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Transnationalization of Resistance to Economic Land Concessions in Cambodia

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Abstract

The granting of economic land concessions (ELCs) over large parts of Cambodia has begun to attract global attention. It has also become a key focal point for civil society mobilization in Cambodia as well as for transnational activism directed at targets both within and outside Cambodia. Transnational actors play an important role in activism around ELCs in Cambodia, for example providing funding for Cambodian actors working on these issues, facilitating activities on the ground in Cambodia, contributing knowledge and experiences related to resistance to land grabs, influencing processes of identity-formation, and internationalizing campaigns around land-grabbing in Cambodia in various ways. This paper interrogates these and other existing transnational relationships related to resistance to ELCs in Cambodia, examining the roles of actors in Cambodia, elsewhere in the region, and in the West.

Introduction

The Spanish NGO (non-governmental organization) GRAIN's 2008 report, *Seized: The 2008 Land Grab for Food and Financial Security*, sparked a flurry of scholarship on what it termed the "global land grab." The report claimed that the global land grab was triggered by global food and financial crises and that on the one hand, governments of food insecure nations were acquiring land in other countries, and on the other that transnational corporations had turned to invest in farmland. Following the report, two International Academic Conferences on Global Land Grabbing were held, in 2011 and 2012. There was interest in explaining processes of land grabs and their effects, but also nuancing the global land grab narrative (Baird and Le Billon, 2012; Baird 2014a,b; Borras and Franco, 2012; Deininger, 2011; Cotula, 2012; Borras et al 2011, 2012; Zoomers, 2010; McMichael, 2012; De Schutter, 2011; White et al, 2012). By the time of the second conference on global land grabbing, held in October 2012 at Cornell University, the narrative had been heavily critiqued. But scholarly interest in land grabs - like land grabs themselves - had continued to spread. Interest in resistance to land grabbing had also grown.

There is now a nascent literature on resistance to land grabs. Some scholars have shown that land grabs are not always implemented as planned, due to various forms of resistance by affected communities (Baird and Le Billon 2012; Borras and Franco, 2012; Borras et al, 2011; Smalley and Corbera, 2012). There have also been many cases where some resistance has emerged, but without considerable success (see, for example, Baird 2010). On the other hand, however, the absence of resistance has been highlighted in some cases (Borras and Franco, 2012); scholars have shown, for example, that those affected by land grabs are not necessarily opposed to neoliberalism (Gardner, 2012) or to large-scale land acquisitions per se (Smalley and Corbera, 2012). Land tenure, social identity, and landscape values (Smalley and Corbera, 2012) and the presence of local social movements (White et al, 2012) are reported to sometimes shape responses to land grabs. Gerber (2011), analyzing cases from around the world, identifies a number of factors useful for analysis of resistance which include the role of (mostly environmental) NGOs and grassroots environmental movements of the South and the exchange of information with international networks. Various scholars have also documented the evolution of the global peasant movement La Via Campesina's involvement in resistance to land grabs (White et al, 2012; Rosset, 2013).

While this literature addresses a vital need, it is inadequate in key ways. Most significant for my purposes here is that, while the land grab literature emphasizes distal drivers of land grabs, the literature on resistance to land grabs largely ignores the role of distal actors in resistance. Everyday forms of resistance are emphasized, and resistance is often portrayed as a spontaneous act that is a direct response to grievances (Gerber, 2011; Schneider, 2011), though the role of NGOs is sometimes acknowledged (Baird, 2010; Gerber, 2011). Local action is important, of course, and its importance may even be understated in the literature. But, not to deny the agency of local actors, translocal and transnational actors shape local action – for better or worse – in crucial ways. They play influential roles in the work of organizing, analyzing, and strategizing and they support local action in various other ways. Translocal and transnational actors are sources of ideas which are reworked locally. And – again, for better or worse – translocal and transnational political action aimed at resisting land grabs is also happening. While translocal and transnational actors may not necessarily be the main actors in resistance to land grabbing, there is no doubt that they are relevant.

A useful lens for examining the role of translocal and transnational actors in resistance to land grabs, and the one I will be using here, is that of connections between actors. Connections do not tell us everything, but they do reveal key processes. First, tracing connections between actors, from those most directly involved to those more peripherally involved, can help to identify many of the actors involved – though some are unlikely to be identified this way because of the gaps in connections.

Second, while connections may not always be useful, which actors are connected to whom, and where gaps in connections exist, are also vital parts of the story. Third, the relationships these connections represent – how they form, the power dynamics entailed, tensions and competition, etc. – also tell us a considerable amount about the role of these actors, since much of the politics of resistance involves the negotiation of relationships. Of course, the actors being connected may be individuals or groups; in some cases group dynamics may be more salient, in others less. It is worthwhile noting that while studying connections can sometimes be perceived as ignoring power relations (see, for example, Cumbers et al, 2008), it does not prevent us from using other tools to understand power relations – though it may lead us to focus our attention on some aspects of power relations at the expense of others.

A social movement theory perspective (common in some of the agrarian movement literature) is helpful in looking at connections. Explaining interactions between participants has long been a goal of scholars of social movements and transnational activist networks (see Rucht, 2007; Smith, 2007); movements cannot be understood apart from the relations between actors in them. Various strands from political geography, such as concepts of militant particularisms (Harvey, 2001), scale (Marston et al., 2005), horizontal networking (Leitner et al., 2008), and place-based movements (Cumbers et al., 2008), are also relevant.

In this paper, I will look at transnational connections in activism related to economic land concessions (ELCs) in Cambodia, tracing them out within the region and globally with a focus on civil society actors. ELCs are in principle areas of state land that are granted under contract to private firms for a fixed period of time, usually for industrial agriculture. The data here are based on semi-structured interviews with members of ELC-affected communities and various civil society actors conducted between June 2014 and March 2015 – primarily in person in Cambodia, but also in person in the US (including at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York) and by Skype. In addition I visited ELC-affected communities in two provinces in Cambodia in June 2014. This paper draws also on my own experience working in Cambodia over an extended period of time, between 1992 and 2006. It is part of a larger project in which I seek to bring the literature on resistance to land grabs, social movement theory, and political geography into conversation with each other. What I present here are preliminary findings.

In this paper I do two main things. First, I document activism related to ELCs in Cambodia, highlighting the role of transnational connections, and second, I examine these connections and the relationships they entail more analytically. For heuristic purposes I organize the analysis around four main themes: scalar politics, NGOs, resources, and networks. My overall aim is to try to make sense of the connections in order to be able to lay out a research agenda. The section on scalar politics speaks mainly to questions of connections, in particular the macro patterns of connection that are resulting from activism around ELCs and land grabs. The section on NGOs also speaks to connections, in particular the role of NGOs in making connections (and exclusions) and some explanations for this role. The section on resources speaks to connections – aid chains as connections and the funding of connections – but also power relations that result from aid chain-based connections. Finally, the section on networks speaks both to connections (how people make contacts or join different networks) and relations within networks.

The informants

In total, I interviewed 58 informants: six by Skype and the rest in person. The informants included 36 Cambodians (ten of them indigenous), eleven other Asians, and eleven Westerners. 27 of the informants were female.

Nine of the informants were activists from ELC-affected communities in six different provinces;

six of them were also members of large, representative community-based organizations. Three other informants were also members of such representative organizations. Six informants were staff members or leaders of three grassroots Cambodian NGOs based in two different provinces. Five were staff members or leaders of five small to medium-sized national Cambodian NGOs, all based in Phnom Penh. Eight were staff members or leaders of large national Cambodian NGOs, likewise all based in Phnom Penh. One was a Cambodian staff member of a larger international NGO, living and working in a provincial town. (All of these were Cambodians.) Seven informants (two westerners and five Cambodians) were staff members or leaders of four different international NGOs that serve as donor intermediaries in Cambodia (and live and work in Cambodia). One was an Asian consultant working in Cambodia. All but one of these (Cambodian and international) NGO workers and consultant are directly involved in work fairly directly related to resistance to ELCs in Cambodia.

Two informants were leaders of different regional networks. Six were members of organizations working in five other countries of Southeast Asia; two of these were Westerners and the others nationals of those countries. Of these eight, five are working on indigenous issues; all eight are involved in work on issues of land rights, including issues related to ELCs. Seven were staff members or leaders of six international organizations (two of which are based in Asia). One of these organizations is working on ELCs in Cambodia, five others are working on land and resource issues in the region, and one is working on indigenous rights). One was a recent member of a college chapter of an international organization involved in work on ELCs in Cambodia and land-grabbing in general. Two were staff of a North-based private foundation supporting work on ELCs in Cambodia.

Resistance to ELCs in Cambodia

In 2012 a Cambodian human rights organization named LICADHO reported that the government of Cambodia had granted over eleven percent of the country's land area to private companies in the form of ELCs for industrial agriculture (Vrieze & Kuch, 2012). The concessions are typically for a period of 99 years; the land remains the property of the state but private firms are granted the right to develop plantations. ELCs are thus legally (though not necessarily in practice) quite different from land grabs in which an actor (usually fraudulently) acquires private title over a piece of land.

After the Khmer Rouges' fall from power in 1979, agricultural land was redistributed in much of the country while large areas remained under a de facto common property regime. The Cambodian government granted the first ELCs in the mid-1990s, though the legal basis for granting them was not established until 2006 with the passage of the Sub-Decree on Land Concessions (following the passage a new land law in 2001 which mentioned ELCs for the first time) and the rate at which they have were granted accelerated considerably in the mid-2000s (OHCHR, 2007; Neef and Touch, 2012; Neef et al 2013; Ratner and Parnell, 2011). Although according to Cambodian law ELCs may only be granted on land belonging to the state (and ordinarily state land that does not have "public interest use" (RGC, 2001)), much of the area included within ELCs almost inevitably is land used and variously claimed by local communities. The Cambodian government has generally granted ELCs without addressing those "hidden" or "undocumented" uses or claims. ELC operations have not yet begun on much of the area granted, but where they have begun they have already had severe consequences for local communities. Farmland, residential land, drinking water, and cultural sites have been impacted (APRODEV, 2011; LICADHO, 2005, 2009; Neef, Touch, & Chiengthong, 2013; Ngo & Chan, 2010, 2012; OHCHR, 2007; Oxfam, 2013; Global Witness, 2013; Neth et al, 2013; Schneider, 2011).

Over the years, Cambodian ELCs have met with resistance from a variety of domestic and transnational actors. Resistance efforts have been at least partially successful, contributing, for example, to delays in ELC operations and the reduction in size of some ELCs. The Pheapimex concession (OHCHR, 2007; Schneider, 2011), the operationalizing of which was delayed by years and

which has been reduced significantly in size, is one example. Local communities directly affected by ELCs have protested, filed complaint petitions to various levels of government, spoken out in events in which government officials have been present, spoken out on the radio (often Radio Free Asia), physically stopped tractors clearing their land, camped out on disputed land and planted crops on it, blocked national roads, and employed numerous other tactics. (See, for example, Ratner and Parnell (2011) and Schneider (2011).) Networks made up of people from Cambodian communities affected by the impacts of large scale development projects (including but not limited to ELCs) and related issues have included ELCs in the agendas of protests, press conferences, and mass petitions.

Translocal and transnational civil society actors are also involved in activism related to ELCs in Cambodia in significant ways; the involvement of domestic and transnational civil society actors in resistance to ELCs in Cambodia has evolved more or less together, emerging initially out of work on other kinds of land grabbing and on logging concessions. Oxfam Great Britain played an important role early on with its Land Study Project in the late 1990s. The project involved creating a database of land disputes, including large land grabs, as well as compiling case studies. Through the 1990s, Cambodian human rights NGOs worked on specific land rights cases. Beginning in the late 1990s, other Cambodian NGOs not identifying as human rights organizations became increasingly involved in work on land grabs and logging concessions. Many were small, province-based organizations working closely with rural communities who played a role in organizing communities, helping them understand the legal context and their rights, building their capacities in other ways, and otherwise supporting them. Some of these grassroots organizations became involved in activism around ELCs in the early 2000s as a number of large ELCs were granted. Through their work, supported by larger NGOs, leaders of affected communities began to network within Cambodia. The local UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) became involved in documenting the rise of ELCs and their impacts on human rights (OHCHR, 2007) and UN Special Rapporteurs raised their concerns about ELCs with the Cambodian government. The NGO Forum on Cambodia, a consortium of Cambodian and international NGOs, established an NGO network dedicated to work on ELCs. Global Witness, which had been documenting the role of the Cambodian ruling elite in the destruction of Cambodia's forests, turned its attention to ELCs, framing them in terms of forest destruction (Global Witness, 2007). In the mid-2000s, several Westerners working in Cambodia helped Cambodian groups make use of various UN human rights mechanisms, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racism (ICERD) and UN Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights as well as the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to raise concerns about ELCs (NGO Working Group, 2009; IPNN, 2010; Ratner & Parnell, 2011). Increasingly, the impacts of ELCs on indigenous communities was highlighted as the concept of indigenous peoples became more established in Cambodia (Baird, 2011; Swift, 2013). Westerners were also involved in helping communities develop strategies for local activism on ELCs and related issues. In recent years Westerners have also facilitated the emergence of several transnational campaigns on ELCs in Cambodia, which I will describe below. In the mid-2000s, Cambodian human rights NGOs became increasingly involved in land issues and now regularly highlight ELCs as one of the major human rights concerns (ADHOC, 2013; LICADHO, 2013). A variety of Cambodian NGOs have organized press conferences and other media events and supported titling of indigenous communities' communal land; others have been involved in various worked related to ELCs but less directly, such as protection of activists, support for women's rights, and so on (see, for example, Ratner & Parnell, 2011). More recently, labor unions and other civil society groups have lent their voices to activism on ELCs. Members of the Cambodian diaspora have also criticized land-grabbing, including ELCs, vociferously.

There are numerous formal networks in Asia with activities that relate to resistance to ELCs in direct or indirect ways and in which Cambodians (usually associated with NGOs) participate. One such network is the Philippines-based Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC), which aims to promote "land

and resource rights and smallholder agriculture.” (ANGOC, n.d.). Star Kampuchea, a large Cambodian NGO, is the sole member from Cambodia. The Thailand-based Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP) is a regional network of indigenous people’s organizations which is involved in (among other things) promoting and protecting indigenous land rights. Four Cambodian indigenous people’s organizations are members. Via Campesina (whose regional secretariat is in Indonesia) and the Malaysia-based Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PANAP) are both extremely active on issues related to land, including at the global level. The principle representation from Cambodia in PANAP is a single large NGO named Centre d’Etude et de Developpement Agricole Cambodgien (CEDAC), and the sole member of Via Campesina from Cambodia is Farmer and Nature Net (FNN), organized by CEDAC.

There are various international organizations that are working at the global level specifically on land issues. Some of these organizations became involved in technical work on land before land-grabbing became such a visible and politicized issue and others are advocacy organizations that became involved in work on land through their work on social justice or the environment. The advocacy organizations may mobilize their members for campaigns – boycotting brands, for example, or writing to their elected representatives – and encourage domestic organizations in other countries to do this work as well. Oxfam, ActionAid, Forest Peoples Programme (FPP), Global Witness, and Human Rights Watch are organizations working at this level. Land grabs are a focus of Oxfam’s GROW campaign, for example, and Oxfam is leading a campaign to stop land grabs for planting sugar. Through campus-based Oxfam clubs, American college students participate in Oxfam’s campaigns. Land rights are an important focus of networking that FPP facilitates in Asia and globally. These organizations are also involved in various ways in Cambodia. Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) is another important actor internationally but it does not have direct involvement with land issues in Cambodia; in Asia it is working with groups in Laos and Indonesia.

In addition to individual organizations, there are also numerous fora and mechanisms at the global level for work on land grabbing. The International Land Coalition (ILC) is one such forum in which civil society organizations can participate directly, as members. Various international conventions or other legal instruments relate to land use, and conferences of parties (COPs) and other meetings associated with them are other sites for participation. They include the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). The UNFCCC relates to land grabbing most directly through the UN-REDD (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) Programme, under which areas of forest are to be protected as carbon sinks. The Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems recently approved by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) are particularly relevant to ELCs, and the drafting process involved input from a variety of civil society actors. Meetings of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) are other international fora in which land issues are relevant. There have been various mechanisms in Asia to link to these international fora. For example, both the Asia NGO Coalition (ANGOC) and Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP), mentioned above, are members of ILC. There have been various meetings in Asia around UN-REDD. Several NGOs made efforts to include the concerns of Cambodian communities affected by ELCs (among other things) in consultations on the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems consultations. AIPP helps indigenous groups in Asia participate in meetings of the UNPFII and EMRIP. There have also been efforts to make use of a variety of international mechanisms, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racism (ICERD) and UN Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and UN Special Rapporteurs, as mentioned above.

One case of resistance to Cambodian ELCs where the involvement of transnational actors has been particularly significant is that of Prey Lang, a large area of forest located in northern Cambodia (Ratner and Parnell, 2011; Parnell, 2015). Prey Lang is important to many indigenous (Kuy) as well as

Khmer communities, and is threatened by a number of ELCs. Communities around Prey Lang have been active in protecting the forest using a combination of local action, petitions, a demonstration comparing the fate of local residents to that of the Na'vi people in the film *Avatar*, and other methods (Parnell, 2015). A number of small, province-based NGOs have supported these communities, and Oxfam, the US-based East-West Management Institute (EWMI), and other international NGOs in Cambodia have also been involved in supporting the communities' efforts in various ways. Attempts have also been made to generate external pressure on the Cambodian government, and, for example, appeals have been made to the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues and the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Issues. Facebook campaigns and online petitions have also been launched, appealing to the global public. There has also been advocacy by NGOs to get donor support for alternative management systems for Prey Lang (Ratner & Parnell, 2011).

Another important case involves a number of ELCs for sugarcane production in Koh Kong, Kompong Speu, and Oddar Meanchey provinces (Schneider, 2011; EC and IDI, 2013; UNOHCHR, 2007). Resistance began with communities carrying out local action, but NGOs have been involved in transnationalizing the case. In particular, NGOs supported research on markets for sugar from these concessions and launched a campaign targeting those markets, bringing together communities affected by the ELCs, human rights organizations in Thailand, the US, and other countries, a UK-based law firm, and other actors. Members of affected communities and a representative community organization traveled to Brussels as part of an attempt to get the European Union to block the importation of sugar from these concessions. Efforts have been made to prevent Coca Cola from buying the sugar, and a lawsuit has been filed against a British company (Tate & Lyle Sugars, or TLS) that bought it. A complaint filed by NGOs with the responsible sugar initiative Bonsucro resulted in TLC being suspended from it. This case is now linked with Oxfam's sugar campaign (Oxfam, 2013; ERI & al., 2013).

A third high profile case is that of a concession granted to the Vietnamese firm Hoang Anh Gia Lai (HAGL) in Ratanakiri province for the development of rubber plantations. The British NGO Global Witness documented the role of Deutsche Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, in financing HAGL's operations (Global Witness, 2013). Assisted by NGOs, local communities filed a complaint with the IFC and the case is now under negotiation (Oxfam, 2015; Zsombor, 2015); Deutsche Bank has withdrawn its financing. Some of the same NGO actors involved in the sugar case also been involved in the coalition involved in this case.

Scalar politics

One theme that emerges in analyzing these transnational connections is what I will refer to as "scalar politics." While political geographers have critiqued the concept of scale for implying hierarchy (Marston et al., 2005), the concept of "scaling up" or "jumping scales" has been used frequently by social movement theorists, geographers, and other scholars to describe activists shopping around for the most appropriate scales at which to carry out their struggles (Tarrow, 2011; Glassman, 2001; Smith, 1993; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; Bosco, 2001). Writing about transnational activist networks, Keck and Sikkink (1998) describe various forms of scalar politics which involve establishing international norms, applying those norms domestically, and bringing outside pressure to bear when the domestic political structure is insufficiently responsive (what they call the "boomerang effect"). What I will do here is examine the patterns of connection the deployment of such politics is resulting in.

There is ample evidence of a deployment of scalar politics in relation to land grabs in general and ELCs in Cambodia in particular. With regards to the development of international norms, actors from around the world have been involved, for example, in developing the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems and the UN-REDD Program, in part with an eye to

helping secure land tenure for local communities. With regards to making use of international norms in Cambodia, various actors have made claims vis-a-vis Cambodian state authorities based, for example, on international conceptions of indigenous peoples' rights and environmental sustainability. Efforts to get UN agencies to apply pressure to the Cambodian government to protect Prey Lang from ELCs and other threats, to target markets for sugar from Cambodian ELCs, and to block financing of the Hoang Anh Gia Lai (HAGL) rubber concession are all examples of the boomerang effect.

Because of the common use of international organizations as focal points of scalar politics, a rise in transnational networks has been shown to parallel the rise in international institutions. The international system has been described as providing a "coral reef" (Jutta & Locher, 2009) or creating "opportunity structures" (Tarrow, 2011) for the establishment of transnational networks. Networks that have formed around conferences of parties (COPs) for UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and meetings of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) and the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP) have all been fora for articulating struggles over land grabs. Within Asia, workshops organized to feed into these broader networks or to prepare people for participating in them have been important for raising concerns about Cambodian ELCs. Networks that arise through the deployment of the boomerang effect do not, however, always center on international organizations. Actors (including affected communities, lawyers, organizers, advocacy NGOs, academics, etc.) may come together around particular cases, such as Prey Lang or specific sugar or rubber concessions.

It is worthwhile considering the way these networks may or may not come together, and how they may interact with other networks, over the long term. A debate in political geography framed around what are called "militant particularisms" seems to be a useful way of thinking about this. The term was used by David Harvey (2001), drawing on Raymond Williams, to refer to place-based movements or "people's lived struggles." Harvey writes about the possibility of place-based movements collectively scaling up to challenge global capitalism. Though he hoped they would, he thought that place-based movements were unlikely to be able to join together around abstract universal struggles. Harvey has been critiqued on a number of counts (Cumbers et al., 2008; Sparke et al., 2005; Featherstone, 2008; Massey, 2005; Nagar and the Sangtin writers, 2006) but the debate remains alive today and it is useful for framing discussion.

The militant particularism debate does not, however, provide a very detailed basis of analysis and the interviews suggest ways that it needs to be nuanced. In particular, the term "place-based movement" is used too broadly by geographers who engage the militant particularism debate (Harvey, 2001; Cumbers et al, 2008; Featherstone, 2008). While the debate assumes place-based movements, many of the actors involved in activism around land grabs do not fit this categorization. They may not be movements and they may not be place-based in the sense assumed by those engaging in the debate. Organizations such as Oxfam, ActionAid, Forest Peoples' Programme (FPP), the Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), and Human Rights Watch have more or less global reach. Rather than "scaling up," their work "touches town" in different places. (Of course, these actors are all, in a sense, also place-based. It is not a coincidence that so many of the organizations with global reach that are involved in resistance to land grabs are based in the UK and US.) These and other actors, such as donors and many NGOs that are based in one place but engage in struggles someplace else, complicate the picture assumed by the militant particularism debate by mediating between place-based struggles. These are actors that greatly influence how place-based movements link together, yet are not themselves place-based movements.

Still, the militant particularism debate usefully encourages us to think about the different patterns of connection described above (networking around international organizations, for example, or around particular cases) in broad terms, beyond the individual network or case. While further research is necessary, some preliminary observations can be made. Scalar politics around particular international

organizations (focal points) seem to be resulting in very different patterns of connection from those around particular cases. And it appears that all of these different sets of connections may not be moving towards common aims. Different sets of actors are coming together around different international focal points. Certain focal points are useful only to certain actors (for example, the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues is useful only to indigenous people). The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and UN-REDD are appropriate venues for some land grab issues but not others. It is unclear how case-specific networks, such as those linking together the various actors (communities, NGOs, law firms, etc.) involved in activism on particular sugar or rubber ELCs in Cambodia, can link together. The current patterns do not suggest place-based movements coming together.

A number of critiques of Harvey's initial militant particularism thesis are rooted in a more general critique by feminist geographers of the need to "scale up". A number of feminist geographers have expressed concern that thinking that higher scales dominate lower scales can make people feel powerless and make global problems appear invincible and unchanged by local action (Gibson-Graham, 1996, 2002; Marston et al., 2005; Massey, 2005; Pratt & Rosner, 2006). Feminist geographers also emphasize the potential of the local scale as a site of challenge and that social movements can be strong if they operate locally (Gibson-Graham, 2002; Marston, 2000). Reflecting this view, Woodward et al. (2010:277) disparage "activism intoxicated by the high-flying strategies of global ambitions" and suggest that only activism aimed at "the very social sites where political situations present themselves" can be effective. Consistent with this view, many of my grassroots Cambodian informants emphasized the importance of local action. One, for example, said that while he thinks it is important to make international connections, people in affected countries must stand up for themselves. "Then the government will listen." Another said that "only if Cambodians are strong, and there is pressure from Cambodians, then international pressure on the Cambodian government might be effective."

Scalar politics has consequences for local place-based movements. Tradeoffs such as demands for time, energy, and money and impacts on the ability to implement more local strategies have received considerable attention in the literature (see, for example, Keck & Sikkink, 1998). In scaling up, local actors often adopt "global" frames or discourses, with important consequences at the local level (Smith, 2007). More research is needed to determine the domestic effects of transnational scalar politics in Cambodia, but several of my informants raised concerns. One non-Cambodian informant said, "Some networks drag people into things that aren't productive. Some UN processes keep people busy but don't do anything." Another, expressing more general concern about work at higher scales, said that transnational activism could be disempowering when local groups meet international organizations that do not care about their situation. She also said that "there isn't enough connectivity, not enough real embedding of this stuff at the grassroots level."

Scalar politics are not, however, the only process involved in linking place-based movements together transnationally. Several of my Cambodian informants described a second, "non-scalar" process that involves, for example, the sharing of information and experiences and building of solidarity between place-based movements. Many informants talked about these being the main benefits of linking up externally. Notably, the connections involved in this "non-scalar politics" seem often but not always to be the same as those of scalar politics (it is the politics of the connections that is different) or to depend on those connections. Informants described such politics happening, for example, within the context of networking around international organizations (such as meetings of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) or meetings organized in Asia around UN-REDD). But they also happen within the context of study tours, training workshops, etc. In some cases, at least, non-scalar politics likely imply different patterns of connection from scalar politics, and may also imply different tradeoffs.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs)

Scholars of social movements often distinguish between professional and participatory organizations (Della Porta & Diani, 2006). McCarthy and Zald (1973) describe professional social movement organizations as having no members, relying on grants for funding, and consisting of paid professionals who advocate for others. Leaders are likely to be individuals with particular technical skills rather than organic leaders. Here I have used “NGO” as shorthand for “professional organization.” We have seen that much of the transnational politics around land grabbing, including resistance to ELCs in Cambodia, is done by NGOs. In this section I will explore the implications of the centrality of NGOs to this transnational politics, especially the implications for patterns of connection. In particular, I hope to demonstrate that the NGO or professional organization form matters to how actors (both those associated with NGOs and those not) connect.

Most of the actors involved in the activities I described above are affiliated with NGOs. McCarthy and Zald’s (1973, 1975) work on social movement theory and Keck and Sikkink’s (1998) work on transnational activist networks highlight the importance of NGOs in both cases. Baird (2010) and Gerber (2011), among others, point to the role of NGOs in resistance to land grabs. There is also a large literature on the dominance of NGOs in Cambodian civil society (Malena & Chhim, 2009; Dorsch, 2012; Ojendal, 2013; Christie, 2013; Rodan & Hughes, 2012). Christie (2013) attributes the rise of the NGO form in Cambodia to donors, and it seems certain that the NGO form has, despite criticism, been seen as an organizational form that is in principle suitable for handling donor funds. The larger community-based organizations in Cambodia often take on a modified NGO form (Malena & Chhim, 2009; Henke, 2011). What I have referred to as representative community organizations do have members of a sort – individuals coming from a set of different villages – but not in the sense of people who create a mass base of support for the organization. Within these community organizations, individuals are typically remunerated through donor funding for their work.

NGOs or individuals in them organize workshops, conferences, and networks, and participate in networks (the Asian NGO Coalition, International Land Coalition, etc.) themselves. They provide training. They make use of human rights mechanisms. They organize campaigns on particular issues, such as sugar, or on particular concessions, as I have described. And they clearly play a central role in how people link up. Oxfam, for example, has created connections between people where none existed before. NGO Forum on Cambodia (a coalition of NGOs) has facilitated the participation of Cambodian indigenous people in the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. NGO actors involved in the campaign on sugar in Cambodia have created links to law firms in the UK and human rights organizations in the US.

While NGO actors are certainly helping to create connections, they do so in specific ways that have consequences. For example, to the extent that NGOs assist with scalar strategies (which they often do), they can contribute to the patterns of connection related to scalar strategies that I described in the previous section. Differences in approaches between NGO actors (for example, accepting or rejecting engagement with the World Bank, or more or less radical approaches) can result in actors they engage with respectively not connecting with each other. NGO actors can create exclusions, helping some actors but not others connect.

Taken together, the interviews I conducted suggest that the NGO form often implies (in a non-deterministic way) certain dynamics, types of activities, and ways of connecting. Individuals affiliated with NGOs and with NGO-like organizations appear often to be likely to engage in “NGO-like” activities - for example, organizing workshops and trainings, doing research and writing reports, preparing complaints - with implications for their own connections and the connections that they facilitate (or block) among others. This point requires further research. Here I will just outline some

preliminary considerations on the special role of NGO actors.

First, as noted in the previous section, NGOs are often not really place-based actors in the sense that local movements are. They may be based in one place and carry out activities or support a struggle someplace else. Their attachments to particular struggles may be motivated by very different concerns than those motivating local people involved in the struggle. And they may play a particularly important role in making connections that has not been properly examined. They have some flexibility in deciding where to work, who to include in their activities and who to exclude - decisions that have important implications for how others will connect. Washington, D.C.-based Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI), for example, facilitates transnational linkages for actors in Indonesia and Laos, for example, but not in Cambodia or some other countries of Asia. That matters. However, as I mentioned above, these actors are not really non-placed-based and the consequences of that matter also. Ultimately, looking at the big picture, NGO actors need to be brought into the militant particularism debate.

Second, Tania Li's (2007) critique of development practice may be helpful for thinking about the effects of the rise of NGOs on transnational connections. She suggests that NGOs' operations can be understood through the lens of what Michel Foucault called governmentality: NGOs define problems in ways that are amenable to the kind of solutions NGOs can provide. The idea, then, is that the proliferation of NGOs leads to a preponderance of certain kinds of solutions that leads to certain patterns of connection. What may be happening is that there is a tendency among NGOs to favor the type of activity that NGOs are suited for. With the predominance of NGOs in transnational politics, this seems to be having the cumulative effect of promoting NGO-style solutions, with important implications overall for how people (not just those affiliated with NGOs) connect. NGOs appear to be well suited to certain types of activities, such as organizing workshops and trainings, doing research and writing reports, filing cases in court, channeling donor money, etc. (in short, technical activities). They are often not well suited to other activities, such as organizing mass movements (mass-based activities). In Cambodia, there is a tendency for NGOs to connect people in the spaces of conferences or workshops as compared to in mass movement protests. NGOs tend to rely on external resources more than ideology or other means to bring people together. They tend not to engage so much in very local struggles. Transnational advocacy organizations may tend, almost by definition, to look for transnational angles from which cases can be tackled. This argument is consistent with that of Hughes (2007), who writes that transnational NGOs supported technical rather than mass-based solutions in Cambodia. These same tendencies are replicated at broader levels, and rather than place-based movements linking together in mass movements, there is a rise in donor-funded connections. But there may also be other forces at work; certainly the effects of donor funding and NGO governmentality are difficult to distinguish as they are so intertwined.

Resources

In papers launching resource mobilization theory, McCarthy and Zald (1973, 1977) link the availability of resources with the emergence of social movements. They also call attention to the greater availability in recent times than previously of resources for movements from foundations, governments, and other sources. They suggest that there are always sufficient grievances for people to mobilize, but what is needed to make a movement is organization and resources. Since then, their ideas have been critiqued but their relevance is still recognized. And in the case of resistance to land grabs it is clear resources channeled through aid chains – which Bebbington (2004:729) defines as “networks linked to international aid and cooperation, and channeling funds and other resources and information for the purpose of fostering social change” – shape transnational connections between actors. Here I will examine how this happens, and also begin to look at the relationships implied by

those connections, in particular the power dynamics that characterize those relationships.

Many of the actors in Cambodia involved in activism on ELCs, except (to large extent) for affected communities themselves, and many of the transnational actors in the global South who are involved in activism related to land grabs, are supported by funds deriving ultimately from outside donors (often Western private foundations or governments or UN agencies). Within affected communities, some community leaders also often receive some resources that derive from aid chains. The North-based NGOs involved also generally receive at least some (and often most) of their income through aid chains. In Cambodia, there are a number of donor intermediaries specifically interested in issues related to land rights or land grabs. The back donors include (among other sources) Western governments and Western private foundations, some of which also have a particular interest in these issues. In the case of both donor intermediaries and back donors, the reasons for this interest can be quite idiosyncratic and sometimes single individuals closely associated with the organizations have played key roles.

It is important to recognize that donor-recipient relations are themselves transnational connections. Aid chains are also part of more extensive links, connecting local communities, national level formations, or NGOs to donors in the west or UN agencies as well as other actors. Funding intermediaries play a particularly significant role in connecting people, creating links between the actors they fund and back donors and potentially to domestic publics in their home countries. Some funding intermediaries in Cambodia, such as the East-West Management Institute (EWMI), have also attempted to foster cooperation among their grantees by facilitating networking among them (see Kanti Bandyopadhyay & Khus, 2013).

It is important to recognize also that much of the act of linking up itself, in Asia at least, is supported through aid chains. And, just as “non-place-based” NGOs need to be brought into the militant particularism framework, so do aid chains. Formal networks in Asia - such as Asia Indigenous Peoples’ Pact (AIPP) - and the participation of actors from Asia in global networking events - such as meetings of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) - or linkages around particular cases are largely funded by donors. Overall, my interviews suggest that, for actors in Cambodia who are involved in activism on ELCs, donor-funded events and associated travel have been essential to the development of transnational networking. (I will discuss this more in the next section.) Foreigners in Cambodia who are involved in work related to resistance to ELCs are also largely supported in various ways through donor funding. There seems to be little linking between Cambodians and other Southern actors that relates to activism on land grabs that is not funded by donors, and most of the foreigners involved in this work in Cambodia are Westerners. Further research is needed to explain these outcomes.

Outside funding can also have more indirect effects on how actors connect transnationally. In particular, aid chains appear to be inextricably linked to the NGO-ization of civil society processes in Cambodia and elsewhere, with important consequences. Organizations may take on certain forms in order to be seen as legitimate and reporting requirements may lead them to engage in certain types of activities, resulting in institutional isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Resources create or perpetuate class divides; in Cambodia, certain types of groups are better able to access these resources than others, and they tend to be larger and staffed by elites. English language ability is given priority. More or less, organizations with structures and skills demanded by North-based donors will receive more funding (Malena & Chhim, 2009). These effects all likely influence how groups link up. Outside funding can also affect community dynamics, making communities dependent and undermining existing leadership structures (for example, rewarding leadership based on the ability to secure outside funding rather than the ability to mobilize people), affecting their ability to link transnationally. Schneider (2011) writes that transnational agrarian movements have been unable to engage the poor in Cambodia because the poor are disorganized. But while she blames the

Cambodian state for the poor's lack of organization, the role of outside funding in undermining community organization also needs to be examined.

This discussion hints at some of the effects that aid chains have on power relations. Of course donor-recipient relations are often very unequal (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). At the broadest scale, because funding (for actors and their interactions) comes generally from the North, Southern actors may remain dependent on Northern ones - and ultimately on some of the structures driving land grabs in the first place. At a more local level, that there are power imbalances in aid chain relations is reflected in what the Cambodian literature refers to as "upward accountability" (accountability of civil society organizations to those providing them funding) or dynamics of top-down patronage (CCC, 2010; Dosch, 2012; Malena & Chhim, 2009). Power imbalances are clearly evident in practice in Cambodia. According to the literature, one way power imbalances manifest themselves is that Cambodian NGOs are influenced or confined by donors' agendas (CCC, 2010; Hughes, 2009; Landau, 2008; Malena & Chhim, 2009; Ou, 2006; Un, 2006). Some NGOs with greater resources are able to push back against donors, but this is said to be the exception (Ou, 2006). Certain individuals with close ties to the grassroots in Cambodia – often Westerners – have also been able to shape donor or donor intermediary agendas, sometimes from the outside and sometimes (as consultants or employees) from the inside.

Networks

In social movement theory, networks are generally thought of as sets of actors who are connected through social relations. Networks feature in the social movement literature in two principal ways: people are recruited into movements through networks (sometimes en masse) and networks serve as mechanisms through which movements operate. In this section I will consider networks in the second sense, and (focusing on Cambodian actors) explore how network connections are made - including how contacts are transformed into meaningful relationships - as well as the dynamics of these relationships.

It is common in social movement and political geography literature to write about networks as though they are discrete things (Bosco, 2001; Featherstone, 2008; Tarrow, 2011; Smith, 2007). Among the various collections of actors described in the interviews, a number are, indeed, discrete, named networks. Within Asia, and at the international level, there are countless formal networks that are involved in various ways in activities related to resistance to land grabbing; many at the international level are organized around international organizations. Those that I have mentioned include the Asia Indigenous Peoples' Pact (AIPP), the Asian NGO Coalition (ANGOC), the Pesticide Action Network Asia and the Pacific (PANAP), La Via Campesina, and networks organized around the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), the Principles for Responsible Investment in Agriculture and Food Systems, UN-REDD, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Aside from these formal networks, there are diverse actors (often brought together by NGOs) working together on particular cases, such as individual rubber or sugar concessions. Actors are also linked together in a near infinite number of other ways, some more directly related to activism on ELCs than others.

The importance of mobility for making transnational contacts has been highlighted in the literature (Jakobsen, 2004; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Nicholls, 2009) and is borne out in my interviews. Several Cambodian informants who worked with small national NGOs, for example, described contacts they had made during trips out of the country and that they continued to maintain. I have also already mentioned the importance of resources. My Cambodian informants from grassroots and small to medium-sized national NGOs generally had very strong opinions about which Cambodian actors were linking up transnationally. One complained that "Big organizations have a lot of 'protocol.' They network a lot outside but there is no benefit...When big organizations go on study tours, everything

stays at the level of the organization and nothing changes for communities.” Another said that “Big organizations with outside funding have the most contact with the outside. They have people with high levels of knowledge who want to learn a lot from other countries. People from small organizations, without skills like English, don’t have contact with outsiders.” Mediators also play a key role. Many of the same informants talked about key individuals in Cambodia who helped link them to others within the country, and identified several key mediators. Mediators also are often needed for people to participate in events outside of the country, of which they might not even be aware or understand the importance. Even in a workshop in another place, mediators can be crucial for actually making direct contact happen. Otherwise, people can easily sit through a workshop without meeting anyone. One informant from a small national Cambodian NGO, for example, described being introduced by a mediator during a meeting in Indonesia to activists from another country who were interested in doing work in Cambodia on issues related to land-grabbing, people he otherwise never would have met. In general, these informants attributed their connections with people outside the country either to a mediator introducing them or those outsiders approaching them directly; in virtually no cases did they initiate relationships themselves (even through a mediator). Mediation is also clearly playing an important role at the international level. For example, one non-Cambodian informant, involved in work on land grabs at this level, talked about meeting actors from Indonesia (but not from Cambodia) in international meetings on land rights issues whose participation the Washington, DC-based Rights and Resources Initiative (RRI) had facilitated.

However, a theme that emerged from the interviews was that making transnational contacts is relatively easy, and that what is difficult is turning those contacts into any kind of lasting or useful relationships. Many Cambodians (including community members and grassroots NGO actors) involved in various activities related in different ways to resistance to ELCs have opportunities to travel to other countries (for study tours, trainings, conferences) and meet people there involved in relevant work, or to meet people in Cambodia involved in relevant work (visitors or people working on the ground in Cambodia), perhaps with the help of a mediator. How they maintain their contacts has been extremely important for my informants’ transnational linkages. One informant from a national Cambodian NGO told me, for example, “For me, it is easy to get to know someone. But it is hard to maintain relationships. And we need to maintain relationships. We have to maintain all our old contacts.” Much has been written about the importance of the internet in transnational linking (Brecher et al., 2000; Fluri, 2006; Kumar, 2000; Pickerill, 2003) and many of my grassroots informants who have been most assiduous about maintaining contacts have done so in large part through Facebook. Several informants mentioned signing petitions circulated by their contacts, and vice versa, and this kind of activity seems to give being in contact greater relevance. Overall, many of my informants who had the most limited transnational links seemed to see little value in connecting.

In the case of joining formal networks, my more grassroots Cambodian NGO-affiliated informants had not given much thought to which networks to participate in. They joined opportunistically, generally with the help of mediators. One informant who works with a small national Cambodian NGO, for example, participates regularly in activities of one regional network whose aims, he concedes, have little immediate relevance to him or to his organization. None had tried to identify the different networks that they might join and assess which were it made most sense to join.

The potential for transnational connecting to be gendered as well as classed is great. My data are not sufficient to draw definitive conclusions, but among my Cambodian informants, overall men had more, and more meaningful, transnational connections. In part this seems to be due to the preponderance of men in senior positions in Cambodian civil society organizations. To a lesser extent it seems to be due to men being more proactive in linking up, and having greater confidence in their ability to do so. As mentioned above, less grassroots Cambodian actors who are more proactive, have

more resources, and are more visible may be able to take better advantage of opportunities to link up and network. They are likely also to be wealthier than more grassroots actors.

I want to turn now to consider three aspects of relationships within networks (both formal and informal): identity, tension and conflict, and unevenness and mediation. Scholars in both social movement theory and political geography have written about the importance of networks for collective identity formation (Hunt & Benford, 2007; Bosco, 2001), but informants largely indicated that their transnational connections were strategic or opportunistic and that identity played little part in them. An important exception is indigenous identity; it appears that participation in the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIIPP), for example, has contributed to at least some individuals identifying more strongly as indigenous. Identification as indigenous, in turn, seems to be able to unite people across borders. One indigenous informant who is active in AIIPP said that indigenous identity was important to his relations with other members of the network. He said also that he felt it was easy to link with other indigenous people “because we have similar or identical culture and philosophy.”

With regard to tension and conflict within networks, the interviews point to differences in ideas about strategies among actors who are linked by a network, but also considerable competition over resources. Both have long been recognized as important sources of tensions between organizations (Diani & Donati, 1999; Smith, 2007; Tarrow, 2011, Rucht, 2007). Cambodian organizations involved in activism on ELCs also compete with each other for community members to serve. Thus in one instance, five different organizations working in the same area on issues related to land rights all provided direct support to community members in the form of per diems and money for travel. Each organization’s project was dependent on community members participating in their activities. This could be a case of NGOs overlooking community members’ desires, or working with different people in the communities who have different interests. Political geography literature often emphasizes the productive role of tensions in networks - in part because of their role in identity formation (Featherstone, 2008) – but further research would be required to reveal this in the case of the networks examined here.

Numerous scholars have written about the unevenness of networks and differential power relations within them, as well as the ability of gatekeepers to mediate participation (Lindell, 2011; Thayer, 2010). While I have already mentioned the role of mediators, it is worth noting that non-place-based actors (NGOs, individuals) seem to play a particularly important role in mediation. Writing about unevenness in networks, Keck and Sikkink (1998) note the possibility of certain individuals becoming dominant because of the key role they play, for example in accessing information or particular institutions. It is clear from my interviews that in networking around the UN system, those individuals who are best able to navigate the system often have particularly prominent positions. In transnational campaigns on Cambodian sugar and rubber ELCs, experts (lawyers, researchers, and so on) have taken on special roles while individual members of ELC-affected communities (even those who traveled to the European Union to speak out about the rights abuses incurred in the operations of ELCs) have been relatively powerless.

Power relations within transnational movements or networks are often described in the literatures on transnational activist networks or transnational social movements as skewed in favor of Northern actors (Brecher, Costello, & Smith, 2000; Kidder, 2002; Snyder, 2003; Thompson, 2002; Williams, 2004). And within the networks I have described here, unevenness plays out, in part, as domination by Northern actors – with Northern actors making decisions, for example, about strategy, funding, specific activities, etc. My more grassroots informants seemed not to be perturbed by the role foreigners were playing in activism outside of Cambodia related to Cambodian ELCs, but they were critical of some foreigners’ (and large Cambodian NGOs’) efforts to control grassroots networking in Cambodia. One, for example, said of those she perceived to be trying to control grassroots networking, “It would be good if they just focused on the outside linkages.” They were also critical of those

foreigners whom they felt did not get to know Cambodian communities well enough. Another informant said, “If outsiders come and only meet those in Phnom Penh and those who speak English, they won’t fully understand the issues. To get clear information they need to go to local communities or meet organizations working with local communities.”

More than a concern about the dominance of Northern over Southern voices, a number of these grassroots informants expressed concerns about the dominance of NGO over community voices and thus a lack of representation of those directly affected by ELCs and related issues. While NGOs and NGO-ized community organizations cannot always be clearly distinguished, the larger NGOs that are seen to be dominating transnational activism and networking are, generally, led by elite urban Cambodians who have little interaction with the poor. It is clear that, overall, representation in transnational linkages and national-level activism of Cambodians who are themselves affected by land-grabbing is quite limited. One non-Cambodian informant pointed to the lack of strong Cambodian civil society as an important factor limiting participation of affected communities. Cambodian civil society organizations have been criticized for not having memberships and not being participatory (Hughes, 2003; Malena & Chhim, 2009; Rodan & Hughes, 2012) – making direct representation essentially impossible. People from the grassroots also may not see the importance of linking up, and may not have an organized message that they want to convey. But some members of Cambodian ELC-affected communities are learning to use the internet to communicate directly with outside actors, often through NGO projects. The potential of these developments to enable better representation of these communities, and to shift power relations, remains to be seen.

Conclusion

It has not been my intention to deny the importance of local action by local actors. But as I showed at the beginning of the paper, translocal and transnational actors do play an important role in activism on ELCs in Cambodia. And in exploring the connections and relations involving these actors, I have demonstrated the importance of doing so for understanding the roles they play.

In this paper I have painted some broad narratives around four themes regarding transnational connections related to activism on ELCs in Cambodia, but also land grabs more generally. Scalar politics is leading people to connect in specific ways, often around focal points or particular ELC or land grab cases, and it is not clear that these different sets of connections are moving in the direction of greater overall cohesion; scalar politics also has consequences for place-based movements and local connections. But scalar politics is not the only process linking place-based movements: they may link up to share strategies or information, for example, though how this works requires further study. NGOs and individuals in them help to create connections among actors involved in different ways in politics around land grabs or ELCs, but also exclusions. The role of NGO actors in shaping connections may be explained in part by their non-place-based nature as well as their tendency to promote NGO-like solutions which connect people in particular ways. Aid chains need to be considered in thinking about how place-based movements resisting ELCs or other forms of land grabs link up, as both actors and their connections are funded through them and aid chain relations are likely to be unequal. Funding from outside can have effects at the local level through NGO-ization. Finally, with regards to networks and how people link up, important issues include how people convert contacts into relationships and how they decide which networks to join. The potential for gendering and classing of connections is great, and within networks, power relations may be greatly unbalanced and the potential for representation of ELC-affected communities limited.

Drawing on this analysis, I want to highlight three areas where future research may be most productive. First is the question of mass-based versus technical solutions which I mentioned briefly. While various social movement and political geography literature highlights the key role of mass-

based political activity (Harvey, 2001; Woodward et al., 2010, Tarrow, 2011), many of the actors actually involved in resistance to ELCs and land grabs more generally are engaged in technical work. Technical solutions seem to be favored by the related dynamics of NGO-ization and aid chains. It would appear that mass solutions brought about through NGO-like processes seem are fraught with contradictions between “upward” and “downward” accountability. The implications of NGO dynamics and technical solutions for how people connect (which I have begun to examine here), for representation, and for the success of resistance politics should be studied.

Second is the question of scalar and non-scalar politics. A number of my grassroots informants highlighted the need for more non-scalar politics, as have political geographers (Amin, 2002). A more horizontal politics – involving mutual learning, information sharing, solidarity, etc. – is consistent with a greater emphasis on local action (Gibson-Graham, 2002; Leitner et al., 2008; Marston, 2000). Yet there are also clearly obstacles to Southern groups mobilizing across national borders, and scalar politics seems to play a role in the formation of networks through which non-scalar politics can happen. The actual manifestations and dynamics of horizontal networking deserve attention.

Third is the question of what I have called “non-place-based” actors, who might be individuals or groups, perhaps associated with NGOs or donors, as well as academics and others. They clearly play a central role in linking place-based movements around different issues. The decisions they make may result in inclusions or exclusions of different place-based movements. But as I have noted, they are, in fact, place-based, and how this matters is a question for further research. There is also the intriguing thought that networks of place-based actors (like the Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact or La Via Campesina) may, locally, behave much like these non-place-based actors. They, too, come from outside and “touch down” in Cambodia.

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