PART TWO

CHANGING FORMS OF PROTEST
STABILITY AND CHANGE IN THE CONTOURS OF ALLIANCES AMONG MOVEMENTS IN THE SOCIAL FORUM PROCESS

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This chapter examines changes in the organizational space of the transnational social movements that are involved in the World Social Forum (WSF) process. In this study we seek to understand the structure of connections among progressive transnational movements and how those connections may be evolving over time. For this purpose we analyze results obtained from surveys of participants in the WSF in 2005 in Porto Alegre, the WSF in 2007 in Nairobi and the U.S. Social Forum (USSF) that was held in Atlanta in 2007.

We examine the contours of the social movement connections found among WSF participants, and how these may be changing over time. The tricky problem is that our findings probably reflect other things as well as changes in the structure of the network of popular movements in the global public sphere. Undoubtedly the locations of the meetings, the nature of the groups that sponsored the meetings, and the somewhat different purposes of the meetings, also influence the network structures that emerged at each meeting. We shall try to sort out these different elements affecting the structure of alliances.

There is a large scholarly literature on networks, coalitions and alliances among social movements (e.g. Carroll and Ratner 1996; Krinsky and Reese 2006; Obach 2004; Reese, Petit, and Meyer 2008; Rose 2000; Van Dyke 2003). Our study is theoretically motivated by this literature as well as by world-systems analyses of world revolutions (Arrighi, Hopkins and Wallerstein 1989; Boswell and Chase-Dunn 2000) and Antonio Gramsci’s analysis of ideological hegemony, counter-hegemonic movements and the formation of historical blocks [see also Carroll and Ratner (1996) and Carroll (2006a, 2006b)].

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