

Urban Movements Building Convergences at the World Social Forum, WSF 2009

The current financial crisis demonstrates the limits of capitalism, the hazards of malign neglect in its insufficient regulation and the rush to possess and consume more. The financial crisis, with its manifold consequences, is just one of many threats to life in cities and human settlements everywhere, distorted by land speculation, urban megaprojects, agrobusiness and the privatization of public goods and services, multiply forms of social exclusion and the environmental catastrophe. Meanwhile, this pattern usurps the production, development opportunities and very populations from the land such that intensifies the rural/urban divide.

The different phases of this crisis affect the livelihoods of all citizens, especially the working classes and the poor who cannot assert their basic rights to land, adequate housing, decent work, public space, education and health or effective participation in policy formulation. A clear indicator of this multifarious crisis is the increased frequency and widespread nature of forced evictions further victimizing those same social groups.

In the cities, not only are these conflicts concentrated and highly visible, but so, too, are the opportunities for advancing the "Right to the City". The concept of this composite right emanates from the pursuit of another possible city, a new paradigm that creates an alternative to the false but dominant neo-liberal pretenses and allows for the convergence of social movements articulating a common vision of a shared habitat of human rights, social justice and environmental sustainability.

The World Social Forum is a space where it is possible to identify capacities and networks to promote the Right to the City and a unique opportunity particularly to form common cause with the indispensable and equally urgent struggles to the rights and livelihoods of women and men, peasants, landless and indigenous people.

This Forum already brings together forces of resistance and problem-solving. The protagonists of this new vision arise from social movements and committed activists, from academia, professionals and local governments. These organisations and individuals from around the world are present here in WSF 2009 Amazonia. The networks linking and interlacing these groups subscribe to the following points of convergence:

- Promoting the Right to the City, without evictions and towards urban reform, coincident with WSF Objective 6;
- Democratising the World Urban Forum (WUF) to be held in Rio de Janeiro during 2010 such that social movements and activists may participate fully and effectively with UN-Habitat and the hosts in the organisation, preparation and staging of this event;
- Including the vision of the Right to the City without evictions and towards urban reform in the preparation and development of the WUF;
- Articulating urban struggles in WSF 2010 to build on the 2008 experience of a global call for simultaneous local, national and regional fora;
- Cultivating opportunities for outreach and enter strategic dialog with rural and indigenous movements, in order to refine claims to our common human rights habitat and form practical solidarity in doing so;
- Preparing a Popular Urban Forum and/or a World Assembly of Inhabitants leading up to WSF 2011.

In Belem, on 1 February 2009, committing to this convergence are:

Asociacion Latinoamericana Organizaciones de Promocion (ALOP)
Association Internationale des Techniciens, Experts et Chercheurs (AITEC)
Centre for Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE)
Dignity International (DI)
Enda Tiers-Monde
Forum Local Autorithies (FAL)
Foro Nacional de Reforma Urbana, Brasil (FNRU)
Habitat International Coalition (HIC)
Habitat para la Humanidad, Latin America (HpH)
International Alliance of Inhabitants (IAI)
Local Communities Oorganizations in Asia (LOCOA)
Poor People Economic Human Rights Campaign (PPEHRC)
Programa de Vivienda del Centro Cooperativo Sueco
Secretaría Latinoamericana para la Vivienda Popular (SELVIP)