific location within space. Place is indeed physical, but the meaning of a place comes from what we project on to it. Even the physicality of a place is only meaningful in and through a web of social meanings. Places are socially produced, not once but constantly, and through struggle. Yet though this is a collective process, places are not one monolithic thing. Places are both materially and imaginatively constructed in different ways by different people.⁵ We would each experience and describe the same place slightly differently. Places are not stable external containers for experience. Places are always collectively in the making and in the unmaking. Place making is a conflicted,

³ www.whrnet.org/docs/interview-studart-0502.html

⁴ <http://argentina.indymedia.org/news/2005/02/266316.php>

⁵ Dictionary of Human Geography, "place"

unstable, ever occurring, process. Even though the forum is over, it continues to live on in journals, websites, and discussions. In fact, debates like this one about what happened continue to produce the forum, especially for those who did not attend (Osterweil). And of course another forum will be produced next year, and the next. Why does this theory about place-making matter? Well, again, I am interested in understanding how we produce this ephemeral place of the forum so that we can do so in more liberatory ways.

I am not only interested in reshaping this place, but also, crucially, in seeing how this place shapes us, shapes our struggle, what we are and can become. To do so it is helpful to look at the forum not just as a place but also a type of space, for “what goes on in a place cannot be understood outside of the space relations which support that place, any more than the space relations can be understood independently of what goes on in particular places” (Harvey ‘96, 316).

Space

Space is not empty, neutral, nor pre-existing. Space, like place, is socially produced and ever in-the-making.⁶ Space shapes our doings, and our doings shape space. It is not that one happens first and then the other. Smith reminds us that it is misleading to think of a separation between space and society, as it is to think that the two are entirely fused (77). De Certeau says it beautifully: “space is like the word when it is spoken, when it is caught in the ambiguity of an actualization” (117). Space comes in to being in the doing of space, and we come in to being in and through space. We are mutually constitutive. Social relations are (among other things) always spatial, spatial relations are always social. They become so in the doing. We struggle over space. There is never one final product, we are constantly shifting it. Yet space is not simply a reflection of social relations, it produces relations of power. Spatial forms are social forms.

Certain types of space more easily allow for certain doings, certain ways of being, and vice versa. Henri Lefebvre argues that the dominant form of space today is abstract space, which both makes capitalism possible and is created by capitalism (142, 646). He characterizes it as a violent, masculine space (248, 287). He calls it “the sterile space of men, founded on violence and misery”, and a space of male “joyless domination, renunciation – and death” (380). It is brought in to being particularly by *state* violence he says, but it is also more generally characterized by masculine power and ‘phallic brutality.’⁷

Bodies in Space

Derek Gregory argues that Lefebvre’s history of space is an account of the “decorporealization” of space in the west (368), that is to say, that in its apogee, abstract space, bodies are *most* under attack, emptied out, made useful and docile, and displaced by abstractions. Yet our bodies are never empty, they still have pleasure, desire, and rhythms. However much abstract space *tries* to make us homogenous, and reduce our differences to those that are useful to the system, we are each ever different in our living bodies. So it is from the body that Lefebvre believes we ultimately can and *must* resist.

⁶ In-the-making is a phrase used by Donna Haraway to describe how gender does not pre-exist its doing, as Judith Butler also argues. Gillian Rose also argues that space is a doing.

⁷ Dictionary of Human Geography, “production of space”.

For, “the body, at the very heart of space, of the discourse of power, is irreducible and subversive. It is the body which is the point of return” (from Lefebvre’s *The Survival of Capitalism*, ’76, cited in Gregory, 159).

Lefebvre presents the body moving in everyday life as a “seed of a new kind of space” lying at the heart of abstract space. Something like the dot of yin at the absolute full point of yang. Of course there is also yang in the heart of yin, and rumors of rapes in the forum, but let me come back to that.

Lefebvre particularly turns to *women’s* bodies, in a romanticized and essentialized way, as the source of resistance, the source of the creation of differential space. Yet, perhaps because women’s bodies *are* particularly cut up, emptied out and dominated by the white supremacist heteropatriarchy, it might be that our bodies are indeed a key place to focus, a viewpoint from which we can better see how to turn things around. I do not expect women to do all the work and save us all from capitalism, which sometimes feels like the undertone of Lefebvre. I do believe, however, that honoring and freeing women’s bodies is a strategic way to shift the space we all live in, so as to make possible another world.

Lefebvre argues that we can make another world more possible through broad sensual pleasure, through bodies, but also, crucially, through creating differential space, or what he at times calls ‘revolutionary festivals’. He calls for the reclamation of the spaces of everyday life through and in such festivals, which he sees as counterspaces that challenge dominant representations and inscriptions of space.

Lefebvre tells us that, “Any revolutionary ‘project’ today, whether utopian or realistic, must, if it is to avoid hopeless banality, make the reappropriation of the body, in association with the reappropriation of space, into a non-negotiable part of its agenda” (166-67). He explicitly connects the restoration of the everyday with that of the body, saying that, “any mobilization of ‘private life’ would be accompanied by a restoration of the body, and the contradictions of space would have to be brought out into the open” (363). We get to our bodies through this new space, but to truly get to this new space we must reclaim our bodies, and we get back to our bodies through pleasure.

Lefebvre does not talk much about our bodies in these festivals per se – but if abstract space empties out and deadens bodies, does this revolutionary space reclaim and fill our bodies up with pleasure and joy? This is my vision of what a liberatory space *could* do. This sort of space can liberate bodies, but also must come about through the liberation of bodies.

Creating this sort of space is essential not just to be consistent with our values, but also to be effective, to achieve our dreams of a better possible world. Capitalism achieves its control through creating abstract space, through dehumanizing, deadening us to empathy and connection, even with our *own* bodies, much less those of others. Capitalist culture is a rape culture; it rapes the land, our bodies, and our worth, both men and women’s. If we truly want a world free of capitalism, we have to free ourselves of these patterns. We can begin on a micro scale, working to become ever more free in our own spaces, finding more liberatory ways of struggling for liberation. We can make the forum a freer, more pleasurable, revolutionary festival for all. One of the keys to that is to honor bodies, for example by making sure we are all free to move around and have fun, because revolution has to be pleasurable, or why keep at it? I am certainly not in it for the endless meetings and speeches. One of the best parts of the forum for me was the

sense of being at a huge party, with street theatre, musical jam sessions on the sidewalk, even dancing in the streets.

Bodies at the Center

The World March Of Women declared at the 2003 Forum, “We believe that this network has the potential to prove that the inclusion of the struggle for equality is a winning strategy for all social movements; that in order for ‘another world’ to become a reality, we must work, think and act in another way. This means inventing new kinds of actions and radicalizing our concepts of utopia so that they include the eradication of all forms of oppression.” They went on to express their frustration that “The struggle against capitalism is still considered to be the primary struggle in the minds of many”. I too am frustrated with the frequent blindness to how capitalism interlocks with other oppressions. Racism, sexism, homophobia, capitalism all prop each other up.⁸ We cannot bring them down one by one. But how do we chip away at all of the pillars at once? One way of challenging these structures of oppression is to be more aware of bodies.

One of the key ways we can make the forum freer is by putting bodies at the center, listening and honoring our own bodies and those of others, making sure we are all free to move around safely and with joy. Doreen Massey argues for a politics of mobility and access, and reminds us that these both reflect and reinforce power (62-3). The World March of Women also argues for focusing on violence against women, reminding us that even the threat of it keeps women in fear, restricts our movement, especially at night, as well as our access to public spaces, which ultimately limits our social participation and autonomy – thereby denying us our full citizenship (226). It “keeps us from being politically active, from having fun – in short, from living” (232).

It may seem like a jump, but I believe that grueling long days of meetings are part of the same problem. Though the time-space compressions of late capitalism may have differential effects on different places and people, many of us have ramped up to a frenetic pace in our lives which sadly we seem to replicate in our movements. We always seem to move in crisis mode, overdoing, driving ourselves hard, and being disconnected from our pain, our grief, and our exhaustion. If instead we can struggle with freer bodies, I believe we can more effectively move out from there to build freer relationships, organizations, communities, states, and a freer world. I agree with Riane Eisler that we tend to operate in dominator mode, even with our own bodies, and if we want to shift to a partnership paradigm in the world at large we can start at our own center, and move from there to our intimate daily relationships and then on out.

⁸ Though of course patriarchy existed long before capitalism and exists in other economic systems as well, but they morphed into and support each other particularly well in this combination – a point the March also makes, ‘03.



Figure 3: View of the 2005 Forum before the arrival of the big crowds, photo by author

In and Out

Space always exists in relation, and places too are produced in tension with each other (Rose, Massey). We understand what the forum is by virtue of what it is not. But there is oppression here at the forum too of course. Even as we define ourselves as resisting capitalism - we are not outside it, we are not outside of abstract space. Yet neither is the forum a space that is somewhat abstract and somewhat revolutionary. It is, paradoxically, both of those things at once. The forum is not a third space, it is not off the grid, it is not a crack in the grid. If anything it is a pull in the grid - a gathering of our many movement wrinkles, where we are trying to reshape the grid and be in it in new ways. We are not going to be able to create a space free of capitalism and all oppressions, but how can we pull at and reshape this space so that we have more room, so that we can have a freer forum, in and from which to build a freer world? It can help to see that there is yang in our yin. There is no place of autonomy outside of power. We resist in, with, and through webs of power. We are fully enmeshed in the power relations that create the forum as a perceived space of autonomy. The forum, the way it is ever coming in to being, is shaped by hegemonic discourses, which are themselves continually remade and challenged, not stable or monolithic. Hegemony does not simply impose consent, it shapes how we struggle.

It has long been frustrating to me how often we struggle for liberation by oppressive means. We are shooting ourselves in the foot when we try to struggle from a place of fear and violence. Violence is not just a symptom, but also brings spaces, places, and subjects in to being (Feldman). It is shaping the forum, shaping us.

Whether the violence came from the dominated places inside men on the inside, or from men on the 'outside' does not much matter to me. Yet this question always seems to be the first I get when I mention the rape rumors to other activists, "Was it done by outsiders?" But who says who is an insider and who is an outsider? If they only came for the party, well, is that not also part of the forum? How many meetings do you have to go to before you are 'in'? Do you have to be registered? Could you not register and then

not go to a single meeting? Saying that they were outsiders seems like another way pushing these events out, saying ‘no that’s not us’, and denying, disowning and ultimately continuing to hide the dynamics that these attacks were a part of. The forum does not exist as a bubble outside of the capitalist heteropatriarchy. Saying they were outsiders makes it seem like inside we are all healed, as if there were clear lines. I do not want to pretend there is, or even try to create, a firm boundary, metaphorically or physically. I do not want to define “us” by vilifying “them.”

I do not want fences and armed security guards. I do not want a gated privatopia⁹ - which is ultimately a space of fear, not hope. I do not want a creepy guy watching me either – I would rather feel like everyone is watching *out* for me. I want a space where people listen, care, and will come out of their tents to help. In general, at the forum I often felt like I could turn to anyone next to me and there was an unusual bond and comradery that I really enjoyed. I started all sorts of conversations with strangers that I normally would not have. But clearly this was not true for all people in all times and places of the forum. How do we make the forum freer?

Potential Responses

I would not have wanted the central organizing committee to come in vertically and crack down with guards in the youth camp the next day. The strength of the forum is its bottom up participatory horizontal process. We do live the change we want to see by creating collective emancipatory democratic processes. The way we do the forum is as important as what we do there.

Collectively we *can* make this space freer. Freedom is not a once and for all thing - it too is a process, like the forum is, like democracy is. I do not want to just push back against what we do not want, I want to create space for what we **DO** want. There *was* a bottom up response of women sticking together and finding safety in groups, in the women’s march and the lilac armband brigades. But there could have been more. We could have set up a time and space for dialogue about the allegations, from which to create more collective responses. Maybe we could set up a temporary sexual assault alert line staffed by volunteers on-site with cell phones, like we do at the annual vigil to close the School of the Americas in Georgia. The issue could have been discussed in the daily forum newspaper, reemphasizing those aspects of the forum’s charter at issue, as well as the youth camp ideals that all subscribed to when they moved in, which, indeed, also talk about the importance of building a different world through a different day to day practice. In general it would have helped to be open and clear about what had happened.

Although of course not everyone registers, my personal vote would also be to explicitly state in the forum registration materials something like: “The Forum is a safe space for all, but we particularly want to make it safe for women, given the continued existence of violence against women in our society. We are all responsible for making this a safe space by watching out for and protecting each other. We know that we come in to this space with internalized oppressive baggage from living in dominator societies, but since we are trying to enact a liberatory culture and space we need to make special effort to support and create that. One key marker of that is women’s safety, so we can all

⁹ This term was first used by Evan McKenzie. Now widely popularized, it usually refers to gated communities.

be particularly aware of this, but we want to create a safe space not only for all sorts of vulnerable populations, but for everyone.”

Would it help to have a separate women only section of the camp? It is a classic feminist argument: do we want our own space or do we want to be safe and fully integrated everywhere? In the forum at large feminists have generally chosen to focus on wider inclusion, but have also been frustrated at the lack of it. Is there enough gender



Figure 4: Diversity Boat/ Women’s Boat, photo by author

consciousness that it can truly be present across all program areas, and does not need to be one of the forum themes as determined by the Organizing Committee (León)? I am dubious. We need better mechanisms. Sadly we may still even need to count heads, as León suggests, for it seemed to me that we were far from gender parity in the leadership of most workshops. At this forum (2005), there was a boat chartered by the organization Articulación

Feminista Marcosur from Uruguay, which hosted the “Feminist Dialogues”. It was officially called the “Diversity Boat” – but at least in the circles that I was in it was being called the “women’s boat.” I do not think men were officially uninvited, and there were a few when I went out on it, but it seems to have been primarily women’s space. It was fabulous to go out on the water for your workshop, or just for a sunset cruise and party. Certainly it was a marginalized space – it was literally off the map, off the territory of the forum. But it was also a great breather. Until the patriarchy is abolished, I really appreciate having safe spaces to escape to. If I was alone and there was a women’s section of the camp, I would set up my tent there. Women have always found safety in numbers, moved in groups. The first reaction of women to the news of the rape[s] was to stand together, to put many of our bodies there, together, in a march, and to set up the lilac armbands as a way to move together.

We also need more light. Visibility is key not just theoretically, but quite literally. The camp was the darkest place at the forum. There was very little lighting there, and bizarrely the many buildings and trails in it were not included in the main map on the back of the program! It was literally a big grey area. This made it hard and scary to get around in the camp. We can shed more light on what happens, both physically and metaphorically. We can put up lights, and hold discussions. We can put out clear maps and we can put out reports clarifying what happened. We can do better.

Caracas, 2006, Nairobi 2007

Did we do better the next year? I was not able to go to any of the multicentered forums this year, but the stories online¹⁰ of the Caracas youth camp are not particularly inspiring. It was set up outside the city and far from the forum grounds. There was a strong army presence at the camp. Some appreciated this, and said they felt safer. Others did not like the militarized feel. Again there was no light, which made it scary to move around at night. Though there were 35,000 to 40,000 at the camp in Porto Alegre, estimates for the Caracas camp were of only 1,500 campers. Was this because of the military presence? Because of the distance? Because of a sense of danger? Or maybe because it was pouring rain for much of the time.

Was the military presence a decision made by the organizing committee? Studart does say in her interview that the World March of Women would present an evaluation of the rapes and the situation of the youth camp to the World Social Forum Coordinating Committee and ask the Organizing Commission of the camp to consider preventative security measures to protect women at the next forum. I have been unable to find any documentation of such a discussion or decision, but it seems unlikely though that any of these bodies would have chosen a strong military presence as a response. Perhaps this is a reflection of the militarized nature of the Venezuelan Bolivarian revolution and was a decision made by the local organizing team. I *still* think we can do better.

I was very heartened to read a report,¹¹ recommended to me by a reviewer, on Gendering the 2007 WSF by Onyango Oloo, the National Coordinator of the Kenya Social Forum and a member WSF 2007 Secretariat. Though it only briefly mentions the rapes, it ends with a series of recommendations of strategies for making the Nairobi World Social Forum a safer place, from setting up a rape crisis center onsite, to putting up banners and handing out stickers against rape. I look forward to hearing if and how these were implemented.

How Change Happens

If abstract space is brought in to being by violence, as Lefebvre argues, then a militarized response like security guards will simply create more abstract space, not another world. If space shapes social relations and these relations shape space – where do we work for change? We can work to change both the relations and the space, each through the other. We can put up lights and have discussions.

I do not expect perfection. I mean, how much of an egalitarian space *can* we really create within a world of imperialist, white supremacist, hetero patriarchy? But I do deeply believe in the importance of creating freer revolutionary spaces from which to nurture our struggles for freedom. Honoring our bodies, and making room for pleasure, is a key way to create that freer space. It is also an effective strategy for building that other world at large that we know is possible.

Is the forum meant to be *a* utopia or a way *to* utopia? Some of both I would argue. It is a place to practice, to work out new practices, because we want to ‘live the change’ *now*. I loved the slogan of the booths selling things from local cooperatives,

10 on sites such as www.venezuelanalysis.com/articles.php?artno=1658, www.coanews.org/tiki-read_article.php?articleId=627, and hotcoals.org/?p=62

¹¹ <http://www.nigd.org/docs/GenderingWSF2007NairobiProcessOnyangoOloo.pdf>

“otra economía acontece” (another economy is happening). We try to *enact* new ways of being - not just talk about them, but also live them. But as the rape rumors illustrate, we generally did much better at talking about them. There was a lot of hype about the alternative money at the forum, but I never saw anyone actually use it. The recycling and composting bins were miserably misused, and by the end of the forum there was litter everywhere. Far too many of the workshops were just talking heads on a panel rather than any sort of participatory anything.

Yet there were plenty of people at the forum who are working to change these sorts of micropolitics and who do understand their connections to broader geopolitics. After Brazilians, the largest group of attendees were Argentineans, and particularly in the jobless workers movement there has been a big push to see changes in daily life as connected to larger structural change, be it through soup kitchens or daycares. There is particular awareness in that movement that “daily elements of living are inherently political and constitute critical points for elaborating effective opposition practices” (Osterweil). It seems essential then that we work to make the forum a freer, and more freeing, place.

Harvey argues that politics based solely on place tend to be reactionary, and that we cannot fight capitalism from place; we have to move beyond the local to the global. I believe we are more powerful when we, as the new movement term has it, “glocalize”, and talk about both local and global impacts and connections. This is true at the level of our communities, but also for the ephemeral place of the forum. At the forum we have been very aware of the global, of capitalist space at large, but not as careful with the dynamics of the place, the actual forum, from which we do that work. To look at the micropolitics of *how* and *from where* we do the work is not to be parochial, as Harvey warns, but to be strong in our integrity as we go out in to the world. Let us be more aware of both how the world is in the forum, and the forum is in the world.



Figure 5: Opening concert of the World Social Forum (blue ball is a globe, bouncing on the crowd) photo by author

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