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# POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF TRANSNATIONAL AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS

Agrarian Change & Peasant Studies



MARC EDELMAN & SATURNINO M. BORRAS JR.

# **POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF TRANSNATIONAL AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS**

# Advance Praise for *Political Dynamics of Transnational Agrarian Movements*

In *Political Dynamics of Transnational Agrarian Movements*, Edelman and Borras had a hard row to hoe: they not only strove to provide detailed information on a menu of transnational agrarian movements about which we know far too little, they also dug deep into the domestic soil of many of them, analyzing their regional, class, and ideological composition, their relations with NGOs and international institutions, and how they took on global neoliberalism. No less important for a book that covers so much ground, it is a joy to read.

— Sidney Tarrow, Cornell University,  
author of *The New Transnational Activism*

For those of us who are passionate about building radical transnational agrarian movements (TAMs) it is crucial to have a clear sense of the spaces where TAMs already are or can emerge, to develop sharp and creative analyses of the problems TAMs face, and to be honest about TAMs' limitations. This book offers a panoramic view of TAMs, mapping their dilemmas, strengths and promising paths, challenging our intuitions and encouraging us to think critically.

— Sofía Monsalve Suárez, FIAN International

Drawing upon decades of engaged research, Edelman and Borras have given us an exceptionally rich mapping of the changing field of transnational agrarian movements. They hone in on key questions involving diverse movement organizations, NGOs, donors, political arenas, representation claims, changing modalities of development assistance, and the multi-level, shifting arenas of peasant politics. This is a valuable contribution, and should be of interest to scholars and practitioners.

— Margaret Keck, Johns Hopkins University,  
co-author of *Activists Beyond Borders*

The prayers of those of us who have long hungered for a comprehensive, historically deep, learned and accessible account of international agrarian movements have finally been answered in full. We will long be in debt to Edelman and Borras for this exceptional and lasting contribution to agrarian scholarship.

— James C. Scott, founding Director, Yale University Agrarian Studies Program,  
author of *The Art of Not Being Governed*

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## Preface to the 2021 ebook edition

In late 2020, four years after this book's first edition, the world witnessed a dramatic display of the ongoing importance of peasant politics. Two hundred thousand Indian farmers, from 40 or more organizations – some transnationally linked and others not – drove their tractors and bullock carts from Punjab and Haryana to the capital, Delhi. The protestors were demanding repeal of three Farming Acts — on marketing, contract farming, and “hoarding” commodities – that signified further liberalization of the agricultural economy, with the end of regulated markets and the removal of price supports and fuel subsidies. In November, some 250 million people joined a 24-hour solidarity strike. The protestors came from regions that prospered from the first green revolution, but the neoliberal onslaught that commenced in the 1990s had eroded their livelihoods and driven many to desperation. Months later, facing repression and a horrifying pandemic, tens of thousands remained encamped on the outskirts of Delhi. While media pointed to giant religious festivals and mass right-wing rallies as COVID-19 super-spreader events, the farmers were diligent about mask wearing and other preventative measures.

Several processes discussed in the first edition have evolved and are motives for concern or jubilation. In 2016 we noted that the absolute number of peasants was the largest it had ever been, even if their proportion in the world population had declined. Now, in 2021, projections suggest that both the absolute and especially the relative weight of rural people in the global population will decline in the next three decades. By 2050 more than twice as many people will be living in urban as in rural settings. Net migration – both rural-urban and international – is also accelerating, with troubling implications for place-based social movements, including agrarian ones. The hostility of many governments to internationally linked NGOs and civil society organizations, which we mentioned in 2016, has intensified in recent years as authoritarian populist heads of state consolidated their rule. The climate emergency has battered rural zones with ever more frequent droughts, floods, wildfires, and

storms. Corporate consolidation and capture of international and national governance institutions continue to imperil the agendas of progressive transnational agrarian movements (TAMs).

On the more hopeful side, the 2018 adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Living in Rural Areas, after a long campaign by LVC, FIMARC and other TAMs, provided new recognition of food sovereignty, collective land rights, and peasants' cultural distinctiveness. The TAMs and allies are now pressing for a binding international treaty to rein in the worst abuses of transnational corporations. The network of large and small agroecology schools and peasant universities that we discussed in Chapter 4 continues to expand.

The COVID-19 pandemic impeded the travel and gatherings central to transnational organizing and participation in international governance spaces. As meetings went remote, internet connection problems, widely separated time zones, interpretation difficulties, and screen fatigue complicated participation. The pandemic also provided pretexts for authoritarian regimes to surveil and repress activists. While aggregate food supplies remained adequate in most places, the numbers of food insecure and hungry spiked worldwide, and food chain workers – from fields and packing houses to urban markets – suffered high rates of COVID-19 infection.

*Marc Edelman and Jun Borras, May 2021.*



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# POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF TRANSNATIONAL AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS

Marc Edelman and Saturnino M. Borras, Jr.

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To the memory of Manuel “Steve” Quiambao,  
Oscar “Oca” Francisco, Basilio “Bob” Propongo,  
and Ernest Reyes: comrades, friends, mentors.

— Jun Borras

To the memory of my mother, Judith Edelman (1923–2014),  
who brought me to ban-the-bomb marches in a stroller,  
involving me in social movements before I could even walk.

— Marc Edelman

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## Series Editors' Foreword

*Political Dynamics of Transnational Agrarian Movements* by Marc Edelman and Saturnino M. Borrás Jr. is the fifth volume in the Agrarian Change and Peasant Studies Series from ICAS (Initiatives in Critical Agrarian Studies). The first volume is Henry Bernstein's *Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change*, followed by Jan Douwe van der Ploeg's *Peasants and the Art of Farming*, Philip McMichael's *Food Regimes and Agrarian Questions* and Ian Scoones' *Sustainable Livelihoods and Rural Development*. Together, these five outstanding books reaffirm the strategic importance and relevance of applying agrarian political economy analytical lenses in agrarian studies today. They suggest that succeeding volumes in the series will be just as politically relevant and scientifically rigorous.

A brief explanation of the series will help put the current volume by Edelman and Borrás into perspective in relation to the ICAS intellectual and political project. Today, global poverty remains a significantly rural phenomenon, with rural populations comprising three-quarters of the world's poor. Thus, the problem of global poverty and the multidimensional (economic, political, social, cultural, gender, environmental and so on) challenge of ending it are closely linked to rural working people's resistance to the system that continues to generate and reproduce the conditions of rural poverty and their struggles for sustainable livelihoods. A focus on rural development thus remains critical to development thinking. However, this focus does not mean de-linking rural from urban issues. The challenge is to better understand the linkages between them, partly because the pathways out of rural poverty paved by neoliberal policies and the war on global poverty engaged in and led by mainstream international financial and development institutions to a large extent simply replace rural with urban forms of poverty.

Mainstream approaches in agrarian studies are generously financed and thus have been able to dominate the production and publication of research and studies on agrarian issues. Many of the institutions (such as the World Bank) that promote this thinking have also been able to acquire skills in producing and propagating highly

accessible and policy-oriented publications that are widely disseminated worldwide. Critical thinkers in leading academic institutions are able to challenge this mainstream approach, but they are generally confined to academic circles with limited popular reach and impact.

There remains a significant gap in meeting the needs of academics (teachers, scholars and students), social movement activists and development practitioners in the Global South and the North for scientifically rigorous yet accessible, politically relevant, policy-oriented and affordable books in critical agrarian studies. In response to this need, ICAS — in partnership with the Dutch development agency Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation or ICCO-Cooperation — is launching this series. The idea is to publish “state of the art small books” that explain a specific development issue based on key questions, including: What are the current issues and debates on this particular topic and who are the key scholars/thinkers and actual policy practitioners? How have such positions developed over time? What are the possible future trajectories? What are the key reference materials? And why and how is it important for NGO professionals, social movement activists, official development aid circle and non-governmental donor agencies, students, academics, researchers and policy experts to critically engage with the key points explained in the book? Each book combines theoretical and policy-oriented discussion with empirical examples from different national and local settings.

The series will be available in multiple languages in addition to English, starting with Chinese, Spanish, Portuguese, Bahasa, Thai, Italian, Russian and Japanese. The Chinese edition is in partnership with the College of Humanities and Development of the China Agricultural University in Beijing, coordinated by Ye Jingzhong; the Spanish edition with the PhD Programme in Development Studies at the Autonomous University of Zacatecas in Mexico, coordinated by Raúl Delgado Wise, EHNE Bizkaia in the Basque country, coordinated by Xarles Iturbe, and Fundación Tierra coordinated by Gonzalo Colque; the Portuguese edition with the Universidade Estadual Paulista, Presidente Prudente (UNESP) in Brazil, coordinated by Bernardo Mançano Fernandes, the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) in Brazil, coordinated by Sergio Schneider,



## FOREWORD

and ISEG University of Lisbon coordinated by Joanna Pereira Leite; the Bahasa edition with University of Gadjah Mada in Indonesia, coordinated by Laksmi Savitri; the Thai edition with RCSD of University of Chiang Mai, coordinated by Chayan Vaddhanaphuti; the Italian edition with University of Calabria, coordinated by Alessandra Corrado; the Russian edition with RANEPa in Moscow, coordinated by Alexander Nikulin and Teodor Shanin; and the Japanese edition with Kyoto University, coordinated by Shuji Hisano of Kyoto University and Koichi Ikegami of Kinki University.

Given the objectives of the Agrarian Change and Peasant Studies Series, one can easily understand why we are delighted to have as Book 5 the work by Edelman and Borras. The first five volumes fit together well in terms of themes, accessibility, relevance and rigour. We are excited about the bright future of this important series!

*Saturnino M. Borras Jr., Ruth Hall, Christina Schiavoni, Max Spoor  
and Henry Veltmeyer  
ICAS Book Series Editors*

# Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation Statement

The Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO) has partnered with ICAS to produce the book series on Agrarian Change and Peasant Studies.

ICCO works for a just world without poverty. A world where people can claim and assume their rights in a sustainable society. Key principles are secure and sustainable livelihoods and justice and dignity for all. Sustainable agriculture and food systems are key to realizing this vision. ICCO acknowledges, together with ICAS, that the current mainstream thinking about the rural world will not lead to sustainable alternatives to agrarian systems that contribute to hunger, malnutrition, violations of rights (right to food and other human rights) and unsustainable use of soils and water leading to pollution and loss of biodiversity. ICCO acknowledges that more research and exchange among scholars, practitioners and policymakers is badly needed to find answers. Answers, not just one answer. The world cannot afford anymore to simplify problems in order to develop a “one size fits all” solution leading to a silver bullet that tends to miss the target. We need a plurality of solutions; adapted to local contexts and that fuel the thinking of a diverse range of policymakers, activists and other actors in several sectors. We need diverse inputs from a broad range of people who suffer from hunger, who are kicked off their land and yet have ideas and energy to improve their livelihoods and realize their human rights.

What follows is a description of the type of agrarian system ICCO supports in order to contribute to the realization of its vision: ICCO promotes agriculture that locally feeds people, strives to add value locally and is environmentally sustainable. It promotes an agricultural system in which people are central and allows for self-determination, empowerment and governance of farmers themselves, but also in negotiation with consumers. This agricultural system allows male and female farmers to organize themselves according to their own needs and to make their own choices. It sustainably builds on the

characteristics of the local environment (soil, water, biodiversity). We also know that agricultural systems are bound with other sectors and cannot survive in isolation: we see rural-urban (re)migration and we see trade and markets. Above all we see people living in rural settings that should be able to determine their own choices, supported by a favourable (political, social and economic) environment.

To make this happen, stable, reliable and just access to and control over productive resources such as water, land and genetic material such as seeds and tubers are essential. Related to this, but also in a broader context, ICCO supports small scale producers, in decision-making about their livelihoods and works for more equal power relations in and between agricultural and other systems. The ICCO cooperative acknowledges the interrelatedness between the agricultural and food systems in the Global North and South and acknowledges that these interlinkages, as well as power imbalances, need to be challenged in order to sustainably feed the world.

This type of alternative agrarian systems is knowledge intensive. We need more research that is relevant to support and stimulate the further development of this type of agricultural system and promote pro-poor agrarian change. ICCO is looking to and working towards justice, democracy and diversity in agrarian and food systems. In order to make this happen, analytical tools and frameworks are necessary for informed collective actions and advocacy work. It is in this context that we find the book series of great importance to ICCO and its partners worldwide and to broader audiences.

— Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation  
Utrecht, The Netherlands  
February 2015

# Acknowledgements

This little book represents a distillation of both authors' many years of research on and collaboration with agrarian movements (and, more recently, with each other). The rural activists and movement allies who provided inspiration, support and essential insights along the way are too numerous to name. They, along with many colleagues and students, helped to hone our analysis — in seminars and conferences, in spontaneous conversations and as critics of our written work. Our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all of you.

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# Abbreviations

ACWW	Associated Country Women of the World
AFASA	African Farmers Association of South Africa
AFSA	Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance
AGRA	Aliansi Gerakan Reforma Agraria (Alliance of Agrarian Reform Movements), Indonesia
AgriSA	Home of the South African Farmer
AMIHAN	National Federation of Peasant Women, Philippines
ANACH	Asociación Nacional de Campesinos de Honduras (National Association of Peasants of Honduras)
ANFS	Arab Network for Food Sovereignty
ANGOC	Asian NGO Coalition
ANPF	All Nepal Peasants Federation
APC	Asian Peasant Coalition
APMW	Andhra Pradesh Migrants Workers Union, India
ARWC	Asian Rural Women's Coalition
ASOCODE	Asociación Centroamericana de Organizaciones Campesinas para la Cooperación y el Desarrollo (Central American Association of Peasant Organizations for Cooperation and Development)
ATC	Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo (Rural Farmworkers' Association), Nicaragua
BKF	Bangladesh Krishok Federation
BKS	Bangladesh Kishani Sabha
BKU	Bharatiya Kisan Union (national, plus subnational branches), India
CAOI	Coordinadora Andina de Organizaciones Indígenas (Coordinator of Andean Indigenous Organizations)
CARP	Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program, Philippines
CCODP	Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CENESTA	Centre for Sustainable Development and Environment, Iran
CETIM	Centre Europe-Tiers Monde, Europe-Third World Centre, Switzerland

## POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF TRANSNATIONAL AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS

CFA	Canadian Federation of Agriculture
CFS	World Committee on Food Security and Nutrition
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CILSS	Comité Inter-États de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel (Inter-state Committee of Struggle against Drought in the Sahel)
CLOC	Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Organizaciones del Campo (Latin American Coordinator of Peasant Organizations)
CNA	Confederação da Agricultura e Pecuária do Brasil (Agriculture and Livestock Confederation of Brazil)
CNCR	Conseil National de Concertation et de Coopération des Ruraux du Sénégal (National Council of Cooperation of Rural People of Senegal)
CNTC	Central Nacional de Trabajadores del Campo (National Rural Workers Central), Honduras
COCOCH	Consejo Coordinador de Organizaciones Campesinas de Honduras (Coordinating Council of Honduran Peasant Organizations)
CONAMPRO	Coordinadora Nacional de Pequeños y Medianos Productores de Guatemala (National Coordination of Small and Medium Producers of Guatemala)
CONTAG	Confederação Nacional dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura (National Confederation of Agricultural Workers), Brazil
COPA	Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations in the European Union
COPROFAM	Coordinadora de Organizaciones de Productores Familiares del Mercosur (Coordinator of Organizations of Family Producers of the Mercosur)
CPE	Coordination Paysanne Européenne (European Farmers Coordination)
CSO	civil society organization
DKMP	Demokratikong Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Democratic Peasant Movement of the Philippines)
ETC Group	Erosion, Technology and Concentration Group, Canada
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

## ABBREVIATIONS

FARC	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
FETRAF	Federação dos Trabalhadores na Agricultura Familiar (Federation of Family Farmers), Brazil
FFF	Federation of Free Farmers, Philippines
FIAN	Foodfirst Information and Action Network
FIMARC	Fédération Internationale des Mouvements d'Adultes Ruraux Catholiques (International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements)
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GCAR	Global Campaign on Agrarian Reform
GM	genetically modified (~crops)
GMO	genetically modified organism
GNI	gross national income
GRAIN	Genetic Resources and Action International, Spain
HIC	Habitat International Coalition
HIPC	heavily indebted poor countries
HIVOS	Humanistisch Instituut voor Ontwikkelingssamenwerking (Humanist Institute for Cooperation with Developing Countries), Netherlands
IAASTD	International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development
IALA	Instituto Universitario Latinoamericano de Agroecología "Paulo Freire" (Latin American University Institute of Agroecology "Paulo Freire"), Venezuela
ICA	International Commission of Agriculture, Paris
ICARRD	International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development
ICC	International Coordinating Committee (of Vía Campesina)
ICCO	Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation, Netherlands
ICSF	International Collective in Support of Fishworkers, India and Belgium
ICW	International Council of Women
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development

## POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF TRANSNATIONAL AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS

IFAP	International Federation of Agricultural Producers
IFI	international financial institution
IIA	International Institute of Agriculture, Rome
ILC	International Land Coalition
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPC	International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty
IUF	International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco & Allied Workers' Associations
KMP	Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (Peasant Movement of the Philippines)
KMT	Kuomintang (Chinese Nationalist Party)
KRRS	Karnataka Rajya Raittha Sangha (Karnataka State Farmers' Association), India
LPM	Landless People's Movement, South Africa
LRAN	Land Research and Action Network
LVC	La Via Campesina
MIJARC	Mouvement International de la Jeunesse Agricole et Rurale Catholique (International Movement of Young Catholic Farmers)
MLAR	market-led agrarian reform
MOCASE	Movimiento Campesino de Santiago del Estero (Peasant Movement of Santiago del Estero), Argentina
MONLAR	Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform, Sri Lanka
MST	Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (Landless Rural Workers Movement), Brazil
NAV	Nederlandse Akkerbouw Vakbond (Dutch Arable Farming Union), The Netherlands
NEP	New Economic Policy, Soviet Union
NFFC	National Family Farm Coalition, U.S.
NFU	National Farmers Union
NGO	non-governmental organization
NLC	National Land Committee, South Africa
NRSAP	Nandya Raita Samakya, Andra Pradesh, India
ODA	overseas development assistance



## ABBREVIATIONS

OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OEWG	Open-Ended Working Group
OWINFS	Our World Is Not For Sale
PAFO	Pan-African Farmers' Organization
PAMALAKAYA	National Federation of Small Fisherfolk Organization in the Philippines
PFS	Paulo Freire Stichting (Paulo Freire Foundation), Netherlands
PROPAC	Regional Platform of Peasant Organizations of Central Africa
RAI	Responsible Agricultural Investment
REDD+	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
ROPPA	Réseau des Organisations Paysannes et des Producteurs Agricoles de L'Afrique de L'Ouest (Network of Peasant and Agricultural Producers Organizations of West Africa)
SACAU	Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions
SPI	Serikat Petani Indonesia (Indonesian Farmers Union)
TAM	transnational agrarian movement
TGS	Tenure Guidelines
TNC	transnational corporation
TNI	Transnational Institute
TWF	Tenaganita Women's Force, Malaysia
TWN	Third World Network
UNAG	Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos (National Union of Agricultural and Livestock Producers), Nicaragua
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
UNORCA	Unión Nacional de Organizaciones Regionales Campesinas Autónomas (National Union of Autonomous Regional Peasant Organizations), Mexico

## POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF TRANSNATIONAL AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS

UNORKA	Ugnayan ng mga Nagsasariling Lokal na Organisasyon sa Kanayunan (Coordination of Autonomous Local Rural Organizations), Philippines
UPANACIONAL	Unión de Pequeños y Medianos Agricultores Nacionales (Union of Small and Medium Agriculturalists), Costa Rica
UPPA	Union Provisoire des Paysans Africains (Provisional Union of African Peasants)
USFSA	U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance
VGS	Voluntary Guidelines
WAMIP	World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous People
WB	World Bank
WFF	World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers
WFFP	World Forum of Fisher Peoples
WFO	World Farmers' Organisation
WSF	World Social Forum
WTO	World Trade Organisation
WWOOF	World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms
ZANU	Zimbabwe African National Union
ZIMSOFF	Zimbabwe Small Organic Smallholder Farmers Forum
ZNFU	Zambia National Farmers Union

## Introduction

# A Framework for Understanding Transnational Agrarian Movements

Transnational agrarian movements (TAMs) are organizations, networks, coalitions and solidarity linkages of farmers, peasants and their allies that cross national boundaries and that seek to influence national and global policies.<sup>1</sup> Today's radical TAMs have contributed to reframing the terms and parameters of a wide range of debates and practices in the field of international development, including environmental sustainability and climate change, land rights and redistributive agrarian reform, food sovereignty, neoliberal economics and global trade rules, corporate control of crop genetic material and other agricultural technology, the human rights of peasants and gender equity. For policymakers, scholars, activists and development practitioners concerned with these issues, an understanding of TAMs and their impact is essential for grasping interconnections between these thematic areas and between these and the “big picture” as well.

Many readers, particularly those in developed countries, may need to be reminded that there are now more peasants than at any other time in human history (Van der Ploeg 2008). Scholars and agrarian activists may squabble about how to define “peasants,” or about the usefulness of the category, but even allowing for some imprecision it remains the case that peasants still constitute nearly two-fifths of humanity (see Box 1). Their relative weight in the human population has no doubt declined with urbanization and industrialization, but in absolute numbers they are an immense sector. Most importantly, for our purposes, while elites and urbanites have long disparaged the rural poor as backward, inefficient and narrow-minded, peasants themselves have often managed to organize and to emerge as important historical protagonists, even on a transnational level.

**Table 1 World's Agricultural Population, Rural Population and Economically Active Population in Agriculture, 2013**

	In 1000s	% World population
World population	7,130,012	100%
Agricultural population	2,621,360	37%
Rural population	3,445,843	48%
Economically active in agriculture*	1,320,181	19%

\*Economically active population in agriculture includes household heads who sustain larger numbers of non-active dependents.

Source: FAO Faostat database, June 21, 2013.

This book analyzes the diversity of transnational agrarian movements across time and space; the crises of food and agriculture that have contributed to raising TAMS' international profile; and the political dynamics within and between TAMS and between TAMS and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and national and global governance institutions. In addition to the radical TAMS that are central to our analysis, there have been other TAMS with a more conventional orientation that emphasize using industrial agriculture to produce more food for growing populations. The book also considers what the rise (and occasionally decline) of TAMS means for critical agrarian studies and for theories of social movements.

We take an historical approach to TAMS, which suggests something more than just a long temporal perspective. Instead of explaining the origins of TAMS largely or exclusively as a response to the growing weight of global governance institutions, such as the World Trade Organization, or to the hollowing out of nation-states under neoliberal globalization, we consider regional and national experiences, political cultures and historical memories as important constitutive elements of contemporary transnational alliances. The dream of solidarity beyond the nation-state is an old one, as we indicate in Chapter 1, and in Central Europe pro-peasant political parties formed a "Green International" in the early twentieth century. In more recent decades, efforts to organize across borders in places such as Western Europe, Central America and Southeast Asia drew

on eminently regional traditions and later brought into being wider coalitions, such as *Via Campesina*. The success of the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST, Landless Rural Workers Movement) in Brazil in building a powerful organization and organizing land occupations inspired movements elsewhere and led to numerous, ongoing exchanges between Brazilian activists and those in other countries. As TAMs have consolidated in the 1990s and after, what were once local or national protest repertoires and organizational practices have proliferated worldwide, frequently evolving and mutating in the process.

We also see a relation between TAMs' emergence in the 1980s and 1990s and classical debates about "the agrarian question." Since the late nineteenth century, revolutionaries and scholars — among them V.I. Lenin, Karl Kautsky and A.V. Chayanov — debated the impact of capitalism on the countryside and the limits that land, agriculture and pre-existing agrarian structures posed to capital accumulation and to the full development of capitalist social relations (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010; Bernstein 2010; Hussain and Tribe 1981). While a full discussion of these polemics is beyond the scope of this book, we do note that the rise of significant peasant and farmer movements in many countries in the late twentieth century is an indication of the incompleteness of the transition to capitalism in agriculture. Concretely, the impetus for organizing movements that eventually formed cross-border ties came from the remaining areas of peasant and small-farm agriculture, which large-scale industrial farming had failed or not tried to subordinate or obliterate. Some scholars in recent years, pointing to the outsized role of finance capital, have argued that land ownership has become increasingly irrelevant under late capitalism. We argue instead that looming energy and food crises (with the attendant demand for biofuels and staple crops), new mechanisms for investing in carbon "sinks" to mitigate climate change, and the insecurity and volatility in financial markets have contributed to renewing capitalists' interest in land as a potentially lucrative investment and as a hedge against risk. Expanding "land grabs" and crescendoing calls for redistributive land policies in the Global South make the "agrarian question" of continuing centrality to development studies and policy.

As social movements, TAMs challenge analysts to develop new conceptual tools. First, leading collective action theorists, such as Charles Tilly (1986: 392), argue that it is only really possible to talk about “social movements” in the period since 1848, with the consolidation of European nation-states. The “social movement,” in this view, is counterposed to earlier, “defensive” forms of collective action and comes into being alongside and mainly as a challenge to the state. Even many recent studies of global justice movements maintain a strong “methodological nationalism,” focusing primarily on single countries (Beck 2004; Della Porta 2007). Perhaps paradoxically, this national emphasis also characterizes many transnational social movements, including those examined here. La Vía Campesina, for example, consists largely of national-level organizations and does not yet have a mechanism for affiliating movements in places that lack sufficient political space for creating durable, formal organizations (most notably China). How, then, are we to understand movements that transcend national frontiers and that make claims on states and on supra-state institutions yet are still bound by “national” assumptions?

Second, since the 1980s theorists have spilled much ink arguing about the differences between class- and identity-based (or “old” and “new”) social movements, or between “movements for redistribution” and “movements for recognition” (Calhoun 1993; Fraser 2003). Contemporary TAMs confound these binaries, drawing on (or in some cases reinventing) longstanding identities to make economic claims and to demand both redistribution (of land, in particular) and recognition (as full citizens of the nation, as culturally distinct groups and as vulnerable populations under international law).

Third, Sidney Tarrow (2005) argues that marshalling resources, becoming aware of and seizing political opportunities, and framing demands in ways that enable activists to join with others are formidable challenges that are greater for transnational social movements than for national ones. We maintain that the picture is considerably more complex. In the case of agrarian movements, transnational alliances and actions often facilitate, rather than hinder, the mobilization of resources and the identification of political opportunities. Transnational activism is, in effect, a political opportunity in and of itself. Indeed, on occasion, national constituent organizations of

TAMS have been founded precisely to take advantage of the flows of resources — human and material — that become available through international affiliations and campaigns.<sup>2</sup> Donor NGOs frequently offer support for international activities, and advocacy NGOs provide TAMS essential cognitive resources and political intelligence. At the same time, however, access to resources can be a double-edged sword, both contributing to a heightened international profile and generating new kinds of tensions and vulnerabilities, including the demise of some TAMS and the withdrawal of some national organizations from transnational work. Scholars of transnational social movements (Keck and Sikkink 1998; Smith and Johnston 2002; Tarrow 2005; Della Porta 2007; Moghadam 2012; Juris and Khasnabish 2013) — perhaps because of “urban bias” — have tended to give little or no attention to TAMS, even though these are among the largest social movements in the world today (see Chapters 3 and 4).<sup>3</sup> It is our contention that studying the experiences and challenges of TAMS can enrich the broader field of transnational activism.

This brings us to a fourth important point about TAMS and social movement theory. Peasant organizations, whether transnational or not, tend to represent themselves as *sui generis* processes originating in and developing exclusively through the agency of their peasant supporters. While we acknowledge the extraordinary organizing capacity and political imagination of grassroots leaders, we also point out that today’s peasantry is not the peasantry of even one or two decades ago. Many rural activists have broadened their perspectives through training programs, contacts abroad and participation in global civil society events and national and international governance bodies. Many have managed to obtain university degrees. A small number have moved away from farming and activism and into academic life, where their research and writing often provide legitimation for and highlight peasant movement claims (Desmarais 2007). In addition, although peasant movement–NGO relations are often fraught with tensions, the boundaries between the two categories are sometimes blurred and alliances with a small number of research and advocacy NGOs have given TAMS crucial access to important knowledge resources and international institutions.

Fifth, TAMS, to the astonishment of many, have been in the fore-

front of struggles against neoliberal globalization, from well before the 1999 “Battle of Seattle” against the World Trade Organization (WTO), which some scholars and activists consider the inception of the global justice movement. The surprise derives from two misperceptions. In an urbanizing world, especially but not only in the Global North, peasants and farmers are typically viewed askance, as ingenuous rustics or relics of a rapidly vanishing past, even though, as we indicate above, today’s peasantries are quite heterogeneous and frequently highly sophisticated. Another misperception and source of surprise relates to the role of organized labour. The advent of neoliberal globalization in the late 1970s had a devastating effect on workers’ unions in many countries, as industries closed or privatized, public sectors downsized and international competition intensified. In Seattle, teamsters did join hands with environmentalists dressed as turtles, but on the whole labour unions in both developed and developing countries were unable to sustain a robust opposition to the neoliberal onslaught. The situation in the countryside was different. Economic liberalization had a devastating impact there too, as we discuss in more detail in the chapters to come, but because of capital’s incomplete penetration of rural areas, considerable capacity remained in many places for organizing and resistance. Ultimately, TAMS created and filled a space of protest that the labour movement proved incapable of occupying.

Sixth, the case of TAMS demonstrates how political economy is essential in the study of social movements. A content analysis of article abstracts and titles in *Mobilization* and *Social Movement Studies* — two leading journals in the field — revealed that the terms “capitalism” and “economy” hardly appear at all and that “class struggle” and “class conflict” are completely absent (Hetland and Goodwin 2014). The political economic contexts that gave rise to TAMS — particularly the neoliberal globalization of the 1980s and after — are central to the discussion in the pages that follow. Similarly, we argue that it is impossible to understand the politics of rural movements without examining their bases or constituencies in particular social classes — large commercial farmers, rich peasants, small peasants or landless labourers — as well as the class alliances that may exist within agrarian organizations. Social movements are



rarely as coherent as their supporters or leaders suggest — indeed, they frequently constitute “fields of argument.” As Colin Barker points out, “The ‘class struggle’ occurs not only *between* movements and their antagonists, but also *within* them: their ideas, forms of organisation and repertoires of contention are all within their opponents’ ‘strategic sights’” (2014: 48, original italics). At the same time, as we insist in Chapter 2, while class is a fundamental category of analysis for agrarian politics, it is essential to understand how it intersects with other social identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender, generation, nationality, region and place.

A seventh point involves the ebb and flow of movements over time and their sometime fragility. Scholars of social movements have long recognized that movements are affected by “protest cycles” — the turbulent 1930s and 1960s, for example (Tarrow 1994; McAdam 1995). To put it bluntly, movements sometimes have a “life and death” (Castells 2012). In addition, while activists tend to project an overly coherent picture of their movements and to overstate their support, observers have long noted that peasant (and other) organizations are often wracked by factionalism and that leaders sometimes use them as springboards for their own individual upward mobility (Landsberger and Hewitt 1970). The phenomena of “fictitious organizations” (Tilly 1984) and — in the internet age — “dot-causes” (Anheier and Themudo 2002), small groups that attempt to project a large presence, are sometimes relevant in the study of contemporary TAMS. Indeed, in this book we indicate several cases where TAMS and their affiliated national movements have fractured or collapsed entirely. Rather than creating a triumphalist narrative, we try for a sober assessment of vulnerabilities and challenges.

Finally, we acknowledge a difficulty that readers face in tackling a book that attempts to be global in scope and that focuses on formally constituted organizations. If we spelled out the full name of each movement or organization every time we mentioned it, this “little book” would have become a medium-sized one in no time at all. Our prose is thus unavoidably leavened — or leadened, depending on your perspective — with an alphabet soup of abbreviations. We spell these out (and sometimes translate them) at first mention, and the most frequently used ones (e.g., LVC for La Vía Campesina) will

become familiar after a few pages. But readers may find that they have to make frequent use of the list of abbreviations (which contains full names in the original languages and almost always a translation). And if readers feel they are drowning in alphabet soup, we ask them to remember that every abbreviation represents real people and institutions, each with its distinct history, agenda, practices and alliances. We also acknowledge (and discuss in more detail in Chapter 4) that analytically privileging formally constituted organizations can be limiting, since it tends to render invisible political activity that occurs outside of their bounds and to obscure the reality that few social movements ever organize more than a minority of the constituencies they claim to represent. But to fully explore these questions would require not a “little book” but a much larger and different one.

### Notes

1. While we recognize the usefulness of heuristic distinctions between the terms “movement,” “coalition” and “network” (Fox 2009), we also wish to note at the outset that many of the solidarity linkages considered here share characteristics of all three categories or shift between the three categories over time.
2. This is the case, for example, with the national-level Guatemalan organization CONAMPRO, founded in 1992 to fill that country’s slot in the Central America-wide ASOCODE coalition (Edelman 1998), Indonesia’s SPI, founded to affiliate with LVC (as we discuss in Chapter 5), or — more recently — some Indian organizations founded in order to affiliate with transnational movements of fisherfolk (Sinha 2012).
3. Von Bülow (2010) is a notable exception.

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# Transnational Agrarian Movements: Histories and Diversity

Contemporary transnational agrarian movements and networks are plural and diverse, even though observers often focus attention only on the most visible and “noisy” TAMS, such as La Vía Campesina (LVC). Many analysts also assume — and many agrarian activists claim — that contemporary TAMS constitute a novel phenomenon, caused by neoliberal globalization and enabled by new communications technologies and inexpensive air transport. The dream of international solidarity, however, predates the internet by at least a century, and TAMS are hardly new. Some took shape in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, others in the aftermath of World War II, and many more in the 1980s and 1990s. Some movements and networks have been in existence for decades, for example, the *Campeño a Campeño* (Peasant to Peasant) movement, a horizontal agricultural extension process in Central America and Mexico that started in the 1960s (Boyer 2010; Bunch 1982; Holt-Giménez 2006). Moreover, transnational movements or networks often build directly on older cross-border linkages formed well before the neoliberal onslaught commenced in the early 1980s (Edelman 2003). Many cross-border and cross-continental links were forged, for example, during the 1970s and 1980s as part of the extensive solidarity networks in Europe and North America that backed national liberation and anti-dictatorship movements in developing countries, such as Chile, Nicaragua, South Africa and the Philippines. But transnational alliance-building among peasants and farmers goes back much earlier. Understanding the diversity and dynamics of contemporary TAMS is enriched by an understanding of past TAMS and in some cases helps to explain the emergence of contemporary movements and networks.

### Historical Antecedents

Several historical and contemporary TAMs have received relatively little scholarly attention. Transnational alliance-building among peasant and small farmer organizations accelerated after the late 1980s, but its origins lie as far back as the late nineteenth century. This suggests that cross-border activism is not just an outgrowth of computers and the internet, cheap air transport, the growing power of supra-national governance institutions and a weakening of contemporary states under neoliberal globalization. Early transnational agrarian organizations manifested sometimes eclectic combinations of agrarian populism, communism, elite-led reformism and *noblesse oblige*, pacifism and feminism. Like the “new social movements” of the 1960s and after, lifelong activists who participated in one movement after another built on previous experiences of struggle to make new kinds of claims.

#### *Associated Country Women of the World*

These connections between issues and across generations stand out in the forces that converged in the Associated Country Women of the World, a transnational agrarian organization that began to take shape in the late 1920s.<sup>1</sup> ACWW’s proximate origins lay in encounters between leaders of the International Council of Women (ICW) — founded in Washington in 1888 — and the Women’s Institute movement, which began in Canada in the 1890s and spread to the United States, England and many British colonies (Davies n.d.). The ICW was founded by U.S. activists (and delegates from eight other countries) who had participated in the abolitionist, women’s suffrage and temperance movements (Rupp 1997).<sup>2</sup> The Women’s Institutes were initiated by leaders of ICW’s Canadian affiliate as auxiliaries to the Farmers’ Institutes, a provincial extension program that also existed in the United States (Moss and Lass 1988; McNabb and Neabel 2001). In 1913, Canadian activist Madge Watt moved to Britain, where she helped found several hundred local Women’s Institutes and interested long-time ICW president Ishbel Gordon Aberdeen in starting an international federation. Watt and Lady Aberdeen, an aristocratic feminist whose husband had served as British Governor General of Canada, called a meeting in London

in 1929 with women from twenty-three countries who established an ICW committee on rural women (Drage 1961). The committee published a yearbook (*What the Country Women of the World Are Doing*), a journal (*The Country Woman*) and a newsletter (*Links of Friendship*); it also circulated leaflets in three languages to recruit new national associations (Meier 1958). In 1933, in Stockholm, it became Associated Country Women of the World.

In the ACWW's early years, women from the English, Belgian, Romanian, German and Swedish nobility played key roles (and even as recently as 2012 its board included a Malaysian princess) (ACWW 2012; Meier 1958; Drage 1961; *London Times* 1946a). By 1936, its first Triennial Conference outside Europe, in Washington, DC, attracted some 7,000 farm women, most of them Americans (Meier 1958). The Association set up speakers schools for organizers and researched issues such as midwifery services and nutrition. In the pre-war period, it worked with the League of Nations. During World War II, it moved its headquarters from London to Cornell University, a major centre of agricultural research in upstate New York. Following the war, it attained consultative status with several United Nations agencies (Meier 1958). More recently, ACWW has supported small-scale income-generating programs, including palm oil farms, and advocated in international fora for women's rights, albeit with little critical attention to land, labour or environmental issues. Despite growing participation by women from less-developed countries and an increasingly sophisticated approach to gender issues, ACWW has never transcended its elite British origins. Its conventions are still held in English, without translation services, a practice that limits participation from outside the English-speaking world primarily to educated middle- and upper-class women, most of whom are NGO personnel rather than rural producers (Edelman 2003). Nonetheless, today ACWW claims a membership of nine million in 450 participating societies in over seventy countries (ACWW 2012).

### *Green International*

In the ten years after World War I, two rival international movements vied for peasant support in central and Eastern Europe: the agrarian Green International, eventually headquartered in Prague, and

the Moscow-based Peasant International, or Krestintern (Jackson 1966).<sup>3</sup> Following the war, agrarian or peasant-led political parties came to power in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia and had major influence in Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Hungary, Austria and the Netherlands. The agrarian parties differed in ideology and practice, and each was typically composed of bitterly competing factions, but most sought to shift the terms-of-trade in favour of rural areas, to implement land redistribution and to break the power of the traditional landowning groups. The latter two objectives were, of course, shared by the Communists, with whom the Agrarians had complex, occasionally collaborative and more usually antagonistic relations in country after country.

The most powerful agrarian government was in Bulgaria, where in 1919, following a period of violence and instability, Alexander Stamboliski's Agrarian Union won the first postwar elections (Jackson 1966; Bell 1977). Stamboliski carried out wide-ranging social reforms, most notably modifying the tax system to favour the rural poor and distributing the few large estates to the peasantry. Over the next four years, the Agrarians won growing electoral support (as did the Communists, the second largest party). Stamboliski — famously hostile to cities and urbanites, which he repeatedly termed “parasites” — hoped to turn Bulgaria into a “model agricultural state” within twenty years (Jackson 1966; Pundeff 1992).

Stamboliski ruled Bulgaria with the help of the Agrarian Orange Guard, peasant militias armed with clubs, which he mobilized to meet threats to the government, mainly from the Communists and right-wing Macedonian nationalists (Pundeff 1992). In foreign policy, he attempted to secure support from agrarian parties in Poland, Czechoslovakia and elsewhere for an international agricultural league that would serve as a counterweight to the reactionary “White International” of the royalists and landlords and the “Red International” of the Bolsheviks (Colby 1922; Gianaris 1996; Alforde 2013).

The Green International first took shape in 1920, when agrarian parties from Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary, Romania, the Netherlands and Switzerland exchanged delegations and set up a loosely organized “league” under the direction of a monarchist



Bavarian physician and peasant leader, Dr. Georg Heim (Durantt 1920). The following year, the alliance formally constituted itself as the International Agrarian Bureau and set up a headquarters in Prague (Bell 1977). This effort, due significantly to Stamboliski's initiative, made little headway over the next three years, as the Bulgarian leader was occupied with diverse diplomatic problems and a wide range of domestic opponents, including the Communists, disenchanted urban elites, nationalist and royalist army officers, "White" refugees from the civil war in the Soviet Union and right-wing Macedonian extremists.

In 1923, Stamboliski's enemies assassinated him in a bloody right-wing coup that ushered in more than two decades of military and royalist dictatorship.<sup>4</sup> They rapidly overcame intermittent peasant resistance, and dozens of Agrarian Union supporters were killed in the succeeding weeks. Several months after the coup, a short-lived, fragile alliance between exiled Bulgarian Agrarians and Communists produced a Communist-led uprising, but this too was rapidly squelched, with an estimated 5,000 rebel fatalities (Pundeff 1992; Carr 1964).

### *Red Peasant International*

The Bulgarian disaster paved the way for the 1923 decision of the Communist International (Comintern) to establish the Red Peasant International (Krestintern) and to seek deeper ties with the agrarian parties. Several factors in the Soviet Union and the international Communist movement also contributed to this move. The 1921 introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the U.S.S.R., characterized by greater tolerance of agricultural markets and smallholding property, ushered in a uniquely pro-peasant period in Soviet history that lasted until 1929, when the consolidation of Stalin's rule brought the initial steps toward collectivizing agriculture and "liquidating the kulaks as a class." Disappointed by the failure of the 1919 communist uprisings in Germany and Hungary and by the 1920 defeat of the Soviet invasion of Poland, Moscow increasingly looked to the east as the most likely zone for successful new revolutionary movements, but these societies had only tiny industrial proletariats and massive peasantries. At the Krestintern's founding

Congress in 1923, the group appealed to “the peasant toilers of the colonial countries” (Carr 1964: 615). The first issue of its journal contained articles by Nguyen Ai-quoc (a pseudonym for Ho Chi Minh) and Sen Katayama, the Japanese Comintern operative whose activities ranged across Asia and as far as Mexico and Central America (Edelman 1987).

The Krestintern only succeeded in attracting non-communist agrarian movements as members on a few occasions. In 1924, it briefly recruited Stjepan Radić’s Croat Peasant Party, which, like Moscow, strongly opposed the idea of a Yugoslav federation that might become “a mask for Great Serbian imperialism” (Biondich 2000: 198). Radić, who hoped to use the Krestintern affiliation to pressure Belgrade for greater Croatian autonomy, had pacifist leanings and found it difficult to collaborate with the Yugoslav Communists. He never actually participated in any Krestintern activities and his rapid withdrawal weakened the legitimacy of an already frail organization (Carr 1964; Jackson 1966).

China’s nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) also flirted with the Krestintern during the mid-1920s as part of its alliance with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Several KMT leaders visited Moscow, and Krestintern and Comintern operatives, including Ho Chi Minh and a significant group of Vietnamese militants, studied at the CCP’s Peasant Movement Training Institute, where Mao Tse-tung was an instructor (Quinn-Judge 2003). But this connection was also severed, in 1927, when the KMT massacred its Communist allies in Shanghai, something that caught Soviet leaders by surprise. On the eve of the coup, the Comintern had instructed the CCP to bury its arms (Cohen 1975).

The Krestintern never attained the influence of the other “auxiliary organizations” of the Comintern, such as the Red International of Trade Unions (Profintern) or the International Organization for Aid to Revolutionaries (also known as Red Aid or MOPR, its Russian acronym). Following the 1925 Comintern congress, the Krestintern held a plenum, with seventy-eight delegates from thirty-nine countries. It recommended that its militants participate in existing peasant organizations and try to align them with Communist positions (Carr 1964). But this was precisely the approach that two years later led to

the Shanghai fiasco, and apart from some ephemeral organizing successes, the Krestintern was moribund by the end of the 1920s. Pro-peasant figures in the Soviet Party, in particular Nikolai Bukharin, increasingly found that they had to conform to Stalin's vision of the rural world and most were ultimately eliminated in the purges of the 1930s (Cohen 1975). The Krestintern's only durable achievement was the founding of the International Agrarian Institute in Moscow, which was explicitly intended to serve as a counterweight to the Rome-based International Institute of Agriculture (IIA), founded in 1905 with Rockefeller Foundation support and a remote ancestor of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (Carr 1964; Jackson 1966).

### *Green versus Red in the 1920s*

From the outside, however, the Red Peasant International did not appear so weak. In 1926–1927, in response to the perceived Krestintern threat, rival coalitions sought to form an international coordinating body for peasant organizations. The first originated with Dr. Ernst Laur, general secretary of the Swiss Peasant Union, who sought to unite the Paris-based International Commission of Agriculture (ICA) and the IIA in Rome, which was closely associated with the League of Nations.<sup>5</sup> Laur's plan was to create closer links between national peasant and farmer organizations and the two policy bodies, but it foundered when the ICA and IIA each established competing international coordinating groups of farmer organizations and when the eastern European agrarian parties kept their distance, suspicious of Laur's opposition to state expropriations of large estates and intervention in the agricultural sector (Jackson 1966).

By 1926, the Prague International Agrarian Bureau, or Green International, jettisoned its initial Pan-Slav orientation and began to reach out to farmer organizations in France, Romania, Finland and elsewhere in Europe. Under the leadership of Karel Mečír, who had served as Czech ambassador to Greece, the Green International defined itself as a centre for the exchange of experiences, moral reinforcement and solidarity for peasants and agrarian parties, and as an international adversary to national governments that threatened peasant interests. Its main activities, however, were the publication of

a multilingual quarterly bulletin and the holding of annual conventions. At its height in 1929, it included seventeen member parties, stretching, in Mečir's words, "from the Atlantic Ocean to the Black Sea, from the Arctic Ocean to the Aegean" (Jackson 1966: 149).

The world economic crisis of 1929, the failures of various national agrarian parties and the rise of fascism all contributed to the demise of the Green International. The Communists, despite occasional flirtations with the agrarian parties, heartily condemned both the Green International and Laur's attempt to unite the Paris ICA and the Rome IIA. In an increasingly polarized central and Eastern Europe, with rapidly shrinking political space, the project of a peasant or farmers international did not re-emerge until after World War II, with the founding of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP).

### *International Federation of Agricultural Producers*

The International Federation of Agricultural Producers was founded amidst post-World War II optimism about global cooperation and serious fears of food shortages and a recurrence of an agricultural depression like that of the 1930s. After the war ended, food rationing in Britain continued for nearly a decade and actually became stricter for some staple products, such as potatoes. The same *London Times* article that announced the founding of IFAP in 1946, for example, also hailed the imminent arrival of "215,181 boxes of apples from Australia" and "the first consignment of tomatoes from the Channel Islands" (1946b).

In 1946 the British National Farmers Union convened a meeting in London of agriculturalists' representatives from thirty countries, with the objective of creating a transnational coalition to support the newly formed U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization and to overcome differences between commodity-based interest groups — grain farmers and feedlot livestock producers, for example — within the agricultural sector (*London Times* 1946a, 1946b). The northern European organizations that came to dominate IFAP already had a decades-long history of international congresses, many involving cooperative societies and Christian farmers' groups created in the early twentieth century (ICA and IFAP 1967; IFAP 1957). Despite

some ambivalence about market liberalism, these forces often backed centre-right political parties. In the pre-World War II period they worked with the Rome-based IIA (see above), which engaged in agronomic research, campaigned for uniform systems of statistical reporting and cooperated with the League of Nations. The FAO, founded in 1945, was explicitly modelled on this earlier experience, and IFAP was intended to be FAO's private-sector counterpart or ally.

The prevailing situation of scarcity is an important element for understanding why British and other European farmers' organizations in the postwar era, as well as FAO and IFAP, saw increasing agricultural production as an overriding imperative. At IFAP's founding convention, some non-European delegations, notably the Canadians, nonetheless called for international marketing mechanisms and supply management that "would distribute abundance efficiently and in such a way that surpluses would not spell disaster to the producers" (*London Times* 1946b). The "productivist" orientation prevailed in IFAP, however, and later came to constitute a major bone of contention with more radical agrarian organizations that emerged in the 1980s and after and that instead prioritized social equity and environmental sustainability.

In its early years, IFAP's leaders, overwhelmingly from developed countries, served in government delegations to FAO conferences, sometimes exercising substantial influence on FAO policies (IFAP 1952). With its connections to global governance institutions and to mainstream agriculturalists' organizations in the Global North, IFAP eventually managed to attract a growing number of peasant and farmer organizations from the Global South. Its internal organizational structure was based on cross-cutting regional and commodity-focused units. For several decades IFAP was arguably the largest and most influential transnational agrarian movement, even though it was gradually eclipsed by the rise of more radical groups, particularly LVC (which is analyzed extensively in the following chapters). In 2010 IFAP suffered a sudden and severe internal crisis that effectively led to its bankruptcy and dissolution (discussed in Chapter 3).

*International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements*

FIMARC, founded in Portugal in 1964 and headquartered in Belgium, grew out of the Second Vatican Council's renewed emphasis on the social teachings of the Church and, particularly, the "preferential option for the poor," which was at the centre of liberation theology. Together with its youth group, the International Movement of Young Catholic Farmers (MIJARC), FIMARC defines itself "as a lay Catholic movement for the development in solidarity for the rural world and its inhabitants, farmers, fisherfolk, indigenous people and all marginalized sectors of ... society" (FIMARC 2014b). It seeks to work

for the genuine evangelisation of rural areas and for the comprehensive advancement of the world's rural people, the vast majority of whom are deprived of everything that is needed for a dignified human existence. The movements making up the Federation are committed to make their own contribution towards building up a society based on solidarity in which ... individuals and communities are respected in terms of everything that defines them: their sex, race, culture and religious faith. (Pontifical Council 2014)

FIMARC has sixty-five member organizations distributed across Africa (16), Asia (10), Europe (8), the Middle East (2) and Latin America (21), and claims a total membership of 1.5 million. (Note that this is a much more modest assertion of total membership than that made by LVC, which in 2014 had 164 affiliated movements and says it represents about 200 million farmers.) FIMARC's magazine, *Voice of the Rural World*, appears in four languages. FIMARC views the United Nations as a strategic institution and has been an active supporter of the IPC for Food Sovereignty and of LVC's campaign to have the U.N. pass a declaration on the rights of peasants (see Chapter 6). FIMARC places special emphasis on information dissemination, training and what it terms "citizen awareness" for participating in lobbying and campaigns (FIMARC 2014a). The "solidarity economy," fair trade, "solidarity finance," food sovereignty, land grabbing and human dignity are among FIMARC's key areas of work.

*Wwoof Network*

The World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms network usually passes below the radar of scholars and activists interested in more explicitly political organizations. Yet wwoof aims to address two crucial problems facing the rural world: first the absence in many settings of alternatives to industrial agriculture, and second, the difficulties youth encounter in seeking to learn about agriculture and in becoming agriculturalists. Initially it emphasized connecting urban consumers of organic food with the producers who grew what they ate. Later the objective evolved into a program of longer-term volunteer apprenticeships or internships on organic farms. From Britain, the network expanded elsewhere in Europe and to New Zealand. wwoof Canada and wwoof USA were founded in the mid-1980s, and wwoof now has host farms in over a hundred countries. Many of these have national wwoof organizations, but even where they do not, affiliated farms (called wwoof Independents) still attract volunteers. The wwoof network has held international conferences in Britain (2000), Japan (2006) and Korea (2011) (Bunn 2011). The few academic studies of wwoof tend to consider it under the rubric of alternative tourism or volunteerism, but wwoof increasingly contributes to the survival of small organic farms by providing low-cost labour and it constitutes a route into farming for young people in developed countries who would otherwise have few opportunities to enter agriculture (Hyde 2014; Yamamoto and Engelsted 2014). Many of its host farmers see themselves as participating in a local “social economy” that evokes both the “solidarity economy” favoured by FIMARC and better known visions of “food sovereignty.”

wwoof’s whimsical side is suggested by the way the meaning of the abbreviation has shifted over the years. In 1971, when the network was founded in London, the abbreviation stood for “Working Weekends on Organic Farms.” In the early 1980s it became “Willing Workers on Organic Farms,” but the mention of “workers” created problems with immigration authorities for young wwoofers who sought to volunteer outside their own countries. In response to this difficulty, the network changed its name again, this time to “World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms.” The network’s name has

become both a noun referring to its participants (wwoofers) and a verb (“to wwoof” is to work on a farm through the wwoof network) (Bunn 2011).

### *ROPPA in West Africa*

In 1973–1974, a major drought devastated the Sahel and West Africa. “Natural disasters” are never entirely “natural,” of course, and they frequently give rise to social mobilization. Much of the desertification that contributed to the Sahel famine occurred as export-oriented cotton and peanut cultivation depleted aquifers, pushed peasants off land and squeezed transhumant pastoralists into ever-smaller grazing areas (Franke and Chasin 1980). In 1973, countries in the region responded by forming the Interstate Committee of Struggle against Drought in the Sahel (CILSS), while donors in the Global North founded the Club du Sahel to coordinate aid projects. Two years later, regional governments formed the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), with an agenda centred on economic integration and peacekeeping (Cissokho 2008, 2011).

The mirror image of these top-down integration processes was a growing grassroots discussion about resource management, economic and physical survival, and collective struggle. Cross-border contacts among emerging peasant movements occurred in 1976 in the context of training programs sponsored by international and some local NGOs. These led to the creation of the short-lived Provisional Union of African Peasants (UPPA). When another drought struck in 1984–1985, the states in CILSS sought to incorporate peasant movements into their crisis planning. By the mid-1990s, European bilateral donors began to prioritize support for transnational, regional initiatives over national ones. Much as occurred in Central America with the ASOCODE network (see below), in West Africa organizations formed the Sahel Peasant Platform in order to present a unified face in negotiations with international financial institutions, donor agencies and their own governments. In 1999, the Club du Sahel acceded to the demands of the Peasant Platform and allocated funds for capacity building with and exchanges between West African peasant movements (Cissokho 2008, 2011; Lecomte 2008).

ROPPA, the Network of Peasant and Agricultural Producers



Organizations of West Africa, was founded in 2000, uniting existing “platforms” in ten Francophone countries and opening a regional office in Burkina Faso. Within a few years, the network grew to include organizations in Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea Bissau. From the beginning, ROPPA was highly critical of neoliberal structural adjustment and trade and regional integration policies. It has been deeply involved in the food sovereignty movement and, especially, the global conference at Nyéléni, Mali, in 2007. Yet, unlike LVC, ROPPA has been willing to engage the World Bank, participating in tripartite negotiations along with governments and other civil society organizations and collaborating on Bank-funded projects (Cissokho 2008). In 2007, ROPPA members participated as “co-negotiators” in trade talks between West African governments, regional institutions and the WTO (Lecomte 2008).

### Thirty Glorious Years?

The French term the three decades following World War II “the thirty glorious years” (*les trente glorieuses*) — an era of state-led development, rising real wages and living standards, and greatly expanded social protections. While it is likely that few in France in 1945–1975 perceived their situation as “glorious” (and certainly many fewer in France’s colonies and ex-colonies or elsewhere in the Global South), today’s nostalgic view of this period nonetheless points to some broader structures and processes that bear on the later advent of neoliberalism and the eventual rise of a more combative generation of peasant organizations.

### *National Development*

The Bretton Woods Conference of allied governments, held in New Hampshire in July 1944, when the end of the war in Europe appeared within sight, set up an international system of fixed exchange rates and controls on capital movements that endured until the 1970s. Most importantly, for some three decades, economists and policy-makers in the capitalist countries presumed that states and markets played mutually reinforcing roles in development. John Maynard Keynes, chief of the British delegation at Bretton Woods, was a

prominent proponent of using public spending as a countercyclical stimulus and creator of jobs. Keynesian policies, applied in the United States and some other countries during the 1930s depression, arguably contributed to reviving the major capitalist economies (although military expenditures in the lead-up to World War II were clearly also significant). After 1944, Keynesian approaches to national development became influential in many parts of the developing world. The Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund), along with other specialized U.N. agencies, were set up to jump start a postwar European recovery, but they rapidly moved on to the developing countries, where they backed state-influenced development agendas that typically included sectoral and infrastructure investment as well as spending on health care and education.

In contrast to their free-market austerity prescriptions after 1980, in this period the World Bank and the IMF usually took a positive view of state intervention in the economy. Often this meant implementing import substitution industrialization behind high tariff barriers, controlling exchange rates, subsidizing investment and consumption, and financing mega-projects such as dams, irrigation projects, roads and ports (Helleiner 1994). In the agricultural sector, in addition to encouraging technological modernization (see below), the World Bank typically supported both the formation of commodities boards that purchased farmers' harvests at guaranteed prices and consumer subsidies that placed staple foods within reach for low-income households.

Even authoritarian states in this period often created at least the rudiments of a social welfare system — public hospitals and clinics, subsidized housing, and social insurance and pension schemes for urban, formal-sector workers. The reach of these programs was, of course, incomplete and uneven, and rural residents were almost always the last to benefit, especially in the poorer countries. But even if the 1945–1975 period was far from “glorious,” in many parts of the world it saw rising living standards and improved, if still very skewed, overall levels of social equity, at least compared to the prewar period.

### *Green Revolution*

The “green revolution” in agriculture that began in the late 1940s was essentially an extension to the developing countries of the hybrid seed revolution that took place a decade earlier in the United States, Canada, France and other industrialized countries. Funded first by the Rockefeller Foundation, which had a longstanding concern with agriculture and public health, the institutional framework for the “revolution” was a series of crop-specific research centres (which today might be called “public-private partnerships”). In the face of still widespread hunger in Mexico, India, the Philippines and elsewhere, the “revolution’s” underlying assumption was that the application of science to agriculture could raise productivity and stave off peasant-based communist revolutions. The wheat improvement program in Mexico and the rice program in the Philippines bred new high-yielding varieties adapted to work best with copious applications of chemical fertilizers and insecticides. They succeeded spectacularly in raising yields and reducing hunger. Yet, as many others have demonstrated, they also exacerbated class divisions in the countryside, as gains from the new technologies accrued mainly to better-off early adopters with access to irrigation, credit, transport and extension services (Hewitt de Alcántara 1976). The “revolution” also generated a host of environmental problems: agrochemical contamination, pollution and unsustainable use of aquifers, genetic uniformity and loss of biodiversity.

Efforts to bring about a green revolution in maize were less effective, in part because extension programs had a hard time reaching the millions of small producers ensconced on rain-fed, hillside farms in Latin America and elsewhere (Paré 1972). Maize is also very sensitive to day-length, which made it more difficult to simply provide U.S. hybrids to Latin American markets. The diffusion of green revolution wheat and rice across the globe, however, was rapid. Wheat developed in Mexico became the basis for a green revolution wheat boom in the Indian and Pakistani Punjab region, and rice from the Philippines was further adapted throughout Southeast Asia and Latin America. In numerous places throughout the world, small farmers began to combine elements of the green revolution package,

especially chemical fertilizers, with traditional seeds and cultivation techniques. As had occurred with the early adopters, even partial reliance on the new technologies drew small producers ever further into webs of market relations that sometimes generated higher incomes but that also signified heightened indebtedness and vulnerability. The technical fix for what was fundamentally a complex set of social crises thus sometimes ended up exacerbating the problems for which the fix was intended in the first place.

### *State-led Redistributive Agrarian Reform*

Cold War fears of communism and postwar anti-colonial movements also spurred radical, state-led programs of redistributive agrarian reform in several key world regions. In post-war Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, the United States encouraged redistributive reform in order to defang reactionary landed elites and reduce social tensions. In all three East Asian settings, the reforms — carried out behind high tariff barriers — eventually contributed to creating a rural middle class and a robust domestic market for manufactured goods. Importantly, the success of the “Asian tigers” involved a sequence of democratization of land ownership, followed by growth of domestic markets, protected industrialization and finally export-oriented industrialization.

In Latin America, the experience of agrarian reform was more uneven. Mexico carried out a far-reaching land redistribution in the 1930s, and Bolivia followed suit after its 1952 revolution. Following the 1961 Punta del Este meeting that founded the U.S.-led Alliance for Progress, when anxieties about revolutionary contagion from Cuba were at a high point, every Latin American country — including the most conservative dictatorships — put agrarian reform on the agenda (Dorner 1992; Thiesenhusen 1995). Sometimes these programs provided low-quality land or encouraged colonization of remote frontier zones as substitutes for genuine redistribution. At other times state agencies expropriated under-utilized large estates and set up peasant cooperatives or allocated plots to individual beneficiaries. In virtually every case, those who received land assumed large debts to pay for it. The agrarian reforms cemented a strong social contract between the peasantry and the state, which in turn shaped the ways in which peasants organized and engaged in collective ac-

tion. But the reforms also frequently foundered when states failed to deliver (or later ceased to even offer) adequate complementary resources, particularly credit, technical assistance and training, irrigation, and transport, processing, storage and marketing infrastructure.

### *Peasant Organizations and the State*

The state-led agrarian reforms tended to operate in a top-down manner, requiring interaction with numerous public-sector bureaucracies, including agrarian reform agencies, titling and surveying offices, state development banks, extension services, insurance companies and commodities boards. This characteristic of the reforms facilitated the emergence of particular kinds of peasant organizations that served as brokers and were generally corporatist and/or controlled by traditional political parties that used the distribution of reform-related benefits as political patronage in return for votes and other expressions of loyalty. The peasant organizations tended to concentrate power and institutional knowledge among a privileged stratum of long-term leaders, while the mass of members had little voice and was expected to follow directives emanating from the top. This sort of verticalism both subordinated peasant interests to those of political parties or state bureaucracies and greatly limited peasants' possibilities of autonomous organization and action.

In the 1980s and 1990s, public-sector belt-tightening meant that states and political parties were less able to maintain flows of patronage resources. In diverse world regions, electorates manifested growing distrust of traditional political parties as a result of corruption scandals and austerity policies. For many organized peasants, diminished benefits from the resources-for-loyalty trade-off generated rising discontent with politicians, state policies and their own leaders.

Public-sector retrenchment involved multiple assaults on rural livelihoods, especially from economic structural adjustment programs. Relevant measures included reducing or eliminating credit for peasant crops from public-sector banks, the hollowing out or shutting of commodities boards, and an end to government extension services and subsidies for inputs and machinery. Unidirectional market openings resulting from the inclusion of agriculture in GATT/WTO and from bilateral trade agreements forced agriculturalists in

developing countries to compete not only with highly capitalized farmers in developed countries — who remained protected from foreign competition — but also with the treasuries in those countries, which provided export and other subsidies for the main commodity crops. The dumping of U.S. maize at below the cost of production depressed prices and undermined producers in Latin America and Africa, while the provision of artificially cheap wheat facilitated a dietary shift away from traditional grains and toward breads, pastas and inexpensive snacks, causing growing dependence on food imports.

### Peasant Wars of the Late Twentieth Century

The “thirty glorious years,” in addition to seeing expanding welfare states and social protections in developed and some middle-income developing countries, were also a time of massive peasant-based insurrections (Wolf 1969). The revolutions in China (1949), Bolivia (1952) and Cuba (1959), anti-colonial and anti-imperial wars in Vietnam, Portuguese Africa and Rhodesia-Zimbabwe, and the rise of guerrilla movements in Malaya, the Philippines and Colombia all contributed to a perception — almost universal across the political spectrum — that the peasantry was an important historical protagonist and a key target for development initiatives. The tremendous interest in “peasant studies” in the late 1960s and 1970s grew directly out of this ferment (Shanin 1990).

In the 1980s and 1990s, however, many scholars shifted their gaze away from rural realities. The participation of peasants in genocides (in Cambodia and Rwanda) and predatory resource wars (in Liberia and Burma) and the depoliticization or unsavoury activities of some earlier revolutionary groups (e.g., Colombia’s FARC and Zimbabwe’s ZANU) gave rise to disillusionment among left-wing academics and solidarity activists (Buijtenhuijs 2000). Declining romanticism about armed struggle, on the part of peasant activists and scholars, also opened space for new kinds of politics that responded to emerging threats to rural livelihoods. In particular, the inclusion for the first time of agriculture in global trade negotiations during the GATT Uruguay Round (1986–1993) signalled that a dramatic liberalization of trade was on the way.

### TAMs and the Rise of Neoliberalism

The early history of the transnational agrarian movements (TAMs) that emerged in the 1980s is closely bound up with IMF- and World Bank-sponsored austerity and economic structural adjustment programs, bi- and multi-lateral trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (1994), the Uruguay Round GATT negotiations that culminated in 1995 in the formation of the World Trade Organization (Edelman 2003; Heller 2013), and the overall recasting of the food regime (McMichael 2009, 2008). These new forms of neoliberal governance marked the end of the Keynesian welfare state and more broadly of national development projects. The threats to small-scale agriculturalists included both the disappearance of public-sector supports and new vulnerabilities from open markets and globalized trade.

These agrarian movements were founded by “rooted cosmopolitans” (Tarrow 2005) who hoped to block a neoliberal economic onslaught that had been gathering strength for some two decades. The Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates and national controls of capital flows that had made possible the “thirty glorious years” eroded and then collapsed in the 1970s. Recession, “stagflation,” skyrocketing oil prices, the end of the gold standard and growing fiscal deficits all provided an opening in politics and policymaking for free-market radicals whose ideas, widely viewed as outlandish if not extremist, had previously attracted little serious attention (Boas and Gans-Morse 2009). While many scholars date the onset of neoliberalism to the elections of Margaret Thatcher in Britain in 1979, Ronald Reagan in the United States in 1980 and Brian Mulroney in Canada in 1984, it is useful to recall that the earliest efforts to implement the paradigm were actually in third world dictatorships, notably Suharto’s Indonesia and Pinochet’s Chile (Ffrench-Davis 2003; Simpson 2008).

“Neoliberalism” — by the 1980s a term of opprobrium in much of the developing world and for many progressive scholars and activists — was a capacious category that encompassed four main elements: (1) trade liberalization, (2) guarantees for investors, (3) freer capital flows and (4) state retrenchment through firings of

public-sector workers, reduction or elimination of key services and privatization of publicly owned enterprises. Countries that embraced these policies in the 1980s and 1990s, apart from a few heterodox cases (e.g., Taiwan, South Korea), experienced diminished growth rates, widening gaps between rich and poor, and massive informalization of their economies (Chang and Grabel 2004; Kohli 2009; Wade 2003). In the agricultural sector, neoliberalism meant sharp reductions in tariffs and rising imports of cheap staples, cuts in direct and indirect subsidies for producers, except in a few developed countries granted exceptional flexibilities (especially the European Union and the United States), and streamlining of sanitary and phytosanitary regulations that could constitute non-tariff barriers to trade. Peasants and farmers increasingly recognized the profound impact that global neoliberalism would have and was already having on farming and on their livelihoods.

Neoliberalism also involved increasing commodification and privatization of the biosphere, including appropriations of crop germplasm via breeders' rights and patents, which made it possible to generate huge profits from seeds that peasant farmers had selectively bred over thousands of years. Seed certification laws in almost every country increasingly dictated what seeds agriculturalists could plant and both reflected and contributed to a rapid and extreme concentration process among major seed companies (Howard 2009). Another type of biosphere commodification involved new markets that treated forests and tree plantations as "sinks" for CO<sub>2</sub> and that generated "carbon credits" for their owners.

Neoliberalism was not, however, a fixed, monolithic or timeless doctrine. By the mid-1990s, continuing financial crises prompted the World Bank and the G-7, under pressure from the Jubilee 2000 movement, to develop debt relief programs for nations it termed "heavily indebted poor countries" (HIPC). Increasingly, the harsh orthodoxy that had been dominant in the international financial institutions and in many developing-country governments evolved into a more "pragmatic" neoliberalism concerned with enhancing individuals' "capabilities" (Sen 2000). The hegemony of the Washington Consensus crumbled in the mid to late 1990s as several of its prominent architects launched scathing criticisms of the im-



pect of structural adjustment policies on the economies and living standards of the poorer countries (Stiglitz 2002; Sachs 1999; Soros 2002).

The early TAMS organizers that sought to turn back the neoliberal tide were a politically diverse bunch, including Spanish anarchists, northern European and Canadian social democrats, environmentally minded small farmers committed to strengthening alternatives to industrial agriculture, and veterans and militants of revolutionary movements and Marxist parties (notwithstanding Marxism's ambivalent attitude toward peasants, hailing them as a revolutionary force, on the one hand, and disparaging them as petit-bourgeois individualists, on the other). Their constituencies ranged from marginal maize producers in Central America and landless squatters in Brazil, to well-off peasants in South India and mechanized wheat farmers from the Canadian prairies. In several areas — Western Europe, Central America, Southeast Asia, West Africa — the first TAMS were regional cross-border alliances. Prior to the establishment of formally constituted TAMS, some national organizations, such as Canada's National Farmers Union and Brazil's landless movement (MST), had active international outreach and solidarity programs and significant links to activists in neighbouring countries. Most importantly, in a major break with previous eras of peasant organization, the emerging TAMS were politically and culturally extraordinarily heterogeneous, since the shared imperative of confronting the WTO, giant seed companies and global grain merchants cut across virtually every potential fault line. Indeed, one notable characteristic of early TAM organizers is the significant presence among them of individuals who — as a result of exile, migration or other vicissitudes of life — were multilingual and could act as broker-interpreters between activists from different countries and language groups.<sup>6</sup>

In the chapters that follow, we analyze the politics of today's most prominent TAMS, examining issues of social class, cultural identity and ideology, as well as their links with each other and with NGOs, donor agencies and intergovernmental institutions. We acknowledge that with our emphasis on the *agrarian* movements we have had to give short shrift to transnational solidarity linkages among related sectors, such as fisherfolk (WFF and WFFP), pastoralists and indig-

enous nomads (WAMIP). We are encouraged that others (Ratner et al. 2014; Sinha 2012; Upton 2014) have begun to put these movements on the research agenda.

### Notes

1. Parts of the sections on ACWW and IFAP are based on Edelman (2003) and parts of the section on the Green International are based on Borras, Edelman and Kay (2008).
2. Keck and Sikkink (1998: 41) consider the abolitionist movement an important “forerunner” of later transnational social movements.
3. “Krestintern” was a conjunction of the Russian “Krest’yianskii Internatsional,” or Peasant International. The sections on the Red and Green Internationals draw on Borras, Edelman and Kay (2008).
4. During the coup the Communists declared neutrality in what they saw as a simple quarrel between the urban and rural bourgeoisies (Bell 1977).
5. The ICA was formed in 1889 by French Agriculture Minister Jules Melin. It sought to hold periodic international congresses on technical problems of world agriculture (Jackson 1966).
6. After around 2000, movements such as LVC increasingly depended on the services of volunteer professional interpreters, such as those from Babels (Boéri 2012) and COATI.

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## **Internally Differentiated TAMs: Competing Class, Identity and Ideological Interests**

The emergence of rich and poor classes within the peasantry — usually termed differentiation — has long been among the most hotly debated topics in agrarian studies (Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010; Bernstein 2010). While our concern here is with the impact of class differences on the politics of transnational agrarian movements (for example, understanding land-oriented versus labour-oriented issues and campaigns), rather than with the debates themselves, it is still important to sketch the outlines of these, since they are inextricably bound up with the politics of distinct classes within the peasantry. This will also be useful for understanding the rise of radical agrarian populists within La Vía Campesina (LVC), which marginalized orthodox Marxists within the global agrarian movement. Class differences within the peasantry and within movements also help to explain why LVC and its member groups have emphasized campaigns around land, trade, climate, environmental, seed and gender issues, rather than labour rights, which would likely be more immediately meaningful for the vast numbers of rural poor people who are landless workers.

### **Differentiation Debates and Middle Peasants**

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russia was a key site for differentiation debates. In part this was because the Tsarist government's collection of agricultural census and household budget data on a scale unparalleled anywhere else in the world permitted economists and sociologists to carry out an immense number of innovative, empirically based synchronic and diachronic studies (Shanin 1972). The heady revolutionary atmosphere of the time also profoundly shaped the discussion. Lenin (1964) — and later

other orthodox Marxists — viewed the penetration of capitalism in the countryside as the main force dividing the peasantry into poor, middle and rich peasants. Economist A.V. Chayanov, in contrast, like the Russian populists with whom he is sometimes associated, saw the domestic cycle of households as the main engine of class differentiation, with older households that could count on the labour of adult children generally better off and younger households, burdened with unproductive younger dependents, less well off. The central contrasts between the Marxist and populist positions had to do with the permanence (or lack of it) of rural social classes and the causes of differentiation — capitalism versus generational cycles. Both poles of the debate have received praise and stinging critiques (Van der Ploeg 2013; Vilar 1998), and it is very likely that almost all real historical cases of differentiation of the peasantry involve some combination of class-based and generational drivers.

Echoes of the Russian debates are heard in later historiography and in other world regions (and in contemporary peasant politics — see Chapter 3). Historian Fernand Braudel (1982), for instance, argued emphatically that in Europe the market *per se* did not dispossess peasants and that proletarianization more commonly occurred through extra-economic coercion or brute force. In Latin America, and particularly in Mexico, orthodox and agrarian Marxists — *descampesinistas* and *campesinistas* — divided along Leninist and Chayanovian lines over whether the peasantry could survive under capitalism (Esteva 1983; Feder 1978; Roseberry 1993). The Leninist *descampesinistas* anxiously awaited the imminent disappearance of the peasants, whom they assumed would eventually develop a “true” proletarian consciousness. The *campesinistas*, on the other hand, insisted on what today might be termed the resilience of the peasantry — its capacity to adapt to ever more threatening economic circumstances and to develop its own consciousness about struggles for land. Many of the latter group viewed the peasantry — or at least some classes within it — as having extraordinary revolutionary potential (Huizer 1972).

Large transnational agrarian movements are usually differentiated internally — by class and ideology as well as by other identity dimensions, especially race, ethnicity, gender and generation. One



of the most striking aspects of contemporary TAMs is that they are highly differentiated along these lines, and they are nonetheless able to unite and mobilize around common campaigns and to remain committed to the transnational movement during and in between campaign peaks. Movement activists celebrate this as the triumph of “unity in diversity” — a master frame in their narrative fundamental for building and consolidating their identity politics. For TAMs — whether radical, liberal or conservative — framing tends to revolve around the idea that “we are all people of the land.” Movements transform this slogan into a political economic category by invoking the concepts of “peasantry” (“we are all peasants”) or “family farmers” for La Vía Campesina (LVC) and the now-defunct International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP).

Both formulations are suggestive of the “middle peasant,” a category with a long and contentious history in rural politics and scholarship. In pre-revolutionary Russia, Chayanov, for example, saw the “middle peasant” or “middle farmer” as an agricultural producer who did not hire wage workers or hire out family labour, but who produced sufficiently for household consumption and for a modest level of accumulation. Marxists — from Lenin to Mao — also devoted considerable attention to the “middle peasant,” even if they differed with Chayanov about the cyclical, generational roots of rural class differences. In general, Marxists saw the poor peasants as potentially most sympathetic to armed revolution and socialism (Paige 1975; Cabarrús 1983), though they also maintained that the “middle peasants,” whom they distinguished from “rich peasants” (or in Russia, “kulaks”), could become reliable allies.

Eric Wolf’s *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (1969), one of the foundational works of the 1960s peasant studies tradition, also focused on “middle peasants.” Not so poor as to be desperately focused solely on survival and not so rich as to benefit significantly from the status quo, “middle peasants” for Wolf had sufficient room for maneuver so that they could become pivotal protagonists in the revolutions that transformed Mexico, Algeria, China and Vietnam, among other places. Wolf’s generic peasant ideal-type also had a “middle peasant” flavour; he had to produce a “replacement fund” to assure biological reproduction, a “ceremonial fund” to support

weddings, community festivals and other social obligations, and a “fund of rent” that consisted of wealth transferred to landlords, moneylenders, intermediaries, religious specialists and tax collectors (Wolf 1966). The “middle peasant” for Wolf was thus a figure who was exploited, but not terribly so, and who, if he exploited others, did so infrequently and unsystematically.

Any attempt at building and consolidating a large social movement ultimately requires a narrative of “simplification,” often privileging unity *over* diversity. Any “engaged researcher” recognizes the importance of this political task, and we are deeply sympathetic to this imperative. Nevertheless, it is not productive, politically and analytically, to *over-privilege* unity at the expense of not seeing diversity or acknowledging its roots and implications. As “engaged researchers,” we do not view this as a purely academic matter, since it is easy for scholars to be “movement hecklers” from a distance. We believe instead that acknowledging significant internal differentiation in a movement facilitates not only a better grasp of critical political issues, such as strategic alliances, but also of internal organizational struggles for unity in the face of difference. It is in this spirit that we sketch our ideas in this chapter, focusing on LVC, with a briefer look at APC and IFAP.

As an actor on the world stage, La Vía Campesina has achieved recognition as the main voice of organized sectors of marginalized rural peoples, especially peasants and small farmers. Even before the 2010 collapse of IFAP, LVC was increasingly recognized as a legitimate and viable alternative, which contributed to eroding IFAP’s earlier hegemony. At the same time, like any entity that seeks to aggregate, organize and represent a plurality of identities and interests, LVC constitutes an evolving “arena of action” where a movement’s character and strategy may be contested and (re)negotiated over time. This dual quality — as a “single actor” and as an “arena of action” — helped to make LVC an important institution for national and local agrarian movements. At the same time, however, other transnational social movements, NGO networks, international agencies and academics have found it challenging to comprehend and deal with LVC’s internal complexity. What we call the dual character as “arena” and “actor” of LVC and other transnational social movements is similar to the

notions of “network as actor” and “network as structure” developed in Keck and Sikkink’s (1998: 7) foundational study of transnational activism.

### Social Class Differentiation

Activists and academics alike often deploy freighted key words in ways that may not be useful for understanding agrarian politics. These terms include “local people,” “local community,” “people of the land,” “rural poor” and, indeed, even “peasants.” Land-based working classes are socially differentiated. This differentiated character is principally, though not solely, based on their contrasting locations in social relations around property and/or control over key means of production: land, labour, capital and technology, in particular. While the members of these imprecise categories may all be working class, they have different access to resources: some have lands, while others are landless; some may have irrigation, while others are at the mercy of seasonal rains. Land access and ownership are among the most important differentiating features among rural-based working classes and groups.

Farmers who have more land than their own household can work are unlikely to hire out family labour and will probably hire in labour. They will be able to produce more surplus for expanding their farms, acquiring livestock, machinery and inputs, speculating in markets, lending money and so on. They are different from a landlord in that they continue to work the land and their main income is from their labour and other productive undertakings — as opposed to the landlord who does not work the land and whose income is mainly from rents and and/or moneylending. If they have to buy grain or animals on the market, they have the purchasing power to do so. For example, rich rice farmers in the Philippines, where rice is the staple, usually keep enough from their harvests to feed their households for the remainder of the year and sell the rest. They rarely have to buy rice for their consumption needs.

This profile of rich farmers is almost universal — although the size of farm and extent of labour hiring, among other things, may differ markedly from one society to another. A rich farmer in Java,

Indonesia, for example, may own three hectares of irrigated rice and a small truck used in a business for hauling farm inputs and produce. On the Canadian prairie, a wealthy farm family might have ten thousand hectares of wheat and several expensive combine harvesters. Are such farmers “the real masters of the countryside,” as Lenin (1964) asserted for the Russian “kulaks” in the late nineteenth century? In most societies, the absolute number of rich farmers is quite small, even if they frequently have considerable economic and political power. And landlords and moneylenders frequently possess greater wealth, as even Lenin acknowledged was the case in Russia.

The profile of a poor peasant — not the middle peasant — is very different. A poor farmer earns her income mainly from working the land. The land she works may or may not be hers. Her situation is most precarious if she has to rent the land she works. Her land is typically small and/or of poor quality. She mobilizes available labour from her household to work the land, yet her output is insufficient for making a living. If she is a typical poor rice farmer in the Philippines, she might have a hectare of dryland rice. She cannot afford to retain much of her harvest because she needs cash for basic necessities. She might be able to keep some rice for consumption, but only enough for a couple of months. Afterwards, she has to buy rice in the market. A key characteristic of poor farmers is that they rarely hire labour, even though they sell their labour to others, typically middle and rich farmers or employers in nearby towns or cities. They are perhaps the most numerous type of farmer in the world today.

The “middle peasantry” is by definition in-between. Its members usually have land for their own survival and rarely hire out or hire in labour. Their situation is nonetheless precarious, aspiring to climb the ladder and become well-to-do farmers, while simultaneously struggling to avoid plummeting into the ranks of poor farmers.

The categories above are best seen as heuristic signposts rather than as cast-in-stone representations of hard facts. Real world situations are far more complex and messier than the neat categories outlined here. The boundaries between these ideal types are also often blurred. As mentioned earlier, Chayanov saw class differences in the countryside as impermanent and significantly connected to the age of households (one of several heretical views that led to his erasure and

death in Stalin's U.S.S.R. [see Shanin 2009]). More recently, van der Ploeg (2008) emphasized that peasant and "entrepreneurial" forms of agriculture exist on a continuum, with varying mixes of subsistence and market orientations and of traditional and "modern" technologies. These ideal types are thus dynamic and fluid and need to be understood as parts of a process of ongoing social differentiation of the peasantry, as capital relentlessly penetrates the countryside and commodifies land, labour and seeds. But for our purposes, a brief and crude class typology is important in understanding agrarian politics and the issues that unite *and* divide agrarian working classes.

Rich farmers are concerned with issues specific to their class. Since they derive income from selling surpluses, they usually favour government policies that enable them to accumulate further. These would likely include higher farm-gate prices and protection against cheap imports, whether these come through market channels or as food aid. They are keen on policies that ensure lower prices for inputs such as fuel and fertilizer and that ensure lower interest rates on loans for production or for machinery purchases, improved irrigation and post-harvest infrastructure, such as storage facilities and farm-to-market roads. Higher food prices generally benefit wealthy farmers since they are food surplus producers who retain supplies for their households and are not net buyers of staples. They generally look askance at two key policies: the first is higher wages and benefits for agricultural labourers; the second is land reform (even though in many countries rich peasants have sometimes managed through various subterfuges to become agrarian reform beneficiaries).

Poor farmers are likely to privilege a significantly different set of policy issues. First, they have a fundamental interest in acquiring secure access to land, either via agrarian reform, a colonization or reallocation program, or through leasehold. Second, as at least seasonal buyers of staples, they are likely to support affordable food via universal or targeted subsidy schemes or food distribution programs. And since they may also sell a significant quantity of surplus production, they will probably back government price supports based on the principle of "buy high, sell low," with the government purchasing food crops at high prices and reselling them to consumers at low prices (an arrangement that was central to the commodities boards

that the World Bank helped to set up in country after country in the 1960s, only to urge their abolition in the 1980s as anti-free-market institutions that produced large fiscal deficits). Third, poor farmers may be keen on policies that require better wages and benefits for agricultural work.

Middle peasants, standing somewhere in between these two categories, may embrace both rich- and poor-peasant policies at different times, partly depending on whether they have secure access to and/or ownership of the land they work and whether their situation is gravitating towards the well-to-do stratum or the poor farmer category. But they generally back lower prices for farm inputs and better prices for farm output as they aspire to become well-to-do farmers.

We are aware that actually existing social realities may not fit these schematic categories in a neat and simple way. Many households or individuals may be difficult to place in one category or another, as they engage in a plural and diverse portfolio of livelihoods across seasons in a year — poor farmer, farm worker, street vendor, construction labourer. There are rich farmers who are closer to a highly capitalized farmer or who are mainly traders or money-lenders, and so on. The quick pace at which households straddle or swing between these various ideal types amidst dynamic changes in accumulation processes, demographic shifts and macroeconomic changes may also defy simple categorization. So while we insist that categories such as rich, middle or poor peasant not be employed in rigid or static ways, we also believe these heuristics are useful for thinking about how each group understands and struggles for what it perceives to be its interests. The political differences between these groups — on agrarian reform or food prices, for example — are frequently not only significant, but also in marked contradiction. We now turn to looking at TAMs from this perspective.

### Class Politics in TAMs

La Vía Campesina's social class base is highly heterogeneous. A rough and incomplete class map of LVC, constructed from the authors' knowledge of the movement, suggests the following: (1) landless peasants, tenant-farmers, sharecroppers and rural workers, mainly in

Latin America and Asia; (2) part-time, small and medium-size family farmers in Western Europe, North America, Japan and South Korea; (3) family farms — subsistence and entrepreneurial — in the Global South, including those in Africa as well as those created through land reforms, as in Brazil and Mexico; (4) middle to rich farmers mainly, but not solely, in India, the United States and Canada; (5) indigenous peoples' communities engaged in a variety of productive livelihoods, mostly in Latin America; and (6) semiproletarians located in urban and peri-urban communities in a few countries, such as Brazil and South Africa.

While there are certainly other social groups and classes in the countryside that belong to LVC, they arguably have less voice within the movement and are of less significance in terms of its mass base. These groups include small fisherfolk and fish workers, pastoralists, rural landless agricultural workers, migrant workers and forest dwellers. The presence of these groups and their relative weight vis-à-vis the larger farmer organizations have important implications for how LVC frames issues and campaigns and builds its alliances with other working-class movements. We discuss this issue more thoroughly in the next chapter.

### The Land Issue and Gatekeepers in La Vía Campesina

LVC has always framed the land issue as a struggle against *latifundia*, or large landholdings. Agrarian reform — the redistribution of large private holdings to landless and land-poor peasants in order to create a vibrant and productive middle peasantry — has become the overarching master frame of LVC's land campaigns.

Within LVC, movements of landless and land-poor peasants from Latin America and Asia are among the most vocal groups. LVC organizes its thematic campaigns by commission, one of which is in charge of spearheading the push for agrarian reform. LVC's Global Campaign on Agrarian Reform (GCAR) was launched around 1999–2000, at a time when the World Bank was aggressively promoting neoliberal “market-led agrarian reform” (MLAR). Other allies joined LVC in framing, launching and carrying out GCAR, including Foodfirst Information and Action Network (FIAN), Focus on the Global South,

and Rede Social in Brazil in the context of the Land Research and Action Network (LRAN). The anti-MLAR and anti-World Bank angle was a logical and necessary extension of LVC's broader anti-neoliberal stance. GCAR and LVC largely succeeded in returning land reform to the mainstream development agenda, although they have failed to influence the actual policy course in key countries. In Brazil, for example, which is a critical base for LVC, MLAR expanded during the period in which the GCAR was active (Borras 2008).

Within LVC, GCAR was anchored by an "agrarian reform commission." LVC commissions are each managed by a member organization. The agrarian reform commission was coordinated by the Honduran peasant movement COCOCH and its long-time leader Rafael Alegria (also LVC general coordinator during 1996–2004).<sup>1</sup> Among the most influential Latin American voices in LVC are those of the Brazilian MST, whose representatives have continued to hold critical leadership positions within the global movement. In Asia, movements from the Philippines and Indonesia — especially when the global secretariat of LVC was in Indonesia in 2004–2013 — and some groups from South Asia (especially Bangladesh and Nepal), while important in their own right, are not yet as cohesive or powerful as the solid Latin American bloc. Nonetheless the Latin American and Asian landless peasant and rural workers' movements (as well as South Africa's Landless People's Movement [LPM] before it imploded) were the main force behind the push for LVC to carry out a global campaign on agrarian reform. More recently, in 2014, the land reform issue may have received a boost with the move of LVC's international secretariat to Harare, Zimbabwe, where it is hosted by the Zimbabwe Small Organic Smallholder Farmers Forum. ZIMSOFF leader Elizabeth Mpfu, a beneficiary of her country's fast-track agrarian reform, has become LVC general coordinator.<sup>2</sup>

The force of these Latin American and Asian organizations was such that it prevailed even when another powerful voice within LVC, the Indian KRRS, initially balked at making land reform a major LVC campaign. India's KRRS, whose main mass base consists of middle and rich farmers in Karnataka state, was decisively overruled.

What was at stake for KRRS? Since the 1980s, this group organized theatrical campaigns against TNCs and GM crops that captured



the media spotlight (Gupta 1998). The anti-GM campaign, in particular, connected well with northern advocacy against GM crops, and KRRS became a leading actor in LVC's global anti-GM and anti-TNC campaigns (although ironically many KRRS members planted and were not particularly opposed to GM crops [Pattenden 2005]).

KRRS also assumed the role of informal "gatekeeper" in South Asia, in effect deciding which organizations should be admitted to or — more often — kept out of LVC. Significant sectors of the organized rural exploited classes in India and elsewhere in South Asia were excluded from LVC, either because KRRS blocked their entry or because they were uninterested in participating in a process where KRRS was "gatekeeper." As one close LVC ally remarked, "In India, a higher caste of farmers joined *Vía Campesina*, and now the lower castes are kept out of *Vía Campesina*. How to fix this?" (quoted in Rosset and Martínez-Torres 2005: 37). Some of these poor farmer organizations later joined LVC. Nonetheless, many organizations of the landless rural poor in India remain outside LVC, partly because of the continuing influence of KRRS in LVC and partly due to ideological rifts that sapped KRRS's strength in the late 1990s and made it a less attractive ally.

Despite its frequently radical rhetoric, KRRS deliberately turns a blind eye to issues of class. Its founder and long-time leader, the late M.D. Nanjundaswamy, explained: "We cannot divide ourselves into landlords and landless farmers, and agitate separately, for the agitation will have no strength, nor will it carry any weight" (Assadi 1994: 215). KRRS has unsurprisingly opposed legal ceilings on land ownership, while at the same time advocating limits on the ownership of urban industrial property. Moreover, "both the Shetkari Sanghatana movement in neighbouring Maharashtra state and the KRRS have not only failed to condemn atrocities against Adivasis and Dalits, but in some cases the perpetrators of such outrages have been their own members" (213–15).<sup>3</sup> What the KRRS case indicates is that serious class-based differences exist between movements in LVC. These differences profoundly shape not just LVC's roster of organizations but its framing of campaign demands, goals and representations.

KRRS was not the first or only rich farmers' organization to try to shape LVC. The first serious fall-out in LVC concerned Nicaragua's

UNAG, the National Union of Agricultural and Livestock Producers. UNAG hosted the global solidarity conference in 1992 in Managua, from which the idea of building LVC emerged and was, in effect, an LVC founder. It was also a pillar of the Central America-wide ASO-CODE coalition, which became one of the most dynamic regional groups in LVC's early years. Despite its closeness to Nicaragua's radical Sandinista Front, UNAG was a member of IFAP, the transnational network of middle and rich farmers' organizations. UNAG's main concerns were production and trade issues, administration of the first Sandinista government's public-sector commodities agency, and obtaining more government support services and credit facilities from bilateral and multilateral donor agencies (Blokland 1992).

Another Nicaraguan organization that participated in the founding of LVC, the Rural Farmworkers' Association (ATC), provides a sharp contrast with UNAG, even though both were historically close to the Sandinistas and UNAG emerged as a well-off farmers' offshoot from the ATC. Focused on landless people's issues and demands, such as wages and land, ATC organized plantation and seasonal workers and cooperative and state farm members, and was affiliated with regional and international labour federations. In a 1994 interview, an ATC leader scoffed that while UNAG leaders would travel to neighbouring countries on airplanes, he and other ATC activists could only afford to go by bus.<sup>4</sup>

These kinds of class differences erupted in 1993 at the founding meeting of LVC, as emerging LVC leaders and a Dutch NGO — the Paulo Freire Foundation (PFS), which initiated the event — clashed over whether LVC should become a “forum” where the associated organizations become members of IFAP, or should become a full-blown organization separate from IFAP.<sup>5</sup> The PFS was pushing for the former, while agrarian movement leaders, such as the Basque farmer leader Paul Nicholson (then of the Confederation of European Farmers, or CPE), were opposed to that and pushed for a separate, autonomous organization. This was complicated by the fact that UNAG was also a member of IFAP. Ultimately UNAG (where PFS's coordinator had worked for many years as a Dutch cooperator) sided with PFS, remained in IFAP and chose to leave LVC. While the incident appears to have been the usual turf-related, intra-movement

political conflict, both activists and scholars often return to it as a foundational moment, and a closer look reveals a deeper class-based fault-line between pro- and anti-IFAP forces.

LVC's campaign for land reform gained ground in Latin America and in some countries in Asia. In India, where land reform is an urgent political issue, LVC's global campaign was never really launched in the first place. The resounding silence in India regarding LVC's global campaign on land reform is not surprising if we use a class lens to scrutinize LVC's mass base there — prosperous farmers in KRRS (and later, in BKU).

A class-analytical lens helps to explain some of the silences in LVC's campaigns. A significant sector of the rural poor is comprised of landless labourers. Examples include sugar-cane cutters in Brazil, banana workers in Ecuador, pineapple plantation workers in the Philippines, foreign migrants in the United States and Europe working in vineyards and strawberry fields, and so on. The landless group also includes those who work for small-scale and rich farmers. Many of them, especially landless workers on corporate plantations, have little desire to become small farmers. Their demands are framed around labour justice: better wages, benefits and working conditions, and collective bargaining rights. Despite claiming to represent the world's "rural poor," LVC has not launched any systematic campaign around labour justice — the key issue that is most compelling for the majority of rural poor people. While LVC has held meetings on migrant farmworkers in Europe and the United States, it accords far less importance to these initiatives than to its anti-WTO, anti-GM, land, climate change and seed campaigns.

### Other Identity Politics

We have raised the issue of class with caution. Class is clearly an important factor that shapes the politics of TAMs, but it is not the only one (as we indicated in the Introduction). Class intersects with other social identities, further complicating the character of movement politics. It would be misleading to suggest a neat correlation between socioeconomic class position and the actors' exercise of their agency. The transition from a "class in itself" to a "class for it-

self” — if it indeed occurs — is often mediated by other intersecting social identities, including race, ethnicity, gender and generation.

### *Race/Ethnicity*

The intersection of class with race and ethnicity can be complex and can render the politics of working people quite messy. Landless households, for example, may belong to different ethnic groups and may frame their politics differently. A Cebuano, or Ilonggo, or Tagalog migrant worker (also a Christian) labouring on a rubber plantation in southwestern Philippines may take a landless class standpoint, while nearby an unemployed landless Yakan settler (also a Muslim) may have been violently evicted by the plantation’s owners from his original community half a century ago. Both of them have the class interests of landless people — to have land to farm or stable plantation work. But they are linked to the same piece of land and the plantation in radically different ways and take different stands on land and plantation issues. The migrant Christian worker will likely want to obtain his own individual plot from the plantation through agrarian reform, while the evicted original Muslim settler may seek to regain land through some kind of restitution process. The intersecting class, ethnic and religious identities here complicate an already complex agrarian politics. While class is important, it cannot be a stand-alone category isolated from other dimensions of identity.

Tensions similar to this abound in many TAM-linked agrarian movements today. European origin and Afro-descendant landless people in Brazil and Colombia, South African, Zimbabwean and Mozambican migrant farm workers in South Africa, and Namibian sedentary farmers versus nomadic pastoralists are just a few of the cases where antagonistic ethnic or national relations have slowed or undermined movement building.

### *Gender*

The intersection of gender and class is among the most pervasive and important identity dimensions. Gender parity in constructing LVC and carrying out its mandate has been a key internal political campaign. At LVC’s founding meeting in Mons, Belgium, in 1993, however, only about 20 percent of the delegates were women. At

LVC's Second Conference, in 1996 in Tlaxcala, Mexico, the election of an all-male International Coordinating Committee (ICC) caused an uproar among women delegates, who forced a new election that resulted in one woman — Nettie Wiebe of Canada's NFU — joining the ICC (Wiebe 2013).

Historically the Latin American countryside tends to be notoriously patriarchal, but it was Latin American movements that pioneered models of greater gender equity. In the 1980s, many organizations, responding to pressures from women in their ranks and from European donor agencies, formed women's secretariats and commissions and in some cases these broke off to become autonomous peasant women's organizations, often identifying with one or another variety of feminism (Deere and Royce 2009). The Latin American Coordinator of Peasant Organizations (CLOC), which includes most LVC member groups from the region, early on established the tradition of holding women's assemblies before major conferences in order to assure that women's voices would be heard and represented. LVC adopted this practice as well, and at its Third Conference, in Bangalore in 2000, reformed the composition of its Coordinating Committee so that each region would be represented by one male and one female member. This heightened participation of women, according to Deere and Royce (2009: 16),

opened up space for a gender discourse within the mixed-sex rural movements, in part because the autonomous rural women's movements and the mixed-sex movements are often competing for membership, encouraging the mixed-sex organizations to become much more accommodating to women and their demands.

Importantly, "gender," or "women's issues," are no longer considered the exclusive domain of women. Efforts to sensitize men have proceeded apace, and high-profile drives, such as LVC's Global Campaign to End Violence against Women (Vía Campesina 2012), have encouraged member organizations to embark on an intensified round of small-group and mass anti-violence activities.

Whether greater sensitization and formal representational par-

ity lead to real change in power relations is another matter. But as Bina Agarwal (2015), analyzing the case of forestry management committees in South Asia, argues, “a critical mass of ‘women-in-themselves’ can make a notable difference even without a ‘women-for-themselves’ social consciousness.”

### *Generation*

“Who will inherit the countryside?” Ben White (2011) asks in advocating for more systematic integration of generational and agrarian studies. The generational dimension of agrarian change and politics is once again visible (as it was in a different way in Chayanov’s time), although still quite far from receiving the attention it deserves. This is partly because many feel that young people from rural areas today do not want to farm anymore. This may be true in many places. But how about rural youth who want to farm but cannot access land because of financial barriers? As land has become scarce and more expensive worldwide, more and more young people who want to start farming cannot afford land. But are they unable to access land because they are young or because of their class position? Generally speaking, daughters and sons of well-to-do families who want to pursue farming face fewer obstacles than those from poor and working-class backgrounds. Here again, the intersection between class and generation is critical.<sup>6</sup>

Many assume that part-time farming is an indication of economic distress and of a household that is in the process of getting differentiated out through market dynamics. The call for improving this situation is premised on an ideal-type of “middle farmer” and on the idea that policies should be instituted to help part-time farmers transition to being full-time, viable middle farmers. It is true that becoming a part-time farmer is frequently a stage in a social differentiation process where the farmer is losing out. But part-time farming is not always a sign of distress. For some households, it may be a calculated strategy to stay in agriculture by combining part-time farming with other economic activities or employment — what social scientists now term “pluriactivity” or the “new rurality” (Kay 2008). Some farmers and prospective farmers in the Global North, mostly young ones, see part-time farming by choice as a viable al-

ternative. Policies to support this type of livelihood are significantly different from those targeted at full-time middle farmers. The new part-timers are likely to pursue politics and advocacy differently from both young full-time farmers and older generation part-time farmers who are in the process of getting differentiated out.

### *Place*

The issue of space and place, and how they intersect with class, is especially important in the current phase of global capitalism, where capital aggressively searches for spaces to seize to further accumulation. Region, nation and locality have almost always been important loci of identity, at times paralleling and at other times crosscutting class hierarchies. When corporations grab large swathes of land for open pit mining, tourism or climate change mitigation projects, such as REDD+, they are unlikely to need much labour, and expulsion of human inhabitants tends to be a common outcome. While such processes impact various social groups differently, in a situation of mass expulsion, diverse sectors tend to be affected in similar ways. Expulsion is traumatic, whether those affected are rich or poor farmers, landless labourers or pastoralists. In the face of expulsion, the most important social identity that they all assume is “the dispossessed.” Their shared politics — regardless of their dissimilar class origins — is likely to emphasize this common situation.

In short, while class is fundamental to our analysis of agrarian politics, we insist on understanding how it intersects with other social identities. Only then can we see how and why specific kinds of politics emerge.

### **Ideological Differences**

Large transnational social movements such as LVC are generally ideologically diverse. The variety of ideologies is partly — but not only — linked to class differences, as explained above. There are radical landless peasant movements, for example, that have very different ideological standpoints. There are social movements with supporters who are heterogeneous in class, generational, ethnic and gender terms that may share a common ideology. Social movements

often ask: “How did we get to this current situation, what kind of alternative system do we want, and what kind of strategies do we deploy to reach our alternative vision?” These strategic questions are inherently ideological. Marxists have different answers to these questions than non-Marxist radical agrarian populists; movements inspired by anarchist ideas will have fundamental differences with Leninists; liberal-progressive groups may have no difficulty engaging with eco-feminists; and historically antagonistic Marxist tendencies — Maoists and Trotskyists, for example — may experience difficulties working together in a large coalition. Ideology does not get played out in a neat uniform way across organizations within a TAM. Some groups have a very strong commitment to an ideological position, while others may be flexible but lean in a particular direction.

Understanding the ideological configuration of a large TAM and how this links to its class base can help to explain its analysis of issues and its claims-making processes. It may also point to gaps in the movement’s mass base and politics and suggest how large TAMs are contested arenas themselves. In short, by looking at how ideological configuration intersects with class and other identity politics at play within a TAM, we can have a better understanding of why a TAM acts in a particular way (or not) at key historical conjunctures.

LVC is a large TAM comprised of national movements that have firm commitments to particular ideological positions or at least incline toward one or another ideological perspective. Like class differences, ideological divergences are rarely talked about openly within LVC or among sympathetic external observers. The diverse orientations found in LVC include those from (1) various strands of radical agrarian populists, (2) orthodox Marxists, some of whom are Maoist in orientation, (3) radical groups with anarchist influences, (4) radical environmentalists and (5) feminist activists. Many groups and individuals fall somewhere in-between these broad categories, while others have overlapping orientations, such as radical agrarian populist feminists and radical agrarian populist Marxists. Many others do not have any clear ideological position at all, or lack a well-developed ideological position. This ideological diversity among LVC members is extraordinary: compare, for example, Bangladesh’s orthodox Marxist Krishok Federation (BKF), with the heterodox



radical Sindicato Obrero del Campo (SOC) of Andalucía, Spain, with Canada's National Farmers Union (NFU), or with India's KRRS.

The class configuration of a TAM is one thing; the dominant ideological framework guiding the global movement is another. There is no automatic relationship between the two. In the case of LVC, its leadership since the early 1990s has been dominated by a radical agrarian populist bloc, effectively marginalizing orthodox Marxists. This bloc — actually a coalition of various smaller blocs — is anti-capitalist, but aspires to reimagine a new kind of modernity with the “middle peasantry” at the centre of its alternative vision. This leadership influences not only the framing of political campaigns but also how LVC constitutes itself as a global movement.

### Organizational Costs of Ideological Divisions

In South Asia, KRRS's rich peasant orientation and its outsized role in LVC led other left-wing peasant groups in India to form a competing transnational movement in the region, the Asian Peasant Coalition (APC). The strength of the APC network, which is generally orthodox Marxist or Maoist in orientation, lies in its consistent commitment to organizing poor peasants and rural workers. Its social base is among the most destitute strata of the peasantry. The organizations in the APC network could have sharpened the class analysis and class-related demands of LVC, expanded its representation in the region and strengthened the struggle for land in Asia. Its sectarian ideology, however, has gotten in the way of multi-class alliance building. Not surprisingly, the relationship between APC and LVC has spiralled downward.

Ideological tensions have implications for political strategy, as we have shown throughout this chapter. Tensions between and within Mexican LVC members over the desirability of past and present alliances with each other and with the state and political parties reflect such differences as well (Bartra and Otero 2005). Very small organizations and factions of organizations that suffer divisions at times seek to affiliate or intensify existing relations with TAMs as a means of bolstering legitimacy and securing ongoing access to material resources.<sup>7</sup> Sometimes the ideological gulf separates orga-

nizations in different countries rather than in the same one. Brazil's MST and Senegal's CNCR, for instance, have different positions on how and whether to relate to state and international development institutions. MST engages with state agencies around land questions, while insisting on its autonomy, but takes a far more adversarial position regarding the World Bank, as does LVC. CNCR, on the other hand, includes several government-sponsored organizations, is a member of the ROPPA coalition (see Chapter 1) as well as LVC, and opts to combine negotiation and intermittent confrontation with a collaborative relationship with the World Bank. Underpinning such differences, of course, are particularities embedded in the social and political histories of the different societies and class bases from which LVC member organizations hail.

### Conclusion

Large TAMS such as LVC are generally multi-class alliances. These alliances are complicated — or enriched — by the diversity and breadth of their mass base. But multi-class alliances also internalize not just a plurality of class interests, but perhaps more importantly, *competing* class interests and standpoints. A movement of “people of the land” — even “working people of the land” — tends to obscure this. Calls for higher farm-gate prices, for example, may impact the movement's mass base differently. To be blunt, small food producers may prosper, while net buyers of food may go hungry. Potentially divisive class issues are, as we discuss above, mediated by other social identities (ethnicity, generation and gender). Movements such as LVC are probably best seen as multi-class, multi-identity alliances.

Ideology is critical in understanding class and identity issues that potentially unite and divide movements. In large TAMS, we see a plurality of ideological positions, tendencies and influences. As with the class issue, an important and challenging aspect of this ideological diversity is not simply that it is plural but rather that these ideologies are in competition. When we appreciate that multiple ideologies are *competing* ideologies, we necessarily bring our analysis back to the relations between member organizations within a large global movement. They are not there simply as multiple groups working in

parallel. They are there both united and competing with one another. From this perspective we can develop a more realistic picture of a TAM as both a “single actor” and an “arena of action,” and we can begin to grasp how these two aspects of TAMs shape one another (Borras 2004).

### Notes

1. In 2010, COCOCH suffered a major internal division, Alegría was marginalized from the organization, and soon after it ceased to be a member of LVC (though two of its constituent organizations — ANACH and CNTC — became LVC members in its stead). See Honduras Laboral (2010) and Junta Directiva Nacional Auténtica del COCOCH (2010).
2. On Zimbabwe’s controversial agrarian reform, see Scoones (2010).
3. Adivasis are groups considered to be indigenous “tribals.” Dalits are members of stigmatized castes earlier referred to as “untouchables.”
4. Marc Edelman interview with José Adán Rivera Castillo, Organizational and Finances Secretary, ATC, Managua, Nicaragua, June 29, 1994.
5. The Paulo Freire Stichting (or Foundation) was created in 1983, originally to impart courses on international issues to students in Dutch agricultural high schools and later to link farmers’ organizations in different parts of the world to sources of European cooperation funding. Paulo Freire, the innovative Brazilian educator, only found out about the PFS in 1988, but was reportedly pleased it had been named after him. In 1997 PFS, together with four other Dutch organizations, founded a new NGO, Agriterra. PFS then ceased to exist, though its office and equipment passed to Agriterra. Marc Edelman interview with Kees Blokland, Arnhem, The Netherlands, April 24, 1998.
6. Mills (2013) asks the same theoretical questions and examined the case of Canada. Bunn (2011) and Hyde (2014) analyze the myriad ways young people in North America and elsewhere manage to enter farming.
7. This arguably is the case with some of the Mexican, Honduran and South African movements discussed above.

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## Class, Identity and Ideological Differences Between TAMs

In Chapter 2 we discussed differentiation *within* large transnational agrarian movements. In this chapter, we address differentiation *between* large TAMs, taking as our point of departure the analysis of class politics that we used to examine differentiation within TAMs.

La Vía Campesina (LVC) has been the most famous radical TAM on the global social justice movement scene during the past twenty years. But it is not the only important TAM. Indeed, some TAMs are better known than others and some more politically radical than others. There is a diversity of relationships between TAMs that derives from their class bases, identities and ideologies — the same fissures that differentiate large TAMs internally. These relationships are dynamic and fluid, and are constantly renegotiated and contested.

Most studies of TAMs focus largely or entirely on LVC, and few have looked systematically at the political dynamics between major TAMs.<sup>1</sup> Yet it is of limited usefulness to examine a single TAM in isolation from others, or from other global justice movements, because TAMs and other movements mutually constitute one another. Inter-TAM relationships are important for understanding TAM politics generally and in particular questions of representation, intermediation and mobilization. LVC is our key reference point in this chapter, but we analyze it in relation to other key TAM organizations: the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), World Farmers' Organisation (WFO), International Land Coalition (ILC), International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) and Asian Peasant Coalition (APC). We broaden the discussion by bringing in other TAM organizations, and we analyze differences between LVC and other TAMs by scrutinizing the intersections of class, identity and ideology.

The TAMs we examine in this book are, in varying ways, all

committed to an idea of “social justice.” But how they interpret and pursue this idea differs between TAMs. Writing on environmental justice movements, Anna Tsing (2005: 13–14) observes:

The possibilities of thinking globally have inspired social movements of all kinds to imagine global causes. Yet global politics creates special problems. Social justice goals must be negotiated not only across class, race, gender, nationality, culture, and religion, but also between the global south and the global north, and between the great mega-cities of the world and their rural and provincial hinterlands. The twentieth-century class-based solidarity model asks coalition allies to line up as parallel equivalents. Allies rarely line up that well. Without even intending to break the line, they push in new directions. Their friction changes everyone’s trajectory.

By clarifying what unites and divides TAMs and inter-TAM relations, we can better understand why certain TAMs frame issues and demands the way they do, deploy specific collective action repertoires and interact with particular sets of state and non-state actors. We hope also to provide an antidote to three common tendencies among development practitioners: (1) treating TAMs as undifferentiated constellations of actors and reducing their importance to a question of “mere presence or absence” of a TAM in given geographical, political or policy space; (2) trivializing recurring themes that unite or divide TAMs as narrow “turf” battles (e.g., competition between TAMs for funds) or personality and leadership differences; and (3) romantically celebrating coalitional unity, while treating tensions and cleavages as something inherently negative.

### Class Differentiation and Identity Politics

#### *LVC, IFAP and WFO*

La Vía Campesina (LVC) was founded by key national and regional agrarian movements largely to challenge the now-defunct International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP). In the late 1980s, activists in many national agrarian movements felt that IFAP had maintained its hegemony on the international governance scene



for too long, representing not the poor and marginalized strata of the labouring classes in the rural world, but the well-to-do sectors of the farm population, with a headquarters in Paris, the capital of a highly developed country. As outlined in Chapter 2, the formation of LVC in May 1993 in Mons, Belgium, resulted from a conflict between, on the one hand, national agrarian organizations that wanted their own autonomous movement and, on the other, the NGO (PFS) that sponsored the meeting and that hoped to incorporate the participating organizations into IFAP. Tensions between IFAP and non-IFAP agrarian movements surfaced during the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations (1986–1994) and were especially pronounced in North America and Europe, where the American Farm Bureau, Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations in the European Union (COPA) were (and still are) politically dominant. It was not a surprise therefore that North American and European organizations with alternative views — the National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) of the United States, National Farmers Union (NFU) of Canada and European Farmers' Coordination (CPE) — were among the founders of LVC. Their initiative to form LVC was an extension of a struggle to construct spaces that were outside of and autonomous from the dominant IFAP-linked associations. A brief look at the differences between LVC and IFAP bears out the importance of class and identity politics in analyzing TAMS.

Officially, IFAP used to maintain that it is “the world farmers’ organization representing over 600 million farm families grouped in 120 national organizations in 79 countries.” It further claimed to have advocated for “farmers’ interests at the international level since 1946” (IFAP 2009). IFAP’s main base consisted of small, medium and large farmers’ organizations in northern and southern countries, but it was dominated by developed-country organizations. Many IFAP members in developing countries were organizations of middle and rich farmers, led, in many instances, by middle-class and agribusiness-minded entrepreneurs. Founded in 1946, IFAP became the main sector organization for agriculture that obtained official representation in intergovernmental institutions.

Although it was not a politically homogeneous network, IFAP’s

politics reflected those of its economically powerful members. From 1946 to 2008, all of IFAP's presidents and general-secretaries were white men from industrialized countries. It was only in 2008, sixty years after its founding, that IFAP elected a president from a developing country, Zambia. The class and identity politics of IFAP shaped its political positions. Despite a distinct ambivalence about market liberalism, groups linked to IFAP usually backed centre-right political parties (Edelman 2003). On many occasions IFAP saw neoliberalism as an opportunity, and it typically supported neoliberal policies while advocating for minor modifications that would benefit the agricultural sector (Desmarais 2007).

This affinity for market-based "solutions" may explain why IFAP never pushed or mobilized around the agrarian issues that are most compelling to the poorest of the rural poor, such as wages and land redistribution. A close reading of key IFAP documents indicates that its agenda emphasized commodity and trade issues, in contrast to key LVC documents, which highlight political contestations around land. IFAP preferred negotiation, collaboration and official partnership with intergovernmental bodies, such as FAO and the World Bank, in contrast to LVC's repertoire, which includes negotiation, partnership and collaboration but also confrontation, mass demonstrations, civil disobedience, extralegal land occupations and uprooting fields of genetically modified crops. Jack Wilkinson, ex-IFAP president and leader of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA), summed up the organization's perspective accurately when he remarked, "IFAP had gained a position as the go-to farm organization when groups like the World Bank, the United Nations, IMF (International Monetary Fund) and FAO (United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization) were discussing food policy and wanted a farmer view" (*Western Producer* 2011).

When agricultural commodity markets spiked in 2008, sparking food riots in dozens of countries, civil society organizations and social movements launched campaigns against the production of biofuels, which were one of the significant drivers of rising prices and — consequently — of hunger. A telling example of IFAP's stance on key agricultural policies is its position on biofuels at the height of the 2008 global food crisis:

The production of food and feed remains paramount for the farmers of IFAP; however, biofuels represent a new market opportunity, help diversify risk and promote rural development. Biofuels are the best option currently available to bring down greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector and thus to help mitigate climate change. ... Recently, biofuels have been blamed for soaring prices. There are many factors behind the rise in food prices, including supply shortages due to poor weather conditions, and changes in eating habits which are generating strong demand. ... The misconceptions about biofuels are important to overcome for a farming community that has long suffered from low incomes. Bioenergy represents a good opportunity to boost rural economies and reduce poverty, provided this production complies with sustainability criteria. Sustainable biofuel production by family farmers is not a threat to food production. It is an opportunity to achieve profitability and to revive rural communities. (quoted in FAO 2008: 97)

LVC, in contrast, opposes biofuels, which it views as one of the main drivers of global land grabbing and a false solution to climate change (a position subsequently borne out in reports from mainstream environmental organizations [Searchinger and Heimlich 2015]). Despite IFAP's nod in the direction of "family farmers" and poverty reduction, its position on this issue reflects those of wealthy commercial farmers.

IFAP collapsed in 2010, to the surprise of many who had considered it a robust, consolidated and influential organization. Financial and internal governance problems led to its demise. The official dissolution act by the Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris reveals that IFAP foundered because it became overly dependent on project-specific funding from a single source, the Dutch NGO Agriterria, with which it intended to carry out a joint "Farmers Programme Against Poverty 2007–2010" (Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris 2010). Jack Wilkinson later noted that IFAP "began to spiral toward insolvency when [Agriterria] failed to honour a promise to reimburse IFAP for the costs of some development projects" (*Western Producer*

2011). According to the Tribunal document, Agriterra refused to pay IFAP part of its 2008 commitment and its entire 2009 one, leaving the Federation with a €500,000 deficit (Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris 2010: 3). It is ironic to see Agriterra in this role, given that its predecessor organization, Paulo Freire Foundation (PFS), played a major role in organizing LVC's 1993 founding meeting, where it tried to steer participating movements in the direction of IFAP (see Chapter 2).<sup>2</sup>

The financial dispute between IFAP and Agriterra occurred in tandem with internal disputes that had obvious regional and racial undertones. In 2008, Ajay Vashee from Zambia was elected secretary general, the first non-white ever elected to the IFAP leadership. The French court document observed that

there was a problem of “governance,” mainly because of a presidency that was controversial for a large number of members of the Federation and a conflict between the president and the general secretary of IFAP. A change of presidency, which could only have come as a result of holding a general meeting, is not feasible due to its cost. (Tribunal de Grande Instance de Paris 2010: 3)

Wilkinson was more explicit:

Vashee's leadership style also became part of the problem ... Organizations that wanted to help would set meetings and he would not show up and that is not the way to work with partners ... He often considered advice a challenge to his authority. (*Western Producer* 2011)

A year after IFAP's dissolution, a new organization emerged whose membership and ideology mirrored IFAP's. Founded in Stellenbosch, South Africa, the World Farmers' Organisation (WFO) is often viewed as the successor of IFAP. Its mission statement declares:

WFO's mandate is to bring together farmers' organisations and agricultural cooperatives from all over the world, represent-

ing the global farmer community: nano, small, medium and large-scale farmers. ... It aims to strengthen farmers' positions within value chains, with a particular focus on smallholder farmers. By advocating on behalf of farmers and representing their interests in international policy forums, WFO supports farmers in better managing extreme price volatility, leveraging market opportunities, and timely access to market information. (WFO 2014)

WFO focuses on six areas: food security, climate change, value chains, women in agriculture, trade and contract farming. These are very similar to IFAP's key themes. Contrast this with LVC's main thematic issues: agrarian reform and water, biodiversity and genetic resources, food sovereignty and trade, women, human rights, migration and rural workers, sustainable peasant agriculture, and youth.

WFO and LVC member organizations in different countries have significantly different class bases. A few examples suffice to make the point: South Africa's AFASA (African Farmers Association of South Africa) and AgriSA (Home of the South African Farmer) *versus* the Landless People's Movement (LPM); the Dutch Land and Horticulture Organization (LTO) *versus* the Dutch Arable Farming Union (NAV); the Argentine Rural Society (SRA) *versus* the Peasant Movement of Santiago del Estero (MOCASE); the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) of Zimbabwe *versus* the Zimbabwe Smallholder Farmer Forum (ZIMSOFF). At the regional level, in Europe for example, there is a similar contrast between COPA, a coalition of national-level large farmer groups, on the one hand, and the European Coordination Via Campesina (ECVC), on the other. These are classic well-to-do farmer *versus* poor farmer divisions.

Hence, we have two different global networks rooted in different social classes — and both claim to represent smallholder farmers of the world. The following phrase seems to capture the vision of “people of the land” as advanced by LVC and its allies: “to promote the well-being of all who obtain their livelihood from the land and to assure to them the maintenance of adequate and stable remuneration.” Yet this phrase was actually the first clause in IFAP's constitution. The political dynamics that separate LVC from IFAP/

WFO are likely to have far-reaching implications for global development policymaking. But without a class analysis, it is difficult to differentiate LVC from IFAP/WFO, or to explain why and how such a distinction matters. Formulations such as “people of the land,” “local people,” “farmers’ voice” and “local community” — used by LVC and its member organizations — inadvertently mask important class-based differences between movements and so are not always analytically useful.

*A Movement of Movements: LVC and IPC for Food Sovereignty*

La Vía Campesina is often referred to as a “movement of movements.” The notion of “movement of movements” in the agrarian world connotes a convergence of forces with multiple kinds of class and identity politics. Labouring agrarian classes are diverse and plural, and this diversity is leavened by complex identity politics along the lines of ethnicity, gender, region and generation, among other dimensions, as we discussed in Chapter 2.

If the “movement of movements” idea is apt for LVC, it is even more so for the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC). It is the largest international social movement network working on food policy and politics and food sovereignty issues. IPC is a multi-sectoral alliance of rural and urban sectors and of peasant and non-peasant groups — although the rural section of the network is dominant. Founded in 1996 at the Rome World Summit on Food Security, IPC has provided a space for networking and political coordination among these varied movements (see Table 3.1). The following NGOs played critical roles in the establishment of IPC and in its consolidation afterwards: Crocevia; the International Collective in Support of Fishworkers (ICSF); and the Centre for Sustainable Development and Environment (CENESTA), with ICSF and CENESTA bringing two key constituencies into IPC, namely, pastoralists and fisherfolk. IPC has a loose organizational structure as compared to its member organizations, such as LVC. It is a network of networks, a coalition of coalitions. IPC’s work is organized around thematic groups. In 2013, it had active working groups focusing on land, agricultural biodiversity, fisherfolk, “responsible agricultural investment” (RAI), agroecology, indigenous peoples and pastoralists.

**Table 3.1 Social Movement Members of IPC for Food Sovereignty**

<i>International Movements</i>
La Via Campesina (LVC)
World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP)
World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF)
World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous People (WAMIP)
International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco & Allied Workers' Associations (IUF)
International Indian Treaty Council (IITC)
Habitat International Coalition (HIC)
World March of Women (WMW)
International Federation of Rural Adult Catholic Movements (FI-MARC)
International Movement of Young Catholic Farmers (MIJARC)
<i>Regional Movements</i>
Network of Peasant and Agricultural Producers Organizations of West Africa (ROPPA)
Regional Platform of Peasant Organizations of Central Africa (PRO-PAC)
Asian Rural Women's Coalition (ARWC)
Coalition of Agricultural Workers' International (CAWI)
Arab Network for Food Sovereignty (ANFS)
Latin American Agroecological Movement (MAELA)
Continental Network of Indigenous Women (ECMI)
Coordinator of Andean Indigenous Organizations (CAOI)
Coordinator of Organizations of Family Producers of the Mercosur (COPROFAM)
Australian Food Sovereignty Alliance (AFSA)
U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA)

IPC deserves a full-blown study of its own and a separate book. Our point here is not to explore it in detail but to use it as an illustrative case that provides insights relevant in studying TAMS. Several points are crucial.

First, transnational *social* movements — beyond simply *agrarian* ones — interested in the politics of food and agriculture are diverse in terms of class origin and base and ideological orientation. The mass base of IPC is among small and medium farmers, landless rural labourers, artisanal fishers and pastoralists. Notably, nearly all politically significant radical national rural social movements worldwide are linked to IPC, directly or indirectly. Unsurprisingly, most politically important organizations of well-to-do medium and large farmers worldwide (including those earlier affiliated with IFAP and now with WFO) are not linked to IPC. Political solidarity among the poorer strata of largely rural labouring classes is the glue that holds these movements together in a global network and that differentiates it from networks of well-to-do rural sectors such as IFAP and WFO.

Second, the broad, shared identity and concerns of both food producers and consumers led disparate social movements to establish IPC in 1996. IPC member organizations generally see neoliberal globalization as inimical to the interests of their mass base and maintain that the global food system does not provide adequate remuneration to food producers while also failing to feed the world's hungry. This IPC consensus, which is both class-based and ideological, has constructed the identity politics of IPC around the alternative platform of food sovereignty.

IPC, along with LVC and other movements, began to push for food sovereignty at the 1996 World Food Summit, arguing that it was an alternative paradigm to the “food security” focus of FAO and the participating governments. IPC has grown and consolidated as a result of its advocacy work during at least three other political conjunctures: (1) protests against the WTO negotiations from 1999 onwards; (2) in the lead-up to the 2006 FAO International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD) (Monsalve 2013); and (3) during and after the 2008–2009 global food price spike and the subsequent negotiations in the Committee on World Food Security and Nutrition (CFS) around the Voluntary Guidelines



on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (Seufert 2013). In each of these key moments, an organizationally broad but ideologically coherent coalition of coalitions was necessary for effective advocacy and for proposing and struggling for alternative policies. IPC became and has remained a dynamic international social movement actor — certainly not as celebrated as LVC, but probably just as strategically important.

Third, one of the main reasons for founding IPC in Rome in late 1996 in the context of the World Food Summit was to challenge the hegemony of IFAP. Since 1946, IFAP monopolized representation of family farms in official U.N. spaces. As discussed in Chapter 2, one of the motives for the creation of LVC was a strong popular resentment of IFAP among many national agrarian movements, which saw IFAP as representing the interests of well-to-do, developed-country farmers. Yet prior to the 1996 World Food Summit LVC was not sufficiently well-known or strong to challenge IFAP on the global stage. Other sectoral movements, such as the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF), formed the year before the Summit, contributed to building a broader platform, which was used to contest IFAP. Importantly, beyond simply opposing IFAP, IPC and its member movements also succeeded in challenging prevailing conventions about grassroots representation in international governance spaces, including NGOs' monopoly on such participation (discussed in Chapter 4). In effect, they carved out an autonomous space for the social movements of labouring agrarian classes, broadening the scope and aggregating the political force of otherwise scattered member movements. IPC has successfully countered and competed with IFAP, and later WFO, in official spaces of representation in U.N. bodies and agencies. Nonetheless, this presence in international governance institutions requires it to do what IFAP used to do — negotiate and lobby in what Gaventa and Tandon (2010) call “invited spaces.” In contrast to IFAP, however, IPC and its member movements consider their main arenas of struggle to be outside such official venues.

Finally, extra-large TAMS such as IPC, despite having a largely coherent class and ideological orientation, are inherently arenas of interaction between coalition members that can be fraternal or

rival movements and that constantly try to shape one another. This can be seen, for example, in the evolution of how the land question is addressed within LVC. From the launch of LVC in 1993 through the early 2000s, its land campaign was framed within the narrow parameter of land reform, with specific advocacy against the World Bank's market-led agrarian reform. During FAO's 2006 International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD), IPC — not LVC — took the lead in representing agrarian movements in the official U.N. space. This contributed to a much broader treatment of land issues, emphasizing in particular land as “territory” and not just as a farming plot (Monsalve 2013). “Territory,” importantly, implies collective rights and exclusive possession. The complication of “land” versus “territory” framing derives from distinct class and identity politics. Small farmers, the landless, indigenous peoples and pastoralists, for instance, frame “land” and “territory” in significantly different ways, with the latter two historically wary of agrarian reforms. More recently, LVC has framed its own global land campaign in the context of “land and territory” (Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2014).

### Ideology

#### *LVC, IFAP and WFO*

Ideologically, WFO (and earlier IFAP) is concerned with making the global capitalist system work well for small, medium and large commercial farmers. Like its predecessor IFAP, WFO lists among its principal partners the International Finance Corporation (IFC), World Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO). In contrast, this is the same set of international institutions that LVC deems the main enemies of smallholder farmers. Moreover, WFO, like IFAP before it, “aims to strengthen farmers’ positions within value chains.... [It] supports farmers in better managing extreme price volatility, leveraging market opportunities, and timely access to market information” (WFO 2014).

WFO's mission is to link producers to markets and trade. LVC, on the other hand, has always emphasized autonomy of smallholder agriculture from corporate control and “strongly opposes corporate

driven agriculture and transnational companies that are destroying people and nature” (Via Campesina 2011). And while LVC is known for its worldwide anti-GMO campaign, key organizations that were members of IFAP and are now in WFO sit on opposite sides of the fence. Jervis Zimba, for example, leader of the Zambia National Farmers Union (ZNFU) and vice president of WFO, called in 2010 for the Zambian government to revoke its decision to not allow GMOs. He argued that GMOs are good for small-scale farming because they increase productivity and provide an escape from poverty:

In other countries where bio-technology, especially for cotton, has been used, our small-scale farmers are able to produce 10 times more than our current levels of production with less inputs, implying less production cost leading to huge profits to our small-scale farmers. (AgBioWorld 2010)

ZNFU is the same organization that Ajay Vashee — president of IFAP during its 2010 collapse — previously headed.

The class and ideological differences between LVC on the one hand and IFAP and WFO on the other can be seen more concretely through a national-regional perspective. In South Africa, for example, LVC’s member is the Landless People’s Movement (LPM). It is a fledgling movement that has been hobbling organizationally and politically since its inception (see Chapter 4). Its thin and thinning mass base is among landless people from rural, as well as peri-urban communities (Baletti, Johnson and Wolford 2008); it has hardly any support among economically stable, commercially oriented farmers, whether small or large. LPM’s members are poor black South Africans who were dispossessed under apartheid.

In contrast, IFAP’s South African member was AgriSA. This was a successor to the South African Agricultural Union (SAAU), formed in 1904 to represent white commercial farmers. In 1999 it changed its name to AgriSA as part of the post-apartheid deracialization of farmers’ organizations and brought on board black commercial producers. In the post-2008 global land rush, AgriSA was among those that saw vast business opportunities in large-scale land deals elsewhere on the continent. AgriSA’s explanation for this move was that “South

African commercial farmers want to move into Africa ‘as a result of scarcity of natural resources and land redistribution’ at home” (Hall 2012: 827). By late 2010, AgriSA was in negotiations with twenty-two governments in Africa for large-scale land acquisitions aimed at commercial production of food and biofuels. In the Democratic Republic of Congo alone, it was allocated 200,000 hectares of land, with the option of acquiring up to 10 million hectares of state lands. In short, AgriSA is firmly located on the side of what the media terms “land grabbers” (Hall 2012). AgriSA was a key member of IFAP and is currently a key member of WFO. It hosted the founding congress of WFO in 2011. AgriSA and WFO see large-scale land deals as an investment opportunity for commercial farmers, while LVC sees them as land grabbing that displaces peasants and other rural people.

### *LVC and ILC*

A separate initiative around land policy advocacy gained momentum after the global 2008–09 food price spike: the International Land Coalition (ILC). Founded in 1996 and originally called the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty, it was renamed ILC in 2003. ILC is a global alliance of international financial institutions (IFIs, e.g., World Bank and IFAD), intergovernmental institutions (European Commission, FAO) and several NGOs (e.g., World Wildlife Fund). IFAP was a member of ILC and part of its governing council. ILC is led by middle-class professionals housed in a global secretariat located at and funded by IFAD in Rome.

This composition of ILC makes it a relevant institution for many actors in global land policymaking, but a problematic one for others. Despite its character as a hybrid coalition, ILC is close to the IFIs that are principal targets of LVC’s “expose and oppose” campaigns. A former ILC director once praised the “democratic” process behind the World Bank’s new land policy, inaugurated in 2003 (World Bank 2003). For its part, the Bank celebrates its influence on ILC, with the World Bank Independent Evaluation Group reporting “evidence ... that Bank staff have played an important role in pushing for sound analysis as a basis for [ILC] knowledge ... [and] have contributed substantial input through the Bank Land Thematic Group and Bank papers on land issues” (World Bank–IEG 2008: xx). But some ILC

members are opposed to the World Bank's land policies, and LVC is strident in its criticism.<sup>3</sup>

The ILC's positions shifted notably as the post-2008 global land rush accelerated. Reflecting the class and ideological base of the coalition, it now occasionally criticizes land deals as land grabs, but only when they are done in non-transparent ways or result in human rights violations.<sup>4</sup> This of course differs from LVC's radical call to stop and rollback land grabs, which focuses less on procedural issues and more on the political economy and social impacts of land deals.

In recent years, the ILC has been able to recruit some farmers' organizations as members, though not enough to counter-balance the NGOs, donor agencies and intergovernmental and international financial institutions. Importantly there is no significant overlap between LVC and ILC members, at least for now, and the main reason for this is institutional and ideological: LVC is a radical grassroots social movement coalition, while ILC is a "conservative-progressive" coalition of international financial institutions and NGOs.

### *LVC and IPC*

In Chapter 2, we discussed how LVC member organizations have diverse and competing ideological positions. This is even more complicated if we look at LVC in relation to the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC). Inevitably, such a broad network brings together ideologically disparate groups.

While some ideological tensions separate LVC and IPC, in general the ideological unity between these two networks is relatively high. While positions on broad issues, such as capitalism, are varied, there is still a shared commitment to prioritizing "struggles against dispossession," whether these are outright anti-capitalist efforts, anti-TNC campaigns or fights against expulsion from the land or for control of seeds, technology and biodiversity. There is a strong, although uneven, tendency among IPC members and LVC towards an anti-capitalist narrative. Overall, IPC is an extraordinary example of an expanded multi-class alliance, straddling the rural-urban and hemispheric, as well as ideological, divides.

Those ideological differences that do cause tensions between IPC and LVC are, to a large extent, rooted in class origin. Other

identity issues further complicate the relationship between the two movements. The radical agrarian populist, confrontational and anti-capitalist discourse of LVC does not sit comfortably with the more liberal-progressive orientation of Catholic farmers' movements such as FIMARC (see Table 3.1). LVC's ideological commitment to the "middle peasant" as the only viable path to an alternative future has also produced frictions. An important actor within IPC is the Brazilian trade union, the National Confederation of Agricultural Workers (CONTAG), a member of IUF (see Table 3.1). After initially opposing market-led agrarian reform in Brazil, CONTAG eventually supported it.<sup>5</sup> MST (a member of LVC) has a historically tense relationship with CONTAG, not least because of their different positions in the struggles that dominate the Brazilian countryside. While MST prioritizes land reform to build family farms, CONTAG highlights labour justice issues. In addition, interfacing with indigenous groups has brought to the surface tensions between peasant movements and some native peoples' organizations (even those that are formally LVC members), with some declaring that LVC "feels like a peasant space, not an indigenous peoples' space" (Rosset and Martínez-Torres 2005: 16, fn. 9). This situation is rooted in an inherent contradiction between implementation of land reform and defending or reclaiming indigenous territory. This tension within LVC and between LVC and IPC is likely to remain one of the most difficult challenges within and between TAMS, despite adjustments within LVC in recent years in terms of how it frames its global land campaign (Rosset 2013).

### *LVC and APC*

Perhaps one of the sharpest and most complicated ideological divides that involves LVC — apart from the gulf between LVC and its rivals IFAP and WFO — is that with the Asian Peasant Coalition (APC). This rift mirrors one of the most enduring controversies in agrarian studies, namely, the debates between orthodox Marxists and radical agrarian populists over peasant differentiation and agrarian change (see Chapter 2 on the Leninist versus Chayanovian understandings of class differences among the peasantry). It is complicated because the LVC-APC dynamic involves some organizations that belong to both networks.

Table 3.2 APC Members and Their Membership or Not in LVC

<i>APC Members</i>	<i>LVC Member</i>
KMP, Peasant Movement of the Philippines	Yes
VNWF, Vikalpani National Women's Federation (Sri Lanka)	No
PKMT, Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek (Pakistan)	No
APMU, Andhra Pradesh Matyakarula Union (India)	No
Tenaganita Women's Force (Malaysia)	No
PAN-AP, Pesticides Action Network Asia Pacific (Malaysia)	No
Roots for Equity (Pakistan)	No
ALPE, All Lanka Peasants Front (Sri Lanka)	No
Andhra Pradesh Migrants Workers Union (India)	No
APTFFPU, A.P. Andra Pradesh Traditional Fisher People's Union (India)	No
TNDWM, Tamil Nadu Dalit Women's Movement (India)	No
KGSSS, Karnataka Grameena Sarva Shramik Sangh (India)	No
UMA, Union of Agricultural Workers (Philippines)	No
NFSW, National Federation of Sugar Workers (Philippines)	No
NFA, National Farmers Assembly (Sri Lanka)	No
IFTOP, Indian Federation of Toiling Peasants (India)	No
BKF, Bangladesh Krishok Federation (Bangladesh)	Yes
BKS, Bangladesh Kishani Sabha (Bangladesh)	Yes
BBS, Bangladesh Bhumihheen Samity (Bangladesh)	No
BALU, Bangladesh Agricultural Labour Union (Bangladesh)	No
Amihan, National Federation of Peasant Women (Philippines)	No
BAFLE, Bangladesh Agricultural Farm Labour Federation (Bangladesh)	No
AGRA, Alliance of Agrarian Reform Movement (Indonesia)	No

POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF TRANSNATIONAL AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS

<i>APC Members</i>	<i>LVC Member</i>
APM, Alliance of People's Movements (India)	No
ANWA, All Nepal Women's Association (Nepal)	No
South Asian Peasant Coalition (South Asia)	No
Pamalakaya, National Federation of Small Fisherfolk Organizations in the Philippines	No
MONLAR, Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform (Sri Lanka)	Yes
FAD, Foundation of Agricultural Development (Mongolia)	No
ANPF, All Nepal Peasants Federation	Yes
APVVU, Andhra Pradesh Vyavasaya Vruthidarula Union (India)	No
TNWF, Tamil Nadu Women's Forum (India)	No

Formally established in 2003, the APC is a coalition of farmers, landless peasants, fisherfolk, agricultural workers, Dalits, indigenous peoples, herders, pastoralists, peasant women and rural youth from nine countries (see Table 3.2). It has an explicitly anti-imperialist platform, emphasizing movement building and resistance, genuine agrarian reform and food sovereignty, anti-corporate struggles, ecological agriculture, climate change and people-to-people solidarity (APC 2014). This stands in contrast with IFAP's and WFO's key themes, although it is broadly similar to LVC's and IPC's agendas.

If the working-class character of a national or sub-national movement is the main criterion for entering LVC, then nearly all of the organizations that are members of the APC should be in LVC because they represent the poorest strata of the peasantry and rural proletariat and almost all are legitimate militant agrarian movements (except for the service-oriented research NGO PAN-AP [Pesticide Action Network, Asia and the Pacific]). These are also anti-imperialist movements with politics close to LVC's. But because of ideological differences between the dominant leadership within LVC, on the one hand, and the more orthodox Marxist (in most cases Maoist-inspired) ideology of most APC members, on the other, that inclusion



**Table 3.3 LVC Members in Relation to the APC**

<i>LVC member</i>	<i>APC Member</i>
ANPF, All Nepal Peasants' Federation	Yes
NALA, Nepal Agricultural Labor Association	No
NNFFA, Nepal National Fish Farmers Association	No
NNPWA, Nepal National Peasants Women's Association	No
BAS, Bangladesh Adivasi Samithy	No
BKS, Bangladesh Kishani Sabha	Yes
BKF, Bangladesh Krishok Federation	Yes
BKU, Bharatiya Kisan Union, Madhya Pradesh (India)	No
BKU, Bharatiya Kisan Union, Haryana (India)	No
BKU, Bharatiya Kisan Union, Maharashtra (India)	No
BKU, Bharatiya Kisan Union, New Delhi (India)	No
BKU, Bharatiya Kisan Union, Punjab (India)	No
BKU, Bharatiya Kisan Union, Rajasthan (India)	No
BKU, Bharatiya Kisan Union, Uttaranchal (India)	No
BKU, Bharatiya Kisan Union, Uttar Pradesh (India)	No
KRRS, Karnataka Rajya Ryota Sangha (India)	No
KCFA, Kerala Coconut Farmers Association (India)	No
NRSAP, Nandya Raita Samakya, Andra Pradesh (India)	No
TNFA, Tamil Nadu Farmers Association (India)	No
AGMK, Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha, Kerala (India)	No
MONLAR, Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform (Sri Lanka)	Yes

of these APC-affiliated movements in LVC was not possible (with the exceptions of KMP, Monlar, ANPF, BKS and BKF). The seriousness of such an ideological divide is not seen in any other region where LVC operates. In Latin America and the Caribbean, nearly all militant agrarian movements have been integrated into LVC, with the exception of a few cases in Mexico, Colombia, Brazil and Central America.

The problem of the non-inclusion in LVC of several militant agrarian movements in South Asia in general, and in India more

particularly, is exacerbated by the dominance within LVC of organizations largely based among medium and rich farmers or that articulate commercial medium and rich farmer ideology (Pattenden 2005; Assadi 1994). Such movements include KRRS in Karnataka and BKU organizations in approximately ten Indian states. Their key demands revolve around higher farm-gate prices. Compare Tables 3.2 and 3.3, with APC members and LVC members in South Asia, respectively. The biggest dilemma for LVC in South Asia is how to maintain its global ideological position and “big tent” inclusivity, which would be at risk if many APC-linked groups — some known for sectarian politics — were allowed entry. It would be difficult to imagine how a “Via Campesina” could defend middle peasants and small farmers with an orthodox Marxist leadership and an ideology promoting primarily the interests of rural proletarians.

### *LVC and the Food (Sovereignty) Movements*

In recent years, various types of food movements have emerged, cutting across class, as well as the rural-urban, producer-consumer and North-South, divides. Some are quite small and localized, while others are larger and well networked — from Nyéléni to New York, as Schiavoni (2009) describes it. They tend to be united in their critique of the dominant food system around the issues of access, cultural appropriateness, sustainability and human and animal health. The differences in their perspectives can be pronounced, with some calling for dismantling of the industrial agriculture-based food system and others for varying degrees of reform. Some local food systems are closer to food sovereignty, while others are closer to the industrial model (Robbins 2015). Some of these movements identify with the food sovereignty framework, while others do not. Holt-Giménez and Shattuck (2011) provide an excellent overview of this vibrant, though highly differentiated, set of movements.

The rise of these broad, multi-class food movements has at least two relevant political implications for LVC. On the one hand, it has helped broaden political struggles around food, extending the political reach of LVC’s campaign around food sovereignty and strengthening the progressive-to-radical part of the political spectrum in pushing for food justice or food sovereignty alternatives worldwide. This is espe-

cially because of the breadth of the food movements' class base and their geographic spread. It has produced multiple and multi-layered food movement alliances (Brent et al. 2015, Shattuck, Schiavoni and VanGelder 2015, Alonso-Fradejas et al. 2015). On the other hand, the rise of food movements has rendered LVC just one among the many actors in the wider effort to challenge the dominant food system and construct alternatives. The food movements challenge LVC's "political franchise" on food sovereignty and its claim to be an exclusive and especially astute architect of alternative food systems. Food sovereignty has become just one possibility, alongside the right-to-food, food justice and related paradigms. And food sovereignty *as defined* by LVC (Patel 2009) has become just one possible interpretation of what food sovereignty means and might look like in real life. The emergence of a broad-based, ideologically diverse, multi-class food movement has de-centred the discourse around alternative food systems away from LVC's "middle peasant-centric" ideal (Edelman et al. 2014).

### Conclusion

Class, identity and ideology shape the alliances that unite transnational agrarian movements and the fissures that divide them. Movements sometimes have overlapping discourses, ideologies and programs, yet nonetheless compete with one another for members and influence. TAMS are therefore best studied in *relational* perspective and not as stand-alone actors or in isolation from the broader social movement community. Even worse is when scholars and activists celebrate TAMS as an undifferentiated community. Such a casual treatment is naïve and tends to trivialize tensions and divisions between TAMS as organizational, "turf" or personality issues. Such analyses usually look at cleavages between agrarian movements as always negative. Our discussion in this chapter suggests that this is not necessarily so.

As Anna Tsing indicates in the passage quoted at the beginning of this chapter, it is inherent in the politics of transnational social movements for coalitions to emerge and disappear, rise and fall, and wax and wane, especially in the era of non-party, non-hierarchical broad coalitions such as the World Social Forum (Santos 2006). Hence,

tensions and divisions between TAMs and other social movement organizations do have positive dimensions, notably when they help sharpen positions on critical issues and clarify goals and strategies. This is one way we can look at the LVC-Asian Peasant Coalition (APC) and LVC-International Land Coalition (ILC) fault-lines, and LVC itself was a product of a similar conflict in 1993 between agrarian movements and the Dutch Paulo Freire Foundation (see Chapter 2). One case of such movement dynamics is LVC's withdrawal from the global coalition *Our World Is Not For Sale* (OWINFS). This alliance works on social justice issues around trade and investments, and LVC's departure occurred in a public way during the lead-up to the 2013 WTO Ministerial Conference in Bali. This triggered a lot of buzz among social justice activists worldwide. In its withdrawal statement, LVC explained that the OWINFS statement,

“WTO Turnaround 2013: Food, Jobs and Sustainable Development First...” no longer reflects the priorities of social movements, particularly of *La Vía Campesina*. The statement espouses admirable language against corporate-led globalization but then goes on to make several demands of the WTO, sounding more like a negotiating partner rather than a critical civil society that should be pushing the envelope on its demands. Our demands are bigger than getting policy space and preferential treatment in the WTO. The statement's demands not only fall short, but they also serve to legitimize the WTO. ... We are not negotiators and we should not be limited to what we can or cannot demand within the context of the negotiations. We are social movements, we are working to change the world and we will never achieve change unless we continue to raise the pressure on our governments and demand it. We must never be afraid to imagine a much better world, one without the WTO, one that is based on Economic Justice, that has Food Sovereignty at its heart and one that relates to Mother Nature in a respectful and sustainable manner. ... Today, our call is for an End to the WTO. We want a deeper systemic change and not a mere reform or turnaround of the WTO... Now it is the time for peoples' alternatives. (*Vía Campesina*, December 2013c)

LVC's statement eloquently affirms its radical politics, social movement identity and utopian vision. The same sentiments — that “we must never be afraid to imagine a better world” — underlie its refusal to join ILC, to work on land issues with the World Bank and to enter into other relationships that compromise its core principles.

### Notes

1. Exceptions include Desmarais (2003), Edelman (2003) and Borrás and Franco (2009).
2. It is doubly ironic that in 2009 IFAP leader Vashee continued to represent IFAP as an intact organization in international fora, such as the Copenhagen Climate Summit (Vashee 2010) and the elite Davos World Economic Forum (CNA 2009), though a later self-authored biographical blurb indicates that he ended his presidency in 2008 (International Conference 2010). In 2003, Vashee helped to found the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), a regional network of large commercial farmers that in 2013 had seventeen member organizations in twelve countries (International Conference 2010; SACAU 2013). Following the collapse of IFAP, Vashee served as president of SACAU (International Conference 2010).
3. As Edelman (2003: 207) points out, however, LVC briefly entered into dialogue with the World Bank when its general coordinator, Rafael Alegría, spoke at a Bank forum called “Strengthening Producer Organizations,” which was also attended by an IFAP representative. This history has been largely forgotten — if not rewritten — and the relevant document (Via Campesina 1999) is no longer available on LVC's website.
4. For a detailed discussion of ILC's position, see Borrás, Franco and Wang (2013).
5. For an analysis of CONTAG and its location among Brazilian agrarian movements, see Welch and Sauer (2015).

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## Linking the International, the National and the Local in TAMs

Realizing the dream of transnational solidarity and action among peasants and farmers is an ongoing challenge. The movements' leaders and members have to balance their agricultural production with the demands of international, national and local activism and to decide where to focus limited time, energy, and human and material resources. The movements have to forge alliances with non-peasant sectors in political campaigns, maintain visibility in the mass media and raise funds from cooperation agencies and foundations (on the latter, see Chapter 5). They have to analyze state and transnational governance institutions to identify suitable points of entry and engagement. At times they have staged audacious direct actions and have had to defend arrested supporters in the courts.

Questions of leadership also raise intense debates. How, for example, have women established a powerful presence in traditionally patriarchal organizations and how does this affect transnational agrarian movements' politics and internal dynamics? How do TAMs' constituent national organizations — and TAMs themselves — assure a generational rotation that replaces historical, largely male leaders with a more diverse and youthful group of activists and how will they develop the skills and knowledge required to sustain the TAMs' political projects over the long run? What happens when leaders are not sufficiently connected to or in touch with grassroots supporters?

Membership in TAMs, similarly, is sometimes controversial. What criteria do TAMs employ in admitting national and local organizations? How can some TAMs' commitment to pluralism be reconciled with the need for minimum shared principles? The moment at which national and local organizations affiliate with TAMs also shapes the movements' future directions. What features of TAMs' internal organization lead to the emergence of “gatekeeper” organizations

and how are problems that this creates addressed? The movements that join TAMS come from developed and developing countries and represent a diversity of views and interests, from those of landless workers to those of relatively prosperous farmers. Can a single frame of “peasantry” or “people of the land” adequately encompass and unite these sometimes antagonistic sectors?

Scholars of collective action have long noted that movements ebb and flow, often in sync with broader “protest cycles” (Tarrow 1994). How do these shifts affect TAMS and the movements that participate in them? To what extent do donor cycles, in addition to protest cycles, become political opportunities or sources of vulnerability and affect the rise and fall of TAMS? Finally, when a social movement directs claims at powerful institutions, it engages in a complex politics of representation, understood here in two interconnected senses, both as a claim about *representativeness*, or having a constituency or social base, and also as a practice of *representing itself* and its leaders as having particular characteristics, notably authenticity and legitimacy. Even sympathetic observers have argued that for a movement simply to claim representation — in either of these senses — is to engage in processes of social exclusion, since not all interests or constituencies within a movement will be well represented or even represented at all (Burnett and Murphy 2014; Wolford 2010). This chapter examines these challenges and tensions as they have affected La Vía Campesina and its member organizations, as well as other TAMS and non-LVC movements.

### Balancing Demands

“When people think of the headquarters of an international movement, they think it has to be in Brussels, Paris, Geneva or Washington, but we in principle want the movement’s headquarters to be in a Third World country, not a developed one.” Rafael Alegría was speaking in 2001 in the tiny office in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, that housed La Vía Campesina’s international secretariat.<sup>1</sup> The entire LVC operation at that point consisted of two computers, a full-time office administrator, a part-time bilingual secretary and a Europe-based multilingual communications manager, who handled email lists and media rela-

tions. Alegría was about to leave for Mexico City, where two events were taking place, one a congress of the Latin American Coordinator of Rural Organizations (CLOC) and the other a preparatory meeting for the upcoming World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil. At the same time that Alegría expounded on his vision of La Vía Campesina, he lamented that he had hardly any time before leaving to go to his cooperative in the countryside and harvest a field of cabbages that otherwise might rot. As the conversation ended, an earnest young man rushed in, imploring Alegría to hurry to another rural community two hours away and lend his legal expertise to peasants entangled in a complicated land dispute.

Alegría's quandary — how to simultaneously harvest cabbages at home, provide legal advice elsewhere in Honduras and represent La Vía Campesina abroad — suggests that linking local, national and international spheres of activism is not easy, either for individual activists or for movements. Prioritizing demands emanating from local, national and transnational spheres of activism may mean slighting important campaigns carried out at other levels. Neoliberal globalization, for example, has often spurred a decentralization of central state functions, forcing movements to operate simultaneously at local and international levels. Competing demands of this sort raise a host of questions about the professionalization of leaders and the decision-making processes and specialization of functions within organizations. At the same time, leaders who become so professionalized that they neglect their agricultural production run the risk of losing legitimacy among their base supporters and the “peasant” authenticity that undergirds their right to act as movement spokespeople or representatives.

### **Diffusing Protest Repertoires and Movement Practices**

In the Introduction we suggested that for national and local peasant organizations, transnational alliances frequently facilitate access to material and knowledge resources and the identification of opportunities for effective political action. Members and allies of TAMS exchange protest repertoires, information and views on strategy. They plan joint campaigns, collaborate on fund-raising and consult with

each other on how to identify entry points and potential supporters in institutions they seek to influence (see Chapter 6).

Repertoires of contention or protest are deeply rooted in particular national and local histories (Tilly 2002). Whether protestors barricade roads or petition governments, sing songs (and which ones) or march in silence, torch buses or engage in nonviolent civil disobedience, the toolkits that movements deploy vary widely from place to place, shift over time and involve borrowing and innovation. TAMs — where movements from diverse world regions come together — are prolific propagators and inventors of protest repertoires. Caravans of demonstrators that travel or march from place to place, holding meetings and confronting politicians, have been a feature of Indian and South American protest movements for years. In 1999, a caravan of 400 Indian farmers toured Europe, protesting against transnational corporations and free trade and meeting with European counterparts (Pattenden 2005). Shortly after the Indians left Europe, José Bové and the French Confédération Paysanne dismantled a McDonald's that was still under construction, much as the Indians — three years earlier — had besieged a Bangalore Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet (Edelman 2003).

In another example of cross-border protest repertoire “contagion,” in countries as diverse as India, Brazil, New Zealand, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, the United States and the Philippines, activists — sometimes linked to TAMs — have uprooted or burned GM crops (Baskaran and Boden 2006; Kuntz 2012). As governments around the world have required that farmers plant officially certified seed and have criminalized non-commercial seed, agriculturalists have responded by intensifying local and transnational farmer-to-farmer seed exchanges (Badstue et al. 2007; Da Vià 2012; Vià Campesina 2013a). When corporate interests attempted — ultimately unsuccessfully — to patent the active ingredient in the neem tree (*Azadirachta indica*), which Indian peasants had used for millennia as a natural pesticide and cleanser, South Asian agrarian movements furnished neem seed to counterparts in Central America and the Caribbean, in part to complicate its appropriation by private interests.

Symbolic and commemorative practices have also diffused wide-

ly. LVC, for example, adopted the practice of “*místicas*” — ceremonial performances that open and close events, typically with music and political theatre — from MST and other Brazilian social movements. The green bandanas and baseball caps that became emblematic of La Vía Campesina are also an adaptation of MST’s red scarves and hats. During LVC’s second international conference — in Tlaxcala, Mexico, in 1996 — word came that Brazilian military police had massacred nineteen peasants in Eldorado dos Carajás, where MST supporters had blocked a highway to pressure the government to resolve a land dispute (Vía Campesina 1996; Fernandes 2000). Television journalists stuck in the resulting traffic jam filmed the killings, which created a public uproar (Cadji 2000). Since then LVC organizations in diverse world regions commemorate the International Day of Peasant Struggles on April 17, staging demonstrations and other protests.

Each year movements in many parts of the world also commemorate Lee Kyung Hae, a Korean farmer who — holding a banner declaring “WTO Kills Farmers” — stabbed himself to death during a protest march outside the WTO’s Fifth Ministerial meeting in Cancún in 2003. Even though Lee was a former president of the politically centrist Korean Advanced Farmers’ Federation, which was not and is not a LVC member, the transnational movement nonetheless claims him as a martyr because of his dramatic suicide, celebrating each September 10 as an “international day of struggle against the WTO.” Korean activists have been especially inventive when it comes to new forms of protest. During the 2005 WTO Ministerial in Hong Kong, hundreds of protestors from the LVC-affiliated Korean Peasant League suddenly donned orange life vests and plunged into the harbour in an effort to bypass police cordons and swim to the meeting. Virtually all were pulled from the water and imprisoned, sparking an international campaign to win their release.

### Diffusing and Constructing Agricultural Knowledge

TAMS and their constituent movements increasingly engage not just in the cross-border diffusion of protest repertoires and symbolic practices, but in exchanging and constructing knowledge about farming. In Latin America the Campesino a Campesino movement initiated a

farmer-to-farmer agroecology extension process in Central America in the 1960s and 1970s that eventually spread to Mexico, Cuba, the rest of Latin America and beyond (Altieri and Toledo 2011; Boyer 2010; Bunch 1982; Holt-Giménez 2006; Martínez-Torres and Rosset 2014). Many national organizations had long engaged in training programs in agronomy, cooperative administration, phytosanitary standards, community health, agrarian law and other subjects.

The model of the “peasant university” is also spreading. In 2005, the Brazilian MST opened the Florestan Fernandes School, a major centre for training in diverse fields. In the same year, together with LVC and the Brazilian state of Paraná, it inaugurated the Latin American Agroecology School (ELAA) (Capitani 2013). LVC and the Venezuelan government founded another branch of the school at Barinas, Venezuela, called the Latin American University Institute of Agroecology “Paulo Freire” (IALA), though after 2013 it became mired in conflicts between students who denounced administrators for “corruption” and an administration that accused students of being “saboteurs” (IALAnoticias 2014). Other peasant universities, most associated with TAM national organizations and deploying widely varying pedagogical models, are functioning in Argentina (Vía Campesina 2013b), Mexico (García Jiménez 2011) and West Africa (GFF 2014), among other places.

### Leadership Dynamics

Historically, almost all the local and national peasants’ and farmers’ organizations that make up TAMs — and indeed TAMs themselves — had largely or entirely male leaderships. Nonetheless, in many world regions women perform much or even most agricultural labour and contribute in myriad other ways to rural households. This imbalance began to shift as movement women met among themselves, shared experiences and then applied pressure for greater representation in their organizations and in TAMs (Desmarais 2007: 161–81). In some national organizations, such as the National Farmers Union of Canada, specific leadership posts had long been reserved for women and youth. Elsewhere, notably in Latin America, pressure for greater gender equity in the organizations came from European donors, in-

digenous and Afro-descendant movements where women had earlier emerged in leadership roles, and regional groups such as the Latin American Coordinator of Peasant Organizations (CLOC). By 2000, La Vía Campesina decided that each region's representatives on its International Coordinating Committee should consist of one man and one woman. LVC increasingly held separate women's meetings prior to large international events and related training events for men "so that they can be sensitized to show greater respect for women" (Vía Campesina 2009: 168). The women's assemblies served not only to analyze gender concerns narrowly conceived but also a wide range of other issues. This contributed to strengthening the confidence of the women — many of them young or indigenous — who began to enter previously patriarchal leadership spaces and to voice new kinds of concerns.

The incorporation of young people into the organizations and especially into leadership positions also required special attention. In many countries, especially in the Global North, the farming population is aging. In 2007 in the United States, for example, 30 percent of farmers were sixty-five or older (Doran 2013). Disillusion and despair are widespread in rural areas of countries such as India, where a majority of farmers say they would prefer to leave agriculture and where thousands of farmer suicides — mostly by ingesting pesticides — have made headlines since the 1990s (Hindu Business Line 2014; Patel et al. 2012). Agrarian movements thus have to face not only the challenge of integrating young people at all levels, but also the issue of the flagging enthusiasm, crippling indebtedness and greying of the population involved in agriculture.

TAM activists are acutely aware of these problems. Some countervailing tendencies exist in Europe, North America and the Caribbean, among other places, where young people, some the children or grandchildren of agriculturalists, are "returning" to the land, often to produce high value-added crops for organic or other local niche markets and to experiment with alternative marketing modalities, such as farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture groups (Hyde 2014). While these sectors of new countercultural farmers are important for modelling sustainable alternatives to industrial agriculture and maintaining green belts around large cit-

ies, their overall numbers are still small. A few participate in local, national and transnational agrarian movements, though most of the young people in TAMS come from more conventional farm families.

TAMS' efforts to incorporate young people parallel those that led to greater participation of women. La Via Campesina and its constituent organizations, for example, have held frequent youth assemblies, generally in conjunction with other, larger events. The age pyramids of movements, however, tend to mirror those of the workforces of the societies from which they come, with "greyer" movements in the north and more youthful ones in southern societies, where populations have not aged as much.

A key challenge for TAMS is the potential or actual gap between leaders and the social bases of their organizations that may result from emphasizing transnational activities over domestic, national or local politics. In Central America in the 1990s, for example, local activists grumbled about the emergence of a "*jet set campesino*," leaders who were constantly traveling from one international meeting or seminar to another and who rarely had time to attend to their base organizations or their agricultural production (Edelman 1998: 76). In a 2001 interview, one such self-admitted jet setter conceded:

When a leader originates at the base [and then] becomes bureaucratized and distant from the base, the people say that he's become like a kite [*se papaloteó*], that he goes up and up into the sky, and then suddenly the string breaks and he's lost. (quoted in Edelman 2005: 41)

The specialization of functions within organizations that this sort of leadership style implies sometimes leads to a concentration of institutional knowledge and memory, as well as personal contacts, among a few individuals. Just as some organizations become "gatekeepers" — facilitating or blocking entry of other movements into TAMS (see Chapter 2) — single individuals may also emerge as "gatekeepers" (Pattenden 2005). These entrenched and well-connected figures impede essential processes of generational succession and are sometimes reluctant to embrace fresh ideas.

Leaders may also wear blinders about gaps between movement



discourses and the practices and beliefs of grassroots supporters. KRRS, for example, was one of the first movements anywhere to adopt a radical stance against transgenic crops, yet many of its supporters (and other Indian small farmers) enthusiastically cultivate Bt cotton (Herring 2007; Pattenden 2005; Stone 2007). Similarly, Jefferson Boyer (2010) shows how peasants in Honduras find the notion of “food security” attractive and compelling — “*seguridad*,” after all, has great resonance for people in precarious circumstances — even though movement leaders embrace “food sovereignty” and criticize “food security” as a technocratic, quantitative concept that says nothing about how food is actually produced.

### Representation in Two Senses

We noted above that “representation” may be understood in two senses: as a claim about *representativeness*, or having a constituency or social base, and also as a practice of *representing* a movement and its leaders as authentically incarnating a peasant political project. The two senses of “representation” are intricately bound up with each other. Both, for example, potentially help to constitute and fortify an organization’s legitimacy vis-à-vis national and transnational governance institutions, non-agrarian social movements, the media and its own members. Conversely, representation claims and practices that fail to convince their intended audiences may contribute to weakening transnational (or other) movements.

#### *Representativeness*

By 2014, La Vía Campesina comprised some 164 organizations from 73 countries — both numbers had climbed steadily over the years — and claimed to represent about 200 million farmers. It is surely assertions such as this that led the London *Guardian* to refer to LVC as “arguably the world’s largest social movement” (Provost 2013). Indeed, similar perceptions are widely shared within international governance institutions, among the NGOs and other civil society organizations that interact with them, and among the agrarian movements themselves, where this sense of strength at the global level is a source of both richly deserved pride and self-congratulatory rhetoric.

At the national level, however, it is useful to remember that no single organization or group of movements is likely to represent the diverse groups and interests in an entire country, notwithstanding occasional activist claims to the contrary. Two extreme cases suffice to make the point: one where a national member of a TAM is very weak — South Africa — and the other — Brazil — where a national member is very strong. The South African Landless People's Movement (LPM) was a “late mobilizer” and never gained significant political or organizational strength (despite frequent MST missions and efforts to replicate the success of the Brazilian Landless Movement). In 2004, LPM claimed a membership — loosely defined — of 100,000. Nonetheless, some scholars friendly to the movement concede that “these ... numbers are difficult to verify and may be inaccurate [and that] the claim to such numerical strength was an important strategy for the LPM to gain visibility” (Baletti, Johnson and Wolford 2008: 301). A few years after its leaders asserted that LPM had this substantial membership, the movement had nearly disappeared. Indeed, by 2012, it had so few resources that one LPM leader from a rural municipality near Limpopo National Park, who frequently “represents South Africa” at international meetings, reported that he did not have access to a computer and had to travel several kilometres by bus to an internet café for international communications.<sup>2</sup> The digital divide, which affected so many movements in the early years of the internet (Edelman 2003), continues to impact the less well-endowed peasant organizations and those in remote areas. Despite these challenges, LPM is still the only organization that represents the South African rural poor in La Vía Campesina.

At the other extreme, the Brazilian MST is by far the largest and most politically coherent national movement within La Vía Campesina. MST has been described — probably accurately — as “one of the largest social movements in the world” (Seligmann 2008: 345). MST doubtless represents a huge number of poor people in Brazil, has extensive education and health programs and backs an international cooperation effort that has assisted peasant movements in South Africa, Haiti, Indonesia and elsewhere. However, even in the context of Brazil, MST's representational capacity is, at best, partial. MST leader João Pedro Stédile, for example, acknowledged:

We projected a shadow much bigger than what we really were, and we became famous for that. In fact, the MST as an organized force of the workers in Brazil is very small: we cannot even organize all the landless of Brazil who number four million. But since the others did not fight and we kept fighting, it was as if the small soccer team had started to play in the Premier League! (Stédile 2007: 195–96)

Moreover, even sympathetic critics of MST note its limited representation among Afro-Brazilians and rural women, some of whom have abandoned MST to form their own organizations (Stephen 1997; Rubin 2002). Others note how landless squatters strategically cycle through encampments sponsored by MST and those of various lesser-known agrarian movements before finding the most promising land occupation (Rangel Loera 2010). Arguably, all other national movements in La Via Campesina fall somewhere in between these two extremes — LPM and the MST — in terms of representation. The most they can claim is *partial* representation of the constituency they say they represent.

Although La Via Campesina articulates a global discourse and aspirations, its geographical presence is uneven. It has no affiliate in China — where one-third of the world’s peasants live (Walker 2008) — or in most areas of the Middle East or North Africa. It entered sub-Saharan Africa late and has few members there, in part because other TAMS with similar approaches, such as ROPPA (Network of Peasant and Agricultural Producers Organizations of West Africa), had already organized in the francophone countries. In the former Soviet countries, TAMS similarly have had little or no impact, despite the existence of a handful of organizations, such as Russia’s Krest’ianskii Front (Peasant Front), that voice concerns like those articulated by La Via Campesina (Visser, Mamonova and Spoor 2012).

One limitation in terms of extending TAMS’ geographical reach has been their tendency to define “peasant” or “farmer” in a restricted sense that excludes significant sectors of the rural poor (migrants and fisherfolk, for example). TAMS may also fail to “see” movements in unfamiliar regions because these do not conform to their restricted

criteria of what constitutes a “movement” or because rural activism, particularly under authoritarian regimes, exists in a less organizationally coherent zone of “everyday,” “rightful” or “covert” resistance (Scott 1985; O’Brien and Li 2006; Malseed 2008).

### *Representations of “Peasantness”*

Assertions about numbers and bases of support are difficult to disentangle from those about the authentically “peasant” character of organizations and leaders. Yet here too it is important to confront and acknowledge complexity and ambiguity. The claim of peasant authenticity goes beyond the “framing” of issues and the movements’ efforts to seize favourable conjunctures or “political opportunities,” both of which are familiar to scholars of social movements (Benford 1997). Instead, it speaks to a certain kind of self-fashioning and presentation of that self, individual and collective, which potentially translates into political efficacy.

Peasants’ and small farmers’ movements face higher hurdles in these interlinked processes of claims-making and self-fashioning than is the case with many other, non-agrarian collective struggles. Almost everywhere, elites scorn the rural poor, typically employing an extensive vocabulary of pejoratives to impugn peasants’ intelligence, honesty, physical appearance, cleanliness and — incredibly — capacity for hard work (Handy 2009). At the same time, romanticized images of the peasant figure prominently in many nationalist narratives as emblematic of historically remote roots, ethnic purity, spiritual values and selfless sacrifice. While these contrasting visions could be viewed as upper-class cognitive dissonance, what unites them is that both hold peasants to a high standard of “purity.” The derogatory language is, after all, in part a critique of a failure to live up to the romanticized vision.

When the dominant groups — large landowners, urban elites, politicians, media pundits — encounter peasant movements, they may express shock and feign disappointment that the “simple” and heretofore “loyal” “sons of the soil” are voicing grievances and making demands. The elements that make the discourses of contemporary peasant movements most compelling — rhetorical fluency, legal and economic knowledge, recourse to abstract notions of justice — may

disqualify the speakers in the eyes of elites, who imagine these features to be incompatible with “genuine,” “true” and rustic peasants. Overcoming this elite resistance may require peasants and small farmers to employ innovative protest repertoires and to intensify efforts to establish their authenticity in the eyes of the broader public.

Cross-border alliances between agrarian movements in different world regions unavoidably widen the gap between elite mindsets about lowly rustics and the urbane bearing and political savvy of widely travelled peasant activists. Contemporary TAMS have had to acquire highly specialized knowledge about global trade, intellectual property, GMOS, subsidy policies and environmental and health aspects of agriculture. Some of these concerns are central in *national*-level contention as well, but particularly when organized peasants display such erudition in international arenas, they inevitably appear even more distant from the dominant groups’ image of “true” peasant-ness. These questions of representation become even more complex in the context of TAMS’ relations with nongovernmental organizations and other non-agriculturalist groups, as the next chapter indicates.

### Notes

1. Marc Edelman interview with Rafael Alegría, Tegucigalpa, Honduras, August 2, 2001.
2. Marc Edelman interview with LPM leader, Geneva, 2012.

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## “Not About Us Without Us”: TAMs, NGOs and Donor Agencies

The long, rich history of agrarian studies is replete with debates about solidarity between peasants and external allies. The classic Marxist formulation of the “agrarian question” is broadly about linkages, relations and alliances between peasants and political parties and other classes (Hussain and Tribe 1981). Later Marxist scholarship, similarly, examined the question of who is the most reliable revolutionary force, with Eric Wolf (1969) arguing for a “middle peasant thesis” and Jeffery Paige (1975) for a “rural proletariat” one (see Chapter 2). Marxist revolutionaries, notably Mao Tse-tung, also analyzed this question out of strategic necessity. Literature on moral economy examined peasants’ relations with other classes and institutions and how these shape peasant politics and patron-client relations (Scott 1976). Scholars of moral economy subsequently focused less on dramatic but infrequent revolutions and rebellions and more on “everyday forms of peasant resistance,” which include not just the oft-cited “foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, [and] sabotage” (Scott 1985: 29), but more broadly peasants’ relations with external actors, whether adversaries or allies (Scott 1990; Kerkvliet 2005, 2009). The notion of “rightful resistance,” developed by Kevin O’Brien and Lianjiang Li (2006; O’Brien 2013), provides a nuanced framework for understanding rural villagers’ relationship with outsiders in less-than-democratic political settings, such as contemporary China. Coming from the tradition of neoclassical economics, Samuel Popkin (1979) probed the question of peasants and external allies by positing a self-interested, profit maximizing-peasant who engages in an endless cost-benefit calculus to evaluate the risks of collective action. In short, various traditions of scholarship identified peasants’ relationship with non-peasant actors as key to understanding agrarian politics. These

traditions touched upon alliances between peasants and workers and between agrarian movements and political parties. Our discussion of TAMS' relationships with NGOs and donor agencies builds on this fertile tradition of scholarship in critical agrarian studies.

During the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, political parties were among the external actors that played major roles in the rise, or fall, of radical agrarian movements (e.g., Communists, Socialists, Christian Democrats). Many national liberation, anti-colonial and/or socialist struggles had significant peasant support, as in Mexico, China, Vietnam, Angola and Zimbabwe. Not surprisingly many scholarly studies about peasant politics during this period centred on questions such as how peasants become revolutionary (Huizer 1972) or which section of the peasantry is most revolutionary, as in the competing interpretations of Wolf (1969) and Paige (1975). Most national political projects of this generation were statist in orientation, geared at seizing state power and establishing one or another state-dominated development model. Hence, political contestations almost always involved confronting the state or attempting to seize state power. It was in this context that political parties functioned in multiple ways for the agrarian movements, providing ideological and political leadership, linking agrarian movements with other movements (especially trade unions), supplying logistical support for movement building and advocacy campaigns, and training corps of organizers and intellectuals. The experience of this generation of peasant movements suggests that peasants are not inherently against external alliances or leadership *per se* but are concerned more about the *terms* of those alliances (Fox 1993).

The era of armed revolutionary peasant-based movements effectively ended in the 1980s, with the 1979 Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua and the 1980 victory of the Zimbabwe liberation forces. Only a handful of peasant-based armed revolutionary movements persisted, including for a while in Peru with Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and in Colombia with FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), the Chiapas uprising in the mid-1990s and a number of Maoist groups in Asia, especially in South Asia.

The end of the era of peasant-based armed revolutionary movements, or at least political party-led peasant movements, did not

mean the end of militant agrarian movements. A new type of agrarian movement emerged in the 1980s that had a lot of similarities with earlier movements (many were militantly anti-capitalist). However, the new type also represents a break from the past. Most importantly, many movements that arose during the 1980s and after trumpeted their "autonomy" and no longer accepted subordination to or tutelage from political parties, in particular "verticalist" communist or socialist ones (Moyo and Yeros 2005).

The waning of political parties and the resurgence of militant agrarian movements meant that some key functions earlier performed by parties had to be taken up by agrarian movements themselves or by other entities. Both have occurred. Some politically significant, stand-alone agrarian movements that were no longer part of a larger political party developed their own ideological frameworks and leadership. Many launched eloquent and charismatic leaders whom scholars of transnational social movements would later term "new peasant intellectuals" (Edelman 1997) or "rooted cosmopolitans" (Tarrow 2005). However, three other important dimensions of political parties' traditional practice received less emphasis in the subsequent period. First, the strict "political line," party "discipline" and commitment to building common fronts with other working-class movements diminished, largely because of the decline of the orthodox left and the downward spiral in global militant trade unionism. Second, the parties had previously provided highly dedicated cadres and logistical support to agrarian movements. And third, political parties generally insisted on a clear state-power agenda.

NGOs unaligned with any political party and nongovernmental donor agencies increasingly filled the vacuum left by the agrarian movements' rejection of political party ties. Frequently they became important actors in what would emerge as TAMS. Some individuals within the NGOs and donor agencies were earlier part of global networks of support for national liberation movements or of solidarity groups that crossed the South-North divide. They shared much of agrarian movements' disappointment with and disdain for political parties. It was these non-party, non-social movement actors that took over some of the tasks traditionally performed by political parties.

While pre-1980s agrarian politics often revolved around

questions about peasant movement–political party relations, the 1980s and after saw intense negotiations and contestations around peasant-NGO relations. The 1980s was also the period when most contemporary post–political party agrarian movements were just beginning to emerge (Hellman 1992; Putzel 1995). It was in this same period that the practice of retailing official cooperation or aid money through nongovernmental agencies in the North also began. Usually, the argument was that governments were inefficient (in the North and South) and corrupt (in the South) and that NGOs would be more “agile” service providers and make better use of available funds. Hence, tiny church-based agencies in Europe started to grow as they accepted funds from their governments. Traditional non-sectarian donors, such as Oxfam, expanded their activities, and a significant number of new NGOs — particularly in Western Europe and North America — began to vie for government and foundation money and private donations. It was in this political conjuncture that the relationship between NGOs, donor agencies and agrarian movements started to evolve. Three decades later, this relationship remains dynamic, though hardly free of tensions. Like the troubled relationship between agrarian movements and political parties, the NGO-donor-agrarian movement nexus remains a “love-hate” relationship, politically contested and endlessly renegotiated. A useful way to analyze this complex tableau is to focus on two of its elements: (1) TAMs and NGOs and (2) TAMs and nongovernmental donor agencies.

### TAMs and NGOs

By NGOs we mean non-state groups that broadly reflect the concerns articulated by “global justice movements” and that focus on “agrarian justice” themes. We recognize that this is a narrow definition that does not capture the full range and diversity of NGOs, but we see such a minimalist description as appropriate for this book. These groups can be big or small in terms of funds and organization and located in southern or northern countries. They are usually directly dependent on other non-state donors. The scope of their work can be local, national or international. Some are nationally and/or internationally federated or networked. Many are strictly non-grassroots NGOs,

while others combine features of an NGO and of a social movement. Their specific goals can vary, ranging from community organizing to building working-class organizations, supporting grassroots movements, and carrying out research and/or policy advocacy. Many of the NGOs that fit this profile were established in the 1970s onwards (Edwards and Hulme 1995; Bebbington, Hickey and Mitlin 2008).

Some international NGOs have, to varying degrees, accompanied TAMS during their inception, expansion and consolidation. Groups in this category include the Institute for Food and Development Policy or Food First, the Transnational Institute (TNI), GRAIN, the ETC Group, the Foodfirst Information and Action Network (FIAN) and Focus on the Global South.

These NGOs have made enormous contributions to building TAMS. It is misplaced romanticism to pretend that TAMS emerge solely from the independent efforts of grassroots agrarian movements. Such an assumption fails to fully acknowledge the structural, institutional and material obstacles that labouring agrarian classes and social groups in the countryside face in building autonomous movements and launching collective action. The contributions of NGOs to building TAMS can be seen in several ways.

First, NGOs helped build movements in settings where grassroots agrarian movements were not yet in place or were too localized or scattered. Many of these (sub)national agrarian movements would later become building blocks in TAMS. For example, the first time Indonesian agrarian activists entered into contact with LVC was at the latter's global assembly in Tlaxcala, Mexico, in 1996. The Indonesian delegation consisted of NGO activists, because grassroots agrarian movements in Indonesia were then in their infancy and geographically dispersed, with some assisted by radical NGOs. Henry Saragih, who would later become global coordinator of La Vía Campesina, was then with an Indonesian NGO (Yayasan Sintesa) based in Medan. Saragih and colleagues, inspired by what they witnessed at the LVC assembly, resolved to expedite the process of building a national agrarian movement. Soon after, Serikat Petani Indonesia (SPI – Indonesian Farmers Union) was established, and NGOs played a significant role in aggregating the country's localized movements into a coherent national federation. SPI became well known internationally as host

of LVC's global secretariat. Even after SPI became a key LVC member it continued to work closely with NGOs. Some of these NGOs specialized in community organizing, others in legal issues, and still others in action research. The history of SPI is a story of a tightly intertwined, almost inseparable relation linking NGOs and grassroots agrarian movements in the construction of TAMS (Bachriadi 2010).

The SPI story in Indonesia is similar to that of South Africa's Landless People's Movement (LPM). Immediately after the end of apartheid in 1994, there was a short period marked by great enthusiasm and optimism about building militant agrarian movements. Land reform was a key issue in the national regime transition. In the second half of the 1990s, a broad NGO coalition, the National Land Committee (NLC), jumpstarted the process of building a national agrarian organization, the Landless People's Movement. Prior to this, NGOs that were NLC members did community organizing in various regions because at the time there were hardly any local agrarian movement organizations. The political moment of transition called for a national agrarian movement. NLC accelerated the process of national movement building and linked this initiative internationally with LVC. The outcome was less than satisfactory: the LPM has never gained political momentum and has never built a mass base. The NLC itself would later collapse (Greenberg 2004), after which the task of helping LPM was taken up by MST. MST deployed Brazilian organizers to South Africa as part of the LVC effort to strengthen LPM (Baletti, Johnson and Wolford 2008), but this too failed to produce the intended outcome. The LPM continues to exist today, but it is organizationally thin and politically weak. The LPM's and SPI's histories both point to how inseparable NGOs and grassroots organizations sometimes are, but the outcomes and trajectories in Indonesia and South Africa diverged markedly.

A second contribution of NGOs to TAMS involved facilitating transnational information flows and cross-border exchanges of cadres and militants. This was especially the case in the formative years of TAMS when information technology and transportation were not yet as accessible and affordable as they eventually became. In many world regions in the 1980s and early 1990s, NGOs had vastly greater access than agrarian movements to computers and communications

technology. In this period NGO offices were typically equipped with phones, faxes, pagers and computers — and eventually internet connections. This was much less common for agrarian movements, even those that managed to rent modest offices. Today, most NGOs have the funds to pay for the international travel of their staff, and many also support the travel of agrarian movement activists. The impact of access to communications infrastructure on agrarian movements has been far-reaching. As Deere and Royce (2009: 9–10) pointed out in the context of Latin America, access to internet and “the rapid spread of cell phone usage ... has greatly improved the capacity of rural organizations to mobilize their membership on short notice for meetings, marches, and demonstrations,” both inside a country and internationally.

The third significant contribution of NGOs to TAMS is action research that informs advocacy work. Action research on trade policy and GATT (later, WTO) was mainly handled by research NGOs. Among them were the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI), based in Canada, which later became the ETC Group and which focuses on synthetic biology and genetic engineering; the Barcelona-based GRAIN, which tracks transnational agribusiness companies; Focus on the Global South — headquartered in Bangkok and founded by Walden Bello, who earlier served as director of Oakland-based Food First — which provided research support for LVC on trade issues during the second half of the 1990s; and the Land Research and Action Network (LRAN), established in 2002 by a number of NGOs and coordinated by Peter Rosset after his term as director of Food First to support LVC in its Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform. Research by the Amsterdam-based Transnational Institute (TNI, chaired by Susan George) on aid, trade, food politics and corporate power has similarly helped inform LVC’s operations.

In sum, the waning of influence of political parties over agrarian movements paralleled an increasing internationalization of many agrarian issues. Both phenomena contributed to the rise of agrarian-oriented NGOs worldwide. These in turn took up some of the roles previously played by political parties in a process that contributed mightily to forging transnational ties between agrarian movements.

### TAMs and Non-Governmental Donor Agencies

In this section, we focus on relations between TAMs and nongovernmental donor agencies, such as Oxfam, ActionAid, ChristianAid, Misereor and Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO). These agencies are not state institutions, though they receive funds from government sources. From here onward, we simply refer to them as “donor agencies.”

The rise of TAMs during the past two decades coincided with the rise of the global donor complex, a huge and complicated topic that cannot be fully explored in this book. The donor agencies' contribution to building TAMs was similar to that of NGOs, but with some significant differences. First, these donors provided much-needed funds to build grassroots agrarian movements and the NGOs that supported the movements. This work in the past was performed partly by political parties. The history of contemporary agrarian movements, including the most radical ones, is a story of sudden, significant funding flows from donor agencies mainly based in and/or coordinated from northern countries. The rise of local-national and transnational agrarian movements in turn provided the material basis for the rapid expansion of the funding base of these agencies in the North. Each is thus etched into the other's history, and each constitutes one dimension of a symbiotic relationship. It is important to emphasize, however, that we are not saying that the rise of agrarian movements was donor-driven (i.e., that a movement's *raison d'être* is the existence of funds). This is not the case at all with most of the radical agrarian movements that emerged during this period, at least not those that would be associated with LVC and IPC. What we are arguing instead is that the sizeable funding flows from these donors have contributed significantly to organizational consolidation and mass mobilization by contemporary agrarian movements.

Second, donor agencies contributed to facilitating cross-border information flows and encounters between agrarian movement cadres. This was critical. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the formative period for many TAMs, information and communications technology was becoming more accessible, but it was still not within reach for many movements. Acquiring fax machines, paying phone bills,



recording videos and setting up computers with internet connections all entailed major costs. Travelling across borders, similarly, required significant funding. Agrarian movements that were not beholden to political parties did not have these resources. It was the donor agencies that generously provided these essential resources, sometimes directly to agrarian movements and sometimes indirectly through intermediary NGOs. It was precisely in this situation that LVC held its founding congress in Mons, Belgium, in 1993, which was organized and funded by the Dutch NGO PFS. One of PFS’s main objectives at the meeting was to create a platform to raise more funds from European governments to support farmers’ organizations based in the south.

Third, donor agencies provided most of the funding for transnational advocacy campaigns, which were always expensive. Transporting dozens of agrarian activists and NGO leaders from various parts of the world to the 1988 GATT negotiations in Montreal, Canada, was one of the key moments in cross-border agrarian movement linkages. The political significance and impact of that encounter would prove to be strategic and long-lasting. But the expense of bringing a huge delegation to Canada from all parts of the world was substantial. Similarly costly were subsequent large gatherings by LVC and its allies in Belgium in 1993, in Tlaxcala, Mexico, in 1996, in Seattle in 1999, in Cancún, Mexico, in 2000, and at the annual gatherings of the World Social Forum. These were all no doubt critical encounters and crucial to the political life of TAMS.<sup>1</sup> The funds required to make these events happen were enormous, and donor agencies continued to provide these resources over time. A well-oiled and functioning TAM is inconceivable without the financial support of donor agencies, principally because many TAMs are movements mainly of poor people that cannot generate sufficient revenue from members’ dues or contributions.

### **Tensions and Contradictions between TAMs, NGOs and Donors**

In the discourse of TAMs, the term “NGO” is often used as a catch-all phrase to mean both intermediary NGOs and nongovernmental donor agencies. Conflating the two is not helpful in understanding

the relationship between TAMs and these sets of actors. This section briefly examines tensions between TAMs, NGOs and donors.

LVC was born with an intense anti-NGO discourse. The now-defunct Central American peasant coalition ASOCODE played a leading role in establishing LVC and was famous for articulating the first systematic TAM critique of NGOs. ASOCODE sought to take back the “voice” of peasant movements and asserted that peasants could directly represent themselves without NGO intermediaries. Wilson Campos, a Costa Rican activist who coordinated ASOCODE in the 1990s and was a founding leader of LVC, declared: “There are simply too many NGOs in Central America acting on behalf of the peasants. ... Besides, too much money is being wasted on setting up all these organisations and paying salaries” (Biekart and Jelsma 1994: 20). Campos elaborated: “We farmers can speak up for ourselves. Already too many people have been taking advantage of us, without us getting any the wiser of it” (Campos 1994: 215). Ironically, as even Campos later recognized, ASOCODE eventually became what it claimed to reject: a bureaucratized, NGO-like organization, with lots of salaried functionaries and a lavish headquarters. By the end of the 1990s, ASOCODE had disbanded — a victim in part of over-funding by overly enthusiastic donor agencies (Edelman 2005, 2008).

A critical examination of some of the tensions in relations between agrarian movements on the one hand, and NGOs and donor agencies, on the other, includes the following observations. First, NGOs and donor agencies pretending to speak for peasants and agrarian movements triggered much of the tension. Many NGOs and donor agencies used to go to international meetings, negotiations with governments and various other fora claiming to act on behalf of poor peasants. Historically, NGOs and donors had to occupy seats that opened up in international fora because there were simply not enough organized agrarian movements that could do so, apart from the privileged seats pre-allocated to IFAP (discussed in Chapter 2). Initially this was not a problem. In the Philippines, for example, KMP was organized only in 1985. Before that, the famous peasant leader Felicisimo “Ka Memong” Patayan would travel around the world representing Filipino peasants but wearing the organizational hat of an NGO. In Indonesia, before the formal birth of SPI as a national

movement, Yayasan Sintesa, an NGO based in Medan, represented by Henry Saragih, would be the one to go around and occupy seats at international conferences. During the second half of the 1990s in South Africa, NGOs that were members of the NLC played a similar role. While initially this NGO presence in international institutions was not a problem for agrarian activists, as movements consolidated in the 1990s, they eventually found that seats in international gatherings allocated for grassroots representation were closed to them. Many NGOs and donor agencies were quick to realize the changed context and appropriately gave up their places in favour of agrarian movements. But not all NGOs and donor agencies did this.

Some NGOs clearly wanted to assert their claim to representation in international fora for political reasons. Some believed they could contribute more effectively than grassroots activists, and some disagreed with the politics of particular social movements. In addition, holding onto such seats was in and of itself a demonstration of efficacy, which could bring institutional returns such as funding or opportunities for exercising influence. The early and decisive "agrarian movement-NGO" scuffle between what would become today's LVC and the Dutch NGO Paulo Freire Stichting can be partly explained using this lens. The PFS believed that all agrarian movements should just become members of the politically conservative IFAP. As part of IFAP they would work to reform, not reject, the WTO and to secure big funding from government aid agencies to support cooperatives and similar projects. LVC activists, in contrast, advocated for a more radical program and autonomous practices of representation.

A second problem is the tendency of NGOs and donor agencies to use their privileged access to funds to influence the ideological and organizational character of agrarian movements. NGOs and donor agencies do not operate in a political vacuum. They have their own political and ideological biases, networks and agendas. When such agendas converge with grassroots agrarian movements and TAMS, political tensions are minimal. But when they diverge or contradict each other, frictions can become severe.

Third, donor agencies finance most of TAMS' international campaigns. Most but not all donors stay in the background. Some seek to heighten their profile in order to raise funds. For this or other

reasons, some have their own international advocacy programs. There is nothing inherently problematic about this, especially when their campaign master frame, issue analysis and demands converge with their partner TAMS. Complications arise, however, when their campaign master frame and demands compete with or — worse — contradict those of grassroots agrarian movements.

The discourse about “agrarian movement–NGO” relations builds on several assumptions popular among social movement activists. We discuss them here in abbreviated form, risking some oversimplification.<sup>2</sup> First, activists frequently assert that only agrarian movements, and not NGOs and donor agencies, can represent the rural poor. Second, they argue that NGOs and donor agencies are led by middle-class professionals while agrarian movements are led by poor peasants and farmers. Third, NGOs are said to be bureaucratic and undemocratic, unlike movements, which are non-bureaucratic and democratic. Fourth, NGOs have funds, while movements do not have funds. Fifth, NGOs are paternalistic or clientelistic, in contrast to agrarian movements, which are “horizontal” and representative. Sixth and finally, NGOs are allegedly politically conservative and do not engage in direct action, while agrarian movements are radical and employ direct action. Not all elements of this discourse are articulated together or explicitly expressed at all times. Frequently these arguments are voiced separately and implicitly.

Many global justice movements, activists and radical academics accept these characterizations of “good” TAMS versus “bad” NGOs and donor agencies. Examples of anti-NGO discourse abound in scholarly literature. James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer (2001), for example, lump NGOs together and label them a “neo-comprador class.” Lesley Gill (2000: 169) derides the attraction of NGOs to “fashionably exotic groups, such as women’s and indigenous peoples’ organizations.” The reality, however, is far more complicated than these simplistic binaries suggest.

The issue of representation is context-dependent. Where there are agrarian movements that can represent the grassroots, then NGOs and donors have a lot of explaining to do if they insist on speaking in the name of poor peasants. But in settings where there are no agrarian movements, NGOs can productively step in on an ad hoc basis.

Although most NGOs are run by middle-class intellectuals, there are NGOs with staff members who are the sons and daughters of peasants. Usually field staff, they are directly engaged with the rural poor in the villages and are involved in framing issues and making demands in the context of building agrarian movements. Their class origin arguably lends legitimacy to their representation claims and may make them effective organizers. There are also agrarian movements, including some that belong to radical TAMS, which are led by middle-class professionals. The case of LVC member Karnataka State Farmers' Association (KRRS, see Chapter 2) in India is illustrative (Assadi 1994), although there are many other examples across continents.

Not all NGOs are bureaucratic and undemocratic, and not all agrarian movements are non-bureaucratic and democratic. Nor are all NGOs well-funded and all agrarian movements broke. Indeed, over-funding, as indicated above, has sometimes led to the demise of otherwise promising agrarian movements.

Furthermore, there are NGOs that are not paternalistic, while there are agrarian movements — especially their national, elite leaderships — that are. And there are NGOs that engage in radical direct action, while there are plenty of agrarian movements that do not.

In short, the differences between NGOs and movements are largely ideological and political and are not straightforward. They ought not to be reduced crudely to questions of organizational form.

### **The Changing Global Donor Complex and Its Implications**

Increased support by Northern donor agencies to social justice-oriented NGOs and TAMS was not pure altruism. Partnering with NGOs, local-national agrarian movements and TAMS helped consolidate the funding base of the donors. Movements and donors shared a common interest in each other gaining strength. For donors, the success of their movement partners demonstrates their own success and justifies further funding. For movements, donors provide not just material resources but access to information and expertise, as well as enhanced legitimacy. The two sides are more intertwined than they may realize, or than they would want to be. They emerged and gained

strength together. If one is weakened, however, it will likely have a debilitating effect on the other — although this is not inevitable.

Agrarian and agrarian-related issues spurred rapid, massive flows of funds to donor agencies. Food production, agricultural trade, rural malnutrition and hunger, environmental crisis and climate change, forestry and rural poverty are all targets of official aid and donor programs. The same problems that inspired the rise of agrarian movements and TAMS captured the interest of donors. The weakening of militant trade unionism likely freed up funds that were allocated to agrarian-related initiatives. In short, compelling issues that are agrarian and agrarian-related and the exciting rise of movements and NGOs in this sector fuelled the expansion of nongovernmental funds, mostly coming from northern countries.

Many of the donor groups started as small, church-based agencies. Since they generated money from church and/or community networks, they were fairly autonomous in deciding what issues to take up and which partner NGOs and social movements to support. But as demands from below intensified amidst rising NGOs and emerging agrarian movements, church agency funds quickly became insufficient. During the 1980s, when global neoliberalism went on the offensive, the retrenchment that affected so many states also impacted the official aid complex. Privatization in the official aid complex meant the NGOization of much of the aid sector. What earlier would have been bilateral aid was increasingly channelled through northern NGOs (i.e., donor agencies), which contracted aid money wholesale and then retailed it among intermediary NGOs and social movements in developing countries. The explicit intent was to substitute for states that were viewed as inefficient and/or corrupt (Edwards and Hulme 1995). The small church-based donor agencies saw their traditional fundraising eclipsed by enormous inflows of government funds. Their portfolios of “partner” and “counterpart” recipient organizations in the Global South expanded in tandem with the sudden influx of cooperation funding.

Northern European countries are the hub of the donor complex and have the highest ratios of overseas development assistance (ODA) to gross national income (GNI). The Netherlands, with a population of less than 17 million, provided US\$5.6 billion in development

aid in 2013, placing it eighth among leading donor countries, all of which (except Norway) are much larger. Interestingly, 2013 was the first year since 1974 in which the Netherlands ODA/GNI ratio fell below 0.7 percent, the target level long recommended by the United Nations (OECD 2014). A closer look at the Dutch example illustrates the opportunities and vulnerabilities that the donor-partner model entails for social movements and developing-country NGOs.

The Dutch Co-Financing Program is one of the largest in this global donor league. The formal mechanism of co-financing with NGOs had been in place since 1965, but it was only in the late 1970s that it began to expand rapidly and steadily. State allocations to the Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO), for example, multiplied by a factor of six between 1973 and 1990 (Derksen and Verhallen 2008: 224–25). By the mid-1990s, NGOs and non-governmental donor agencies “*not dependent on official aid for the majority of their budgets are now the exception rather than the rule*” (Edwards and Hulme 1995: 5, original emphasis).

Since the 1980s, a handful of agencies cornered the bulk of Dutch aid funds. They were popularly referred to as “The Big Four”: Novib (later Oxfam-Novib), the Catholic Church consortium now known as Cordaid (and previously as Cebemo), Hivos, and the Protestant Interchurch Organization for Development Cooperation (ICCO) (de Groot 1998). It is significant to single out the Big Four not just for the scale of their operations, but also because they channelled substantial support to radical NGOs, local and national agrarian movements, and TAMS. In 2007, fund shares and the allocation process were changed, allowing for the entry of small and medium-sized Dutch NGOs with diverse work portfolios and political orientations.

The new system introduced in 2007 was called MFS-1 (Co-Financing Scheme), with a three-year funding cycle. In the first, 2007–2010 cycle, the Big Four won a total of close to €1.7 billion — or €577 million per year (80 percent of the total co-financing funds). In the second, four-year (2011–2015) cycle, they received €1.5 billion — or €378 million per year (71 percent of the subsidies awarded). The total amount of Dutch foreign development cooperation — US\$5.6 billion in 2013 (OECD 2014) — is much higher than these figures indicate, since not all aid is channelled through

the Co-Financing Scheme, and more than fifty small and medium-sized agencies also received government funding (Minbuza 2009). The Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and various Dutch embassies worldwide also disburse funds to developing-country counterparts. In short, in the period since 2007, approximately half a billion dollars per year of Dutch funds went to donors or NGOs that work with social justice-oriented TAMS. This is not to say that TAMS were the only partners of these agencies nor that this sum went entirely to donations — much went to administrative overhead — but it does suggest the scale of resources to which some TAMS gained access. Obviously, the Dutch Co-Financing Scheme was vastly larger and more complex than a small-scale, door-to-door volunteer fundraising effort in an urban neighbourhood, as during a Catholic Lenten campaign or a year-end campaign by Food First that rewards donors of US\$100 with a book by Eric Holt-Giménez.

The 2008 financial crisis and the rise of conservative parties in many donor countries increased pressures on aid budgets. Skeptical politicians argued for spending restraint and demanded evidence that taxpayers' money was having a positive impact. In the Netherlands, the second co-financing cycle (2011–2015) marked a transition towards a new system of cooperation funding. Overall allocations per year fell slightly, as did the share of the Big Four agencies. Smaller groups, such as the Transnational Institute and Friends of the Earth, had to apply in clusters or alliances to gain access to funds. The outlines of the post-2015 system are still unclear, but it is likely that fewer funds will be available and that these will be allocated through market-oriented mechanisms, such as project-specific tenders or subcontracting rather than institutional bulk funding. The new orientation that will likely guide partner selection and fund disbursement is “business and human rights,” a version of the corporate social responsibility framework. Many Dutch nongovernmental agencies are aligning with this new orientation, which emphasizes projects with concrete and quantifiable results and which are easy for Dutch taxpayers to understand (Derksen and Verhallen 2008).

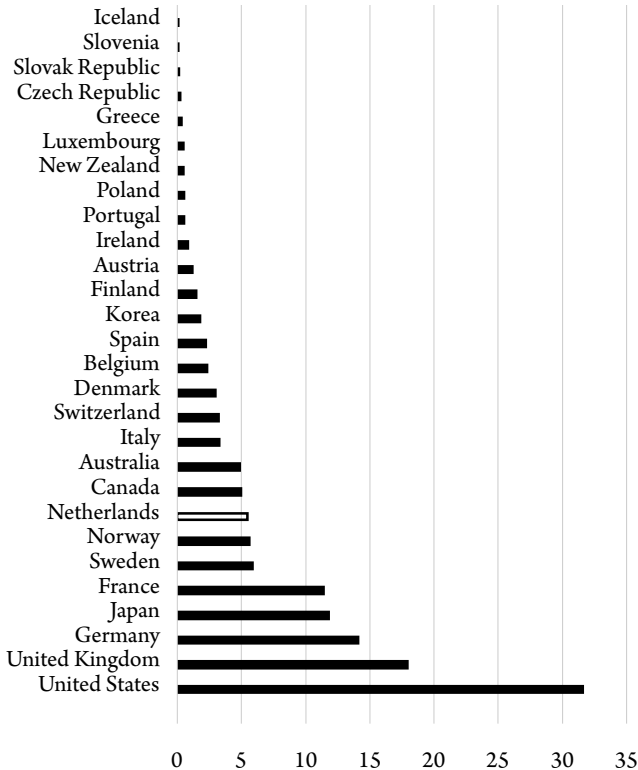
The Netherlands is the eighth largest provider of overseas development assistance and ranks sixth in terms of its assistance as a percentage of gross national income (see Figures 5.1 and 5.2). Its



significance for our analysis, however, transcends these impressive rankings. Dutch and German agencies have been among the largest supporters of radical agrarian movements. More broadly, the co-financing model pioneered in the Netherlands in the 1960s has been adopted, with modifications, by most other European countries and Canada. Finally, the retrenchment pressures that have affected the Dutch aid complex are equally or more acute in these other countries.

Why have northern European governments been so generous in supporting — even if indirectly — radical movements in the Global South? A full treatment of this important question is beyond the scope of this book, so we merely outline some hypotheses here.

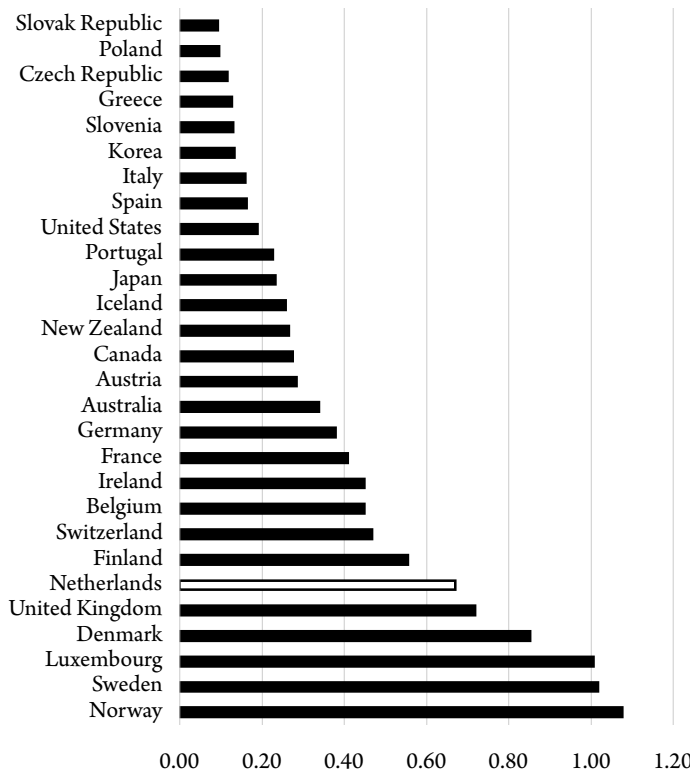
Figure 5.1 Overseas Development Assistance in US\$ Billion, 2013



Source: OECD 2014

The worldwide proliferation of civil society organizations in the 1980s and 1990s coincided first with the democratization of much of Latin America (and some other regions) and second with the end of the Cold War. The United States was the largest source of ODA, but it tended to back counterparts in developing countries that were conservative and pro-business and to emphasize free elections, legal reforms, privatization of public-sector entities and economic liberalization. In regions such as Central America and the Philippines in the 1980s, Washington viewed revolutionary movements as rooted fundamentally in communist “subversion.” European policymakers

Figure 5.2 Overseas Development Assistance as a Percentage of Gross National Income, 2013



Source: OECD 2014

— especially the Spanish, Scandinavian, Dutch and German social democrats — pointed to inequality, poverty, human rights violations and authoritarian rule as central causes of unrest. Two competing civil society projects thus emerged in the waning years of the Cold War, a U.S. one that mainly backed private-sector initiatives and a European (and Canadian) one that pursued democratization, development and social stability by empowering historically disadvantaged groups (Macdonald 1997). In succeeding years, as many European countries and Canada moved to the right, their governments’ understandings of foreign aid increasingly converged — though still not completely — with the market-oriented U.S. vision.

In coming years, the flow of funds from northern nongovernmental donor agencies will likely continue, because governments gain politically from providing development aid. The volume and modalities of aid, however, are already shifting dramatically. The future portends radically reduced volumes of funds provided in a politically inflexible manner: fewer institutional grants for general operating support and more project-specific contracts, less spending on politically oriented oppositional movements and more on public-private partnership initiatives.<sup>3</sup>

An additional challenge is the growing hostility of many governments to foreign donor agencies and their local counterparts. Laws and regulations limiting civil society organizations’ access to external funding are increasingly common. The list of countries that restrict such assistance is long and politically diverse: Russia, India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Cambodia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Honduras, Hungary, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Zambia, Uzbekistan, Jordan, Egypt and Algeria, among others (Carothers and Brechenmacher 2014). While some of these countries have robust peasant movements affiliated with TAMS, many others do not, and at least some of the uneven geographical presence of TAMS mentioned in Chapter 4 is likely attributable to governments’ efforts to limit or complicate foreign funding for civil society.

Two decades ago and in the context of the development aid–NGO politics analyzed here, Ian Smillie (1995: 160) wrote: “When CIDA [Canadian International Development Agency] sneezes ... Canadian

NGOs reach for their vitamin C.” Twenty years later CIDA did not just sneeze, but suffered an acute attack of restructuring, the symptoms of which included sharp reductions in funding, a less flexible and more politically conservative orientation, and heightened subservience to the foreign affairs and trade interests of the Canadian government. How has this impacted Canadian NGOs and nongovernmental donors? The affected agencies range from the large Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace (CCODP) to smaller radical groups such as Inter Pares, most of which partner with radical agrarian movements in various world regions. How is the domino effect of retrenchment going to mark TAMs in coming years?

Agrarian movements and TAMs will not collapse just because the donor complex suffers major transformations. It is likely, however, that some national movements will weaken as aid flows diminish and that this will in turn impact the TAMs in which they participate. During the past few years, LVC lost at least three of its most important funders.<sup>4</sup> Finding new donors and significant institutional funding support will not be easy. Another major TAM, the IPC, has never managed to secure stable institutional funding. Even the politically conservative IFAP, as discussed in Chapter 3, succumbed to a sudden withdrawal of support by a major funder. These negative impacts are not necessarily insurmountable. When national agrarian movements and TAMs broke away from their traditional allies (i.e., political parties), they helped create an alternative (i.e., NGOs and the donor complex). The emerging funding crunch may very well lead to new alternatives, the emergence of a new allies and more creative funding modalities, though the process will certainly pose major, ongoing challenges.

### **Conclusion: Tensions and Synergies beyond Organizational Form**

TAMs, NGOs and donor agencies rose together in the same global sociocultural and political-economic context. The partial retreat of nation-states in the midst of neoliberal globalization paved the way for the rise of NGOs and the donor complex. The pre-1980s alliances between political parties and peasant movements largely

faded away in many parts of the world. Some of the logistical and political functions that political parties had carried out in relation to agrarian movements were taken up by NGOs and donor agencies, and this contributed to the rise of TAMS.

Classic agrarian studies that focus on the agency of labouring classes often note that peasants are not wary of alliances with external actors (Thorner 1986). Indeed, since they often lived in isolated settings, they almost always needed external allies to reduce the risks of collective actions and to increase their political reach. It is the *terms* of such alliances that peasants tend to be wary about. The history of peasant alliances with external actors, especially political parties, is one of constant renegotiation and contestation. Peasants' relationships with NGOs and donor agencies are similar. Radical TAMS, especially LVC and IPC, challenged IFAP and the latter's claims to represent the peasantry. In much the same way, LVC and IPC consistently assert their autonomy from their partners and funders, especially in relation to questions of representation, neatly framed by the slogan "Not about us without us." Key questions now are how TAMS will weather the metamorphosis of the aid complex and how donors will respond to agrarian movements' insistence on autonomy and self-representation.

### Notes

1. To maintain a minimally functional organization, LVC, for example has to carry out the following costly activities: regular global assembly every four years; two meetings every year of its International Coordinating Commission, which usually involve at least twenty people from various world regions; regular meetings of its thematic commissions; and occasional travels to various parts of the world for meetings, conferences and advocacy campaigns.
2. This section draws partly on Borras (2008).
3. That long-term provision of general operating support can be crucial to grantees is illustrated by the impact of conservative philanthropy in the United States since the 1980s. While conservative foundations there provided massive long-term backing to powerful right-wing "think tanks," progressive funders emphasized more modest project-based support to their partners, none of which attained similar influence or a comparable degree of economic security (Covington 2005).
4. These included two Dutch donors, Oxfam-Novib and ICCO.

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## TAMs and Intergovernmental Institutions

The state-peasant relationship is a central theme in critical agrarian studies. The countryside and the peasantry have long been central objects of the state-building agenda. Peasant politics in turn has aimed at influencing, transforming or even seizing the state. Scholarly works on this relationship include classics of the historical-institutionalist tradition, notably Barrington Moore Jr.'s *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966), and more recent books by Merilee Grindle (1986) and Jonathan Fox (1993), both on Mexico. Even studies of “everyday” peasant politics are very much about state-peasant relations, as the works of James Scott (1976, 1985, 1990, 1998, 2009), Benedict Kerkvliet (2005) and Kevin O’Brien and Lianjiang Li (2006) indicate. The state-peasant relationship is also central in analyses of contemporary agrarian conflicts, from the 1995 Chiapas uprising (Harvey 1998) to the controversial post-2000 fast track land reform in Zimbabwe (Cliffe et al. 2011), rural reforms in China (Yeh, O’Brien and Ye 2013) and contention between the Landless Workers Movement (MST) and the government in Brazil (Wolford 2010).

The era of neoliberal globalization and the rise of transnational agrarian movements require that we broaden our focus. The state-countryside relationship remains significant, of course, but it has to be understood in light of interactions between TAMs and intergovernmental institutions. Conversely, analyses of the politics of intergovernmental institutions should engage — when relevant — with scholarly work on agrarian movements and state-peasant relations. Essential conceptual building blocks include the ideas of autonomy, co-optation and accountability.

### Neoliberalism, Nation-States and the Rise of Civil Society

During the past three decades, states in the Global South — and in the North as well — have faced multiple pressures. Neoliberal globalization has tended to undermine national regulatory powers while simultaneously strengthening the role of international governance. Nation-states have had to devolve political, fiscal and administrative powers to local governments as part of the decentralization that international financial institutions encouraged in the name of accountability, “community empowerment” and cheaper, more efficient service delivery (World Bank 2003). The privatization of many public-sector functions has shredded social safety nets, undercut states’ legitimacy and diminished their capacity for employing patronage or corporatist measures to shore up popular support (Fox 2001). Moreover, the proliferation of “financial paradises” and the increasing ease of moving money offshore weaken states’ fiscal underpinnings and force them to acquiesce to the demands of powerful financial sector interests (Henry 2012). Nonetheless, central states remain important, albeit transformed, players in politics and the economy (Keohane and Nye 2000: 12). States’ partial withdrawal from their traditional obligations to the labouring agrarian classes, and the waves of privatization that affect poor people’s control over natural resources and their access to credit, social services and basic utilities, have left many exposed to the harshness of market forces.

This shifting global-local terrain presents threats and opportunities to the world’s rural population. Agrarian movements have further localized in response to state decentralization and the “elite capture” that often accompanies it, while at the same they have had to internationalize their policy advocacy and mobilizations in response to the rise of global governance. One result of this complex adjustment is the emergence of more horizontal, “polycentric” agrarian social movements that struggle to construct coordination structures for “vertical integration” within particular countries and at the transnational level. The seemingly contradictory dynamic of globalization versus decentralization, which is having such a powerful impact on the state, is thus also transforming the politics and organizational processes of agrarian movements. It is from this conjuncture that

contemporary transnational agrarian movements (TAMs) emerged and struggle to engage new forms of supranational governance.

International development agencies were quick to seize upon the emergence of TAMs as an opportunity for “partnerships for development.” This relatively new modality of development practice emphasizes collaborative relationships between international governance institutions and corporate and/or civil society entities (both grouped under the new, classless category of “stakeholders”). The 1992 U.N. Environmental Summit in Rio de Janeiro initiated the rapid take-off of the “partnership” model (Bruno and Karliner 2002). Two years later the report of a panel headed by former Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso brought reforms in procedures for accrediting civil society organizations in the U.N. and allowed grassroots groups to make important inroads (McKeon 2009; Willets 2006). Streets and Thomsen (2009: 8) provide a good summary of the extent to which such partnerships (which most likely range from joint research to hard projects) have multiplied:

Although there is no global overview of the number of existing partnerships, evidence based on reports of individual agencies, the rising number of entries to the database of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) — now [in 2009] listing 344 partnerships compared to 319 in 2006 — and the increased number of bilateral partnership programs ... suggest an increase in overall partnership numbers. The [FAO] ... counts more than 830 collaborative arrangements. ... There is also a trend towards more global multi-stakeholder initiatives. About 400 global partnerships worldwide were identified in 2005 ... compared with 50 in the 1980s. The World Bank currently engages in 125 Global Partnership Programs and 50 Regional Partnership Programs ... the United Nations Development Programme engaged in more than 40 ... and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) ... 30.

For international institutions, forging alliances with civil society is not new. What is new is forging alliances with *transnational* groups.

Sauvinet-Bedouin, Nicholson and Tarazona (2005: 11) explain: “The new phenomenon affecting the relations between FAO and the NGOs and CSOs [civil society organizations] is the coalescence of NGO/CSOs into transnational social movements and networks, think tanks and global policy networks.” For the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), forging partnership with TAMS was part of its mandate in carrying out the Millennium Development Goals (goal number eight was “building a global partnership for development”). But FAO is also cautious, noting that “these are evolving [groups] and include a very broad range of organizations, representing diverse groups and views in society.” It therefore calls for attention to “the genuine ability of individual CSOs/NGOs to represent specific constituencies” and stresses that “when entering into partnership with CSOs/NGOs, FAO needs to be more open and inclusive. This is all the more important in that FAO is particularly appreciated by this category in its role as an honest broker” (FAO 2006: 2–3).

As intergovernmental institutions have become increasingly involved in framing, funding and implementing agrarian and other policies (especially trade policies) that impact agriculture, they have become targets of TAM campaigns. Some of these have been highly confrontational mobilizations “from outside,” as in the case of LVC’s and other movements’ efforts to disrupt WTO meetings. Other campaigns, however, suggest that the more militant movements are seeking “entry points” into intergovernmental institutions so as to exercise influence “from inside” (elite and mainstream organizations, such as IFAP and more recently WFO, have always been on the “inside”). The FAO — which agrarian movements perceive not only as “an honest broker” but as more flexible and also more amenable to pressure than WTO — clearly recognizes differences among TAMS like those we have analyzed in earlier chapters, although it stops short of naming those differences or explaining why they matter.

LVC’s global campaigns on key agrarian issues have contributed to carving out a new and distinct space for citizen participation in international policymaking. Within and through this space, LVC processes and aggregates the varied perspectives and positions of its member organizations, engages with other non-state actors working on global agrarian and trade issues, and interacts with intergovern-

mental institutions. This space can be described as “new” because previously the only groups that had an institutional presence were NGOs and middle and rich farmers’ organizations, which often claimed they were acting on behalf or speaking in the name of poor peasants and small farmers. It is “distinct,” because it has been created, occupied and used by and for poor peasants and small farmers.

The transformation of the nation-state in the context of neo-liberal globalization has reshaped state–civil society relations in two other interrelated ways. Jonathan Fox’s explanation, using the metaphor of a squeezed balloon, points to one vexing issue:

In this context of power shared between local, state, federal governments, as well as international actors, civil society organizations face the problem of the balloon — when you squeeze it over here, it pops out over there. That is, when an advocacy initiative focuses on a particular branch or level of government, one can pass the ball to another. When one criticizes a state government agency, it is very easy for them to pass the buck, by blaming the federal government above, or the municipal governments below. ... This dilemma for civil society organizations is deepened by the lack of transparency at *all* levels of “public” decision-making and policy implementation. (Fox 2001: 2, original emphasis)

The “squeezed balloon” problem is both a manifestation and a cause of a second difficulty, which is the need to simultaneously and constantly apply pressure at widely varying levels of governance, a product of the internationalization-decentralization dynamics outlined above. Much of the potency of global civil society organizations — agrarian and non-agrarian — springs from what Keck and Sikkink in their foundational book *Activists Beyond Borders* (1998: 12–13) called “the boomerang pattern” (and that others have termed “venue shifting” [Van Rooy 2004: 20] or “leap-frogging” [O’Brien et al. 2000: 61]). In effect, movements that cannot attain their objectives at one level of domestic politics must attempt to apply pressure at another level and perhaps seek out international allies to pressure governments to comply with international norms.

To engage in struggles at such disparate levels usually requires substantial material and informational resources, including — most importantly — knowledge about possible institutional “entry points” and vulnerabilities.

In the discussion that follows, we examine several aspects of state-TAM relations: institutional space, allies, targets and target adversaries. We briefly discuss TAMs’ strategies and tactics for engaging particular intergovernmental institutions, such as the U.N. Committee on World Food Security (CFS), the Farmers’ Forum sponsored by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the U.N. Human Rights Council, where the rights of peasants are receiving increasing attention. Finally, we also examine what is at stake in different TAMs’ contrasting relationships with these intergovernmental institutions.

### Institutional Space

“Institutional spaces” are venues where formal and informal rules structure encounters between supra-state, state and non-state actors. Among the latter are TAMs, NGOs, CSOs and non-governmental donor agencies that are broadly identified with global justice movements or discourse (see Chapter 2). These venues are political spaces, not technical or administrative ones, and they are critical for TAMs. “Who’s in, who’s out” in a given space can have implications for who gets to influence which policies or who gets access to which and how much funding. Various institutional spaces may be distinguished by looking at how and why the space was created and at who is represented and how they entered. We point to the following types: (1) invited space, where the space existed previously but the initiative to allow civil society into it comes from intergovernmental institutions; (2) space opened up by TAMs’ demands for representation; and (3) newly created space, the result of TAMs’ advocacy, where previously there was none (see Gaventa and Tandon 2010; see also Fox 2005).

Different TAMs perceive these various spaces and their political value differently and their views tend to shift over time as the broader political opportunity structure changes. Broadly speaking, TAMs have four main perspectives on these spaces. First, they view

them as *venues for exchange*. When TAMS are invited to an institutional space, it could mean facilitating the much-needed intra- and inter-TAM face-to-face encounters that they could not otherwise achieve politically or afford financially. It is not unusual to find occasions where the main event (i.e., the intergovernmental forum) was actually peripheral for some TAM actors, while the piggybacked side event or “parallel forum” is the more crucial one. Indeed, the process of carving out institutional spaces for civil society began with “outsider” parallel forums that demanded entrée into closed intergovernmental meetings (Pianta 2001). Second, these venues are sometimes critical *arenas of struggle* over intergovernmental policies that have far-reaching implications for local and national policies. This is, for example, the case of the WTO negotiations and the earlier period of World Bank-brokered meetings on market-led agrarian reform. It is in and around such venues that TAMS deal with their international allies and adversaries. Third, these spaces can be critical *contexts for legitimation* of TAMS’ campaigns or of their national members, some of which are marginalized or persecuted in their home countries. Thus, a peasant group whose leaders receive death threats or that is met with a dismissive attitude in its own national agriculture or commerce ministries gains political legitimacy and a measure of protection when it is invited to or allowed to enter an international institutional space, such as the U.N. Committee on World Food Security and Nutrition (CFS). Fourth, and finally, these spaces may serve to identify sources of *funding* for movement activities. These four broad perspectives are overlapping, of course, and the salience for particular TAMS of one or the other agenda is constantly shifting.

#### *Committee on World Food Security and Nutrition (CFS)*

CFS was one of those anemic committees in the U.N. system. It didn’t do very much that was interesting and nobody was terribly interested, not even TAMS. In 2006, however, after the FAO-sponsored International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD), LVC, IPC and their allies sought to move FAO to put agrarian reform in its priorities for action. Then, in 2008, global food prices skyrocketed, sparking hunger riots in dozens of countries. An international media frenzy highlighted land grabbing

as a major factor in rising food prices. The situation brought calls for a more formal U.N. intervention and also contention between elite- and corporate-led efforts to reshape global governance, on the one hand, and civil society campaigns to claim participation in key institutions, particularly CFS. It was in this context that CFS suddenly became a critical political venue, at least for TAMS working on natural resources, land, water and forestry. Responding to concerted grass-roots pressure, in 2009, CFS moved to give civil society organizations (CSOs) space that was nearly equal to that of official government representatives, including the right to intervene on the floor during CFS plenaries and committee deliberations (although they still could not vote). At the same time, however, CFS also created the Private Sector Mechanism, which provides a platform for corporate interests.

The reform of CFS nonetheless was a major legitimating process for many CSOs (McKeon 2013; Brem-Wilson 2015). It also had a great impact on FAO itself, with other governance bodies, such as the Committee on Fisheries, opening up to participation by transnational movements. In CFS, civil society organizations and TAMS demanded and secured a role in negotiating international agreements, notably what became — in 2012 — the “Voluntary Guidelines for the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests” (CFS 2012; McKeon 2013; Seufert 2013). LVC, IPC and several other TAMS and their allies sent delegations to Rome and actively engaged in the discussions, along with government representatives and corporate interests. While the Voluntary Guidelines, commonly called “VGs,” are non-binding soft law, the more radical TAMS, seeking to move them in the direction of hard or binding law, reject the word “Voluntary” and refer simply to “Tenure Guidelines” or “TGs.”

The Guidelines potentially provide institutional cover for local, national and international political campaigns by TAMS and their members (although they also do so for corporations — such as Coca-Cola — that are under fire for water and land grabbing [Coca-Cola 2013; Franco, Mehta and Veldwisch 2013]). How the Guidelines are implemented on the ground, however, and how CSOs can use them and with what outcomes, depends on the actual balance of power among competing state and non-state actors in particular contexts. Bilateral and multilateral agencies are increas-



ingly providing substantial backing for worldwide implementation of the Guidelines. As rival TAMS compete for financial resources, it will be important to see “who gets what, how and how much, and for what purpose.” The Tenure Guidelines are likely to remain highly contested, as contending interests struggle over their interpretation, implementation and use and as different actors invoke and wrangle over relevant governance principles, such as “free, prior, and informed consent” (FPIC).<sup>1</sup>

### *IFAD Farmers’ Forum*

The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), a specialized U.N. agency, has an agenda and a diverse portfolio of projects that focus on rural poverty reduction and improving food security (it is not to be confused with IFAP, the conservative TAM). IFAD plays a dual role as a donor and lending agency, on the one hand — usually supporting local projects in co-financing arrangements with member governments or regional development banks — and, on the other hand, as an advocate for policies linked to its poverty reduction and food security objectives. Its rural poverty emphasis and financing and advocacy roles have made it an interlocutor of considerable interest to TAMS.

IFAD operates on a much smaller scale than FAO, but its programs are nonetheless quite varied. IFAD documents underscore “its catalytic role as an ‘incubator’ to develop and test innovative projects with the rural poor” (IFAD 2006: 7). According to its 2002–2006 Strategic Plan, its first “objective is to strengthen the capacity of rural poor people and their organizations, including their capacity to influence institutions, policies, laws and regulations of relevance to rural poverty reduction” (IFAD 2005: 8). This institutional self-image as “one of the more progressive multilateral agencies” (IFAD 2005: 12) — “flexible,” “supportive,” “inclusive,” “pluralistic” and “innovative” are among the descriptors trumpeted in IFAD documents — stands in marked contrast to other, larger U.N. agencies and translates into a somewhat unusual commitment to at least listening to the views of peasants and small farmers. IFAD also talks about politically difficult redistributive policies, such as land reform, at a time when few governments wish to consider these. Together with FAO and

the World Food Program, it is part of the Secretariat of the CFS and has committed to being one of the implementing agencies of CFS policies. Nonetheless, IFAD is less politically influential than other larger bilateral and multilateral institutions (Hopkins, Carpano and Zilveti 2006; Kay 2006).

Every two years since 2006, IFAD has held a Farmers' Forum in conjunction with the meeting of the IFAD Governing Council. The initiative for the Forum came from the West African ROPPA network in 2004. Other TAMS that soon signed on included LVC, IFAP, the World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fishworkers (WFF) and the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP). More than just a biannual get-together, the Forum attempts to work as an ongoing, bottom-up process that begins with national-level consultations that are followed by sub-regional and regional meetings. These in turn are intended to provide inputs and to become an instrument of accountability of effectiveness for IFAD's Governing Council.

The Farmers' Forums have several unusual aspects. First, they reflect a commitment to increase IFAD's collaboration and planning with peasants' and farmers' organizations. This represents an important shift, inasmuch as IFAD previously worked almost exclusively with governments and other multilateral institutions. Second, the Forums have seen unprecedented consensus-building — even if at a minimalist level — among TAMS of starkly opposed orientations, with LVC and IFAP, for example, making joint statements and recommendations along with diverse other organizations. Third, high-profile TAMS, such as LVC, have had to share representation on Forum leadership bodies with smaller, newer and less well-known movements that represent other constituencies and political tendencies. The Forum's 2014 Steering Committee included representatives of LVC and ROPPA, but also of the Asian Farmers Association for Sustainable Rural Development (AFA), the Coordination of Family Farms of MERCOSUR (COPROFAM), the Pan-African Farmers' Organization (PAFO),<sup>2</sup> and the two fishers' forums, WFF and WFFP. Finally, IFAD has thoroughly assimilated the notion of “institutional space” that civil society organizations insist on and that we analyze above. Indeed, IFAD even speaks of “respecting existing organizations and creating new spaces where needed” (IFAD 2008: 2).

### *U.N. Human Rights Council*

The dream of a U.N. declaration or convention on the rights of peasants took shape in Indonesia during the turbulent “reform era,” which followed the toppling in 1998 of the Suharto dictatorship (which came to power in the mid-1960s and proceeded to slaughter some 500,000 peasants and ethnic Chinese). Beginning in the 1990s and culminating in 2001, Indonesian agrarian organizations elaborated a lengthy country-specific peasants’ rights declaration that had articles on land rights and natural resources, as well as on free expression and association (Bachriadi 2010; Claeys 2013; Edelman 2014; Edelman and James 2011; Lucas and Warren 2003). LVC’s Asian region drew on the Indonesian document to draft an international declaration on the rights of peasants (Vía Campesina 2002). Also in 2001, an encounter at the World Social Forum in Brazil between Indonesian peasants and activists from the Geneva-based NGO CETIM led La Vía Campesina to enter a new international governance space.<sup>3</sup> Later that year, with CETIM’s support, Indonesian LVC leader Henry Saragih presented a statement supporting a peasants’ rights convention in debates on the “right to development” in the U.N. Human Rights Commission, the predecessor of the Human Rights Council (CETIM, WFDY and Vía Campesina 2001). Saragih returned to Geneva to lobby at the U.N. almost every year after that, always accompanied by LVC activists from other regions.

For years LVC lobbying in Geneva bore little fruit. In 2008, one year after the U.N. passed the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and as the world food crisis worsened, LVC — together with NGO and academic allies — redrafted the text of its proposed peasants’ rights declaration to make it more compatible with existing international legal instruments (Vía Campesina 2009). The draft still contained radical demands, particularly regarding seeds, markets and what it called the “right to reject” outside interventions in peasants’ “territories.”

Beginning in 2010, the process in the Human Rights Council advanced rapidly. The Council’s Advisory Committee, responding to the ongoing food crisis, submitted a preliminary report on “discrimination in the context of the right to food,” which included as

an appendix the entire text of La Vía Campesina's peasants' rights declaration. In 2012, the Advisory Committee submitted its final study on advancement of the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas, which contained an appendix with its own declaration on peasants' rights, a text very similar to the LVC draft (UNHRC Advisory Committee 2012). That same year, the Council authorized the creation of an Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) charged with finalizing the draft declaration. The OEWG held sessions in 2013 and 2015, marked by polarization between countries in the Global North and South. The United States and the European Union countries objected to the proposal on mainly procedural and budgetary grounds, while many developing countries embraced it with enthusiasm.

The balance of forces in the Human Rights Council suggests that at some point peasants and other rural people will probably have a U.N. declaration protecting their rights (which ultimately would have to be approved in the General Assembly in New York). Such a document would obviously call much-needed attention to ongoing violations of human rights in rural areas, but several pressing questions remain unanswered as of this writing. Will the text conserve the peasant movements' "red lines": rights to land, water and seeds, decent income and livelihoods, and food sovereignty? Will peasant activists from so many parts of the world who provided inputs into early drafts continue to feel that they are "owners" of the declaration? A few non-LVC TAMS, notably the Catholic FIMARC network, have long spoken in favour of the declaration in Council sessions. More recently, transnational organizations of rural workers (IUF), fisherfolk (WFFP) and nomadic pastoralists (WAMP) have joined the civil society coalition backing the declaration. Incorporating these groups and reconciling their demands with those of peasants may prove challenging, especially given contradictions between rural labourers and the peasant farmers they work for and ongoing conflicts — especially in Africa — between mobile herders and sedentary agriculturalists. Finally, will a soft-law, non-binding declaration be a useful tool for defending peasants' rights on the ground? The experience of indigenous peoples with UNDRIP is encouraging in this regard, since the international norms have already been

incorporated into many national legal codes, providing real tools to human rights defenders. But opponents of the declaration point out that the category “peasant” is much more heterogeneous than “indigenous,” which potentially makes identification of the rights holders complicated and highly contentious. What is most relevant in terms of our discussion in this book is that by persisting against all odds in the quest for U.N. recognition of peasants’ rights, LVC and its allies have had to engage international governance institutions and national governments in new ways and expand their action repertoires. And these forms of engagement are quite different from those they employed to enter and work within the CFS or IFAD or, for that matter, to protest against the WTO or to negotiate around the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development, an analysis by several multilateral organizations that — perhaps surprisingly — culminated in a report highly critical of industrial agriculture and supportive of agroecology (IAASTD 2009; Scoones 2009).

### Allies

Some intergovernmental institutions, or at least some individuals and groups within these, have become important allies for TAMS and for their national member movements. They provide the much-needed logistical resources and extend the agrarian movements’ political reach beyond national or regional borders. But the concept of alliance can differ radically from one TAM to another, depending on ideological and other factors. LVC and IPC do not have many allies at the level of intergovernmental institutions. There are, however, a small number of influential people within some intergovernmental institutions who, for various reasons, defend LVC’s and IPC’s rights to be represented in international institutional spaces or even help advance these organizations’ goals. For example, several important actors within FAO’s Rome headquarters, especially those in charge of partnership with agrarian movements and resource tenure, have been relatively stable allies for LVC and IPC. This alliance began in the mid-1990s in the lead-up to the 1996 World Food Summit and continued throughout the complicated WTO negotiations, in the ICARRD

agrarian reform process and more recently in CFS, as discussed above. FAO was and still is the most important institutional space for — and ally of — LVC and IPC. In 2013 this relationship was cemented further when Brazilian academic José Graziano da Silva became FAO director general and formalized the alliance in a joint declaration with LVC.<sup>4</sup> “This exchange is important,” Graziano declared,

because FAO allies itself with a movement representing over 200 million farmers around the world and we join forces with a network that tries to innovate on many fronts to extend the right to food to everyone. As I always say, when working together it is not important to agree on everything but to have the same goal, and we are convinced that small-scale farmers are part of the solution to hunger.

LVC general coordinator Elizabeth Mpofu responded:

It has been a long journey and we are very happy to be here today. La Vía Campesina defends food sovereignty and small agro-ecological farming and I think the collaboration initiated today will change many things. ... FAO will support the effective participation of La Vía Campesina in political processes at different levels and promote dialogue for designing sustainable local initiatives, projects and emergency interventions. This partnership is based on knowledge sharing, dialogue, policy development and cooperation in normative activities.<sup>5</sup> It will also discuss various issues of mutual interest including those related to land, seeds and agro-ecological practices of small-scale farmers. (FAO 2013)

Important LVC allies have also been present in other intergovernmental institutions. In the U.N. Human Rights Council, LVC has been able to count on backing from several sympathetic member-states, such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Cuba, Venezuela and South Africa. The first two special rapporteurs on the right to food — appointed as part of the Council’s “special procedures” for independent experts — were Jean Ziegler (2000–2008) and Olivier de Schutter (2008–2014). Ziegler served on the Council’s Advisory Committee after his

mandate as special rapporteur and was instrumental in shepherding LVC's Peasants' Rights Declaration as it went from a social movement proposal to an appendix in an official U.N. document. De Schutter, similarly, has been an outspoken supporter of LVC, frequently dialoguing with its activists and authoring numerous reports on topics such as agroecology, biofuels, gender equity, and large-scale land acquisitions that were consonant with LVC positions.

Peasant, small farmer and landless movements have also begun to forge an alliance with the Vatican — a startling reversal, considering the Catholic hierarchy's historical ties to conservative rural elites in Italy, Spain, Latin America and elsewhere. In 2013, the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, together with the newly appointed Pope Francis (Jorge Mario Bergoglio), sponsored a seminar entitled "The Emergence of the Socially Excluded," which included Brazilian MST activist João Pedro Stédile and Argentine Juan Grabois, leader of an organization of "socially excluded" workers, such as cardboard recyclers and labourers in "recuperated" factories abandoned by their owners after the 2001 economic crisis (Oliveira 2013). A year later, the Vatican hosted a three-day "World Meeting of Popular Movements" with dozens of dozens of peasant, small farmer and landless movements, many of them members of LVC and ROPPA, as well as trade unions, progressive NGOs and fishers', slum dwellers' and indigenous organizations. Few participating organizations were Catholic, although many were from historically Catholic countries. Indeed, the more than one hundred invitees included the Hindu KRRS from India and the anarcho-syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), as well as peasant organizations from Turkey, Bulgaria, Senegal, Central America, Korea, Palestine and many other countries (León 2014). While the explicit objective of the meeting was to strengthen coordination between popular organizations and the Church, it is also clear that both the social movements and Pope Francis — whose pro-poor rhetoric was viewed with suspicion by conservatives in the hierarchy — garnered heightened legitimacy from the encounter.

Large farmer TAMS, such as IFAP and WFO, find very different allies elsewhere. Allies of these organizations include the World Bank, WTO and IFAD. The International Land Coalition (ILC), which brings

together international financial institutions, NGOs and research and advocacy groups, many of which have a strong pro-market orientation, such as the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), has been strongly identified with IFAD and the World Bank and obtains significant support from the World Bank and the European Commission. One way of understanding the politics of particular TAMS is to look at which intergovernmental institutions are their allies — or their adversaries.

### Targets and Adversaries

For some TAMS, particular intergovernmental institutions are targets and adversaries to be publicly named and shamed for policies that are contrary to the interests of labouring agrarian classes. For other TAMS, the same institutions may be allies and sources of support. IFAP and WFO, for example, have had warm relations with the WTO, which is the bane of LVC and its constituent movements. For LVC, the main problem is neoliberalism and institutions that champion it, such as the World Bank and the IMF. This explains LVC's confrontational stance towards the WTO on trade issues and towards the World Bank on the land reform issues.

Although LVC takes a confrontational, "expose and oppose" stance against the World Bank, it participated at least once (in 1999) in a Bank forum (*Vía Campesina* 1999), and some other groups that include LVC member organizations have experimented with demanding accountability from the Bank (Fox and Brown 1998; Scholte 2002). The National Forum for Agrarian Reform in Brazil, for instance, a broad coalition of rural social movements, twice filed for the World Bank Inspection Panel to investigate the market-led agrarian reform experiment there (see Fox 2003). While the request was turned down on both occasions due to technicalities, the Brazilian movements were able to deliver a compelling message about the need for powerful international institutions to be transparent and publicly accountable (Fox 2003: xi).

It is important to emphasize that the large global intergovernmental institutions that LVC has engaged, such as FAO and IFAD, are themselves contested arenas, made up of heterogeneous actors. Moreover, tension is ever-present between different international



institutions. Social movement allies within these institutions sometimes find themselves in politically difficult situations as a result of their advocacy. At the same time, however, these tension and divisions within and between intergovernmental institutions also provide entry points and political opportunities for radical TAMS that allow them to forge alliances with some actors on the inside. An anonymous FAO official remarked in an interview in 2005 (years before the 2013 FAO-LVC partnership discussed above):

The [La Vía Campesina] is seen in FAO as an important, well organized institution, advocating very strongly in favour of agrarian reform. ... However, it should also be said that there are sectors of FAO who simply prefer to ignore the [LVC] because of their “strong” advocacy role. However, if a [LVC] “partnership” with FAO is considered, with acceptable common objectives, there is still good room to maneuver and work together. ... Frankly speaking, the impression is that the [LVC] more than being a lobby in favour of agrarian reform, it has been a lobby against the World Bank. ... But for institutional reasons, we can hardly criticize a sister agency, and the stronger the critique [by LVC of the World Bank], the less the “options” we have to maneuver. (Rosset and Martínez-Torres 2005: Appendix, p.5)

### **Splits and Divisions and TAMS’ Relations with Intergovernmental Institutions**

Development practitioners and academics frequently assume that when reforms do not move fast it is because of a lack of “coherence” among bureaucrats within an agency or between agencies. There is doubtless some truth to this. Splits and divisions among policymakers and institutions, however, may also allow alliances to solidify and reforms to emerge. When powerful intergovernmental institutions achieve a consensus it is typically a conservative one. But when consensus and “coherence” are lacking, institutions tend to be more permeable.

Radical TAMS employ a complex action repertoire to take advan-

tage of such divisions, “naming and shaming” to isolate adversaries and collaborating with allies for mutually reinforcing benefits. In dealing with intergovernmental institutions, LVC and IPC have adeptly combined militant “expose and oppose” actions with negotiations and critical collaboration tactics. Critical collaboration tends to work best when combined with pressure and mobilization from outside. LVC states that “to create a significant impact, we should ... carry out our coordinated actions and mobilizations at the global level. ... Mobilization is still our principal strategy” (Vía Campesina 2004: 48). IPC and APC also accord a central role to mobilization in their protest repertoires, while the large farmer TAMs, such as IFAP, WFO and ILC, prefer to form partnerships with intergovernmental institutions and collaborate from the “inside.” The contrasting ways that radical TAMs (e.g., LVC and IPC) and large farmer TAMs (e.g., IFAP, WFO and ILC) engage intergovernmental institutions are not simply a reflection of institutional turf wars, but are related instead to their distinct class bases and ideological perspectives.

The potency of TAMs’ “collaboration with pressure” strategies may be illustrated by comparing campaigns that employed this approach with others that worked solely “inside” intergovernmental institutions. On most occasions, LVC has employed “inside-outside” strategies and tactics to secure concessions from intergovernmental institutions. While it engages “inside” the spaces of these institutions, it insists on retaining autonomy so it can exercise pressure from “outside” and carry out mobilizations. This dual approach can result in more significant concessions than working just “inside” or “outside.” At the FAO-sponsored International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ICARRD), held in Brazil in 2006, IPC, LVC and their Brazilian supporters organized a parallel Land, Territory and Dignity Forum on the outside, while at the same time pushing on the inside for a more permanent civil society presence in FAO and for profound agrarian, fisheries, rangeland and forestry reforms in favour of the poor. The recognition of many IPC and LVC demands in ICARRD’s final report and the momentum generated toward institutionalizing civil society participation in FAO suggested that the “inside-outside” approach had been at least moderately successful (ICARRD 2006).

When the 2009 reforms to the U.N. Committee on World Food Security (CFS) opened up spaces for broader civil society participation, IPC, LVC and other movements opted not to exercise pressure from “outside” but to work largely within the CFS’s new Civil Society Mechanism. While the CFS’s approval of Tenure Guidelines (discussed above) arguably constituted a victory for agrarian movements, its subsequent “responsible agricultural investment” principles (“RAI”), intended to regulate land grabbing, were widely considered anemic and disappointing — in no small part because of the influence of agribusiness and other corporate actors represented in the CFS’s Private Sector Mechanism. Both the Civil Society Mechanism and the Private Sector Mechanism were considered “stakeholders,” but in the absence of sustained pressure from outside, the private-sector stakeholders were more successful than the civil society ones in having their views reflected in the RAI principles.

### Conclusion

Institutional space is not a zero-sum game, but rather a positive-sum process. As more civil society actors gain footholds in intergovernmental institutions, it facilitates entry for new groups and expands, broadens and democratizes global policymaking processes. But the terrain of international development policymaking is not politically neutral. It is occupied and shaped by actors with competing interests based on, among other things, national, class, professional, ideological, sectoral and corporate agendas. With the entry of LVC and IPC, in particular, these institutional spaces also became sites of encounter for TAMS’ constituent movements and for agrarian and non-agrarian sectors of civil society. The tensions inherent in these spaces are largely rooted in the class origins, social bases, ideologies, politics and institutional make-up of various TAMS and networks. The actors who engage with each other in these arenas do so with distinct degrees of political power, particularly in settings where private sector interests are accorded equal space to civil society or even considered part of civil society. A central challenge for social movements is to simultaneously participate on the inside and also maintain sufficient autonomy so as to exercise pressure from outside.

### Notes

1. On this issue, see Borras, Franco and Wang (2013). For a critical discussion of FPIC, see Franco (2014).
2. PAFO, founded in 2010, unites five regional groups of strikingly diverse orientations: the Network of Peasant and Agricultural Producers Organizations of West Africa (ROPPA), the East African Farmers Federation, the Central Africa Sub-Regional Platform of Farmers' Organizations (PROPAC), the Maghreb Farmers Union and the Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU). The latter, an ally of IFAP and now WFO, represents large commercial farmers, while ROPPA's support is mainly among small producers.
3. Marc Edelman interview with Florian Rochat, CETIM, 7 March 2012, Geneva.
4. Around the same time, however, FAO formalized similar alliances with less radical organizations, such as Oxfam and ActionAid.
5. "Normative activities" refers to the writing of international norms or laws. Olivier de Schutter remarked: "What we see with the CFS is a new breed of global governance emerging, in which [civil society organizations] are co-authors of international law with governments and international agencies" (Wijeratna 2012: 5).

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## Challenges

The transnational agrarian movements that emerged in the 1980s and consolidated in the 1990s have made remarkable strides. In the preceding chapters we analyzed many of their successes and impacts. Most importantly, TAMS forged links between organizations of some of the most marginalized and oppressed sectors of the rural poor in diverse world regions, transcending boundaries of nation-state, language, race, ethnicity, religion, generation and gender. They have constructed cross-class and cross-sectoral alliances around shared interests. As we indicated in Chapters 3 and 4, organizations such as La Vía Campesina (LVC) and the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC) are among today's largest transnational social movements.

Radical TAMS have carved out spaces in international governance institutions that were previously largely deaf to the voices of peasants and small farmers. In Chapter 6 we examined TAMS' presence in the U.N.'s Committee on World Food Security and Nutrition (CFS), the IFAD Farmers' Forum and the U.N. Human Rights Council. They have also repeatedly confronted other institutions — particularly the World Bank and the World Trade Organization — perceived as inherently undemocratic, inflexible and inimical to peasants' interests. TAMS managed to put agrarian reform back on the international development agenda during the 1990s and after and to reinvigorate land distribution programs in several world regions. They have mobilized against the corporations that promote GM crops and have raised the alarm about the land and water grabbing taking place in so many areas of the globe. TAMS have contributed mightily to disseminating agroecological models of production and to creating new models of popular education, whether horizontal farmer-to-farmer extension projects or peasant universities (see Chapter 4). They have learned and taught how to select, propagate, conserve and distribute the seeds that they need for their own production. These processes

have fortified a large and growing corps of sophisticated, often cosmopolitan activists, imbued with the “*mística*” of collective practice. For national and sub-national movements, affiliation with TAMS has often helped to consolidate their organizations and — in places where human rights are routinely violated and peasants’ struggles criminalized — to shield leaders and supporters from repression. TAMS have powerfully sensitized non-agrarian social movements to the ramifications of agrarian problems for food justice, gender equity, human rights, climate justice and the environment.

These remarkable achievements should not, however, blind us to some very real and formidable difficulties, many of which we have alluded to earlier in this book. Here we will simply summarize some of the challenges. Several of these relate to the delicate balance between political action “inside” and “outside” of key institutions and, more broadly, between mobilization and conventional politics (see Chapter 6).

Successful social movements, especially but not only in liberal democratic political systems, sometimes demobilize when they find that their demands can be satisfied through incorporation into political parties. Mobilizations for land are typical examples. In some cases, peasant leaders have served as congressional deputies while simultaneously continuing at the helm of grassroots organizations. Some of these situations occur where authoritarian regimes maintain a formally democratic façade (e.g., Honduras). This has not produced demobilization and it may at times lead to positive synergies, but it inevitably raises the issue of how to balance different forms of struggle: whether to dedicate political resources to social movement building and mobilizations or work within government; and how to engage with allies within the state while remaining representative of the movement’s mass base. State-movement alliances are never conflict-free. Even where governments claim to be of and for the social movements, as in Evo Morales’s Bolivia, they frequently have antagonistic relations with progressive peasant, indigenous and environmentalist organizations.

TAMS’ close links with NGO allies pose related problems. We indicated in the Introduction and in Chapter 6 that the lines between social movements, including TAMS, and NGOs are sometimes more

blurred than those on either side like to acknowledge. Commonly used rubrics, such as “civil society” and “stakeholders,” exacerbate this analytical melding. Radical TAMS, such as LVC, have insistently defended their autonomy from NGOs and their right to speak and not be spoken for by others. But several key LVC activists have come not so much from the farm as from the radical NGO sector and some LVC member organizations are still represented by activist intellectuals with long trajectories in the “third sector” and only tentative or recent connections to agriculture. “Bureaucratization” affects not only the foreign cooperation complex, but also social movements, and occasionally it has contributed to TAMS’ demise, as occurred in Central America with ASOCODE (see Chapter 5). But ultimately, social movements need non-state allies to extend the reach of their organizing work and mobilizations, and in the general absence of political parties in the life of contemporary agrarian social movements, some NGOs have served this purpose. This relationship was, and will always be, marked not only by synergy but by tension as well.

Closely linked to the politically necessary but contested relationship between popular movements and NGOs is the question of funding. Scholars and TAMS activists have generally been loath to acknowledge the delicate issue of who is paying for all the international seminars, mobilizations and other social movement activities. We have pointed above to cases of the demise of TAMS provoked by both underfunding (IFAP) and overfunding (ASOCODE). The lessons of these experiences might include finding a balance between needs, objectives, organizational capacity and external funds and also diversifying dependence on a handful of donors so as to reduce vulnerability to sudden reductions in aid. We have also noted impending changes in the European cooperation apparatus that portend possible funding problems for TAMS. As donors shift from general institutional operating support to project-based grants and tenders, TAMS and their constituent organizations will have to modify internal organizational practices and possibly reduce some international and overtly political activities and mass mobilizations.

Analyses of transnational social movements sometimes suffer from an implicit teleology: transnational is more potent than national and once movements transcend the national scale there is no

turning back. The historical record suggests that this unidirectional preconception is untenable. National organizations sometimes leave TAMS, or are asked or pressured to leave, or still others remain within TAMS but are deliberately kept at the margins. Various reasons account for this. In the case of LVC, these have included ideological incompatibility (UNAG in Nicaragua and Solidarnosc in Poland), the need to concentrate on national rather than transnational work (UPANACIONAL, Costa Rica) or because of internal divisions (CO-COCH, Honduras). The challenge of maintaining sometimes fragile coalitions is ever-present even when organizations don't secede. It is inherent in the cross- and multi-class character of most TAMS and in the deployment of inclusive identity categories (e.g., "people of the land") that potentially unite disparate sectors while at the same time papering over the differences and contradictions between them. It is also tied up with the gatekeeper phenomenon, discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, where early affiliates of TAMS block participation by other organizations in their regions. The presence in TAMS of weak or "fictitious" organizations may lead coalition participants to have an inflated sense of their overall strength and may also detract from the movements' credibility with political interlocutors and the public. The vast areas where TAMS have no presence — China, Russia, North Africa — constitute an additional limit on TAMS' influence. Restrictions on foreign funding of NGOs and social movements in a growing number of countries further restrict TAMS' possibilities.

There is an immense distance — geographically, culturally, linguistically — between the international venues where TAMS mobilize or try to work on the "inside" and the rural zones where the social bases of their component organizations live. Bridging the gap between the demands and vision of TAMS and the practices of the people they represent is an ongoing struggle. LVC and its allies demand "food sovereignty" even as their bases on the ground in Honduras find "food security" a more congenial concept. TAMS and national movements denounce GMOs, while some grassroots members plant Bt cotton in India or transgenic soy in southern Brazil (see Chapter 4). In some regions, such as Southeast Asia, linguistic divides impose a real challenge to building vibrant regional TAMS. National and local movements have to keep their members informed about, interested

in and committed to the TAMS in which they participate. They have to rotate leaders in and out of these zones and cultivate new generations of activists. The difficulties of running a small farm and participating in frequent international activities make the multitasking that vexes many urban professionals look trivial in comparison.

Changes in demographic patterns and agrarian structure profoundly impact the contexts in which TAMS operate. Rapid urbanization, the aging of agricultural populations, the difficulties young people face in accessing land and the loss of small farms (GRAIN 2014) all potentially undermine agrarian activism. Environmental shifts from climate change heighten vulnerability and diminish resilience, even if TAMS such as LVC hail peasant agriculture as a crucial means of “cooling the earth” (Vía Campesina 2009). Economic booms, such as in Brazil in the early 2000s, diminish the attraction of militant agrarianism, as participants in land recuperations either obtain government services for existing settlements (Fabrini 2015) or find comfortable jobs in towns rather than camping under tarpaulins on occupied properties. Civil wars, gang violence and economic crises — in Central America, Colombia, Syria, Philippines and sub-Saharan Africa — may lead peasants to seek “exit” via mass migration rather than “voice” and struggle in their ancestral homelands.

TAMS, like LVC and IPC for Food Sovereignty, that take radical positions on fundamental questions such as anti-capitalism and put forward coherent alternatives such as “food sovereignty” are not necessarily the most politically popular social movements as far as other state and non-state actors are concerned. They are also the most poorly funded social movement coalitions. Ideologically conservative and politically middle-of-the-road international networks continue to corner vast resources, enabling them to disseminate their idea of “win-win” solutions to global problems via partnership with the World Bank and the World Trade Organization. How the radical TAMS can reposition politically, help forge broader strategic global alliances and gain broader logistical support while remaining committed to and firmly rooted in their fundamental principles of radicalism are probably among the most difficult challenges LVC and IPC face.

Finally, the momentum and resources of corporate power and the associated model of industrial agriculture, with their supportive

international governance institutions, are daunting, to say the least. The clash between two models, as some LVC supporters (Martinez-Torres and Rosset 2010) call it — giant chemical intensive, genetically uniform monocultures versus small-scale, diversified agroecological production — is a highly unequal one. Not all peasants are environmental stewards, of course, but many are, and these face continuing threats from diverse aspects of the industrial agriculture apparatus — contamination of crop germplasm, soil and water, expulsion from the land, subordination through contract farming, pressures from creditors and intermediaries, and criminalization of their movements, among others. To make matters worse, even mainstream specialists increasingly agree that the industrial model is unsustainable over the long run (IAASTD 2009) and that the food industry is killing its own consumers, at tremendous cost to society and the environment (Bittman 2014). It is precisely the severity of these looming crises and contradictions, as well as the force and savvy of organizations that claim to represent nearly one-half of humanity, that will likely propel the TAMS' solutions to greater prominence on the world's development and social justice agenda.

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