Spaces for Talk: Information and

Communication Technologies (ICTs) and

Genuine Dialogue in an International Advocacy Movement

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Abstract

Despite the digital divide that exists between the developed and developing world, communication technologies such as the Internet are providing new opportunities for transnational advocacy. This paper explores issues of identity and co-operation between actors participating in the Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform (GCAR), led by the peoples' movement La Via Campesina, focusing on the application of Internet-based services. While the movement has successfully reframed the land reform debate within the global public sphere, and makes use of the World Wide Web in its role as a strategic bridge-builder within the Campaign, digital connectivity does not necessarily overcome challenges of participation and representation.

Keywords: Communication, Social movements, The Internet, Advocacy, Civil society, Agrarian reform, Human rights

Introduction

When union leader and peasant farmer Henry Saragih was named one of the "50 People Who Could Save the Planet" by *The Guardian* this year, it may well have been the first time many readers had heard of La Via Campesina, the global movement Saragih heads as General Coordinator (Vidal 2008). Based in Indonesia, La Via Campesina is an international peasant movement comprised of over 130 organizations actively campaigning for land reform in 60 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas (Menser 2008). This global alliance of peasant, family farm and landless peoples' movements continues to play a leading role in promoting agrarian reform at World Social Forums, Latin American Social Summits and anti-FTAA meetings. With the Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN), La Via Campesina initiated the Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform (GCAR) to unite local movements in promoting "food sovereignty" - the right for people and nations to define their own agricultural and food policies according to the needs and priorities of their own communities.

Digital networking is increasingly a feature of the organisation of social movements. Despite the long-standing "digital divide" (World Bank 1998) between the developed and developing world Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) are facilitating global connectedness, enabling the co-ordination of action, the extension and consolidation of networks and new forms of media activism.   The Internet, and in particular the World Wide Web, has given social movements more power to shape a public image, altering "the landscape of protest" (Owens and Palmer 2003). However despite the "horizontal networking logic" (Juris 2007) of new digital technologies and their potential to engage local, resource-poor organisations and movements in global campaigns such as the GCAR it is actors at the "sending end" of the campaign (Hertel 2006) who determine how the issue is defined and framed. Driven by the need to complete in what Clifford Bob (2005) calls the "transnational support market" (Bob 2005), powerful actors or movement "brokers" (Anheier and Katz 2004) define standards for the campaign according to their perception of what will resonate with the media, donors and other global publics. Messages must appeal to the agendas of distant audiences to gain support (Warkentin 2001; De Chaine 2005) while the movement itself potentially alienates its base through promoting goals and targets that are incompatible with local initiatives.

Movement dynamics, particularly the connectivity and linkages of networks on local, national and global levels, has been neglected in studies of what Borras (2008) calls "transnational advocacy movements" (TAMs).   This paper aims

to identify and describe some of the key issues of identity, diversity and co-operation that face actors in TAMs, through the GCAR case study. An analysis of hyperlinks, web pages and online news updates suggests that while the movement has been successful in reframing and presenting the terms of the land reform debate around the concept of "food sovereignty" and the agency of peasants, local issues are not foregrounded sufficiently to fully reflect the diverse agendas of grassroots members. New digital technologies are incorporated into existing communication routines however the opportunities of these to "facilitate open participation and debate" (Juris 2007) are not yet exploited within the Campaign.

1. Methodology

This study applies a network approach in exploring issues of identity and co-operation between actors within transnational advocacy movements through a case study, the Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform. The case study method has been selected as a means to "investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (Yin 2003: 14). This acknowledges that contextual conditions are highly relevant to the phenomenon of study.

Movements can be defined as informal networks of actors – organisations, groups and individuals – "engaged in conflicts for the control of material or symbolic stakes, on the basis of shared identities" (Diani 2000). Manuel Castells argues that within our "network society", enabled by advances in telecommunications, meta-networks are constructed at a transnational level, facilitating "decentralised concentration" where tasks are completed simultaneously at multiple sites (Castells 2000). Castells speaks of the "spaces of flows" where processes of communication occur. These spaces, comprised of manifold exchanges and interactions, have overcome the territorial barriers of state and neighbourhood through their flexibility and adaptiveness. Within the space of flows "nodes" and "hubs" form anchors for social organisation. Harasim (1993) refers to "networlds" to describe the virtual "places" where networking occurs.

Social network analysis seeks to describe networks, trace information flows and reveal the effects of these on individuals and organisations (Wasserman and Galaskiewicz 1994). In doing so, it aims to reduce the complexity of social interactions. In Web-based social analysis the source of the networked information is commonly the World Wide Web, where hyperlinks, consciously created by site authors, represent a relationship between web sites. As such, hyperlinks represent social relationships (Jackson 1997). The hyperlink structure of the Web also influences its use as a news medium by dictating "which information is consumed and by whom" (Owens and Palmer 2003). Network analysis goes beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, overcoming what has been described as "methodological nationalism" (Anheier, Glasius et al. 2004). Unlimited by geographical or political units, network analysis is most concerned with the structure of relations between actors. Connectedness, rather than attributes, is the focus of network analysis. A "map" of a network on the World Wide Web can illustrate strategic alliances built around a worldwide movement. Accordingly, this analytical framework is well-suited to the study of actor interaction in relation to the Campaign. Chains of interaction link local, national and global bodies within the movement, within which La Via Campesina plays a key role as a central node and "movement broker" (Anheier, Glasius et al. 2004). This kind of network, where one actor is the focal node, is said to be "egocentric". Egocentric network analysis is particularly useful in exploring relations within organisational task environments and in evaluating the social capital, or "connections", possessed by individual actors (Anheier and Katz 2004).

This study focuses on the places or virtual spaces where communication occurs, the types of technology used to communicate and the directions of informational flows within the GCAR network. Data includes hyperlinks to members of La Via Campesina, pages dedicated to the GCAR on the World Wide Web, and electronic updates issued via the Campaign's Internet-based distribution list between January 1 and May 28, 2008.

2. The Genesis of the Global Campaign for Agrarian Reform

Land reform has become an increasingly significant issue on the global agenda of civil society as issues of food availability, the genetic modification of crops and debates over biofuels have emerged. The initiatives of supranational institutions including the World Trade Organisation and the World Bank are considered by many civil society actors to have failed (Rosset 2004; Desmaris 2003; Woods 2001). Land occupations in Brazil, Mexico's Zapatista Rebellion in 1993 and the Zimbabwe food riots of 1998 were key events signaling a new era of "Land Reform from Below" (Rosset, Patel et al. 2006). On October 12 1999, La Via Campesina joined with FIAN to launch the GCAR. United under the banner "Food, Land and Freedom" peasants joined human rights activists in Asia, the Americas and Europe in mobilisations, land occupations and other events to demand the right to land and security of land tenure as essential to the human right to food.

The Campaign aims to support peasant movements in their national struggles for agrarian reform and facilitates exchanges between these movements to examine the nature of struggle in various countries. Tactics include lobbying governments and international institutions and establishing emergency networks for international intervention in cases

of human rights abuses in conflicts over land. Historically, the criminalisation and persecution of peasants who exercise democratic rights to organise and express their views and self-determine has been ignored as a human rights issue (Desmaris 2002). According to the Human Right to Food, presented in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN 1966), peasants are entitled access to productive resources, specifically land. International human rights law sets standards and defies unjust frameworks that negate the necessity of instituting agrarian reform programs. In 2002 GCAR brought attention to gender inequalities in the management of rural land reform (Suarez 2005). Such strategic overlapping and broadening of frames enables Campaign actors to leverage internationally recognised social and economic rights and participate in "collaborative campaigning" with human rights NGOs (Nelson and Dorsey 2003).

Adopting a human rights-based approach to development, the GCAR encompasses a broad range of issues related to food sovereignty including global trade; the management of genetic resources and biodiversity; human rights, gender and rural development; sustainable peasant agricultural models; migration (urban/rural; international) and farm-workers' labour rights. Rights-based approaches to development are challenging the market-dominated view of development that flourished in the 1980s, providing new sources of influence for advocacy and international standards of accountability (Nelson and Dorsey 2003).   The broad, holistic concept of food "sovereignty" places the interests of peasants and small-scale farmers at the centre of the debate:

Food sovereignty is the RIGHT of peoples, countries, and state unions to define their agricultural and food policy without the "dumping" of agricultural commodities into foreign countries. Food sovereignty organises food production and consumption according to the needs of local communities, giving priority to production for local consumption. Food sovereignty includes the right to protect and regulate the national agricultural and livestock production and to shield the domestic market from the dumping of agricultural surpluses and low-price imports from other countries. (La Via Campesina 2008)

Unlike market-led agrarian reform, food sovereignty favours national agricultural production over imports and supports sustainable development.   The right not only to food but to produce food clearly extends beyond the current definition of food "security", which focuses on availability. The GCAR argues that genuine security equates to access to productive land and fair prices for crops to allow farmers to make a living. Priority of market access must be given to local producers, requiring supply management and regulation. La Via Campesina disagreed with the Global Forum on Agricultural Research (GFAR) Dresden Declaration (2001) that relied on science, biotechnology and genetic engineering as solutions to poverty, food insecurity, loss of biodiversity and environmental degradation, arguing that research should be farmer-driven and designed to meet the needs of small farmers, and be taken out of agribusiness control (Desmaris 2003).

Based on the platform of "the struggle for the right to feed oneself" (La Via Campesina, 2008), the GCAR is designed to articulate the movement's direct reaction against market-led agrarian reform (Borras 2008). This strong expression of political will was expressed clearly through La Via Campesina's rejection of the NGO declaration on the peoples' right to food in Rome at the World Food Summit in 1996 (Mulvany 1997).   The liberal-market perspective of the Summit's Plan of Action was seen by the movement as a clear indication that NGOs with the same "market-access focus" can no longer speak on behalf of or be representatives of peasants and farmers.   Accusations of paternalism, co-optation and the "dumping" of imported grain in the guise of "economic assistance" are among criticisms of the "aid industry" (Lewis and Wallace 2000).

According to Raj Patel (Rosset, Patel et al. 2006) the failure of neoliberalism has fuelled the repoliticisation of those excluded from debate. The only resources available to peasants are organisation, cooperation and community, exercised through political struggle, direct action and strategic linkages with other actors in global civil society (Desmarais 2007). Historically, land occupations are one of the most effective, proven methods of pressuring governments to act (Barraclough 1999). Largely non-violent poor people's movements have mobilised in Brazil, Paraguay, Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Thailand and India (Rosset, Patel et al. 2006). A key feature of successful reforms is the role of farm families as key actors mobilised in national development, framed as agents of change rather than indigents in need of charitable assistance.

3. Strategic Communication within the GCAR

Collective action, through its form and organisation, is a "message broadcast to the rest of society" (Melucci 1996). Campaigns such as the GCAR are processes of issue construction that provide a common frame of meaning. Deliberate attempts to co-ordinate movement activities around a specific issue or event, campaigns aim to communicate a message beyond the informed to reach general publics.   Through campaigns networks of actors disseminate "movement frames" (Benford and Snow 2000) which define problems and solutions.

Organised protest requires mobilisation.   In spearheading the GCAR, La Via Campesina has become a "movement broker", driving the mobilisation of other actors within the diverse network (Anheier, Glasius et al. 2004). Networks

provide "political spaces" where the purpose and meaning of the actors' "joint enterprise" is negotiated (Keck and Sikkink 1998). Routine contact between actors formalises transnational ties and facilitates the moblisation of resources for collective action. Coalitions, described by Margaret Keck as "networks in action mode" (Fox 2005), coordinate shared strategies to publicly influence social change, often through protest or disruptive action. These strategies are manifested in "transnational campaigns" such as the GCAR. In this type of international campaign sets of actors with common purposes and solidarities, linked across state boundaries, generate coordinated and sustained social mobilisation along with more focused periods of activism in more than one country.

The GCAR implements strategies that work on both global and local levels. Internationally, formal alliances and collaborations are sought to secure concessions and expand "invited spaces" for civil society participation. La Via Campesina recognises that those accepting basic premise of neoliberal globalisation have greater access to institutions than grassroots organisations that are highly critical (Desmaris 2003), and hence strategically favours sector alliances with strong global players including the Land Research and Action Network (LRAN) and Food First and Information Network (FIAN). La Via Campesina has also established thematic alliances with related movements promoting organic food and those rejecting genetic modification (Borras 2008). On the ground, national volunteer organisations (VOs) lead in organising, advocacy and public education in their own countries, gaining support from international VOs in lobbying Northern governments and international assistance agencies (Korten 1990). La Via Campesina is considered an "influential" participant in the World Social Forums, notably in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001 and Mumbai, India in 2004 (Patomaki and Teivaninen 2004).

Aware of how participation can be used to "co-opt" a movement, "diluting or silencing opposition", La Via Campesina is wary of international institutions that try to impose a "multistakeholder" approach, where the interests of NGOs, social movements and even agribusiness are aggregated into one political space (Desmarais 2007). The movement has refused to participate in fora that require compromising commitments to democratic representation, insisting on a thorough nomination process to identify the right spokesperson for a particular event. This is done through regional co-ordinators who nominate candidates based on their expertise on the theme of the forum and their need for experience or exposure in the international arena. Insistence on grassroots representation has helped to overcome prejudicial views that farm workers, the landless and peasants are not educated or sophisticated enough to speak for themselves. Reclaiming the word "peasant" and refusing to adopt the English translation of "farmer" in the nomenclature of the movement is testimony to this commitment (Desmarais 2007).

The increased professionalism and pro-activity of the movement has also been facilitated by collaborative efforts with other actors in coalitions such as "Our World is Not for Sale". On November 6, 2001, the coalition launched the campaign "Priority to People's Food Sovereignty- WTO out of Food and Agriculture". This focus on a common target serves to create a sense of solidarity between movement actors even when their individual agendas may differ. This year La Via Campesina named "Agribusiness Transnational Corporations (TNCs) Create World Food Crisis, Peasant Seize Back Their Rights" as the theme for its April 17th International Day of Peasant Struggle:

The theme is taken as result of our reflection that most of the violations of peasant rights such as poverty, hunger, intimidations, physical violence to death, various calamity (sic) resulted (sic) from environment destruction is because of the greediness of agribusiness TNCs operation. The operation can be through the international financial institutions (IFIs), WTO, Free Trade Agreement/ FTAs, Economics Partnerships Agreements/ EPAs, but it is the agribusiness TNCs that take the profit on the suffer (sic) of majority world peasants and ordinary people. (Saragih 2008)

Delegitimising or shaming public institutions such as multinational corporations and institutions through systematic campaigns and direct action is a means of attracting media attention. In August 1999 in Millau, France, activists opposing the importation of hormone-fed beef dismantled a McDonald's outlet in a non-violent protest. Spokesperson Jose Bove was subsequently interviewed with Mike Moore, former Director-General of the WTO, and Venezuela's Hugo Chavez on international media. Bove's trial attracted 100,000 spectators. La Via Campesina was among global movements that played a vital role in anti-globalisation protests in Seattle, a "prime-time media event" framed by newsmakers as the "Battle for Seattle" (Juris 2007).

In contrast with Seattle, much direct action is not broadcast widely and relies on the alternative media. Most recently, on May 22, 2008, activists "disrupted" the UN Convention on Biodiversity in Bonn in protest that "not one farmer, pastoralist, fisher, or Indigenous Peoples' representative was invited to participate" in the event (Delforge May 27, 2008). Little mainstream media interest in protest was generated. However on the World Social Forum's "television" site, www.wsf2008.net, La Via Campesina, in partnership with Babun Media, Metropoli Video Films and German activists, presented a 12 minute video focused on peasant viewpoints, addressing concerns that "the big agroindustrial multinationals as Monsanto, Dupont, Syngenta, Limagrain, Bayer and Pioneer are pushing for the wider introduction of transgenics (including the so-called Terminator Seeds) and the further industrialisation and commercialization of agriculture - as solutions to the so-called "food crisis" and climate change" (Ploger 2008).

Achieving foreign recognition via the media and other channels increases a movement's legitimacy and provides an

important psychological boost to members (Bob 2005). Clifford Bob's marketing perspective of the dynamics of transnational support-seeking emphasises that successful movement framing highlights issues that resonate internationally, which has important implications for the selection of action frames for the GCAR:

"Global civil society" is an arena of sharp competition where myriad weak groups fight for recognition and aid. It is a sphere in which hard-nosed calculation of costs and benefits constantly competes with sympathy and emotion. And it is a place where the real needs of local people are one factor, not necessarily the most important, in sparking international activism. (Bob 2005: 195)

4. Identity, Diversity and Co-operation

Within the transnational public sphere created by movements engaged in a campaign participants experience a sense of membership or belonging (Fox 2005). The development of collective identity is the result of exchanges, negotiations, conflicts and decision-making. A campaign such as the GCAR provides a focal point that can unite diverse actors – to a degree.

Transnational advocacy movements (TAMs) constantly face the challenge of establishing a common frame of meaning for network actors or "nodes" – individuals and organisations in the framework (Anheier and Katz 2004). Challenged by the need to represent local movements with class, ideological and political differences along with diverse objectives, alliances and ways of working, TAMs are "arenas of interaction" rather than independent, unitary actors. Representation, globally, is inherently linked to agenda-setting and issue-framing within TAMs and is essential to any claims of validity they make (Borras 2008).

The diversity of La Via Campesina poses challenges. The movement represents tens of millions of small farmers, fishermen and women, rural workers and the landless. It is divided into seven regions: North and Southeast Asia, South Asia, North America, Central America, South America, the Caribbean, and Western/Eastern Europe. To facilitate the participation of its broad member base in gathering facts, debating policy and agreeing on strategy, regional assemblies meet and nominate delegates that convene every three years. Two members from each region become part of the Internal Coordinating Commission (ICC), the key decision-making body of La Via Campesina (Menser 2008). This horizontal structure is complicated by patriarchy and sexism, addressed in part by the formation of a Woman's Assembly (Desmarais 2006).

Class and ideological differences between national actors are an additional challenge to co-operation. For example, India's KRRS movement is primarily comprised of middle-class and rich farmers. Eager to avoid class issues, KRRS prefers to focus on anti-TNC (transnational corporation) and anti-GM campaigns. Their land reform platform extends to the ownership of urban industrial property but opposes legislative restrictions on the ownership of rural land (Borras 2008). Organisations clearly possess differing motivations for their cooperation in movements (Bandy and Smith 2005).

Regional tensions challenge other areas of the movement. "Gatekeepers and bottlenecks" are created when the membership process places responsibilities on national and regional levels (Desmarais 2007). La Via Campesina has a policy of not intervening in domestic issues however internal differences have spilled into the movement. The first example was occurred in the Philippines in 1993 when disagreements between local movements dKMP and KPM severely hampered preparation for an NGO Parallel Forum, necessitating a shift in venue to Mexico. Within Mexico poor communication between the five domestic members was attributed the lack of a common national project. "We do not have the perspective of working together even though, theoretically, we share the same orientations and agenda" (Desmarais 2007). The complexity of "working together" is truly demonstrated in the fact that one of those Mexican organisations, UNORCA, represents 2,700 domestic bodies with a total membership of 400,000 affiliates built up over 15 years (Desmarais 2007).

In some regions extending the network has been problematic for other reasons. Low levels of membership in the Southeast Asian region are attributed to internal divisions, leadership styles, political differences and language barriers (Desmarais 2008). Only nine Southeast Asian groups participate in comparison to 20 South Asian movements (La Via Campesina 2008). Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and China remain poorly represented (Menser 2008), despite the importance of these highly populated and volatile regions in global land and food debates. To date only five groups represent the entire African continent (La Via Campesina 2008).

Resource-poor grassroots organisations, particularly those lacking clear leadership, can benefit from global partnerships within TAMs, using the influence of strong friends to confront regional competition, ideological differences and cooptation from governments or paternalistic NGOs. In accepting such benefits they sacrifice a degree of independence and agree, implicitly and otherwise, to a representation in global forums. Actors must assess the "transaction costs" they will incur, which involves balancing the realities of competition with the benefits of cooperation (Zald and McCarthy 1994). They experience collective identity formation, and in building an "action system" form expectations and assess the "possibilities and limits of their own action" (Melucci 1996). Identity "crystallises" into organisational forms, leadership structures and sets of rules or norms within which cognitive definition or "framing" takes place. These

frames must make community-oriented issues salient across international borders, while remaining grounded in the local - balancing the autonomy of members with international cooperation and collective action. Interaction poses unique challenges for local actors in retaining their identity while becoming part of a global movement. Weaker movement actors, including "late mobilisers" (Borras 2008) are in danger of their voices being drowned out at the expense of stronger, well-established actors (della Porta 2007), particularly if they do not possess the social and political resources to stage direct action that attracts media attention. Historically, La Via Campesina has been dominated by "founding organisations" in Central and South America, whose relationships extend back to the constitutive conference in 1993 and have been facilitated by commonalities in language and culture (Desmarais 2008). For many years the International Operative Secretariat was based in Honduras, Central America. South American members now number 29 and comprise over 20% of the total movement (La Via Campesina 2008).

As the movement has grown, centralisation of information, administration and power has posed a challenge for maintaining the "flat" structure of the network. Collective protest requires "deliberate organisational effort" (Rucht 1999). The process of organisation itself inevitably leads to the development of a hierarchical structure, according to Robert Michels' (1962) "iron law of oligarchy". This tendency to become more centralised-bureaucratic over time is attributed to the reality that "the sheer problem of administration necessitates bureaucracy…the price of which is the concentration of power at the top" (Michels 1962). Gamson (1975) argues that bureaucratic bodies achieve their objectives more readily than those that are horizontal in structure. "The quest for 'effectiveness' makes desirable and necessary the elaboration of vertical political structures" (Routledge, Cumbers et al. 2007). The inevitable, and essential, institutionalisation that is required to "get things done" administratively is exhibited in actions such as collating and distributing press releases and special reports, making calls to action and initiating online conversations – carried out largely by movement brokers such as La Via Campesina.

5. Localising the Global

The rapid development of information technologies has greatly enhanced the capacity of geographically dispersed civil society actors to build networks, coalitions and movements (Frederick 1993; Capra 2002; Langman 2005; Juris 2007). There is optimism this intensive interactivity leads to more democratic participation and cross-cultural understanding (Young 1992; Langman 2005), and that technology can help to overcome some of the well-documented challenges of incorporating "grassroots" input and participation into international development initiatives (Korten 1990; Boli and Thomas 1999; Eade and Pearce 2000). In theory, by bridging the digital divide - "connecting" and engaging the global poor - access to technology will aid development. This enthusiasm is driven by initiatives including the World Summit of the Information Society and a body of literature that promotes "ICT4D" or "Communication for Development" (Mansell 2006).

Access to online content and the ability to send and receive emails clearly makes real choices available to actors, and can be used to attract global attention, as demonstrated in the Zapatista uprising in Mexico in the early 1990s. Recognised as the first movement to employ "net warfare" (Garrido and Halavais 2003) the Zapatista's skillfully used the World Wide Web to widen public discourse beyond mainstream media. In doing so they provided the inspiration for subsequent anti-globalisation activists. Platforms such as Econet, which links 10,000 activists and NGOs in 90 countries, demonstrate the role of new technologies in mobilising social capital by engaging influential social allies online (Ebo 2001).

As of May 2008, 128 member organisations, and seven "candidate" members were named on the La Via Campesina web site. Only 33 of all members offer hyperlinks, which are largely skewed toward the European region, which presents a total of 16 links, reflecting the North – South technological divide. The remaining 95 members nominate only 17 web sites, collectively. The absence of an online presence may reflect the size of these organisations and their access to technical resources and expertise. Links between ICT and poverty are well-established by the UN Human Development Index in terms of internet hosts, telephone lines and personal computers per 1000 people (UNDP 1999). ICTs are frequently poorly designed for users in developing nations, and packaged in Western values and preferences, presenting another barrier to adoption (Mansell 2006; Nielsen and Heffernan 2006). Connectivity; location; gender, race and class issues; organisational characteristics; geography; level of education and range of vision are some of the variables that may explain remaining unwired (Kole 2001). Once connected, it is only through learning "netiquette" – the languages, values and norms of the Internet - can one become an experienced user or "netizen" (Kole 2001). If hyperlinks do in fact represent social relationships (Jackson 1997) the absence of these may limit access to what Owens and Palmer (2003) call "in-group" communication – that which occurs among members of the same group and reinforces solidarity.

Two clusters of "nodes" or actors appear in the La Via Campesina network. Within these groups network density is at its highest; members are the most "densely-knit" and "tightly bounded" in the network. In comparison the rest of the GCAR network is sparely-knit, with network members sharing only one link or "tie". A tie connects a pair of actors by one link or relation (Garton, Haythornthwaite et al. 1997). For most actors in the network this tie is La Via

Campesina. Stanley Milgram's (1969) "small world theory" demonstrates that even large, sparse networks experience a high degree of clustering. Most nodes may have few links to others while a minority of well-connected "hubs" bridge the distances between other actors.   Geography and political alliance play a role by providing pre-existing groupings and established relationships.   This is the case where WINFA, the Association of Caribbean Farmers, Windward Islands, provides a bridging role for movements in Grenada, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Martinique.   The second, larger cluster of GCAR actors is represented by the European Farmers' Co-ordination (CPE) which unites 32 farmers organisations in Germany, Italy, Belgium, Portugal, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Hungary, Sweden, Norway, Spain and Switzerland in a grouping loosely based on the European Union (EU).

The benefits of clusters or cliques include the convenience of existing connections and the capacity, and desire, to focus resources on regional initiatives. For example, the European Farmers' Co-ordination is united in rejecting the existing Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), established according to WTO criteria, on the basis that it is "not legitimate from either the international or social points of view and ruins the environment, health and product quality and turns farmers into people dependent on aid but without economic and social recognition" (CPE 2007).   A further, higher level of co-operation is witnessed in the unity of African, Caribbean, Pacific and European actors in rejecting the Economic Partnership Agreement (CPE 2006).   Hence many "sub-campaigns" are generated within the GCAR through the network that La Via Campesina facilitates.

In playing a central role in connecting actors or "nodes" throughout the GCAR network, La Via Campesina possesses greater access to and potential control over information within the communication network (Krackhardt and Brass 1994).   It thereby controls informational resources, which increases the dependence of other actors. The degree of centrality measures one's power within the ego-network. While the Internet's "reticulate network structure" reinforces the horizontal logic of social movements (Juris 2007) it has been proposed that network centrality is equally or more important than hierarchical rank in predicting power, as measured by involvement in administrative activities (Krackhardt and Brass 1994).   As an actor's importance increases and it facilitates flows of information between others it serves as a broker, enabling connections and fostering coalitions that previously did not exist.

Movement brokers are also described as "synapses" or "relays" (Fox 2005), terms that succinctly describe this key communication role as connector or bridge-builder. Paul Routledge, in his study of global justice networks, refers to key organisers as "imagineers" whose work in organising key events literally creates or produces the network itself (Routledge, Nativel et al. 2006).   The principle means of materialising the GCAR network has been through the La Via Campesina and Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN) web sites and a yahoo email list (Newell 2008), performative events including conferences, and global days of action.   La Via Campesina's International Operational Secretariat reports on local initiatives through electronic news updates. La Via Campesina's electronic news updates between January 1 and May 28, 2008, focus on a wide range of issues: biosecurity and biodiversity; the world food crisis; civil society; women, food and power; and biofuels.   The updates include media releases, position papers, media advice, open letters, new publication alerts, "conversations" or interviews and calls to action. These communications frequently share links to other activist networks, including the World Social Forum (WSF) web site and Indymedia.com, an alternative media source that often receives several millions hits a day (Langman 2005).

In its news updates La Via Campesina promotes a global structure deeply rooted in local issues and the realities of regions. Regions are encouraged to mobilise and are free to choose the focus of collective action, which is then reported on.   For example, an appeal to members for action on April 17   - 'The international day of peasant struggle', commemorating the murder of 19 MST activists in Eldorado do Carajas in Brazil in 1996 -was issued by Henry Saragih, General Coordinator of La Via Campesina. Members were encouraged to send the International Operative of La Via Campesina reports and information "on the impacts of agribusiness TNCs that create hunger, poverty for family farmers and peasants" and to organise "seminars, public discussions, actions, mobilisations, press conferences" to "expose the impacts of agribusiness TNCs and to delegitimise their role in the food sector" (Saragih 2008).   Subsequent emails describe these activities, which include a general assembly held by the Indonesian Peasant Union in Jakarta, marches against soya producers in Argentina, exhibitions and rallies in Germany and a conference to discuss food policies in Cameroon (La Via Campesina 2008).   Links to web pages provide further details on these and other events, as well as contact lists, policy papers and other documents. A new innovation is a picture gallery containing static photographs and video files.

Communications are mediated by the International Operational Secretariat (IOS).   Informational resources about the Campaign are centralised the La Via Campesina web site, www.viacampesina.org, while relevant pages also appear on the FIAN web site, www.fian.org. There is no independent GCAR web site, which may be interpreted as attributing "ownership" of the campaign to the initiating organisations. In these modes of communication the distinction between source and receiver is a measure of prestige, marking the difference between "leaders and followers" (Krackhardt and Brass 1994).

Grassroots actors may accept this asymmetrical method of information sharing until the frames presented by the

campaign "shapers" do not fit with local objectives. "Receiving-end" activists commonly have fewer political and material resources than "senders", and as a result opt for alternative ways of influencing the meanings or frames central to the campaign. Shareen Hertel (2006) has identified "blocking " and "backdoor moves", played out within networks. In campaigns opposing child labour in Bangladesh and pregnancy screening in Mexico, Hertel identifies grassroots resistance to dominant frames through refusal to participate ("blocking") or more subtle readjustment of campaign frames to fit local contexts ("back-door moves"). In both campaigns local activists emphasized a "different, or fuller, interpretation of those rights than the one put forward by advocates on the *sending end* of the campaigns" (Hertel 2006: 17).

Strengthening ties on national as well as international levels is vital to the success of La Via Campesina and effectiveness of the GCAR. However members have suggested that in focusing resources on campaigning to attain the international stage lack of attention to internal structuring within the movement has resulted in "less communication and fewer spaces for internal debate". Member Pedro Magana believes La Via Campesina could provide better opportunities for leadership building and learning. Regional reporting "doesn't facilitate real exchange" (Desmarais 2007: 159). In concentrating the information and decision-making the movement risks alienating its membership base.

Conclusion

The value of e-campaigns has been demonstrated, from the Zapatista's ground-breaking "netwar" to online mobilisation against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment and the subsequent WTO protests in Seattle. Within many movements, however, Internet services are merely an innovation of traditional civil society tactics (Surman and Reilly 2003). Many NGOs and civil society movements have not found ICTs to be an adequate replacement for traditional methods of campaigning (Lebert 2003). In fact use of new technologies frequently involves "the adaptation of traditional tactics", which Graham Meikle calls "backing into the future" (Surman and Reilly 2003). Internet use has been used to complement and facilitate face-to-face interaction rather than replace it. The "virtual public spaces" provided created by new technologies must be supported by social interaction through "solidarity-affirming collective gatherings" (Langman 2005).

The challenges for La Via Campesina in uniting the diverse actors participating in the GCAR include class differences, ideological differences and limited representation. Despite its claims, the movement is not truly global. Language issues prevail (Routledge 2000). Though Indymedia activists attest to the efficiency of global listservs in co-ordinating translations by fellow-activists (Juris 2007) the predominance of English on the World Wide Web is broadly criticised (Ayres 1999). Issues of power and influence within the GCAR network include early or late mobilisation, the quality of linkages, the capacity to launch dramatic actions against transnationals and existing tension between actors, some of whom are excluded from the network on class/ ideological grounds (Borras 2008).

As a "movement of movements" La Via Campesina faces great challenges in presenting relevant action frames that satisfy the needs of all actors while still resonating with broader global publics. Bennett (2003) argues that Internet-driven campaigns are "ideologically thin" to permit a diversity of political perspectives to co-exist. However campaigns still require compelling action frames that resonate with global audiences to be able to compete for scant resources and media attention (Bob 2005).

In representing the broader activities and achievements of the GCAR a "global lens" is required, one which acknowledges the different types of everyday unstructured action carried out by grassroots members. Borras suggests a "sandwich strategy", combining global issue framing and initiatives with local and national campaigns that impact domestically (Borras 2008). The communication of shared experiences will motivate and inspire other movements (Routledge, Nativel et al. 2006), while providing multiple opportunities for genuine dialogue. Establishing enabling technologies in the form of dynamic communication hubs, where grassroots activists can generate their own content and capture their own activities in digital formats for uploading to the World Wide Web, will require investment and training. Juris (2007: 360) refers to the networking logics of movements such as MRG (The Catalan Movement for Global Resistance) and PGA (Peoples Global Action) where "network-based politics involve the creation of broad umbrella spaces, where diverse organisations, collectives and networks converge around common hallmarks while preserving their autonomy and specificity". Real-time discussion forums, Internet relay chatrooms, open publishing and production projects that allow activists to write, post and distribute their own stories empower by "reversing the implicit hierarchy" (Juris 2007) dividing movement broker and grassroots actor.

New digital technologies can provide peasants with the agency to adapt campaign frames to fit local circumstances and the capacity to present these to the world, providing a multitude of new interpretations. The broad values of horizontal collaboration, open access and direct democracy can be embedded in network architecture through the use of such technology. Despite the inherent challenges to social movements, as they constantly "cleave and converge" (Diani 2000), the possibilities for genuine dialogue and participation abound.

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