

Globalisation from Above? Corporate Social Responsibility, the Workers' Party, and the Origins of the World Social Forum

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Abstract

In its assessment of the origins and early development of the World Social Forum this article challenges traditional understandings of the Forum as representing 'globalisation from below'. By tracing the intricate relations among elements of business, civil society, and the Workers' Party in the first years of the Forum, this article reveals the major role played by a corporate movement stemming from the Brazilian democratisation process in the 1980s, and how this combined with the transformed agenda of the Workers' Party as it gained higher political offices to constrain the Forum's activities from the outset. In so doing, this article challenges not only widespread conceptions of the Forum as a counter-hegemonic alternative but also current critiques concerning its subsequent limitations. Furthermore, it reveals how traditional understandings of the World Social Forum and of global civil society are underpinned by flawed assumptions which typecast political activities in the global 'South'.

Keywords: *World Social Forum, Global Governance, Civil Society, Brazil, Workers' Party, Corporate Social Responsibility*

Few institutions have been more widely regarded as ‘manifestations for progressive and counter-hegemonic globalisation and an emergent counter-hegemonic civil society’ than the World Social Forum (WSF) (Hernandez 2010: 41). The ideals of the WSF’s original April 2001 Charter of Principles would appear to support such a perception, with their emphasis on ‘democratic debate of ideas’ in an ‘open meeting place’ of ‘groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital and any kind of imperialism’ (WSF 2006).

In recent years, however, the WSF has become increasingly criticised for transforming into an NGO ‘trade fair’ and for having become ‘co-opted by the more elite, institutionalised, and reformist forces, at the expense of putatively more radical mass movements’, especially as it has expanded beyond its Brazilian origins (Conway 2008: 94). According to Worth and Buckley (2009: 649), for instance, the WSF ‘has become a funfair for the expression of ideas from academics and NGO/government workers, which has led to a form of elitism that the WSF attempted to avoid at its inception’.

This article, on the other hand, provides evidence to indicate that the elitist dimensions of the WSF are far from new, and have been a key aspect of the institution since its origins at the turn of the millennium. While it is traditional to portray the WSF as spearheading ‘globalisation from below’, this article will reveal how from the outset many dimensions of the development of the WSF do not match such a description.

The distinction between globalisation from ‘above’ and ‘below’ is commonly attributed to Falk, who has distinguished between ‘corporate globalisation as “globalisation from above” and civic globalisation as “globalisation from below”’ (Falk 2004: 17). The key actors that are said to be involved in promoting ‘globalisation from above’ are

‘statist/corporate’, in contrast to ‘globalisation from below’ that provides a ‘counterweight’ to such actors (Falk 2004: 83).

The notion of ‘globalisation from below’ is closely related to the substantial body of literature that has developed since the end of the Cold War on the development of transnational and global civil society (Baker 2002: 120). Authors on this subject have been reluctant to provide a clear definition of global civil society, describing it as a ‘fuzzy and contested concept’ (Anheier et al. 2001: 11). For-profit actors and political parties in power have tended to be excluded from present-day understandings of civil society (Edwards 2009: 28). It is common to argue that global civil society is ‘an unfinished project’, involving non-governmental actors and networks across national boundaries that ‘tend to pluralise power and problematise violence; consequently their “peaceful” or “civil” effects are felt everywhere’ (Keane 2003: 8). Central to much of the literature on transnational and global civil society has been an emphasis on a process ‘that is “bottom-up” rather than “top-down” and that involves the struggle for emancipatory goals’ (Kaldor 2003: 142). It has been common to turn to civic activism in the global South as ‘indicative of something moving in different societies across the globe towards a new vitality of “bottom-up” movement in civil society as a counterweight to the hegemonic power structure and ideology’, in contrast to ‘top-down’ NGOs based in the global North (Cox 1999: 13).

The WSF has been interpreted as the key exemplar of ‘bottom-up’ approaches and ‘globalisation from below’. Smith, for instance, draws a distinction between ‘global policy arenas’ that ‘are...dominated by government and corporate actors’ and the WSF process which is viewed as ‘an example of how social movements and their allies work to generate alternatives to government-led initiatives for world order’ (Smith 2008: 199, 206). Others,

however, have viewed the development of the WSF as indicating 'globalisation from the middle' (Waterman 2004: 87), given the 'NGOisation of the WSF' (Santos 2006: 70).

In both cases, the traditional account of the emergence of the WSF emphasises its roots in social movement activism. It is now common in the literature on the development of international relations in the post-Cold War era to refer to the 'activist origins of the WSF' (Halliday 2010: 128). It is claimed, for instance, that 'the Zapatistas were certainly a primary force in bringing about the development of the World Social Forum' (Shor 2010: 24). The WSF is also commonly presented 'as heir to the wave of resistance against corporate globalisation that burst on to the public radar screen during the protests against the World Trade Organisation in Seattle in 1999' (Juris 2006: 208).

The counter-demonstration to the 1999 Davos meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) by organisations including ATTAC (*Association pour la Taxation des Transactions pour l'Aide aux Citoyens*) and MST (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra*) has been described as 'the start of the movement to create a "parallel summit" to the hidden, elitist and technocratic managers of globalisation symbolised by Davos where they got together with their own "organic intellectuals"' (Munck 2007: 83). The first World Social Forum in 2001 has therefore been viewed as 'largely an "anti-Davos" people's assembly' (Smith 2008: 209). One of the founders of the forum, the Israel-born Brazilian businessman Oded Grajew, has described his initial ambition for the World Social Forum as 'to have a space to make people who have the same vision to be together and to join forces, strengthen the movement' (Paget-Clarke 2004). Traditionally, this has been interpreted as having been 'inspire[d]' by the 'Zapatista model of G[lobal] C[ivil] S[ociety] as global public sphere, a space of encounter, deliberation' (Chesters 2004: 332).

While there has been a consensus around the role of these ideas in the conception of the WSF, responsibility for initiating the Forum has been a source of tension among those who have claimed to be among the founders, especially between Grajew and Bernard Cassen, the French leader of ATTAC. Cassen's (2003) book *Tout a Commencé à Porto Alegre... Mille Forums Sociaux!* [Everything started in Porto Alegre... A thousand social forums!] attributed the conception of the World Social Forum to himself. To Grajew, the book minimised the contributions of local actors and exaggerated the role of European ones, replicating '...the position of the coloniser in front of the colonised. He [Cassen] does not manage to admit that Brazilians had the idea and moved the process forward. It is an undue appropriation of the initiative. [...] It looks as if this was a history that began in Europe, in the First World. He minimises the role of Brazil and developing countries in all the process' (Eichenberg 2003).

Other authors on the origins of the WSF have laid greater emphasis on the role played by Brazilian actors (Teivanen 2002: 623; Schönleitner 2003: 128; von Bülow forthcoming). Labour and social movement organisations in Brazil such as the CUT (*Central Única dos Trabalhadores*) and MST have been singled out for their part in the origins of the Forum (Teivanen 2004: 123). So too has the Brazilian Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores - PT*), which has generally been seen to have been 'crucial to the establishment of the WSF and its open space paradigm' (Gautney 2009: 209). The role of Brazilian actors such as these, combined with the chosen location for the first World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, is thought to have helped ensure that the formation of the WSF resonated 'with a strong trajectory of social mobilisation' and may be interpreted as representative of 'globalisation from below' (Perera 2003: 76). In the most advanced exploration of the role of Brazilian actors in the development of the World Social Forum to

date, von Bülow (forthcoming: 21) shows the importance of the international links Brazilian civil society actors had developed in the preceding years in ensuring that the Forum had significant international participation from the outset.

This article challenges not only the globalist narrative of the WSF's origins which sidelines the significant influence of local Brazilian structures but also the localist account which highlights popular and civil society actors in Brazil, as neither pays sufficient attention to the intricacies of the close relations between business, party political, regional and later national governmental, and social actors, which were central to the origins and early years of the WSF. Through its analysis of the role of these relations in the origins and early years of the WSF, this article will show how the traditional perspective of the WSF as embodying a counter-hegemonic 'globalisation from below' emanating from grassroots actors counterbalancing an 'above' dominated by business and governmental actors, does not provide an adequate picture. In doing so, this article will reveal how the wider literature on transnational and global civil society needs to move beyond simplistic assumptions which divide the world between 'top-down' NGOs based in the global North, and 'bottom-up' social movements in the global South (Baker 2002; Anheier et al. 2001). Whereas existing work on social movements and civil society organisations has endeavoured to isolate these actors from the business sector and political parties, this article reveals the extensive relations among these sectors even in one of the most paradigmatic examples of transnational social mobilisation.

While it cannot be claimed that the origins of the WSF represented 'globalisation from above' in the traditional sense of being driven by Northern-hemisphere businesses and governmental actors, and although the role of social movement actors must be acknowledged, this article will explore the limitations of considering the Southern-

hemisphere origins of the WSF to be 'globalisation from below'. In particular, this article aims to challenge existing narratives by highlighting that (i) in its immediate origins the WSF is closely rooted in the corporate movement for social responsibility in Brazil rather than simply in anti-capitalist social movements, and (ii) these roots were supported by the close collaborative relations among elements of Brazilian business and the political and civil elites promoted by the PT, which developed at the regional level in Brazil prior to the creation of the Forum and which accentuated with the Party's ascent to the presidency in 2003.

The element that binds together these two propositions, and a commonly overlooked feature in existing literature, is the personal and ideological connections that the Brazilian corporate social responsibility movement had with the PT – which was to go on to support moderate business-friendly stances during its first two administrations – and the role that these links played in the organisation and consolidation of the WSF in its first years. These connections have historical roots that placed both groups, the Brazilian corporate social responsibility movement and the PT and its popular allies, as part of the progressive movements that accompanied the 'controlled' democratisation of the 1980s, as rising political actors in the 1990s, and as governmental associates with the ascent of the PT to power in 2003.

Moreover, this article considers that the origins of the WSF and the role played by this corporate group in it were favourably shaped by the transformation of the PT from an anti-systemic social movement party - born from the convergence of the new labour movement, popular-base groups, grassroots Catholic organisations, and clandestine leftwing militants - to a party of government advancing a 'social neoliberal' agenda, where state-led social policies are supported by neoliberal economic policies (Singer 2009; de Oliveira 2006; Rollember Mollo and Saad-Filho 2006; Morais and Saad-Filho 2005; Samuels 2004b).

Although the moderation of the PT's socialist and social movement project has been amply studied (Ribeiro 2008; Hunter 2007; Samuels 2004a; Marques and Mendes 2006; Paiva 2006; Panizza 2005), the implications this moderation had for the WSF have been rarely engaged in the literature. Santos Elias (forthcoming) emphasises the dilemma the WSF project presented for the PT in the early 2000s, given its dual identity as a social movement representative and as a competitor in electoral politics, and shows the prevalence of the latter. This article, on the other hand, goes further by exploring the combined role played by this dual identity of the PT and its co-evolving relationship with the corporate actors significant in the creation and early development of WSF. In this regard, this article provides a missing element that goes beyond both the most recent studies of the WSF's evolution in Brazil, and the wider literature on civil society and social movements, which has commonly attempted to isolate examination of the third sector from the work of political parties and of business (Edwards 2009: 28). As this article will show, the close relationship between business and the PT in the origins of the World Social Forum constrained from the outset the functioning of the Forum, which developed as an arena for discussion rather than a mechanism for the advancement of more radical alternatives to neoliberal globalisation.

Accordingly, this article traces the origins of the WSF through the changes in the PT agenda and its links with the CSR movement through three phases: from their origins in the democratic transition in the 1980s, through the PT's first moderation and regional electoral success in the 1990s, to the moment the PT reached the presidency in 2003 and the Brazilian national government openly promoted the WSF. The first two phases are discussed in the next section of this article, while the subsequent section explores how these actors helped not only to bring about the WSF, but to moderate and politicise its programme.

This article is based upon a broad range of primary source material on the Brazilian dimension of the origins of the WSF, including interviews with WSF participants and other civil society actors in Brazil (both published and in-person interviews), as well as primary documents and publications of institutions involved in the development of the WSF, and a diverse array of local press articles. The material consulted was not restricted to those directly involved in the WSF process in Brazil, but also related to those involved in other civil society organs in Brazil.

The Brazilian origins of the WSF: civil, corporate and partisan

While it must be noted that the roots of the WSF cannot be attributed to a single individual, Oded Grajew was, as the next section of this article will show, central to the Forum's establishment. Existing accounts of the origins of the WSF tend to neglect how, in Grajew's words, the idea for the WSF came to him only after he had 'tried for some time to introduce social responsibility in the World Economic Forum' (Paget-Clarke 2004) and following his efforts to reform rather than to challenge the WEF, stating at the time that the Forum was not against Davos but that 'Davos is against Porto Alegre' (Toledo 2001) by not opening up to society. These proposals were discussed directly with the leader of WEF, Klaus Schwab, with whom Grajew had personal acquaintance given that the successful toy firm he founded in the 1970s, Grow Jogos, was 25% owned by a German firm represented by Schwab's brother (Grajew 2005).

The background of Grajew illuminates the complexity of the Brazilian context leading to the origins of the WSF, its relevance, and its contrast with the global narratives outlined at the start of this article. Grajew was well known in the country before the creation of the WSF on account of two factors: (i) he was among the leaders of the business sector

supportive of the PT, and (ii) he was one of the most outspoken advocates for corporate social responsibility. Beyond his personal role, it is through the confluence of these two cleavages, and the political structures underlying them, that the WSF became a feasible project.

In particular, the fundamental difference between the corporate social responsibility movement in Brazil and that in the US and Europe, is the ideological and institutional association with diverse social and political personalities involved in the democratisation movement. This connection, rather than reducing it to an exclusively business programme, positioned certain elements of the corporate responsibility discourse as a legitimate civil agenda to be shared by a number of popular actors, which explains the capacity that Grajew and others displayed in mobilising key social actors despite their business roots. This was possible because an eclectic range of social, corporate and political relations existed previously in Brazil and became 'activated' in the organisation of the first WSF.

These relations largely stem from the context from where they originated. Prior the 1970s the centrality of the state in the industrialisation and institutionalisation of the country is said to have shaped 'the most full blown system of corporatism in Latin America' (Collier and Collier 1991: 128).¹ However, the gradual democratisation process in the late 1970s and 1980s implied the transformation of authoritarian corporatist structures into more open arrangements accompanying the activation of multiple new political actors (Collier 1995; Keck 1992; Collier and Collier 1991; O'Donnell 1977). Central among these new actors was the PT, founded formally in 1980, with a project of reversing the authoritarian and monopolistic organisation of Brazilian state-society relations and economy until that point, and providing an institutional representation to previously excluded sectors of society (PT 1980; PT 1979).

The PT aimed to provide a voice to a diverse array of social sectors, with its multiple founders including intellectuals from the organised left, clandestine Marxists, *Paulista* intelligentsia and politicians, and Catholic groupings linked with the CNBB, the Brazilian Confederation of Catholic Bishops, the public policy body of the Catholic Church in the country (Ribeiro 2008). Such diverse influences were not only behind the ‘novo sindicalismo’ represented by the CUT, the main union confederation associated with the PT, but also behind the formation of rural and civil organisations, such as the Landless Workers Movement MST created in 1984 and the Brazilian Institute of Social and Economic Analysis IBASE created in 1981, all of them among the founding organisations of the WSF in 2000.² Grajew was to play a fundamental role in bringing these actors together in the creation of the WSF, and in order to understand his role it is necessary to explore his ‘corporate’ activities during the democratic transition, and his engagement with the PT and its allies in the two decades preceding the Forum’s creation.

As early as the mid-1980s Grajew played a central part in the formation of a new business sector supportive of a ‘social pact involving various different segments of the market, labourers and businessmen’ (Grajew 2005) in contrast to the traditional corporatist relations that previously associated Brazilian industry with military governments and socially repressive agendas. In 1987, two years after the first civil – though not fully democratic – government was elected, Grajew co-founded the PNBE (*Pensamento Nacional das Bases Empresariais*), an association of young businessmen promoting ‘dialogue between employees, businessmen, and democracy as a whole’ (Ibid.) which separated from the powerful Federation of Industries of São Paulo (FIESP).³ From the outset the agenda of the PNBE was to position this ‘new’ business sector in relation to wider social questions such as political reform and education, vis-à-vis the Constitutional Assembly that was to approve

the new Constitution that would install a fully fledged democratic system in the country (Bianchi 2001). At the same time, this sector of business started to develop relations with the new labour movement around the CUT and the PT, which then had a strong socialist agenda aiming to end 'the exploitation of man by man' (PT 1979) and to struggle for the political inclusion of 'all those exploited by the capitalist system' (PT 1980). By 1984 Grajew and his group claimed to have pioneered forging business relationships with trade unions and the trade union federation CUT: Grajew claimed that he was the first businessman to enter the premises of the CUT in São Paulo (Brum 2005), and among the first businessmen 'to approach Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva [Lula]' (Grajew 2005). By 1987 Grajew's PNBE organised trips to Israel and to the US to explore their experiences in social pacts and debt management, inviting not only business leaders but that of CUT and its rival federation, which later became the federation FS (*Força Sindical*). This collaborative approach was promoted at a time when the official position of the main industry organisations was of rejection and deep suspicion for the union movement and its candidates, with the leader of FIESP claiming previous to the 1989 presidential elections that 'if Lula wins, 800,000 businessmen will leave the country' (Costa 2002).

The relationship of the PT with these corporate groups evolved alongside its gradual transition from its radical popular roots towards more moderate political stances. This transformation started when the PT gained its first major political offices in the late 1980s, gaining control of cities such as Porto Alegre, São Paulo and Belo Horizonte, and moved forward when the PT was elected to state governments from the mid-1990s onwards (Bittar 2003). The PT's mode of governing at the time was characterised by the promotion of inclusive democratic mechanisms such as participatory budgeting and popular management (Souza 2001; Sousa Santos 1998). These mechanisms were claimed to prevent 'corporate

domination of the democratic process and ... [to give] progressive governments and popular mobilisations leverage against corporate power' (Ponniah and Fisher 2003: 5). Porto Alegre in particular became a flagship of participatory budgeting worldwide – selected as one of the top 40 urban innovations in the world in the 1996 UN Urban Habitat Conference - a point claimed to have partly motivated the decision to host the first WSF in this city (Leite 2005; Teivainen 2002).

However, these experiences in political office also contributed towards the moderation of the PT's political programme. Francisco 'Chico' Whitaker, one of the co-founders of the WSF, Catholic activist, and the majority leader of the PT in the São Paulo Municipal Chamber in the early 1990s, considered that prior to these experiences the PT had a very elementary vision of government and a poor opinion of political alliances with other groups (Gonçalves Couto 1994). But the experience of having to run large cities and states started to differentiate governing PT members, who adopted an administrative approach to politics - the idea that it is possible to 'govern for everyone' - from non-governing party leaders that considered that the PT should 'govern everyone' from a workers' perspective (Gonçalves Couto 1994: 156; Macaulay 1996). This importance of the first group grew along with the PT's electoral success, reinforced by the impact this had on the Party's finances: Ribeiro (2008) shows that by mid-1990s the PT's budget consisted mostly of contributions from members in office and funds distributed by the State to the political parties in accordance with their number of deputies in the Congress (under a system called 'Fundo Partidário'). Furthermore, by 1995 certain PT candidates started to accept contributions from private firms, which although legal were criticised by the left wing of the Party. To such accusations, a pragmatic response by a PT federal deputy was that the party would only be electorally viable if it acted within the boundaries allowed by the

legislation (Ribeiro 2008: 105). Several authors concur that the moderation of the radical aspects of the PT's political agenda was not only driven by the experience of governing but by the consequences of Lula's defeat in the presidential campaigns of 1994 and 1998, which triggered an internal revision of the party's strategy (Rollemberg Mollo and Saad-Filho 2006; Samuels 2004a). In particular after 1998 the PT's decided to move away from explicit rejections of capitalism, the position advanced by the more radical elements in the WSF and some of the PT's founding intelligentsia, towards criticism of its 'unsustainable' practices.

During this period the businessmen within the PNBE expanded their agenda beyond the enhancement of democratic institutions, while maintaining a critical discourse towards governing and dominating classes, monopolies and oligopolies, and regional oligarchies, pointing out the lack of alternatives to authoritarianism, populism and neoliberalism in Brazil (Bianchi 2001: 137). In 1993, Grajew founded another business association, under the name of CIVES (*Associação Brasileira de Empresários pela Cidadania*). This group emanated from the PNBE, which had become polarised between supporters and opponents of the neoliberal policies of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's administration. CIVES had a vision advocating the development of citizenship, democracy, social justice and business ethics. More importantly, CIVES, which was part of the first WSF commission and is one of the members of the Brazilian WSF Committee, not only represented a social business position but was an explicitly political business association, as its main goal was to organise '*empresarios petistas*', businessmen sharing the agenda of the PT. Thus, through the 1990s Grajew spearheaded 'making the links, the bridges, between the Workers Party in Brazil and the business sector – supporting Workers Party candidates and Lula for many years' (Paget-Clarke 2004). In this manner, Grajew and CIVES became central in the campaign to enhance

corporate support for the PT, and by 1994 Grajew led Lula's candidacy Business Committee (Pomar 1995).

Grajew and the Brazilian businessmen around the PNBE and CIVES also became active promoters of approaches to the organisation of civil society that facilitated greater collaboration between corporate and civil sectors. Early in the 1990s, Grajew, as President of the Brazilian Association of Toy Manufacturers ABRINQ, created the ABRINQ Foundation, with support from business as well as UNICEF and the Kellogg Foundation, dedicated to improving children's conditions in Brazil, by 1993 becoming its full-time president. Five years later, in 1998, Grajew and his associates created the Ethos Institute for Business and Social Responsibility, with the mission 'to mobilise, sensitise and help companies manage their business in a socially responsible manner, making them partners in building a just and sustainable society.' (Ethos 2010). Ethos became Brazil's representative of 'social' business, and the key promoter of private regulatory projects, liaising with international organisations on these matters and operating as a local consultancy and think tank. Moreover, in the coming years it enjoyed the support of international bodies promoting environmental and social standards such as the Global Compact, the Global Reporting Initiative [GRI] and other corporate-oriented initiatives. It also had the support of the main national trade federations, and of the most visible companies in the country, including a wide range of state companies, in particular the oil giant Petrobras. Ethos' membership rose from 11 companies in 1998 to 1,391 by 2011, half of them small and micro-enterprises (Vieira 2009). Its membership is estimated to represent 35% of the country's GDP (CSR360 2012).

The model followed by Grajew and his associates, linking civil society with private business, proved successful, and businessmen around Ethos continued forming NGOs on this basis, such as the Akatu Institute, a conscious consumption NGO spun off from Ethos in

2001 (Akatu 2012) and the Nossa São Paulo (NSP) Network chaired by Grajew and aiming to establish common agendas between society and state to improve quality of life in that city (NSP 2012). Other Ethos/PNBE leaders founded CSOs alongside recognised civil activists: Ricardo Young, former President of Ethos, and Eduardo Capobianco, Director of the Society of Alcohol and Sugar Producers, co-founded in 2000 the NGO Transparency Brazil, along with Chico Whitaker, PT member and one of the co-ideologues of the WSF (TBrasil 2012).

By the end of the 1990s Grajew actively promoted the link between the CSR movement, business–civil society partnerships and the PT programme. In 1998, the year the Ethos Institute was created, Grajew wrote an article in *Folha de São Paulo* entitled ‘The candidate of Businessmen’ in light of the coming presidential elections. Without mentioning Lula – albeit signing the article as ‘Businessman, General Coordinator of CIVES and President-Director of the ABRINQ Foundation’ - Grajew called businessmen to endorse the candidate committed to reducing social inequality, generating employment, reducing inflation, stimulating exports, and promoting partnerships between business and civil society (Grajew 1998). The implications of this eclectic agenda in the development of the WSF are examined in the next section.

A new perspective of the development of the WSF

The previous section revealed that among the different popular, civil and corporate groups in Brazil that played a part in the inception and origins of the WSF there existed significant linkages both with each other and with the PT. The following paragraphs outline the role of these linkages in the origins of the WSF and show how these linkages, rather than influencing the WSF to be an instrument of action against capitalism, promoted from the start a moderate position compatible with the notion of social responsibility, which prefers

voluntary and non-coercive intervention over more mobilised and aggressive political tactics.

In February 2000, during a visit to Paris, Grajew discussed the idea of the WSF with his friend Chico Whitaker, who was at the time Executive Secretary of the Brazilian Commission of Justice and Peace (CBJP), an organ of the CNBB. This idea was subsequently presented to Bernard Cassen of ATTAC and *Le Monde Diplomatique*, who apparently proposed that the Forum be held in the Brazilian city of Porto Alegre (Leite 2005: 78). Back in Brazil, Grajew used his contacts in business organisations such as CIVES and Ethos – over both of which he had presided – and in labour and social movement organisations associated with the PT, such as CUT and the MST, to form the organising committee for the first World Social Forum, which included IBASE, ABONG (the Association of Brazilian NGOs) and the CBJP, plus two foreign organisations, ATTAC and the Center for Global Justice:

Then, in one of the meeting rooms here [at the Ethos Institute], I called six other friends. Chico Whitaker is for the Catholic Church movement, so (to add to that) I called people from the social movements, the NGO (non-governmental organisations) movement, the MST (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra -- Landless Workers' Movement), and the human rights movement. Six people from six organisations, Chico Whitaker for the Catholic movement, and me for the business sector. And I told them the idea (Grajew 2005)

Previous ideological affinities between this diverse range of organisations are evident in their respective Charters of Principles, which highlight as common goals the promotion and enhancement of democracy and participation. The PNBE, IBASE and Ethos express support for negotiation and social debate, public and private orientation towards equality and social

concerns, economic development with social justice, and social and environmental sustainability, organised around a market economy but with profit as a developmental tool and domestic markets prioritised. While not neoliberal, the goals of these organisations are also not anti-capitalist. Similar objectives are present in the Charter of Principles of the WSF, the first of which defines the Forum as an open space for the democratic debate of ideas, for civil society groups that oppose neoliberalism and a 'world ruled by capital', and demand instead a globalisation with solidarity, respecting human rights and the environment, with institutions serving social justice, equality and sovereignty (WSF 2002).

According to Grajew, after the initial conception of the Forum was discussed, he and his group contacted the local authorities of the city of Porto Alegre and the state of Rio Grande do Sul, as hosting of the WSF in Porto Alegre had been viewed as particularly 'appropriate ... because the city had been governed by the Workers' Party since 1988 and is celebrated for its innovative participatory budget process, grounded in a radical reform of the relationship between the public, government and business' (Karides and Ponniah, 2008: 9). It is worth noting that at the time of the first Forum the leaders of municipal and federal governments were personal acquaintances of Grajew and his group. Among these persons were Raul Pont, Olivio Dutra and Tarso Genro. Pont is one of the founders of the PT along with Lula and others, and current Secretary General of the party, while Dutra is a former union leader, who was appointed Minister of Cities when Lula became president.

With the official involvement of the PT in the creation of the WSF the previously principally ideological linkages started to assume a more official form: not only did two representatives from the state and city become part of the organising committee of the first event (Agência Folha 2001), but these two constituencies provided much of the funding, a role that the President of the country at the time, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, considered

inappropriate (França 2001). This position can be directly contrasted to the one President Lula Da Silva would take later on. Official figures calculated by IBASE and ABONG, the two organisations that acted as financial controller for the events held in Brazil, estimated that state contributions for the Forums of 2001 and 2002 represented almost half the total income (Lopez et al. 2006), granted indirectly through the provision of venues, communication and transport infrastructure, albeit no official numbers for these contributions exist. The other part of the funding came from international agencies such as the Ford Foundation, NOVIB and ICCO, which were facilitated by Grajew's experience as leader of the ABRINQ Foundation and by the contacts of IBASE:

Then, we went to Porto Alegre to see the situation. I went to the Ford Foundation for money, for the first secretariat. Half of the money we had in Brazil, and then I went to New York to speak with them to have more money to establish the secretariat. (Paget-Clarke 2004)

Several observers have noted that the role of the PT was not merely supportive but fundamental for the fruition of the WSF: Santos (2006: 55) has argued that without PT support 'it would have been impossible, at least in Brazil, to organise the WSF with the ambition that characterised it from the start' and Santos Elias (forthcoming) affirms that the PT governments of the state of Rio Grande do Sul and Porto Alegre city were essential in providing the physical and logistical infrastructure of the first event. Candido Grzybowski, IBASE's Director, admitted in 2009 that '...no forum would exist in Brazil without help from the state' (Magalhães and Flor 2009).

However, as Diaz (2006: 97) concluded, 'if an organisation depends on public funding for its operations, its effectiveness depends on the party in power', a relation that was quite clear for the PT public authorities behind the Forum from the beginning. In this regard,

Santos Elias (forthcoming) indicates that the PT representatives attending the first meeting of the Organising Committee of the WSF were there on behalf of National Direction of the party, suggesting an institutional interest by the PT in the event. Moreover, PT public officials considered the event convenient for both the city and the state, and were active in its promotion: the Governor of the state asked in his opening speech at the World Parliamentary Forum for 'the support of members of Parliament in different countries to guarantee the realisation of the WSF outcomes in Porto Alegre' (Santos Elias forthcoming), while the city's prefect did so in a tour through Europe in 2000 (France Presse 2000). It should be noted that the events are estimated to have mobilised around US\$50 million in 2003 for transport, food and housing, a figure that encouraged the Indian tourism sector to argue along these lines when discussing moving the event to India in 2004. Grajew himself is reported to have said in 2001 that the Forum was contributing economically to the city, with its hotel sector with full occupation, an opinion given 'not ideologically, but as a businessman' (Toledo 2001).

The ascendancy of the PT to the presidency in 2003 altered its role in the WSF and led to the consolidation of a political position that helped shape the WSF's development. From 2003 the ruling PT started to use the state machinery to extend funding to the Forum's organisation, in particular through the deep pockets of the widely recognised state-owned companies, firms the size of Petrobras, Banco do Brasil, the Post Office and the energy firm Electrobras, which by 2005 became official sponsors of the Forum (Lins Ribeiro 2006; Teivainen 2002; Diaz 2006). That year there was a significant increase in the amount of municipal funding and a substantial decrease in state funding to the Forum, given that the new center-right government of the state, in the hands of the opposing party PMDB, had decided to cut the money assigned by the previous administration. Reports claimed that

the defeat of the PT in the state's elections made organisers of the Forum lobby the PT-controlled Federal government for support (Gerchmann 2002b), which decided to compensate for these cuts by allocating extra funds using the state companies as financial vehicles. The link between the WSF organisers and the leadership of these companies was quite robust: from 2003 to 2005 the Chairman of the Board of Petrobras was occupied by the Minister of Energy, Dilma Rousseff, the current president of Brazil, and the CEO was José Eduardo Dutra, a former union leader during the 1980s and president of the CUT. Dilma Rousseff was the Minister of Energy of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, where Porto Alegre is located, under Olivio Dutra's administration between 1999 and 2002, the period when the two first Forums took place.

Quite rapidly the association between the organisers of the Forum and the PT made the Forum a target for accusations of party politics. Even before the first Forum, the leader of the Democratic Labour Party PDT, a left-wing party associated with the Socialist International, called for public auditing of the PT's expenditure on the Forum's organisation process, stating that '...the objective can be very coherent, but the form in which it is being conducted in our country possesses a major deformity. It was given to the PT...' with neither him nor his party invited to participate (Folha de S. Paulo 2001). This also created rifts inside the PT itself: in 2002 during the campaign for the governorship of the state, Tarso Genro, prefect of the city, accused his competitor Olivio Dutra, outgoing governor, of a 'Stalinist' use of the Forum, as the state television focused attention on Dutra and other party personalities but not on him (Gerchmann 2002a). Santos Elias (forthcoming) concludes that the participation of the PT in the WSF, even when aligned the Party's original vision of providing institutional voice for the demands of social movements, was very much oriented towards party politics and the electoral agenda.

These observations are in stark contrast to many of the claims made in much of the existing work on the World Social Forum, which attribute to the PT similarly progressive and democratic attributes to those attributed to the WSF. Smith (2008: 146-7), for example, uses the example of the PT to support her claim that 'political parties based in the global South may be more responsive and open to democratic participation.' More specifically, the PT's participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre is deemed to have embodied 'a practical school of democracy', making the city 'a smart choice for hosting the World Social Forum' (Teivainen 2002: 624-9).

Perspectives such as these neglect the extent to which by the time the WSF was conceived the programmatic stance of the PT had transformed, becoming bureaucratized, professionalized and ideologically moderated. It was previously mentioned that this moderation developed from the mid-1990s and accelerated after Lula's defeat in 1998. By 2002 the PT's official programme of government did not mention the word socialist or socialism, with Samuels (2004a: 1004) observing that the term 'radical' became reserved to political rather than economic notions, such as 'radicalising Brazilian democracy' or the 'radical defence of public welfare'. In 2002 Guido Mantega - one of Lula's principal aides during the campaign, later appointed Minister of Planning and current Chairman of the Board of Petrobras under Dilma Rousseff - expressed the PT's new economic vision in the following form: 'I would put it [the PT] on this list of parties that aspire to and long for a capitalist society because socialism is totally undefined today; it no longer exists. We do not seek a more efficient capitalism, rather one made more human' (quoted in Bianchi and Braga 2005: 1753). Journalists observed that despite big business remaining suspicious of the PT previous to the elections, Lula's promises to stimulate housing credit, lower interest rates, and revitalise the capital market had drawn the attention of the financial sector (Rossi

2002). Furthermore, since 2000 the PT had continued transforming its financial resources model accepting significant donations from private companies, which quadrupled between 2000 and 2004 (Ribeiro 2008: 104).

In this regard, the political project advanced by the Lula campaign vis-à-vis the 2003 elections was far from the radical visions some observers cast upon the PT's involvement in the WSF, and was substantially closer to the moderate and collaborative views of the CSR movement. In July 2002 Grajew coordinated the signature of a support manifesto for Lula's candidacy by businessmen (Zanini 2002). A few months later, Grajew was reported to endorse Lula's view that his government would involve a 'permanent dialogue over a new social encounter', observing that a PT government would operate as a giant 'sectoral chamber' - grouping businessmen, workers and government - not only in relation to the economy but in social areas (Rossi 2002). In the months previous to the 2003 elections Grajew wrote another article titled 'The Candidate of Businessmen' in *Folha de São Paulo*, just as he had in 1998. The article again emphasised issues such as inequality, ethics and the consolidation of democracy. However, he made clear that businessmen should endorse the candidate committed to economic growth, employment and income distribution, a distribution that would 'place more consumers, with greater income, in the market' (Grajew 2002). This candidate was, of course, Lula da Silva.

The presidency of Lula catalysed the moderation of the PT, accentuating a dual model that supported both social policies and economic neoliberalism at the same time, coinciding with the moment the PT started to pass resources to the WSF in greater quantities. This approach by PT 'in government' was defined by its ability to 'build a correlation between economic objectives and political objectives, guaranteeing the circularity of public policies that would rely on the economic to promote the social' (Bianchi

and Braga 2005: 1745-62). To do so, the government combined compensatory policies and often clientelist practices, such as the co-optation of leaders of civil society, social movements and labour groups into the state bureaucracy. As previously indicated, the Brazilian democratic system had inclined towards inclusive mechanisms already in the 1990s, leading some observers to consider that it had shaped a form of 'council democracy' (Alvarez 1997; Friedman and Hochstetler 2002). Nonetheless, the Lula administration expanded participatory institutions, spending unprecedented resources on building strong connections with civil society through new consulting mechanisms and participatory spaces (Hochstetler 2008; Avritzer 2010). Thus, the government became populated with labour and civil activists, with party members and CUT leaders receiving important positions in the government, public-owned companies, pension funds, and state-run banks (Ribeiro 2008; Alonso and Maciel 2010; Avritzer 2010; Carter 2010).⁴ But business was actively included in this process: Lula appointed more businessmen to ministerial positions than the previous 'neoliberal' Cardoso (Schneider 2010): the Vice-Presidency during his two terms was occupied by José Alencar, the owner of Coteminas, the biggest textile group in Brazil, and an open supporter of neoliberal industrial policies, the Ministry of Agriculture went to the president of the Agri-business association, and the Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade to the chairman of the large food processing group Sadia.⁵

This approach was described during the September 2011 20 Years ABONG Conference as 'schizophrenic' and reflective of a 'social neoliberal' model.⁶ André Singer, a political scientist and spokesman of the first Lula administration, considers that the bonapartism of *Lulismo* represents a pragmatic 'third way' that managed to reconcile the traditionally diverging interests of Brazilian popular sectors, middle class and elites (Singer 2009). On the other hand, Francisco de Oliveira, a founder of the PT who left the party when

Singer joined the administration (Anderson 2011), instead put forward the figure of the 'platypus' to describe the 'inverted hegemony' of the Lula government, based on the alliance between union and party bureaucracy with globalised financial capital (de Oliveira 2006). Similar ideas are found in Bianchi and Braga's (2005) notion of the Brazilian 'social liberal state' and Morais and Saad-Filho's (2005) 'Left Neoliberalism'. Moreover, Rollemberg Mollo and Saad-Filho (2006) evaluated the continuation of neoliberal economic policies in the Lula administration, claiming that they were 'indistinguishable' from Cardoso's.

This article proposes that the pro-social movement and pro-business approach that came to characterise the PT's administration once in power was influential in the development of the WSF from its creation, since the party's platform had already been transforming in the 1990s and this platform cohered with the vision of the CSR programme advanced by its corporate supporters. The pragmatist stance of the PT whereby it is not capitalism that should be rejected, but its unsustainable practices, matched the moderate stance advocated by the Brazilian corporate social responsibility movement around Ethos in the 1990s (Ethos 2011), and groups such as PNBE since the 1980s. Moreover, is it the same vision as that promoted by the UN since the late 1990s through initiatives such as the UN Global Compact promoting partnerships between private, public and civil actors in order to advance universal human and environmental standards (Annan 1998). The linkage between PT actors and the CSR movement was not merely programmatic or linked to the origins of the WSF: after its victory in 2003 Lula appointed Grajew - at the time President of the Ethos Institute and fundamental to mobilising business support for his presidential campaign⁷ - as Special Advisor to the Presidency, a position he occupied for less than a year, in charge of the relationship between private business and public policy (Castanheira 2004). Furthermore, he and three other board members of the Ethos Institute were selected to

participate in the influential Economic and Social Development Council (CDES) bringing together the Presidency, government officials, and civil society and business representatives (Ethos 2012).⁸ Both Grajew and the CEO of Petrobras – from 2005 to 2012 a position held by Sergio Gabrielli de Azevedo, another of the co-founders of the PT (Moura 2007) – occupy a place on the Governance Board of the UN Global Compact, and Lula himself gave the speech opening the Global Compact Leaders Summit in 2004 (UN Global Compact 2004).⁹

Thus, while acknowledging the many and well-recorded social improvements achieved during this period by the socially-inclusive approach of the PT, it must be noted that the particular relations among the PT, a sector of business and civil society had a moderating effect in the origins and early evolution of the WSF, which from the outset was supported by a conglomeration of interests that shared a collaborative vision of civil society, state and business relations that did not reject capitalism. The ambivalence in the PT's programme enabled Lula to be cheered by 100,000 people at the 2003 WSF (along with Hugo Chávez), and at the same time to become a protégé of big business, bankers, financial institutions and right-wing politicians, speaking at the World Economic Forum at Davos (Petras and Veltmeyer 2005), promoting the compatibility between liberal economic policies and social welfare.

From 2005 the 'social neoliberal' imprint of the PT in the WSF assumed a more controversial character, as the open involvement of the Brazilian state in the WSF coincided with the deterioration of the relationship between the PT and its conventional supporters, mainly following the corruption scandals that shook the Party and the disenchantment of its leftist allies with Lula's economic policies (Sola 2008). In this period the intimate relationship between the WSF and the Brazilian state-business connection started to be openly criticised by certain participants and observers. Some noted that the WSF's leadership opposed

granting greater visibility to more radical alternatives to 'neoliberal globalisation' such as those put forward by the government of Venezuela, the efforts of which towards funding the 2006 Caracas WSF met considerable resistance (Mestrum 2006). In 2005 Lula's speech received lukewarm support, in contrast with Chavez's standing ovation, and the PSTU (the Marxist Labour Party of Brazil) questioned on its website after that year's event how the security arrangements concentrated on protecting the figure of Lula from insults or negative chants:

A gigantic operation was put together involving the direction of the WSF, the federal, state and municipal governments, the Military Police, the CUT and the MST. In the Gigantinho Gym, where the act was going to take place at 9.00 am, the gates were opened covertly three hours before, for thousands of people brought by the CUT and MST wearing shirts with the slogan "100% Lula". In this way they occupied almost all the space of the gym, leaving few places for the oppositions (all far from the podium). Every person out of this scheme who wanted to enter faced a queue of over a kilometre. What stopped entry to the gym was an organised manifestation. (PSTU 2005)

Furthermore, the PT's corruption scandals reached close to the Forum's corporate sponsors: for instance, the person accused of being the financial articulator of the 'mensalão' corruption scheme, Marcos Valorio, owned the advertising agency SMPB handling the communication of state companies such as Petrobras, Furnas and Bank of Brazil. A parliamentary investigation in 2005 found several irregularities in the activities of SMPB in relation to funds passed to the WSF through these organisations (Serraglio 2006). ABONG claimed that it ignored that the money could have had irregular origins (Magalhães and Flor 2009). On 9 October 2012, José Dirceu, co-founder of the PT, Lula's first chief of staff and

one of the main PT personalities speaking at a panel during the 2003 WSF, was declared guilty of corruption charges and of arranging the 'mensalão' scheme, and sentenced to 10 years in prison by the Brazilian Supreme Court of Justice (Oliveira and Passarinho 2012).

The PT's involvement in the WSF reached a point such that in an interview in 2010 Eric Toussaint, leader of CADTM (Committee for the Annulment of Third World Debt), a member organisation of the WSF International Committee, voiced his concern when seeing the 'Ten years Later' Seminar in the last Porto Alegre Forum being sponsored by Petrobras, Caixa, Banco de Brasil, Itaipú Binational and a strong governmental presence, and considered that Brazil was using the Forum as part of a peripheral imperialist structure, raising and promoting the profile of its state corporations (Ojeda and Toussaint 2010). Moreover, he considered that a sector of the founders, comprising Grajew, Whitaker and IBASE, had come to represent a vision that intends to preserve the Forum as a space of dialogue and debate, open to many social actors, but not as an instrument of action. What this article demonstrates is that this approach to the WSF by certain Brazilian elements was there from the start, reflective of a moderate position compatible with the notion of social responsibility, which prefers voluntary and not coercive intervention over more mobilised and aggressive political tactics. This distinction corresponds with Prestes Rabelo's (2006) identification of two competing factions present in the WSF's spaces of decision-making: the 'horizontalists' and the 'movementalists'. The horizontalists, comprising Grajew, Whitaker and organisations like CBJP, CIVES and international sectors linked with Oxfam, Public Citizen and networks with strong linkages to civil society and business, may be considered to be moderates, representing the ideal of the founding group to move away from the vices of the 'old' movements and social organisations of the 20th century, in particular the influence of the international communist movement. This faction conceives the forum as a horizontal

and democratic space without clear leadership and free from orthodox utopias (Whitaker 2004). The movementalists form a more heterogeneous group which conceives the forum as tool of action against neoliberalism, grouping organisations such as the World Network of Social Movements (created by initiative of the CUT and MST), CLACSO, ATTAC, women's and unemployment groups, among others.

This apparent paradox, whereby it is the moderate faction in the WSF which is more comfortable with the participation of state elements, including the (partially) public-owned companies, rather than the more radical sector, is resolved by understanding the relationship between the pro-social and pro-market model advanced by the PT and the Brazilian corporate social responsibility movement, which as this article has outlined were central in the origins of WSF. The voiced opposition to this arrangement expresses the way in which this 'social neoliberal' vision came to clash with certain sectors of civil society, both in Brazil and abroad that hold a view whereby 'the WSF signals the spread of alternative socioeconomic relations and practices undertaken by ordinary men and women on a daily basis' (Agathangelou and Ling 2009: 141). The roots of the WSF in a partisan elite promoting socially responsible capitalism tied in arm-length relations with pragmatic regional and later national governmental actors are far from this.

Conclusion

This article does not simply challenge the conventional account of the origins of the WSF predominantly in anti-capitalist social movements: by revealing the complex relations underlying its origins, this article has made explicit the constraining influence exercised by a certain Brazilian faction linking the WSF process with the PT and elements of business. These complex multi-sectoral relations help us to understand why the World Social Forum

developed from the outset as a forum for discussion, rather than as a mechanism for the advancement of more radical alternatives to neoliberal globalisation.

This article also challenges the conventional critique of the WSF which claims that it has rejected its supposedly radical roots and descended into an NGO 'trade fair', as it has been shown not only that this moderation was present from the Forum's inception, given the common approach shared by the corporate, civil and party political actors promoting the project, but that the involvement of these organised actors was fundamental for the Forum's consolidation.

The prevalence of moderate stances inside the WSF responds in large part to the ideological and institutional relationship developed locally between the progressive wing of business and certain sectors of civil society, supported by the (re-)positioning of the PT in the last two decades from a programmatic party to a pragmatic one as it gained higher political offices (Hunter 2007). The impact this conjunction of actors had in the early evolution of the WSF renders highly questionable the notion that the WSF stemmed purely 'from below'.

For these reasons, this article has contributed towards a more sophisticated understanding of the WSF as a complex political project influenced by and articulating different sectoral and national interests: it is not merely an expression of an alternative global civil society or of the opposition of the South to Northern hegemony, nor it can be said to be spearheading an anti-capitalist rebellion. Rather, by exploring the particularity of the Brazilian institutional relations crossing the WSF, the article has argued that a dyadic 'above versus bottom' view of the origins and early development of the WSF, as well as an 'hegemony versus counter-hegemony' or a 'society versus business' one, not only simplifies the historical and ideological complexity of Brazilian politics, and international politics more

generally, but also reproduces a liberal stereotype that frames ‘the South’ as the home of plural grassroots movements, independent civil society and counter-hegemonic political projects – a characterisation all too common in existing work on global civil society.

This framing ends up performing the conservative function it intends to reject – locking certain actors and regions in certain roles – while missing the structures enabling an undoubtedly novel space such as the WSF to materialise in the first place. Shedding light on these complex social arrangements, whereby social roles, interests and ideologies do not reflect the competitive social relations presumed by liberal pluralism has the potential to provide insights into other contexts beyond Brazil and to other projects beyond the WSF.

Furthermore, the article demonstrates that the overlapping of roles is not necessarily a defect, as novel and politically-enabling alternatives can emerge and prosper from a set of institutional arrangements which may be assumed to be regressive. Some elements in the WSF have been undoubtedly part of the struggle for a fairer economic system, for a more egalitarian society and/or more responsible business, but at the same time there are party politics, ideological struggles, corporate interests, and Brazilian geo-political ambitions.

Hence, this article highlights how attributing ontological reality to analytical distinctions can be both problematic and reductive even in what may be considered to be the most emblematic of cases. The evidence of the WSF process indicates that the temptation to consider the development of ‘globalisation from below’ and of global civil society from the ‘bottom up’ without due consideration of the role of elites in the business sector, political parties, and regional and national government must be avoided.

¹ Corporatism is defined as a system of state-group relations where the state encourages the formation of a limited number of officially recognised, non-competing, state-supervised groups, shaping a non-pluralistic system of representation (Schmitter 1974).

² Interestingly, in 1994 the then leader of IBASE, the Brazilian sociologist and activist Betinho, was asked to support the candidacy of Lula in that year's presidential race, which ended in defeat. Betinho refused citing the PT's statist tendencies and preferring an independent and radical civil activism. The person who asked for this support was Grajew (Pandolfi and Heymann 2005: 215).

³ Grajew and his allies were expelled from the organisation, where some occupied relevant positions, as they were considered a faction rejecting the centralised structure (Bianchi 2001).

⁴ Ribeiro (2008: 277) states that certain estimates counted 1,400 PT members in the federal government alone, over 200 in the states and nearly 900 in municipalities, with the opposition claiming figures of around 20,000 people in total.

⁵ As de Oliveira (2006: 12) characterised it 'notorious businessmen - in their capacity as "representatives of civil society" - were awarded ministries appropriate to their areas of interest and export ranking'.

⁶ The first author conducted interviews at this conference in September 2011. The literature has observed how Lula maintained the many of the market-friendly policies started at the end of the nineties by Fernando Henrique Cardoso (Cardoso and Gindin 2009; Sola 2008).

⁷ In July 2002 this group launched a public manifesto supporting Lula's campaign claiming that he represented '...the only alternative to implement a government programme inclined towards economic growth with employment generation, reduction of inequalities, strengthening of the domestic market and support to national firms' (Scinocca 2006; Folha Online 2002).

⁸ For a study of its relevance, see Dotor (2007).

⁹ Some local authors observed how in Brazil, the acceptance of this overlapping between corporate and social responsibility facilitated this duality (Grün 2005).

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