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Claeys, P & Duncan, J

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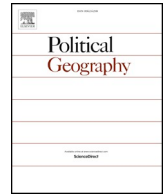
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Food sovereignty and convergence spaces

Priscilla Claeys^{a,*,1}, Jessica Duncan^b

^a Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience, Coventry University, Coventry, UK

^b Rural Sociology Group, Wageningen University, Wageningen, the Netherlands

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we reflect on the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism to the UN Committee on World Food Security as a policy convergence space for the global food sovereignty movement. Addressing a gap in the convergence literature around inclusivity, we assess the extent to which the Mechanism is a diverse and inclusive space. More specifically, we analyze whether constituencies and quotas have worked as effective tools to protect diversity while avoiding fragmentation. We further contribute to the growing literature on convergence spaces by highlighting what changes and challenges occur when convergence is situated and managed in relation to a more formal institutional space. Analyzing how the it has addressed the two challenges of fragmentation and institutionalization, we show how the Mechanism has moved towards greater inclusivity and diversity by reinforcing weaker constituencies, changing its name, and opening up to new constituencies. At the same time, we identify five issues which require further attention if the Mechanism is to remain an inclusive convergence space: risk of a concentration of power; the role of NGOs; gender equality and generational balance; multiple identities that cut across constituency categories; and, tensions related to sub-regions.

1. Introduction

The global food sovereignty movement emerged in the late 1990s in reaction to the liberalization of agricultural trade and the expansion of a capital-intensive, corporate-led, industrial model of agriculture characterized by persistent rural poverty, hunger, displacement and environmental degradation. In 1996, the transnational peasant movement La Via Campesina introduced its concept of 'food sovereignty' to those attending the 1996 World Food Summit in Rome. In a relatively short period of time, food sovereignty gained traction with a wide range of food producing rural constituencies – such as pastoralists, fishers, Indigenous Peoples, agricultural workers – as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who joined forces to demand the right of peoples to define their own food and agriculture systems. As a movement of movements, the global food sovereignty movement has, over the last three decades, created and in different ways enforced, systems of categorization to build unity and convergence between different participant movements, while negotiating and maintaining difference (Claeys & Duncan, 2018a). It includes organizations and movements at transnational, regional, national and local levels from a variety of constituencies. Some of the key actors that are organized at the transnational level include: La Via Campesina (LVC), the International Union of

Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), the World Alliance for Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP), World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF), World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), or the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC).

Actors in the global food sovereignty movement have made particular use of two tools. They have used constituency categories (e.g. pastoralists, fishers, Indigenous Peoples, agricultural workers, small-holder farmers, women and youth) to identify, protect, foster and guarantee the autonomy of movements and organizations representing different groups of people with distinct identities and lived realities. They have also used quotas (e.g. gender, age, constituency and/or geography) to protect diversity, prevent the consolidation of power, and ensure the prioritized participation of affected or marginalized groups within the Movement, notably over NGOs. The use of constituencies and quotas has supported two distinct but related objectives of the movement: alliances building and effective direct representation in global policy-making spaces (Claeys & Duncan, 2018a).

For actors in the global food sovereignty movement, the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS, henceforth referred to as 'the Committee') is arguably one of the most important global policy-making spaces. In 2009, in the aftermath of the 2007-08 global food

* Corresponding author. Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience (CAWR), Ryton Gardens, Ryton on Dunsmore, Coventry, CV8 3LG, United Kingdom.

E-mail address: priscilla.claeys@coventry.ac.uk (P. Claeys).

¹ The names of the authors are provided alphabetically. Both authors have equally contributed to this article.

crisis, the Committee was reformed with the aim of becoming the most prominent global arena where food security issues are discussed. A key feature of the Committee is that it defines itself as a multi-stakeholder platform, within which states, civil society, the private sector, philanthropic foundations, international organizations and research institutes can identify issues and solutions to global hunger and food insecurity, and jointly participate in the elaboration of policy recommendations for national governments to take home (CFS, 2009). States, however, have final decision-making power in cases where there is no consensus.

The Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism (CSM, henceforth also referred to as 'the Mechanism') is an autonomous and self-organized space for a large diversity of movements and organizations usually designated as Civil Society Organizations² (CSOs). We conceive of the Mechanism as a convergence space. Indeed, the role of the Mechanism is 'to facilitate the participation of CSOs in the work of the Committee, including input to negotiation and decision-making' and to 'provide a space for dialogue' (CFS, 2010, para. 4). A key practice of the Mechanism is to develop and defend common policy positions in the work of the Committee. In relation to the Committee, the Mechanism is thus most often treated as a single actor. Internally, however, the importance of diversity is recognized. The Founding Document of the Mechanism states that '[p]articipation within the CSM [the Mechanism] should aim to preserve unity and solidarity amongst CSOs, but should not imply a flattening of the diversity that exists between civil society in terms of objectives, strategies, and content' (CFS, 2010).

Over the last decade, the Mechanism has emerged as a key site where actors in the global food sovereignty movement converge to influence policy outcomes. The Mechanism has demonstrated its effectiveness at bringing diverse movements together to collectively affirm an alternative vision in global food security debates, and to significantly shape the policy work of the Committee (Brem-Wilson, 2015; Duncan & Barling, 2012; Gaarde, 2017; Nora, 2017). Like the global food sovereignty movement (Claeys & Duncan, 2018a), the Mechanism has sophisticated governance rules in place that enable a diversity of constituencies and sub-regions to converge, with attention to sectoral, regional and gender balance. Within the Mechanism, these rules are systematically and spatially implemented, as well as formalized and institutionalized within the Committee.

In this paper, we explore the internal dynamics of the Mechanism as a convergence space. In the literature, convergence spaces are defined as 'geographically dispersed social coalitions' (Routledge, 2009, 1894) that meet only sporadically in 'moments of temporary but intense network stabilization' (Routledge & Cumbers, 2009, 97; see also; Juris, 2004) such as global fora or days of action. The Mechanism, in contrast, is made of both virtual and material spaces that shape ongoing interactions between CSOs and sustain convergence. These spaces include, but are not restricted to: (a) the executive body of the Mechanism made of the Coordination Committee and Advisory Group; (b) the policy Working Groups where participating organizations in the Mechanism discuss policy inputs into Committee processes; and (c) the Forum where actors come together annually in Rome in advance of the Committee's annual sessions. Within these spaces, regional, gender and constituency quotas are formally or informally enforced (and at times contested), and serve as the underlying basis for collective visions of convergence to emerge. Addressing a gap in the convergence literature around inclusivity, we assess the extent to which quotas have worked as effective tools to build unity while protecting diversity. We further contribute to the growing literature on convergence spaces by

highlighting what changes and challenges occur when convergence is situated and managed in relation to a more formal institutional space.

This paper is structured as follows. First, we introduce our methods. This is followed by a review of our analytic framework. We then present the mandate of the Mechanism before analyzing three specific sites where convergence happens through carefully governed processes. This leads us to a discussion of the politics of inclusiveness and diversity across processes of the Mechanism. Here we assess youth and women's participation, as well the dynamics inside and across constituencies and sub-regions as they play out within the Mechanism. Since our objective is to assess how the Mechanism works internally, we do not discuss how the Mechanism influences the Committee's policy outcomes, how these policy outcomes are implemented on the ground or how Mechanism processes take place at the grassroots level. We conclude with an assessment of how the Mechanism is performing as a convergence space, and the extent to which it is addressing two specific challenges we identified: fragmentation and institutionalization.

2. Methods

This paper is based on an independent evaluation of the Mechanism that we conducted in the first half of 2018.³ The evaluation employed a combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection, and relied on textual analysis, an online survey and semi-structured interviews. In order to triangulate the data collected through the survey and interviews, and inform the research design, we undertook a strategic review of Mechanism and Committee documents. We started by reviewing previous evaluations and Annual Reports of the Mechanism and considered the documents produced by the Mechanism's Policy Working Groups (WGs), as well as a number of key documents shared by the Secretariat of the Mechanism and/or found on their website. We further identified a list of 30 strategic documents which we validated with the Mechanism's Secretariat as being of greatest relevance. These documents helped us assess how internal dynamics actually reflect or depart from the operational logics agreed upon and defined in founding documents.

The online survey was launched on 13 March 2018 and was open for a total of 8 weeks.⁴ The survey was translated in the three working languages of the Mechanism (English, Spanish and French) and took about 30 minutes to complete. The survey was sent out by the Mechanism's Secretariat to support legitimacy and response rate. Survey questions were designed according to the three main objectives of the independent evaluation, to which we added specific questions for research purposes. These three objectives were: assessing internal dynamics, assessing relationships with other actors in the Committee, and identifying key challenges for the future of the Mechanism in light of the evolution of the Committee. We received a total of 82 responses. The majority of responses (63%) were in English, while 22% responded in Spanish and 15% in French. However, not everyone who responded to the survey in English spoke English as a first language. We note that the survey is not representative of the Mechanism but is fairly representative of a diversity of views within the Mechanism as it was completed by all constituencies and all but two regions. However, some biases need to be accounted for. We had no respondents from Central Europe or West Asia, and Western Europe was over-represented. Further, constituencies were not evenly covered with NGOs, Indigenous Peoples and small-holder farmers over-represented, along with observers (including academics) (see Fig. 1). Some people selected more than one constituency, highlighting possible tensions around the clarity and application of constituencies that we discuss in our analysis. Of respondents, 44% identified as female, 51% as male and 4% preferred

² The term 'civil society organization' is used as an umbrella term to refer to both social movements and NGOs. NGOs are understood to be organizations that represent a specific issue or theme or the interests of certain social groups. In contrast, social movements are recognized as self-organized social actors with a shared identity that have come together to represent their own interests (Duncan, 2015, 101–2).

³ The report is available here: <http://www.csm4cfs.org/csm-evaluation/CSM>.

⁴ This survey was designed with input and support from Josh Brem-Wilson and Nora McKeon.

What CSM constituency do you belong to? (N=90)

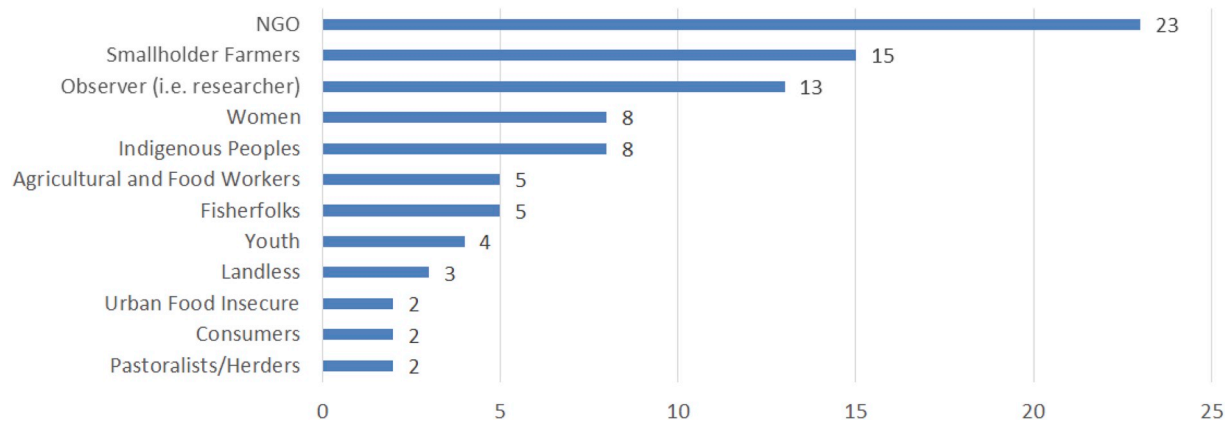


Fig. 1. Constituency identity of survey respondents (online survey Q 2).

not to respond. The breakdown of ages was biased towards slightly older participants with 19% above 65, 43% between 45 and 64, and 38% between 30 and 44. No one under the age of 30 completed the survey.

In parallel to launching the online survey, and in consultation with the Secretariat, we identified over 50 possible people to interview. We set out to prioritize interviews based on knowledge, needs and representation (i.e., gender, constituency, region, language and age), as well as taking into account different roles that actors play within the Mechanism (e.g. Coordination Committee, Advisory Group, Working Groups, facilitators of Working Groups, and Forum participants). We also identified non-Mechanism actors (i.e., governments and relevant agencies). In total, 46 interviews⁵ were conducted between March and June 2018: 35 people directly involved in the Mechanism, including 21 people who had been Coordination Committee members between 2014 and 2018 (7 had also served on the Advisory Group); 7 government representatives; and 4 representatives from other participant categories to the Committee. Interviews were conducted in English, French and Spanish, predominantly over the phone or via Skype. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours. All participants gave verbal consent to participate in the evaluation.⁶ We recorded, transcribed and anonymized all interviews. Seven people preferred to submit their answers in writing.

In addition, our analysis builds on regular periods of participant observation in the Committee since 2009. Our long-term involvement in the Mechanism as scholar-activists enabled us to give life to the data collected in the framework of the evaluation, and to provide a rich and ethnographic analysis of the 'everyday life' of the Mechanism (Billo & Mountz, 2016, 206).

3. Analytic framework: convergence spaces

The Mechanism represents a convergence space (both physical and virtual) for CSOs from around the world that focus on food sovereignty, food security and nutrition, and the right to food. As noted by Routledge (2017, 97), the notion of convergence space provides a conceptual framework with which to interpret the operational and spatial dynamics, strategies, practices and governance arrangements of 'place-based movements and groups involved in extending their reach'. Scholars have identified seven characteristics of convergence spaces

⁵ Ten of these interviews were conducted and transcribed by our colleague Josh Brem-Wilson to support the independent evaluation of the Mechanism.

⁶ We separately and explicitly asked permission to use the data collected for the evaluation for research purposes.

(Cumbers, Routledge, and Nativel 2008; Routledge, 2009). In this paper, we make use of these characteristics to frame our analysis of the Mechanism and its internal tensions as mediated by the implementation of constituencies and quotas.

The first characteristic of convergence spaces is that they are comprised of place-based, but not necessarily place-bound, movements (Cumbers, Routledge, and Nativel 2008, 193). The strength of these movements comes from their local, national or regional embeddedness, and not global level connections (see also Sklair, 1995). Actors in a convergence space have individual and collective identities grounded in their own sense of locality or community. They therefore have to find a balance between specific needs and actions that are embedded in particular places or territories, and building spatially extensive coalitions.

The second characteristic is that within convergence spaces, actors articulate certain collective visions, unifying values or organizational principles which serve as the 'common ground' that is required to generate a politics of mutual solidarity (Cumbers, Routledge, and Nativel 2008, 193). Ideally, these collective visions are representative of prefigurative politics (Routledge & Cumbers, 2009, 93; see also; Graeber, 2002) meaning that they prefigure a participatory and horizontal way of practicing politics, without a single organization or ideology dominating. The articulation of shared values (that approximate universalist politics) runs the risk of creating homogenous activist environments that elide important issues of diversity or obliterate differences between movements concerning practices of gender, class, caste and ethnicity. This can generate important tensions or conflicts within convergence spaces.

Third, convergence spaces necessitate a relational politics of solidarity between movement actors (Cumbers, Routledge, and Nativel 2008, 194). In this respect, convergence spaces do not simply bring different actors together, they are 'generative, actively shaping political identities' (Cumbers, Routledge, and Nativel 2008, 194). Fourth, the practices of solidarity-building in convergence spaces are uneven due not only to inequalities between and across movements but also as a result of different geographies in which these movements are located (Cumbers, Routledge, and Nativel 2008, 195). As such, convergence spaces facilitate spatially extensive political action. Importantly, this means that convergence spaces can become dominated by the politics of particular movements, with some places or movements becoming empowered and others marginalized.

The fifth characteristic is the presence of, and need for, 'grass-rooting vectors' (Cumbers, Routledge, and Nativel 2008, 196). These vectors conduct most of the 'ideational labour' (Routledge, 2017, 104): they ground the ideas or imaginary of convergence spaces locally, in places where there is active membership of participant movements. In practice, these vectors do the work of translating and communicating

between the convergence space and the communities (Cumbers, Routledge, and Nativel 2008, 196), providing the 'communicative infrastructure' (Routledge & Cumbers, 2009, 99). They also tend to concentrate skills, experience, resource access and mobility, which makes them hold disproportionate power and influence within the network (Routledge, 2017).

Sixth, convergence spaces are characterized by a range of different operational logics (Cumbers, Routledge, and Nativel 2008, 196), including horizontal and vertical logics. As noted by Routledge and Cumbers (2009, 100) in the case of global justice movements, the networking logic 'is always entangled with more vertical practices as a result of traditional movement structures, power relations inherent within and between participant movements, and the role played by key network actors within the convergence space'.

Finally, convergence spaces are marked by contested social and power relations that relate to 'differential control of and access to resources', which can give rise to 'problems of representation, mobility and cultural difference' (Cumbers, Routledge, and Nativel 2008, 196). In addition, convergence spaces are comprised of groups with: a) potentially conflicting goals (forms of social change); b) potentially conflicting ideologies (gender, class, ethnicity); and, c) potentially conflicting strategies (institutional/legal and extra-institutional/illegal forms of protest), all of which can generate tensions.

This seventh characteristic is, in many ways, the starting point of our inquiry. As we showed elsewhere (Claeys & Duncan, 2018a), a key rationale for establishing quotas and constituencies within the Mechanism was to address power relations, particularly with regard to representation, in order to manage difference and protect diversity. In this paper, we analyze this seventh characteristic in dialogue with the first two (which relate to the roles of identities and territorially embedded struggles), to assess how identity politics play out in the Mechanism. The Mechanism has implemented strict governance rules that facilitate the inclusion and enhance the salience of identities articulated around constituencies, regions/territories, and to some extent gender and age. These diverse identities give the Mechanism its legitimacy since the Mechanism is valued within the Committee for its ability to bring to the fore the lived experiences of those affected by hunger and food insecurity. Yet, the literature raises concerns around identity-based organizing and the impulse towards creating separate organizations within movements around specific identities, such as women or youth. Giving visibility to and reinforcing distinct identities presents a challenge insofar as focusing on 'identity politics' has been shown to have potentially balkanizing effects (Weldon & Laurel, 2006, 111). Identity politics are also blamed for weakening social movements and reducing their effectiveness by inducing the specialization and fragmentation of the actors involved (Gitlin, 1995; Harvey, 1996; Tarrow, 1998; Taylor & Whittier, 1999). To the contrary, other social movements scholars have argued that the creation of separate spaces can be critical to empowering and engaging marginalized groups, and can make movements more inclusive and influential in policy discussions (Weldon & Laurel, 2006, 113). We pay particular attention to the risk of fragmentation in our analysis of the Mechanism below.

We also expand on these seven characteristics to consider the specific challenges that emerge from the institutionalization of convergence spaces. Much of the work on convergence spaces has looked at how movements of movements create collective political identities across space, generate solidarity, and help activists develop 'transnational networks of support as an operational strategy for the defense of their place(s)' (Routledge, 2017, 97). Here we instead focus on convergence as a process by which actors can gain influence and have impact in a specific global policy process. Within social movement theory, institutionalization can refer to movements that operate *within* social institutions and organizations (Staggenborg, 2013). It can also refer to the process of movements becoming established interest groups, formalized and professionalized in relation to the fields within which they operate. When it comes to the Mechanism, both are relevant.

First, the Mechanism operates within and across the formal policy-making space of the Committee. This means, for example, that the use of constituencies and quotas by the Mechanism is now integrated into the Committee's governance structure. Indeed, the Committee has endorsed and largely adopted the constituency approach to civil society participation developed by the global food sovereignty movement (and more specifically by the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty (IPC)). We have also seen the uptake and institutionalization of this approach within the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) (Claeys & Duncan, 2018a). As we have shown elsewhere (Duncan & Claeys, 2018), the organizational logics and values of the (radical) global food sovereignty movement have been formalized (albeit horizontally) and ritualized through the Mechanism. Developed through trial and error over three decades, these organizational logics have provided a stable and transparent governance structure across the movement, while always entailing a dynamic process of categorization in which food sovereignty actors could constantly reassess which organizations and actors had the legitimacy to play political roles (Claeys & Duncan, 2018a). From the literature, the concern would be that the institutionalization of movement practices into the formal organizational logic of the Committee could limit the scope of adaptation and adjustment necessary to ensure the inclusion of those who may feel unrepresented (Weldon, 2012, 158). Further, scholars have pointed out that power relations can become embedded in these institutionalized organizational arrangements, making it easier for some actors to consolidate power (Davis, McAdam, Richard Scott, & Zald, 2005).

Second, the institutional context in which actors in the Mechanism operate can direct social movements in more professionalized directions, leading them to internalize preexisting rules, and engage more in institutionalized or 'insider' tactics rather than in disruptive direct action (Kriesi, 1996; Zald and McCarthy 1987). As they become professionalized, social movement actors may choose to pursue more rationalized/targeted goals, possibly at the expense of more ambitious goals and revolutionary agendas (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998). They may also become co-opted if norm-making proceeds along channels and issues determined by preexisting interests (Piven and Cloward 1978). Evidence from the human rights movement's engagement with the UN system, for example, shows that while professionalization increases influence and impact, over-professionalization and attendant cooptation are important pitfalls for movements to consider (Tsutsui, Whitlinger, & Lim, 2012).

4. The Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism and its mandate

Since its creation, the Mechanism has facilitated the active and consistent participation of a large diversity of CSOs at the Annual Sessions of the Committee (the number of organizations registered for these sessions has varied between 81 and 123 between 2013 and 2017). The strong commitment of participating organizations has enabled the Mechanism to consistently produce well-prepared contributions as well as clear and constructive policy proposals. In turn, the Mechanism is recognized as a key actor in the Committee by a broad range of member states and participants.

Speaking with a unified voice, the Mechanism has won a number of important political victories, signaled by the uptake and adoption of several of its proposals during policy negotiations. Examples of some of the recent achievements identified by actors in the Mechanism include: successfully negotiating the inclusion of agroecology to the Multi-Year Program of Work (MYPOW) 2018–2019, water recommendations (2015), a strong presence at the Committee's Forum on Women's empowerment in the context of food security and nutrition (2017), the process of monitoring the Voluntary Guidelines for the Right to Adequate Food (2018), successfully negotiating strong and progressive language in outcomes such as Connecting small-holders to markets (2016), and working towards the use, application and monitoring of the

Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Land, Fisheries and Forests (VGGTs) (from 2012 onwards).

The Mechanism is supported by a stable and highly competent Secretariat⁷ and has managed to secure a relatively substantial budget (see Fig. 2). The Mechanism has the goal of 100% public funding from member states (Interview 37). This is rationalized on the basis of the nature of the Committee, which is a public body. Over the years, the Mechanism has succeeded in increasing its share of public funding (Interviews 37 and 38). Between 2011 and 2016, 84% of the total budget of the Mechanism came from governments and international organizations and 16% from NGOs and CSOs, with these figures reaching 91% and 9% respectively in 2017.

The 2018 budget was divided as follows: Mechanism's consultations at sub-regional or constituency level 23%; Annual Forum of the Mechanism 21%; Secretariat and monitoring 20%; Policy Working Groups of the Mechanism 17%; Participation in meetings of the Committee's Advisory Group 11%; Accountability, audit and administrative costs 8%.

The governance structure of the Mechanism is grounded across three main spaces: the Coordination Committee (the executive space) and Advisory Group; the Policy Working Groups (the policy space); and the Annual Forum (the gathering space) (see Fig. 3). The main objective of this complex governance structure is to give leadership and control to social movement organizations representing the 'most affected'. One implication of this is that there is no formal space within the Mechanism for those who are affected by food insecurity but not organized. In what follows we review the internal dynamics at play in each of these spaces, before discussing how the Mechanism has balanced diversity and inclusiveness and addressed the challenges of fragmentation and institutionalization.

4.1. Executive space: the Coordination Committee and Advisory Group

The Mechanism is governed by a Coordination Committee responsible for ensuring that the functions of the Mechanism are carried out according to its organizing principles. The Coordination Committee is also responsible for ensuring that there is effective two-way communication with participants worldwide. The Coordination Committee is composed of 24 Constituency Coordinators (four Coordinators from smallholder family farmer organizations and two from each of the 10 other constituencies (see Fig. 3) and 17 Sub-Regional Coordinators. Extra coordination positions are given to small-scale farmers because they represent 80% of the food insecure worldwide and are the largest group of food producers (CFS, 2010). At a political level, these extra positions also reflect the influence of agrarian movements (particularly La Via Campesina) in the development of the executive structure at the time of the Committee's reform.⁸

The involvement of NGOs in the Mechanism is severely constrained by the Mechanism's governance structure which is grounded in the 'most affected principle' (Duncan & Claeys, 2018), and prioritizes the engagement of social movements over NGOs. This is a key characteristic of the Mechanism, as one of our interviewees explained:

The diversity of those who consider themselves mostly social movements (...) really have the leading voice in the space. The diversity is recognized in the 11 perhaps 12 constituencies, and NGOs are just one of them. I think that is very, very important and this is structurally recognized and operationalized in the space such as the CSM [the Mechanism] (Interview 44).

Coordinators are appointed for a period of two years, with possible renewal for another two years. Coordinators act as 'networking vectors' for the Mechanism and concentrate a lot of information, expertise, material and symbolic resources. Within the Mechanism, they occupy a predominantly virtual space, connecting via email, WhatsApp and on-line meeting tools (e.g. Skype) or through reports. The political process of appointing Coordinators is heavy and time consuming. The election of Coordination Committee members takes place through autonomous and independent processes decided internally by each of the respective constituencies and sub-regions (CFS, 2010). Each constituency and region is tasked with ensuring it reaches out to the organizations representing the most affected in its network or region, and elections usually take place electronically. In practice, the Coordination Committee supports the accountability of the wider Mechanism in so far as it has the role of ensuring that the lists of participating organizations provided by Coordination Committee members for their constituencies and sub-regions are inclusive and representative of organizations conducting relevant work on the ground (Interview 38). This is no simple endeavor:

The first step therefore, for all the processes, in each of the global constituencies and in the sub-regions is to have a list of participating organizations. That's the very first step, which is technically totally easy, but politically is the point where you exclude or include people (Interview 10).

In terms of geographic representation of the Constituency Coordinators, there has been improved distribution when comparing the 2015–2017 Constituency Coordinators to the 2017–2019 ones (see Fig. 4). At the same time, there is a perception that actors from the Global North are over-represented in activities of the Mechanism (e.g. Annual Forum, Working Groups). While this may be the case for some activities (discussed in more detail below), participants from the Global North are not over-represented when it comes to the executive structure of the Mechanism, in line with the principles of its Founding Document.

When reviewing the primary constituency affiliation of Sub-Regional Coordinators, we see that farmers' networks and NGOs are over-represented (see Fig. 5). Despite the application of strict quotas in the appointment of Constituency Coordinators, the autonomy left to sub-regions in the appointment of their Coordinators results in a disproportionate number of Sub-Regional Coordinators coming from farmer organizations (and to a lesser extent NGOs), at the expense of other constituencies. This imbalance could lead – and possibly already has led – to a consolidation of power and influence in favour of small-scale farmers' organizations, which could threaten the constituency balance of the Mechanism. We come back to constituency and sub-regional dynamics below.

One key role for the Coordination Committee is to sit on the Advisory Group of the Committee. According to the Committee's Reform Document, the function of the Advisory Group is to contribute substantive work and provide advice to the Bureau (the executive branch of the Committee). The Advisory Group is composed of representatives from civil society, the private sector, philanthropic foundations, international research institutes and international organizations. The Mechanism has four seats on the Advisory Group. The rationale for this decision is the Committee's reform focus on prioritizing the voices of those most affected, as well as recognition for the diversity of global civil society. However, this is a point of contention for other Committee participants, notably the private sector, which only have one seat.

⁷ According to the Founding Document of the Mechanism (CFS, 2010), the Secretariat provides support to members of the Mechanism, the Coordination Committee, civil society members of the Advisory Group and to help organize the annual Civil Society Forum. The Secretariat reports to the Coordination Committee. It is supposed to be politically neutral and to not perform advocacy and lobbying roles. In recent years, the Mechanism's Secretariat has placed strong emphasis on enforcing due processes, with a view to improving trust, transparency and accountability in activities of the Mechanism and reducing internal conflict.

⁸ The involvement of food sovereignty actors in the reform process of the Committee and their leadership in the establishment of the Mechanism has been discussed elsewhere. See, for example (Brem-Wilson, 2016; Claeys & Duncan, 2018a; Duncan, 2015; Gaarde, 2017; Nora, 2014).

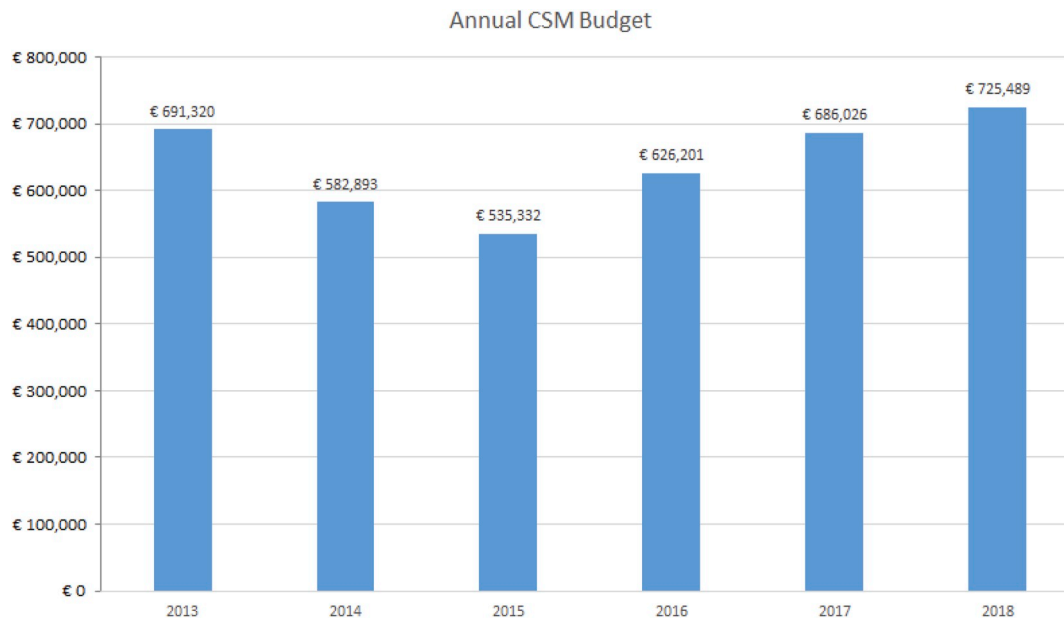


Fig. 2. Annual budget of the Mechanism 2013–2018

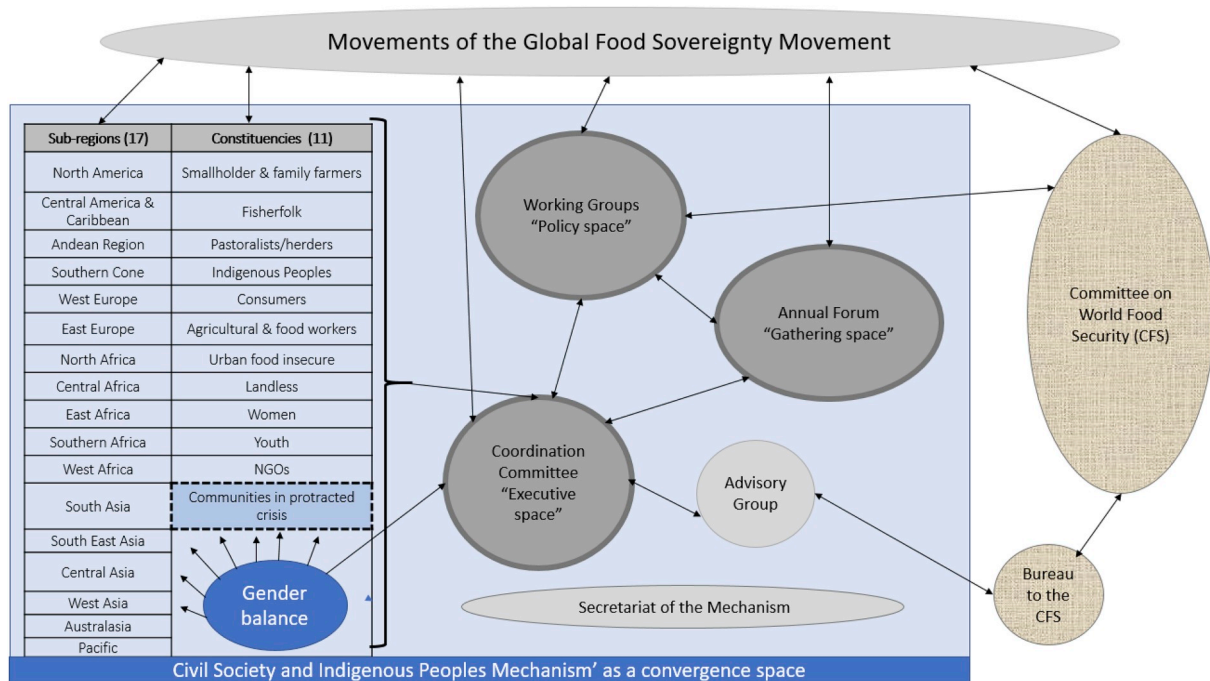


Fig. 3. Working structure of the mechanism. Source: Adapted from the Annual Report 2016–2017 of the Civil Society Mechanism (CSM, 2017)

Since 2017, the members of the Mechanism that sit on the Advisory Group consist of 10 elected Coordinators, rotating into the four assigned seats. The Terms of Reference for Advisory Group members outline that at least 75% of the ‘official four’ Advisory Group members need to be from social movements. It is interesting to note that this ratio of 75% is not at all proportional to the ratio of social movements to NGOs in the Coordination Committee. This can probably be explained by pragmatic reasons, considering that sitting on the Advisory Group is time consuming and NGOs are likely to have greater capacity and resources to fulfil the function. The number of Coordinators rotating on the Advisory Group used to be 8, but was increased to 10 to allow for more sub-regional diversity. Indeed, the issue of sub-regional balance on the Advisory Group has been historically sensitive for the

Mechanism. These tensions have been addressed by allowing all regions to contribute to the Advisory Group, and clarifying that the Advisory Group is not a place where organizations are to push for their own interests. This is a useful example of how the Coordination Committee identified a flexible solution to address inner tensions within the parameters of its institutionalized governance structure.

4.2. Policy space: working groups

The reformed Committee produces policy recommendations to support member countries make progress towards food security. To promote dialogue and common positions amongst CSOs and to be most effective in influencing these policies, the Mechanism established

Geographic affiliation of constituency Coordinators

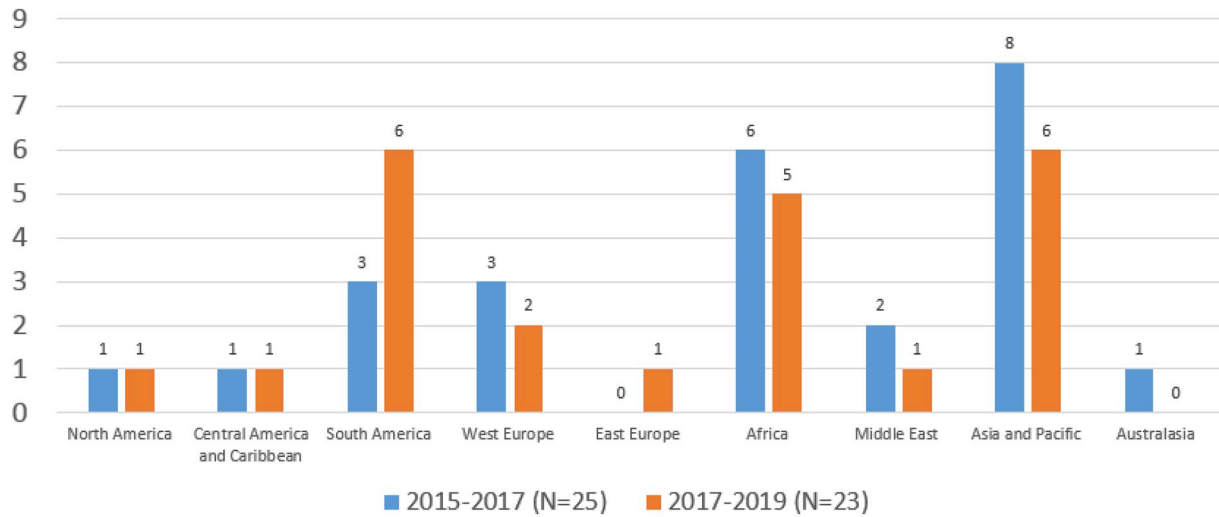


Fig. 4. Geographic affiliation of constituency Coordinators (2015–2017, 2017–2019).

Constituency affiliation of sub-regional Coordinators

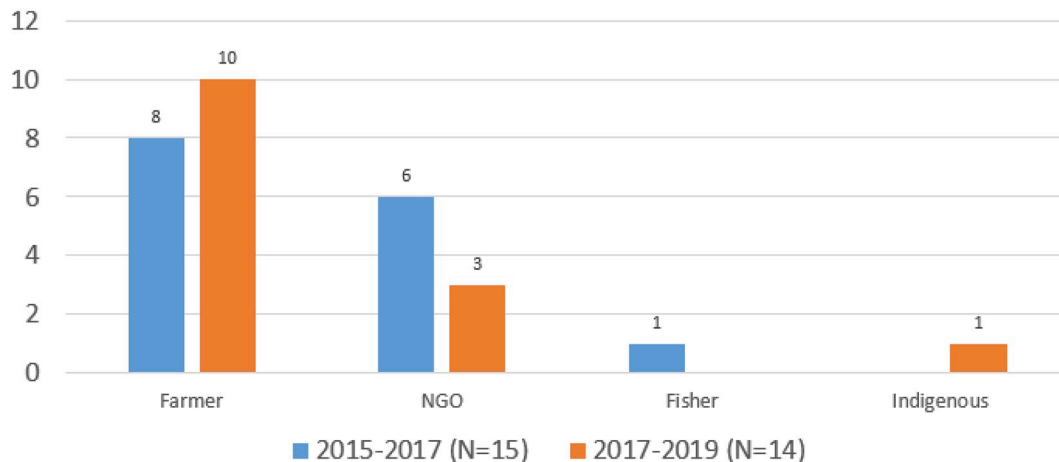


Fig. 5. Constituency affiliation of Sub-Regional Coordinators (2015–2017, 2017–2019).

Working Groups. Most Working Groups mirror the policy-focused Open-Ended Working Groups or Technical Task Teams of the Committee (e.g. Water, Sustainable Development Goals, Connecting Small-holders to Markets), although some are specifically geared towards specific needs or internal purposes of the Mechanism (e.g. Governance, Finance, etc.). The latter tend to be more transversal and enduring (Interview 1). The analysis below covers both, with particular attention to Policy Working Groups.

The Policy Working Groups are open to all CSOs working on food security and nutrition. Anyone interested in participating in a Working Group can contact the relevant Working Group Coordinator and/or facilitator whose names and contact details are listed on the website of the Mechanism. While there are no strict quotas in place for the composition of Working Groups, there is strong awareness of the importance of ensuring diverse participation in Working Groups, and Working Group facilitators see this as part of their task. When asked if constituencies and regions provide some kind of template for the composition of Working Groups, one interviewee replied:

Exactly. You just screen it through; it's like a checklist. 'Is everybody there of those who should be there?' (Interview 44).

This informal implementation of constituencies and quotas has

worked as an effective convergence strategy. As highlighted by one interviewee:

The funny thing in the CSM [the Mechanism] is that we do not really fight over positions. We have actually a huge diversity. Yes, but we don't have on content, we don't have these huge fights inside. (...) we have mostly united positions and we are struggling like more on other issues: our internal power struggle (Interview 10).

Over the years, the Working Groups have developed as the heart of the Mechanism.⁹ Through Working Groups, participants have shown high levels of commitment and engagement, demonstrating a willingness to learn and work as a collective. There is a strong sense of community in the Working Groups, along with a shared purpose. Many interviewees spoke about the ability of Working Group participants to function as a group and speak as one voice rather than pursue the visibility of their own organization. However, this lack of individual or organizational visibility, in favour of a coherent collective position, can be a challenge, particularly for organizations such as NGOs that have

⁹ For a list of current and past Working Groups, see <http://www.csm4cfs.org/policy-working-groups/>.

visibility requirements (i.e. who need to have their name and related branding associated with particular processes) (Interviews 35 and 36). As explained by one interviewee who works with an NGO and has facilitated a number of Working Groups:

NGOs ... should facilitate the most affected by food security and nutrition to take their place, and play their role, and so this has several implications, because you really have to reduce a bit your visibility, or your tendency to be there on the frontline, and do a lot of working supporting the others (Interview 36).

The Working Groups are led by one or two social movement Coordinators from the Coordination Committee and supported by a technical facilitator, usually from an NGO. Both Coordinators and facilitators fulfil their roles on a voluntary basis. Their names are proposed by Working Groups members and must be approved by Coordination Committee members. Within the Mechanism, Coordinators and facilitators have found creative ways of working together to be able to react to the demands of the Committee. Social movements and NGOs are mutually accountable (Interview 5) and their collaboration builds on their respective strengths. As Coordinators of the Working Groups, social movements give political orientation, which is fundamental. In this sense, the Coordinators serve as grassroots vectors, connecting the global to the local, but also as 'grassrootifying vectors' ensuring representation of sub-regional movements in the global convergence space. The political leadership provided by social movements was recognized by one of our interviewees from an NGO who has facilitated a number of Working Groups:

Yes, the job of the facilitator in working groups has been an extremely strong learning experience on how to translate these bulky boring technical things into very simple political things. Then to have this reliable group of political people from social movements, following the big political minds. Then it was very important to be able to always check with them, 'Okay, now these are the crossroads. We go like this, or we go that way? This means this or that for our big political line?' 'Okay, we go better like this.' (Interview 7)

Facilitators, who were described to us in one interview as 'midwives', are of paramount importance to the functioning of Working Groups (Interview 1). Without facilitators' time, commitment and resources, Working Groups would not function and the quality of outcomes would not be as high. Several interviewees highlighted that high quality contributions¹⁰ have been central to ensuring the influence of the Mechanism in policy negotiations, thus recognizing the important contribution of both social movements and NGOs. Talking about Working Groups, one of our interviewees who previously sat on the Coordination Committee explained:

They're amazing for knowledge sharing and even co-creation. I think that's worked really well when you have a [social movement] Coordinator and a Technical Support. I think that's new. When you have that, when you've got somebody with experience and capacity. [laughs] It's a great asset to the group to have technical support (Interview 5).

However, many facilitators described their work as 'lonely at times', with a lot of 'chasing' to ensure that social movements' views are represented (Interviews 1, 7, 34 and 36). Some facilitators noted that they often feel uncomfortable and guilty trying to push movement actors for inputs, recognizing that many are busy with other, perhaps more pressing, issues. One interviewee from an NGO who is a facilitator for a number of Working Groups explained:

I also feel a bit guilty sometimes. I'm chasing people because they have to

give approval, but I know they're so busy and it's ... You don't really know what to do. There's nothing else to do (Interview 1).

Facilitators have developed and implemented a range of creative strategies for ensuring social movements' inputs, including email, Skype, phone calls, in-person meetings, Facebook, WhatsApp, and writing draft contributions on the basis of conversations (Interview 35). Most Working Groups have developed the use of various layers of articulation. Depending on the decisions that need to be made, certain issues are discussed bilaterally between Coordinators and facilitators while some issues are discussed with a core group. The results of either or both processes are then shared with all Working Group members.

Levels of engagement in the Working Groups naturally depend on the issues in question. Some themes appear to attract less interest from social movements (e.g. Sustainable Development Goals, monitoring, evaluation of the Committee), or attract certain constituencies more specifically (e.g. forestry, livestock), while some are perceived as too technical (e.g. nutrition). Issues like land tenure and agroecology tend to attract wide interest and participation from social movements. Technically, a quota system could be enforced in the Working Groups if social movement voices are not well represented (CSM, n.d.). To our knowledge, no Working Group has implemented such actions, despite the imbalances between participating organizations. There are two reasons for this. First, Working Group Coordinators and facilitators seem to have found ways to ensure that social movements' views are adequately portrayed within Working Groups, despite their unequal or sub-optimal presence or participation. This is confirmed by our survey, which showed that 70% of those surveyed feel that social movements' views are well prioritized in policy Working Groups (Online survey Q28). Second, there is awareness, within Working Groups, of the importance of maintaining a balance between strictly enforcing quotas and leaving Working Groups open to those who have the ability and eagerness to participate (Interview 20).

In addition, active participation in Working Groups requires investing a lot of time and effort, and this can consolidate the expertise and power of certain people. Facilitation work, in particular, tends to be concentrated in the hands of a few dedicated individuals, often involved in several Working Groups. Social movement actors, including Coordinators, also tend to spread their limited time and resources across several Working Groups. Some interviewees made references to a few social movement 'rock stars' who cover a range of international meetings or leadership responsibilities for their organizations (Interview 1). We found that there is some discrepancy between the policy work taking place in the Working Groups, where not all social movements are actively engaged and present, and the internal issues that are discussed in the Coordination Committee, where, as a result of strict quota enforcement and dedicated funding, social movements are more consistently present.

4.3. Gathering space: The Annual Forum

The Annual Forum takes place in Rome and is the face-to-face meeting for all CSOs interested in participating in the Mechanism and the Committee. When it comes to the Forum, we were not able to systematically assess the balance of constituencies, sub-regions, gender and youth, nor the evolution of participation over time, due to the absence of reliable data. While personal data is collected by the Mechanism's Secretariat for registration purposes since most meetings take place within FAO premises, such data is structured in a way that primarily responds to FAO accreditation requirements, not internal needs.¹¹ One important element, however, needs to be highlighted here

¹⁰ High quality contributions here refer to documents which are perceived by other participants in the Committee as being professional and constructive to the pertinent negotiations.

¹¹ Data collection is further impeded by last minute changes in representatives sent by participating organizations, cancellations associated with declined visas, illnesses and other events, and the lack of capacity of the Mechanism's Secretariat around the time of the Committee's plenary.

in relation to participation. Participating in the activities of the Mechanism and the Committee is costly, and the Mechanism's budget is only able to cover the participation of members of the Coordination Committee, in line with the quota system in place for the Coordination Committee. Beyond the Coordination Committee, participation is thus constrained by/dependent on the ability of organizations to self-fund their attendance. According to our interviews, the proportion of funded versus self-funded participants was about 50/50 at the last Forum (Interviews 37 and 38), which indicates that diversity (and the political commitment to prioritizing social movement voices) can only be ensured for about half of the total number of Forum participants. For the other half, the over-representation of participants from the Global North, NGOs, research institutions or more resourced organizations is difficult to avoid given that they tend to be more able to finance their participation.

In addition, the Mechanism's Secretariat has not been able to ensure a balance of constituencies and regions and enforce gender and age quotas at the Forum, due to lack of capacity. This limitation has been compensated by a strong emphasis on specific methodologies implemented during the Forum that prioritize the voices of social movements' representatives. Efforts have also been made in the past to reach out to specific constituencies in relation to certain policy processes (e.g. protracted crises).

5. Discussion: the governance structures of the mechanism for inclusiveness and diversity

In this section, we further assess the overall ability of the Mechanism to operate as a convergence space that protects and enhances inclusiveness and diversity, while addressing power imbalances. As we showed in the first part of this article, constituencies and quotas have functioned as effective tools to facilitate the participation of a diversity of voices. Linking policy to territorially-embedded and place-based struggles, the operational logics of the Mechanism have enhanced its legitimacy and fostered convergence in the executive, policy and gathering spaces of the Mechanism. Yet, inner tensions and power relations remain vivid. Below, we focus on recent developments and identify three areas of progress and five areas of concern.

Since 2014, the Coordination Committee of the Mechanism has taken concrete steps towards increasing the diversity and inclusiveness of the Mechanism, and addressing power relations. First, the Secretariat and Coordination Committee have paid specific attention to reinforcing weaker or less active constituencies and addressing imbalances in the representation of different constituencies (i.e., missing constituency Coordinators) with an emphasis on the Women, Youth and Landless constituencies (Interviews 19 and 38). These three constituencies have benefited from specific budget allocations in order to allow for physical meetings outside of the annual meetings in Rome. This appears to have brought substantive results, and the Women, Landless and Youth constituencies all appear to have been invigorated. All three constituencies have undertaken visioning exercises to help participants develop a shared agenda and identify common objectives.

Second, in 2018, the Indigenous Peoples constituency, represented by the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC), requested a name change for the Mechanism in order to ensure the full participation of Indigenous Peoples and the consistent application of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in UN policy processes. The request was discussed at the Coordination Committee meeting in July 2018 and consensus was rapidly achieved, resulting in a change from the original name, the 'Civil Society Mechanism', to the new name, the 'Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism' (CSM, 2018). From our interviews with Indigenous Peoples' representatives, we understand that it is important for Indigenous Peoples to have their own identity when navigating the UN system and that some feared that the 'civil society' terminology, which does not fit well with Indigenous Peoples' own institutions, could passively marginalize Indigenous

Peoples (Interview 17). One of our interviewees from the Indigenous Peoples constituency even expressed discomfort with the idea that Indigenous Peoples should participate within the Mechanism as a constituency. As our interviewee put it:

We have recognition of rights in the United Nations system as peoples, as Indigenous Peoples not as sectors, not as sectors. So we propose that it be a Mechanism of Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples. Because this is also how Indigenous brothers and sisters from all over the world are more comfortable in order to participate (Interview 12).

In our view, this decision to change the name of the Mechanism reflects the high degree to which the Coordination Committee values convergence and unity and has shown flexibility to avoid the fragmentation that would have resulted from the creation of a separate Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism.

Third, the Mechanism has looked into the possibility of setting up a new constituency of communities living in protracted crises, refugees and internally displaced people. A Coordination Committee Working Group was established to assess the usefulness and feasibility of the proposal, and to assess whether the issues of protracted crises are adequately covered, or not, by the existing constituencies. The Working Group noted that communities living in protracted crises are a special category that suffers from distinct social, economic and political phenomena, including: destruction/breakdown of livelihoods, internal and external displacement (i.e. refugees), high dependence on humanitarian assistance, collapsed or dual governments (weak institutional capacity at best), increased rate of morbidity and mortality, and decreased longevity due to food crises. The Working Group also determined that the existing constituencies do not cover the issues of protracted crises. First, protracted crises situations have distinct challenges that do not exist in other situations. Second, protracted crises situations have distinct underlying causes that need to be addressed. Third, protracted crises fall outside of the typical categories for intervention including non-crisis development situations and short-term crises. The Working Group also identified criteria for who would be recognized as part of such a constituency. The Working Group submitted its conclusions and the Coordination Committee must now decide on next steps. While it is premature to draw any conclusions from this process, the attention paid by the Mechanism to the importance of opening-up to a broader diversity of relevant actors shows that the Mechanism does not shy away from questioning its own objectives and legitimacy. At the same time, it should be noted that discussions around the creation of this new constituency have been complex and contentious. As one interviewee from the Coordination Committee noted:

We have been pushing to have an additional seat for communities suffering from protracted crises/conflict/occupation. It was extremely difficult to push through initially, as not everyone suffers or comprehends the severity of war. And perhaps there were other reasons. But now we are in the right direction (Interview 22).

One of the reasons the discussions on the creation of this new constituency were contentious is that they touched on the very nature of the Mechanism as a space that prioritizes social movements' voices. Indeed, it would be inadequate to say that the Mechanism facilitates the participation of grassroots communities. The Mechanism is more adequately described as a 'political' space that brings together social movement leaders of organizations representing the affected. This makes it particularly challenging for the Mechanism to facilitate the participation of non-organized actors, as highlighted by one interviewee currently sitting on the Coordination Committee:

the debate is long but it shows the difficulty in relation to your question, we say to ourselves, yes, it is a constituency that is not represented as such in the networks and that lives in situations of particular food insecurity and that are not supported by international networks, so we say to ourselves yes, we must invest in it but the second question is how to

ensure that it is the people who are in these situations who will belong to these constituencies rather than NGOs who speak for them and then it becomes more difficult to identify the organizations (Interview 15).

Based on the above analysis, we argue that the focus on separate constituency and regional identities has enabled the autonomous but converging expression of a diversity of identities within the Mechanism, without leading to fragmentation. This finding echoes our assessment of the global food sovereignty movement at large, wherein the protection of a diversity of identities and perspectives has not led to fragmentation but rather enabled the movement to come together and grow (Claeys & Duncan, 2018a). We also argue that the Mechanism has identified ways to enhance diversity despite the institutionalization of its governance structure. At the same time, the complexity of the Mechanism's governance structure remains an initial barrier to participation as it is difficult to explain, in particularly to new Coordination Committee members.

While we have shown how the Mechanism has successfully addressed a number of exclusions and power imbalances in recent years, we have also identified five issues which may require more attention if the Mechanism is to remain inclusive in the future. First, a number of participants raised concerns about imbalances in power, influence, capacity and resources between various participating organizations within the Mechanism. As highlighted above, some actors or organizations appear over-represented within the Mechanism, either in the Coordination Committee or in the Working Groups. We also heard specific concerns about the important presence of La Via Campesina within the Mechanism. La Via Campesina encompasses many constituencies and is present in most Working Groups, and its involvement is facilitated by a dedicated La Via Campesina support staff based in Rome. From the interviews and survey, we heard many concerns that La Via Campesina activists have a disproportionate amount of influence, although we have no evidence that this influence has actually hindered the participation of other networks or constituencies.

One of our interviewees from a regional network, who is also a member of the Coordination Committee complained:

Another tension is the monopolization of spaces by La Via. (...) They want to be in all groups and then they bring more and more people. When organizations are smaller they can't move as many people. Then it is not going to become a space of organizations but of one organization. That is not possible for an open space (Interview 13).

At the same time, others noted that this presence is consistent with the fact that La Via Campesina is the largest and most organized social movement of food producers, and that many La Via Campesina representatives have accepted to take on leading roles and responsibilities within the Mechanism. In addition, many view La Via Campesina's active participation as key to the functioning of a strong Mechanism, since La Via Campesina has a clear political stance on many issues discussed at the Committee (Interviews 35 and 36).

We also found that while some constituencies are diverse, with different organizational representatives taking on the role of Coordinator, other constituencies were described as being under the 'guardianship of particular organizations' (Interview 1), with the associated risk that some 'heavy weight' actors (Interview 7) dominate certain processes/discussions. Some questions were also raised as to whether leading organizations within the constituencies were doing their best to reach out and include new organizations (Interview 8). These disparities suggest that the Mechanism could more systematically enforce the balance requirements that are at the heart of its governance structures. At the same time, the existence of imbalances within the Mechanism reflects disparities in how food producer social movements are organized at regional and global levels, with some constituencies being more organized and resourced than others. In addition, competition is inherent to the Mechanism as a policy convergence space because of the unique opportunities it provides to civil society actors

wishing to participate in transnational food security governance (Tsutsui et al., 2012). As noted by other scholars, global civil society is a competitive arena in which domestic organizations compete for scarce international resources (Bartelson, 2006; Keane, 2003). This was confirmed by one of our interviewees and previous Coordination Committee member:

The dynamic of the fight for space or protection of space has been part of the CSM [Mechanism] since the very beginning and plays out in all the spaces, including the Working Groups and the CC [Coordination Committee] (Interview 5).

In short, constituencies and quotas have so far proven to be effective tools to limit the consolidation of power within the Coordination Committee and the Mechanism at large. At the same time, the Mechanism is not devoid of power dynamics and it will be important for the Mechanism to address these in the future, even if these dynamics are perceived as legitimate by many of its participants.

Second, NGOs play roles in the Mechanism that are not necessarily aligned with the founding principles of the Mechanism. As discussed above, NGOs are recognized as one of the 11 constituencies and sit on the Coordination Committee. Yet, in practice many NGOs function more in support of the other constituencies than as a distinct constituency in and of themselves. As one interviewee explained, this support role is the outcome of a mutual or self-selection process and of the explicit alignment of some NGOs with the objectives of food sovereignty (Interview 6). One interviewee from an NGO explained:

If one's lucky enough to be in a place [where you can have influence], I'm completely conscious that I'm bringing with me in my mind the voice of social movements. I will amplify their voices where I can but for the most part that's also an accompanying role. I will sometimes use my, you could say privilege or access, to open doors for social movements. Then hopefully have them walk in (interview 5).

The NGO constituency is very heterogeneous, and it contains large and small, international and national, Northern and Southern NGOs, which do not all necessarily see their roles as one of support (Interview 35). At the same time, however, this support role is clearly embedded in the ways in which the Working Groups function, since Working Groups are led by a social movement Coordinator supported by a technical facilitator from an NGO (as we discussed above). This support function is positively assessed by participants, although some complain that the support granted by NGOs is unevenly shared across social movements. One interviewee from the Coordination Committee noted:

La Via does not need any NGOs. La Via is a huge movement; it's far beyond needing any NGOs, or should be. If it is a movement, then it does not need these NGOs. So, then, why is there such a close collaboration between La Via and the NGOs? (Interview 4)

Our evaluation of social movement-NGOs relations within the Mechanism uncovered a complex picture. On the one hand, the involvement and influence of NGOs is considerably limited by the constituencies and quota system that allocates them only two seats on the Coordination Committee of the Mechanism: one for NGOs from the Global North and one for NGOs from the Global South. On the other hand, several processes within the Mechanism continue to rely on the technical support of a key number of trusted NGOs, notably in Working Groups. The contradiction is not lost on our interviewee who explained:

They keep on saying that NGOs are not real representatives. Fine. I agree. But then, why did you have an NGO slot? Why are your technical advisers from NGOs? [laughs] (Interview 4)

In the Mechanism, the social movement-NGO tandem appears to be working effectively and, as a result, the place of NGOs on the Coordination Committee is not questioned. This is surprising considering that a full commitment to prioritizing the voices of the organizations representing the most affected should, in theory, be translated

into the exclusion of NGOs from the Coordination Committee.

Third, the Mechanism needs to engage in further efforts to achieve generational balance and full gender equality. There is currently no quota for youth, but attention has been paid in recent years to engage more youth, notably through the consolidation of the youth constituency (as discussed above). The lack of specific quotas to enhance youth involvement in the Coordination Committee and Working Groups (i.e. across constituencies and sub-regions and beyond the youth constituency strictly speaking) is surprising, considering the importance of enabling the participation of young leaders, and the increasing challenges relating to farm renewal and succession, rural employment and barriers to entering farming for the younger generations. This situation is however consistent with developments we have documented elsewhere in the global food sovereignty movement, with youth quotas only appearing in recent years (Claeys & Duncan, 2018a). We found that the Coordination Committee is open to adopting a youth quota but that the issue has not been granted top priority.

With regards to gender, participants positively assess gender balance across the activities of the Mechanism but some raised concerns about men dominating discussions and speaking roles, or certain Working Groups. An instance of sexual harassment was also reported to, and adequately dealt with, by the Coordination Committee (Interview 42). The Secretariat and Coordination Committee of the Mechanism are aware that they must continue efforts to uproot and deconstruct patriarchal power relations within the Mechanism, beyond advocating for women's rights in the Committee. Recent developments around gender are promising and include the elaboration of a shared vision of the women's constituency, the outcomes of the Women's Empowerment Forum, attention to inclusive language in documents produced by the Mechanism, and the development of shared values around gender.

In the case of both gender and youth, the Mechanism appears to have prioritized the reinforcement of the Women and Youth constituencies over the strict enforcement of gender and age quotas across its activities. This approach has proven useful to give visibility to women's rights and the specific concerns of the youth, but is insufficient to achieve full gender and generational equality across all activities.

Fourth, one limitation of the constituency approach is the issue of multiple and hybrid identities that cut across constituencies. We found that many actors who enter the Mechanism do not know which constituency to join, or to which they 'belong'. As one of our interviewees explained:

A lot of people have clarity about the constituency, others a little bit less. When it comes to self and definition, I think that not all of the participating organizations of the CSM [Mechanism] know which one is their constituency even though maybe they are in the constituency list (Interview 45).

The Mechanism's Secretariat has tackled this issue by allowing constituencies to overlap (this is particularly true for the Women and Youth constituencies, but to some extent for the Indigenous Peoples and Pastoralist constituencies as well). The Secretariat has also addressed this by encouraging actors to identify their 'first political identity', in fact asking participants to choose between different aspects of their identity for the sake of effective participation (Interview 45). While most processes are, in practice, fluid enough to accommodate a diversity of identities, notably through the Working Groups, at the heart of the Mechanism are important tensions between constituencies and identities. While the Mechanism seeks to be a diverse and inclusive space, the emphasis on convergence means that participants have to engage in activities and processes through established constituencies. This may explain why there has so far been no discussion within the Mechanism about the possibility of facilitating the deliberate inclusion of other identities or people/groups enduring other forms of discrimination (e.g. (dis)abilities, caste, class, LGBTIQ+, race, and religion).

Finally, the Mechanism has been plagued since its inception by

tensions between and inside its sub-regions. Despite improvements in recent years, sub-regions remain a weaker, but crucially important, component of the governance structure of the Mechanism. Participants positively assess the current regional balance of the Coordination Committee as well as across the Mechanism more broadly but there is only limited engagement of actors from Asia (especially Central Asia), West Asian countries, Portuguese-speaking countries, as well as from across the African Continent. Concerns were raised that NGOs and actors from wealthy countries (particularly Western Europe) and Spanish-speaking countries remain over-represented in the Mechanism. As noted above, actors from Western Europe are not over-represented in the executive Coordination Committee of the Mechanism. The Coordination Committee has acknowledged that some sub-regions are weak, with two regions particularly under-represented: Southern Africa and Central Asia,¹² and has deployed specific efforts to reach out to organizations in these regions. It has also supported certain sub-regions facing internal coordination challenges, such as South Asia. This sub-region has so far failed to establish a list of national and regional CSOs working on food security issues and to organize elections to appoint representatives to the Coordination Committee. While exploring the reasons behind the under-representations of certain sub-regions is beyond the scope of this paper, we note that regional tensions, internal divisions and lack of organization could play a role in the ability of CSOs to actively participate (Mills, 2018; Alonso-Fradejas, Borrás, Holmes, Holt-Giménez, & Jane Robbins, 2015; Borrás, Edelman, & Kay, 2008; Edelman & Borrás, 2016).

One body of the Mechanism where the issue of regional balance remains particularly sensitive is the Coordination Committee, in part because a number of Coordination Committee members are then selected to sit on the Advisory Group of the Committee, which is seen as a strategic space. To ensure maximum representation, in recent years, the Coordination Committee decided that Constituency Coordinators must be elected from global/continental organizations, such as La Via Campesina (LVC), the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF), World Alliance for Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP), World Forum of Fish Harvesters and Fish Workers (WFF), World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), or the International Indian Treaty Council (IITC). As for sub-Regional Coordinators, they must be representatives from national or regional organizations, such as the West African network of peasants and small food producers ROPPA (Réseau des organisations paysannes et de producteurs de l'Afrique de l'Ouest (original name in French) or the Latin American agroecological movement MAELA (Movimiento Agroecológico Latinoamericano y del Caribe (original name in Spanish)). Although this new rule appears to be largely accepted and implemented, some expressed that it is unfair as it offers more opportunities to global constituencies to sit permanently on the Coordination Committee in so far as there are only a few global networks of constituencies, but several regional and national networks. In the words of one interviewee from a regional network who sits on the Coordination Committee:

It's not like it's very appropriate that organizations that are global have more participation than others. It seems to me that this does not help democratize a space that wants to be very inclusive (Interview 13).

We also found that Sub-Regional Coordinators do not appear to have full clarity about their roles, the tools they can use, how they could better support certain actors or constituencies within their sub-region, and how they can facilitate the process of coordinating a sub-regional agenda (Interviews 6 and 15). The role of Sub-Regional Coordinators is potentially more complex than that of Constituency Coordinators due to the diversity of views that they need to integrate, e.g. the need to

¹² We note a lack of survey respondents from these regions, as well as from Eastern Europe.

include representatives from all constituencies. As one interviewee and facilitator of several Working Groups commented:

Regions really do function more as Working Groups. Because they're responsible for disseminating information across a lot of different people. In principle all of the NGOs, and CSOs, or whatever should be included, that are under that region, if they want (Interview 1).

Yet, we see two reasons why reinforcing sub-regional articulation (and Sub-Regional Coordinators) is important for the future of the Mechanism. First, sub-regions are the main entry point to the Mechanism for local and national-level organizations that cannot engage through global constituencies. Second, sub-regions could potentially play a key role in advancing the use, application and monitoring of Committee's outcomes because sub-regions often share similar legal and policy frameworks and the existence of regional bodies makes advocacy at sub-regional level more effective (Interview 20).¹³ There are financial constraints however to making this happen. We asked participants in the Mechanism who completed the survey if they were satisfied with the distribution of the budget, and many responded that they would eventually like to see more resources go to regional and constituency consultations if funding allows. This is echoed by interviewees who point to the potential for the Mechanism to increase its inclusiveness and outreach if more funds were made available for activities at sub-regional level (Interview 15). Yet, the Mechanism is unlikely to mobilize more financial resources in the near future.

6. Conclusions

In this paper we assessed how the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism operates as an inclusive convergence space with a focus on constituencies and quotas as tools to protect and enhance diversity while preventing fragmentation. We also explored how the Mechanism is managing its institutionalization in relation to the UN Committee on World Food Security. One specific contribution of this paper was to highlight the role of Constituency and Sub-Regional Coordinators not just as 'grassrooting vectors' but as 'grassrootifying vectors'. The literature on convergence spaces shows that grassrooting vectors are key because they ground the ideas or imaginary of convergence spaces locally, in places where there is active membership of participant movements. We showed how the work of grassrootifying is also key to supporting legitimacy, as it ensures adequate representation of place-based and identity-based movements and struggles in a global governance arena.

A second contribution of this paper was to address a gap in the literature when it comes to the inclusiveness of convergence spaces. As we discussed, the complex governance structures of the Mechanism have succeeded in achieving a good degree of sub-regional, constituency and gender balance, making it a diverse and relatively inclusive space. The identification of primary constituencies and quotas has played a key role in helping the Mechanism meet internal and external legitimacy requirements in terms of the diversity of views, interests, perspectives and groups it represents. It has also imposed a requirement of inclusiveness on the Mechanism, forcing civil society participants to engage in cross-sectoral and cross-regional dialogue, and ensuring each constituency has 'adequate' relative weight (i.e. representation). However, we have also shown how some sub-regions and constituencies continue to struggle to engage effectively with the Mechanism. Further, many participating organizations face important challenges in opening up to, or linking up with, under-represented actors. Our analysis points to issues of capacity (notably language barriers and lack of insertion in global networks), political divisions, power dynamics, and competition among organizations trying so secure

exclusive access to an international forum. We also note a lack of organized movements representing the most affected in some sub-regions or at the global level. Further research is needed into the obstacles and challenges that actors who are currently under-represented face in order to become further involved in the Mechanism.

A third contribution of this paper was to contribute to ongoing debates around identity politics and how organizing around identity lines may lead to social movement fragmentation. Contrary to what some theories predict, we showed that the recognition of sectoral, geographical, gender and age diversity has not fragmented the Mechanism but instead enabled it to operate successfully as a convergence space. At the same time, the Mechanism has left unaddressed other identities (and potential grounds of discrimination) such as religion, race/ethnicity, class and caste, sexual orientation and/or gender identity. There is currently no discussion within the Mechanism on the need to recognize or include other groups (beyond the discussion around protracted crises) and it is likely that the absence of specific constituencies based on particular (especially marginalized) identities makes people feel alienated (Gutmann, 2003) and prevents them from participating. Outside of the Mechanism, La Via Campesina activists are starting to denounce the fact that 'the rights-based food sovereignty movement, whilst defending a feminist agenda amongst small-scale food producers, is not spared from the reproduction of sexist patterns' (Gioia, forthcoming). As Gioia (forthcoming) argues, persons who do not fit into heteronormative patterns are not explicitly mentioned in movement declarations and key documents. This makes them invisible, and hinders the adoption of a truly intersectional perspective. Further research is needed into how some identities are empowered and others are negated in the activities of the Mechanism, and on how this shapes the politics of intersectionality within the Mechanism.

A fourth and final contribution of this paper relates to the institutionalization of convergence spaces, which to our knowledge has so far not been discussed in the literature. Our analysis showed that the codification of the constituencies and quotas approach within the Committee has, so far, not prevented the Mechanism from reflecting on how it might improve its governance structure to enhance its legitimacy and address its own shifting dynamics. As the Mechanism continues to professionalize, however, it will be useful to get a better understanding of how budgets and financial flows affect internal dynamics within and across the Mechanism. Discussions on funds remain very limited in the literature on convergence despite the importance of funding in determining access to convergence spaces and relations of power within these.

Declarations of interest

None.

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¹³ This issue is beyond the scope of this paper but we direct the reader to the Civil Society Mechanism evaluation for more details (Claeys & Duncan, 2018b).

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