

**(IN)FERTILE GROUND? SOCIAL FORUM ACTIVISM IN ITS REGIONAL AND LOCAL
DIMENSION**

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ABSTRACT

Since its inception in 2001 World Social Forum (WSF) has grown in numbers and drawn activists from all areas of the globe. It has also spawned a myriad of social forums around the world. But the pattern of participation within the WSF global event or within other forums has not been evenly spread in geographic or spatial terms. This chapter examines how and why social forum activism emerged in some places and not others. We map the social forum from the first WSF in 2001 through its proliferation and fragmentation over time as it has taken root at various levels—continental, national, regional and local. Then we provide comparative case studies of sub-global forums drawn from North and South America, Europe and Africa. We also compare different manifestations of social “forumism” along a number of dimensions. Drawing on comparative politics and its emphasis on the specifics of place and the role of context we discuss these patterns and the factors that might account for why these forms of resistance find barren or fertile ground around the world.