

## World Social Forum (first meeting)

Label: World Social Forum (first meeting)

Author: Imre Szeman , McMaster University

Date Entered: 2005-05-05

Description The first meeting of the World Social Forum (WSF) was held from 25-30 January 2001, in Porto Alegre, Brazil. The origins of the WSF date back to the public announcement of the proposal for the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI). There were immediate strong criticisms of the MAI, including an article by Lori Wallach of Public Citizen, published in *Le Monde diplomatique* in 1998. Public reaction to this article led to the creation of organizations opposed to the MAI (including Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens, or ATTAC) and subsequently to France's withdrawal from the MAI negotiations (see Collapse of the MAI).

The growing opposition to corporate globalization around the world in the wake of the MAI led the Brazilians Odjed Grajew and Francisco Whittaker to approach Bernard Cassen of ATTAC with the idea of bringing together all of the emerging antiglobalization forces in a meeting to be held opposite the annual World Economic Forum. The leaders of this nascent movement chose Porto Alegre, Brazil as the location for the first meeting in large part because of the enthusiastic support of the Brazilian Workers' Party (PT), which then held control of both the municipal government and the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The organization of the very first forum set the form of subsequent WSF meetings: morning plenary sessions with major figures in the fight against globalization, afternoon workshops organized by participating groups, and testimonios from individuals around the world engaged directly in the struggle against neo-liberalism.