

**EMERGING VISIONS OF ANOTHER WORLD?
TENSIONS AND COLLABORATION AT THE QUEBEC SOCIAL FORUM**

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ABSTRACT

The Quebec Social Forum (QSF) took place 23-26 August 2007 in Montreal. It attracted about 5000 people from across Quebec. Both organizers and observers viewed the event as an unqualified success. In this article, we seek to describe and document this historic gathering and to understand it in its Quebec context, against the larger organizing process which produced it. We also situate the Social Forum, both as event and process, within the longer history of social mobilization in Quebec. Historicizing the Social Forum in this way helps us interpret its cleavages and conflicts more adequately and apprehend its larger significance. We argue that the conflicts that have plagued the organizing of the Quebec Social Forum are a reprise of those that appeared in the movement in the late 1990s and came to a head in the 2001 massive demonstrations against the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas in Quebec City. The chasm then was widely perceived as one over tactics but we argue, then and now, it is more substantive than that. It is about the clash of profoundly different ethics, practices and theories of democracy and, beneath them, different horizons of hope and visions of transformation. The organizing of the Social Forum is the occasion for this debate, which may say something about the significance of the Social Forum more generally and the challenge it poses to established cultures and practices of politics on the left. The cleavage is generational but not only or simply. It signals a struggle and transition but the outcomes are not yet clear and are certainly not pre-ordained.