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**Article:**

Routledge, P (2015) Engendering gramsci: Gender, the philosophy of praxis, and spaces of encounter in the climate caravan, Bangladesh. *Antipode*, 47 (5). pp. 1321-1345. ISSN: 0066-4812

<https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12145>

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**‘Engendering Gramsci: gender, the philosophy of praxis and spaces of encounter  
in the Climate Caravan, Bangladesh’**

Paul Routledge

**The Caravan arrives...**

As the morning mist began to clear, we arrived in in Bangosonarhat village, Kurigram district, northern Bangladesh. We had travelled all night from Dhaka, to commence the Climate Change, Gender and Food Sovereignty Caravan (hereafter, ‘Climate Caravan’) that had been organised by the Bangladesh Krishok (farmer) Federation (BKF) the largest rural-based peasant movement in the country, the Bangladesh Kishani Sabha (Women Farmers’ Association, BKS), and the international farmers’ network, *La Via Campesina*. Approximately five hundred villagers – mostly peasant farmers – gathered to hear speakers from the various social movements that were participating in the Caravan. A female Indian activist approached the microphone: “We are farmer’s movements from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. On this caravan, we need to build our solidarity, build our strength, and build our alternatives to corporate agriculture”.

The Climate Caravan was devised by the BKF and BKS as an organisational, educational and solidarity-building platform for social movements concerned with the interrelated issues of climate change, food sovereignty and gender. This was particularly pertinent to farmers’ movements in Bangladesh. The country is located in the ‘tropic of chaos’ where the impacts of climate change, poverty, and violence converge (Parenti,

2011). It is considered to be one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change and sea level rise (IPCC, 2008). The majority of the Bangladesh's population are poor and dependent on agriculture, and are thus more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, particularly flooding (Dasgupta *et al* 2011; Doyle and Chaturvedi, 2011; Gilman *et al.* 2011). For the BKF and BKS, as with many social movements worldwide, the challenges of climate change fold into existing conflicts over access to key socio-environmental resources such as land to which the poor have been largely excluded.

This paper examines the contemporary relevance of the work of Antonio Gramsci to processes of solidarity building and education around issues of gender, food sovereignty and climate change within and beyond Bangladesh. His work is important because of his concern with subaltern agency, particularly his focus on the formation of political organisation, consciousness-raising efforts, and the articulation of subaltern demands crucial to the transformation of everyday life (Morton, 2007; Kipfer and Hart, 2013). If Gramscian thought is understood as a "future in the past" (Thomas, 2009: 442), then in this paper I am concerned with how Gramsci provides a positive orientation for present peasant movements in Bangladesh. I also use Gramsci because the BKF's political practice has been informed by his work, as noted by the President of the BKF:

The BKF has found Gramsci's ideas useful, especially the subaltern's counter-hegemony in ideological, political and economic aspects; the building of the historic bloc including organic intellectuals; and the emphasis on people's consent on the functioning of the state apparatus (Interview, Dhaka, 2011).

This article analyses the spaces of encounter between activists fashioned during the Climate Caravan, in order to contribute to the revitalised interest in the relevance of Gramsci for contemporary political struggles (e.g. Morton, 2007; Ekers *et al*, 2009; Thomas, 2009; Wainwright, 2010; Ekers *et al*, 2013). In particular, this article examines the problems of gendered power relations experienced during the Climate Caravan, and

examines how feminist research on the politics of social reproduction, dispossession and materiality enable an "engagement with and against Gramsci" (Morton, 2007: 201) providing insights for enriching the philosophy of praxis in contemporary social movement struggles.

The empirical material is drawn from my ongoing collaboration with the BKF. I first started working with the movement in 2002 in my role as one of the facilitators of the PGA (Asia) network in which the BKF participated (Routledge, 2008). My research strategy has involved politically engaged and committed research that is practice-based and conducted in horizontal collaboration with social movements (Routledge, 1996; 2002; Juris, 2007; 2008). This has meant participating with the BKF and BKS in helping to organise solidarity-building activities such as an international conference that took place in Dhaka, Bangladesh in 2004 (Routledge, 2008). Concerning the Climate Caravan, I was involved in helping to devise, raise funds for, document and participate in the Caravan. I was an active member of the Caravan, speaking at and leading many of the workshops and seminars that were held, as well as interviewing Caravan participants. However, I am acutely aware of my privileged positionality as a white, male, able, Western scholar-activist in such contexts, not least the pronounced differences in physical mobility across space, access to resources such as money and technology, ability to leave when I chose to do so etc., between me and most of those whom I interviewed.

Such privileges lead to "contradictions in action" (Casolo, 2009: 416). For example, while I spoke at and facilitated many Caravan workshops, seminars and rallies, the majority of female peasants tended to participate only through listening, reinforcing gendered norms concerning speaking in public in Bangladeshi communities. Further, a gendered division of labour on the Caravan meant that BKS members bought, prepared and cooked all of the food that I eat during the Caravan. In addition, the political, economic and cultural legacies of British colonialism feed into contemporary contexts

and intersect with political opportunities, processes and relations that operate across space: as an academic from a British University I can often obtain an entry visa to an Asian country without problems, and English is frequently the *lingua franca* amongst Asian activists etc. (see Nast 1994, Routledge 2002; 2008). Finally, I often relied on the skills of interpreters for my interviews with male and female activists. In particular, for my interviews with BKF and BKS peasant activists, I relied on English-speaking BKF activists, and English-speaking South Asian women activists who were international participants on the Caravan. As such, the female subaltern of the BKS can only, in this paper, be represented through other's and my own interpretations (Spivak, 1988).

The structure of the paper's argument is as follows. First, I will discuss Gramsci's conceptualization of political struggle, focusing upon the philosophy of praxis. This will be followed by a brief discussion of feminist research on social reproduction (Federici, 2004; 2010; 2012); dispossession (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013); and materiality (Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2013) and how it might extend the philosophy of praxis. Second, I will discuss the political-ecological context in which the BKF and BKS operate, highlighting the gendered power inequalities faced by Bangladeshi peasants. Third, I will discuss land occupations by the BKF and BKS that include demands for food sovereignty. Fourth, I will examine the Climate Caravan as an attempt to contribute to the primary terrains of Gramscian struggle, political organization and consciousness. Fifth, I will discuss how gendered inequalities in different spaces of encounter problematize the enactment of the philosophy of praxis in Bangladesh. I will conclude with some thoughts on how an engagement with feminist research can enrich the philosophy of praxis contributing to the continued relevance of Gramsci for political struggle.

### **The philosophy of praxis and social reproduction**

For Antonio Gramsci (1971) hegemony is the propagation of particular conception of the world throughout society, so that it becomes the generally accepted practice and way of life of particular groups. Because hegemony is enacted through lived practices, transforming hegemonic social relations requires challenging dominant ideologies ('common sense') as they are experienced in such practices. Gramsci (1971) conceived of politics in practical, relational terms: as an ensemble of active relations between the individual, other people and the environment. To be conscious of these relations and processes "in the movement of their formation" (p. 353) already modifies them, "in this sense knowledge is power" (*op cit*). A subaltern power, indeed, that can act as an emancipatory force and an organising principle for emergent political ideas and values as well as potentially being a source of 'community' and solidarity. 'Active relations' between people and between them and their environment resonate powerfully with peasant movement articulations concerning food sovereignty as I discuss below (see also Karriem, 2013).

Hence, contesting hegemonic thought and social relations within society initially requires subordinate groups (usually organised through social or political movements) to create their own consensual legitimacy or counter-hegemonic presence in civil society through a war of position that involves what Gramsci termed a philosophy of praxis. This comprises critical thinking that interprets the world through human activity, and in politicizing the produced environment, opens it to new possibilities (Loftus, 2013). Integral to this process is the spread of alternative norms and values in the various spheres of public life, the primary aim being to fashion a collective political will with a common conception of the world that holds it together that requires ideological, cultural

and educational struggle (see also Ekers, et al, 2009; Wainwright, 2010; Gidwani and Paudel, 2013).

Such struggle focuses upon two primary terrains of struggle in civil society, consciousness and political organisation (Boggs, 1984). The ideological preparation and organizational cohesion of the 'masses' that comprises social movement membership is crucial: "the philosophy of praxis had two tasks to perform: to combat modern ideologies...and to educate the popular masses" (Gramsci, 1971: 392). Gramsci summarises the dialectical relation between organization and consciousness (and the associated intellectual leadership by a vanguard) thus:

Education, culture, and the organised dissemination of knowledge constitute the independence of the masses from the intelligentsia. The most intelligent phase of the struggle...consists in the intensification of culture and the raising of consciousness (quoted in Piccione and Cavalcanti, 1975: 51).

Political organization therefore involves a spatial politics that generates encounters and exchanges between folk locally and translocally that facilitate the transmission of different forms of (subaltern) knowledge, the raising of consciousness and the fashioning of solidarities.

However, while Gramsci's political programme for social change is rooted within the everyday life of production it does not theorise women as (re)productive subjects (e.g. Moe, 1990; see also Ekers, 2013). As Sylvia Federici (2004) argues, the gendered division of labour serves as one of the primary means by which capitalist social relations of exploitation are maintained: "sexual hierarchies...are always at the service of a project of domination that can sustain itself only by dividing, on a continuously renewed basis, those it intends to rule" (8). For Federici, gender relations are determined in a social

system of production that does not recognise the reproduction of labour power as a source of capital accumulation. Women are the “primary subjects of reproductive work” (Federici, 2010: 287) being food providers and producers, and guardians of health and care-giving (Mitchell *et al.* 2007). Hence activities associated with reproduction remain a crucial ground of struggle for women (and men).

Gramsci's recognition that interests are always politically and ideologically constructed and his attention to historical and spatial specificity (Ekers and Loftus, 2013) are important for struggles over gender inequalities. Because gender struggles are culturally and historically specific they are also contestable (Howieson, 2012). In particular, land occupation in Bangladesh represents both a site and a means of the reproduction of peasant labour power and everyday life, what Federici (2010; 2012) evocatively terms a ‘reproductive commons’. As the primary subjects of reproductive work, women depend more than men upon access to communal resources, and have been particularly committed to their defence when confronted by processes of capitalist ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Harvey, 2003) that seek to commodify and privatise communal resources such as land, water and seeds. The notion of reproductive commons serves as a *potential* for ‘being in common’ as a basis upon which more egalitarian gender practices within peasant solidarity might be fashioned. At root is the understanding that social production through the activity of commoning is preceded by reproduction (Linebaugh, 2008, 2014). As Federici argues:

...if “commoning” has any meaning, it must be the production of ourselves as a common subject. This is how we must understand the slogan “no commons without community”...community as a quality of relations, a principle of cooperation and responsibility to each other (2012: 145).

Butler and Athanasiou (2013) argue that being in common opens up issues of relationality as a condition for new political possibilities. Structures of economic and

political (or privative) dispossession within society, they argue, not only deprive peasants from their land, but also organise contemporary forms of gender inequality, such as dispossessions of women's rights to self-determination. Collective action against such dispossession (e.g. associated with the enforced deprivation of land) is based upon ideas of social interdependency. Political action, therefore, necessitates 'being dispossessed', as in a predisposition to relationality (e.g. being moved by others, or self-displacement). Relational forms of dispossession are "constituted as a form of responsiveness that gives rise to resistance" (*op cit* pp. xi).

Such relational dispossession is at the root of women's struggles that challenge common sense patriarchal understandings of the world for both men and women (Hart, 1991; Ledwith, 2009; Howieson, 2012) and this requires a deeper engagement with the "the messy fleshy" aspects of everyday life associated with social reproduction (Katz, 2001: 13). The importance of visceral lived experience felt through the body needs to be addressed alongside social inequities and social processes of knowledge generation and transmission. Structural, discursive and material considerations are mutually constitutive and can be addressed through a philosophy of praxis that is extended to consider political organisation (structure) and education (discourse and common sense) with practices of social reproduction (materiality) (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2013; Short, 2013).

To examine the terrains of such political activity I will consider the spaces of encounter of the Climate Caravan which sought to enact a philosophy of praxis within peasant farmer communities concerning issues of gender, climate change and food sovereignty. Before addressing this, I shall briefly consider the political-ecological context in which the BKF and BKS operate.

### **Climate change and agriculture in Bangladesh**

Eighty per cent of Bangladesh consists of floodplains of the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Meghna and other rivers, which sustain 75 per cent of the country's 160 million people (in 2011) (Brouwer *et al* 2007). Rising sea levels along its coast is already occurring at a greater than the global rate (of 1.0-2.0mm/year) due to global sea level rise and local factors such as tectonic setting, sediment load and subsidence of the Ganges delta (Karim and Mimura, 2008). Further, the coastal region is particularly vulnerable to cyclonic storm surge floods due to its location in the path of tropical cyclones, the wide and shallow continental shelf and the funnelling shape of the coast (Paul and Dutt, 2010). Climate change exacerbates these weather events to which Bangladesh has been historically prone (Reuveny, 2007) and has severe effects on peasant agriculture already faced by economic challenges of neoliberalism and landlessness.

Since the early 1990's the government of Bangladesh has implemented structural adjustment programmes, including trade liberalization of agriculture, involving withdrawal of input subsidies, privatization of fertilizer distribution and seed production, and elimination of rural rationing and price subsidies (Murshid, no date). These have increased farmers' indebtedness and landlessness as they struggle to secure the capital to pay for expensive agricultural inputs (see also Desmarais, 2007; Nally, 2011). Functional landlessness (i.e. ownership of less than 0.2 hectares) accounts for 69 per cent of the population (Hossain, 2009; Seabrook, 2013). However, since 1987, a Land Law introduced by the national government has enabled landless people to occupy and farm fallow (*khas*) land although the landless have faced continued government inaction on implementing this law.

Environmental risk exposure is increased for those with low incomes and less access to land (Brouwer *et al.*, 2007). While the country's capacity to deal with cyclones

has improved through the establishment of cyclone early warning and evacuation systems and cyclone shelters, leading to a decrease in fatalities, the capacity of existing cyclone shelters is woefully inadequate to accommodate all of the people in flood risk areas (Karim and Mimura, 2008; Paul and Dutt, 2010). Moreover, poor peasants' vulnerability is also exacerbated by hazard risk perceptions generated by influences of local culture, behaviour and coping strategies as well as inadequate land management policies and transport infrastructures (Chowdhury, 2009; Alam and Collins, 2010).<sup>1</sup>

The Government of Bangladesh's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP) concerned with food security, adaptation, mitigation and comprehensive disaster management has been primarily shaped by bureaucrats; senior economists, non government organisations (NGOs)<sup>2</sup> and international donors such as the U.K.'s Department for International Development (DFID). Those most vulnerable to climate change – the rural poor – were largely absent from the plan's formulation and little has as yet been initiated in terms of policy (Ayers and Huq, 2009; Raihan *et al*, 2010; Alam *et al*, 2011).

Women lack control over productive assets especially food production and are amongst the poorest within societies (Chant, 2010; Hillenbrand, 2010). Farhana Sultana (2009a: 349-351) has shown how gender and class inequalities in Bangladesh concerning women's labour, mobility, autonomy, and decision-making powers get manifested in different levels of participation. The inclusion of women in decision-making is undermined by social relations of kinship and marriage and patriarchal household dynamics. Hierarchical and patriarchal household structures and power relations control women's labour and behaviour; notions of *ijjat* (honour) and *lajja/sharam* (shame) are

deployed to regulate female bodies in public space; and the ideology of *purdab*<sup>3</sup> restricts women's physical and social mobility, their access to education and knowledge and their participation in political life (Sultana, 2009b; see also Agarwal, 1994). The effects of climate change exacerbate these inequalities (Ikeda, 1995; Mitchell, *et al*, 2007; Alam and Collins, 2010; Sultana 2013). As a result, the distribution of vulnerabilities among bodies, households, communities etc. are unequally experienced by men and women; rich and poor etc. (Walker, 2009; Sultana, 2010). Because of this, and due to women's struggle, climate change and gender have emerged as a key concern for social movements already embroiled in land struggles in Bangladesh.

### **The Bangladesh Krishok Federation and Bangladesh Kishani Sabha: occupation, gender and food sovereignty**

The Bangladesh Krishok Federation (BKF) was established in 1976, and the Bangladesh Kishani Sabha (Women Farmers' Association, BKS), the "female counterpart to the Krishok Federation" (<http://www.krishok.org>), in 1990. They are now estimated to have collectively 1,500,000 members (Interview, Dhaka, 2011), and are part of a broader alliance within Bangladesh, the *Aabt Sangathan* (the Eight Organisations)<sup>4</sup> whose total membership is now close to two million members (Interviews, Dhaka, 2004; 2009). Both the BKF and BKS have relatively verticalist organizational structures and logics: holding internal elections for a series of functional and hierarchical positions within the movement (e.g. president, general secretary etc) separated from the mass base of movement members (see Routledge and Cumbers, 2009). It is the BKF that controls the finances of the landless peasant movement.

From 1977 until 1991 the BKF conducted various types of nonviolent struggles to compel local government officials to make commitments about the distribution of

land amongst landless men and women. Because of government inaction implementing the Land law, the BKF has worked to enable distribution of such land among landless men and women (Interviews, Dhaka, 2004; 2009). Thus, since 1992, the BKF and BKS have organised landless people to occupy approximately 76,000 acres of *kebas* land. Most of the occupations are concentrated in the south of the country (i.e. that part most vulnerable to climatic events) and land has been distributed to more than 107,000 of the poorest men and women living in the countryside (Interview, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2011). In so doing, they must contend with a paucity of resources (such as funds), government corruption, and violence perpetrated by local landowning elites, their *goondas* (armed thugs), and the police (Interviews, Dhaka, 2009; 2011; see also Routledge, 2011).

While men and women are active in the initial claiming of space during land occupations, women become particularly important since the first acts after land has been occupied involve housework, i.e. the logistics of where to sleep, eat, wash and defecate (Interviews, Barguna District, Bangladesh, 2009; see also Caffentzis, 2012). Moreover, the consolidation of land occupation requires socialization processes such as food sovereignty related practices (e.g. seed saving) (Pionetti, 2005; Akhter, 2007; Escobar, 2008; McMichael, 2010). BKS women are therefore engaged in triple labour that includes domestic duties, economic activities and peasant activism (see Datta, 2007).

In opposition to the attempted hegemony of market-led agriculture, the BKF and BKS argue for the importance of food sovereignty practices. Definitions of food sovereignty vary between organizations and activist networks, have changed over time, and contain inconsistencies. However, common themes have emerged such as direct democratic participation and agrarian reform, implying peasant control over land, biodiversity (commons) and means of (food) production. These have acted as a point of encounter, common interest and solidarity between farmer's movements and

international farmers' networks such as *La Via Campesina* (the peasant way, LVC) to which BKF and BKS belong (e.g. Patel, 2009 and also see Rosset, 2003; Windfuhr and Jonsen, 2005; Holt-Gimenez and Patel, 2009). It is claimed that such food sovereignty farming practices attempt to repair the dynamic and interdependent process that links society to nature through labour, that has been undermined by the exploitation of socio-nature through capitalist agriculture (Wittman, 2009), and enable peasant communities to both mitigate, and adapt to, the effects of climate change, because of the biological resistance of crops, recovery capacity of land and the interdependent social dynamics between peasants (Desmarais, 2007; La Via Campesina, 2009b; Altieri, 2010; Rosset *et al.*, 2011).

Food sovereignty implies greater decision-making and control of land by women that challenges gendered inequalities (La Via Campesina, 2009a). This is in contrast to food security initiatives that tend to support women in traditional, culturally acceptable roles (Hillenbrand, 2010). Drawing on Gramsci's work, Karriem (2013) shows how in Brazil's Landless Movement, farmers' interactions with the environment enable a process through which consciousness of themselves and their relations with the world are generated. Such consciousness is mediated through politics, which is the means by which movement members develop capacities to think and engage in collective action. The BKF and BKS draw upon LVC positions on food sovereignty and attempt to ground them in peasant consciousness and practice as part of its ongoing struggles over land in Bangladesh.

These concerns of access to land, food sovereignty and social reproduction fold into the challenges and inequities associated with climate change mentioned earlier. While the national scale remains critical for attempts to mobilise scarce resources (interviews, Dhaka, 2009), the BKF and BKS are also enmeshed in a variety of networks

that have developed in response to the threats posed to peasant livelihoods by neoliberal globalisation. These include LVC, the Asia Peasants Coalition, and the People's Coalition on Food Sovereignty (Interviews, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2009). The Climate Caravan of 2011 drew together ongoing BKF and BKS concerns over food sovereignty, gender and climate change to enable different spaces of encounter between activists and farmers. It is to this that I now turn.

### **Spaces of encounter 1: the Climate Caravan's philosophy of praxis**

The Climate Caravan's philosophy of praxis sought to educate and mobilise vulnerable peasant communities about the effects of climate change, and facilitate movement-to-movement communication and sharing of experiences and strategies. It intended to deepen and extend networks of grassroots movements in South Asia and build international solidarity around specific campaigns concerning issues of climate change, gender and food sovereignty (BKF, BKS and LVC, 2011: 21). This was achieved through different spaces of encounter: the workshops, seminars and rallies that formed the primary engagements of the Caravan; the villages that the Caravan visited, and the buses that constituted the Caravan itself. Spaces of encounter generate relations, connections and strategic capabilities that serve as a basis for the articulation of counter-hegemony.

The Climate Caravan was held from 15<sup>th</sup> November 2011 to 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011. The timing coincided with the start of the harvesting of *kharif* season crops and the planting of *rabi* season crops. In particular, this time of the year tends to be relatively cool and dry making bus travel easier than at other times of the year (such as during the Monsoon when roads are sometimes closed). The Caravan was hosted by the BKF, BKS and LVC.<sup>5</sup> It comprised three buses travelling in convoy containing eighty activists: fifty-

five BKF and BKS activists from various districts from Bangladesh, and twenty five activists from various international grassroots movements and groups.<sup>6</sup> Most of the international activists were from social movements who, like the BKF/BKS participated in the South Asian regional coordination of LVC. These included movement leaders and key organisers, and movement activists responsible for international networking, some of whom were also farmers. Many of these activists participate regularly in international events such as the Social Forums and meetings organised by LVC (see Routledge and Cumbers, 2009). The Climate Caravan visited eighteen villages in twelve districts of Northern and Southern Bangladesh. The route was devised by the BKF/BKS to include BKF/BKS organised communities and sites of land occupations. The majority of activists participated for the duration of the caravan, although some local and international participants had to leave the caravan during its progress to return to work duties in their communities and countries.

The Climate Caravan held three educational workshops (on climate change, food sovereignty and gender; food sovereignty and indigenous practices; and creating gendered solidarity networks) involving in total approximately 1400 people; six interactive educational seminars (on renewable energy; agro-ecology; solidarity networks between South Asian movements; climate refugees; grassroots solutions to climate change; and peoples experiences of Cyclone Sidr) involving in total approximately 1600 people;<sup>7</sup> and four rallies around the key themes of the Climate Caravan including participation in the South Asian Social Forum demonstration and rally for climate justice in Dhaka on 22/11/11. The workshops and seminars were facilitated and led by the international activists on the Caravan as well as local and national BKF and BKS leaders.

BKF/BKS local leaders had organised their communities to prepare for and host the Caravan participants at each of the stops on the route. At each community visited, community members welcomed the buses. Meetings were held under open sided tents

purchased by the BKF/BKS for the Caravan. Food was sourced and cooked by local members of the BKS for the meals that followed Caravan events. Depending on the timing of the arrival of the Caravan in particular communities, the Climate Caravan participants either slept in the communities (often in *madrasas* [religious schools]), or travelled on to the next community on the route. Caravan stops in visited communities lasted no more than 18 hours. The purpose was to visit as many communities as possible in the time available (Interview, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2011).

### *Consciousness*

The Climate Caravan attempted to create awareness amongst peasant communities and nurture dialogue between them and Climate Caravan participants about the threats posed to peasant agriculture by agro-business and climate change, the importance of food sovereignty practices, and how gender relationships shape all aspects of peasant life (Interviews, Kurigram District, 2011). A Caravan participant from Nepal argued that: The Caravan is about reaching as many people as possible through popular education and organising and inspiring communities. It creates awareness about the neoliberal system and climate change and acts as a platform for networking and solidarity (Interview, Rangpur District, 2011).

The Climate Caravan events contributed to altering the consciousness of peasant community members through education as noted by a community member in a seminar on renewable energy in Bogura district: “the Caravan provides much needed information to our community which is important because peasants do not have enough knowledge about how to respond to climate change.” The Caravan events also acted as a motivation for communities to respond to climate change. After a workshop in a cyclone-affected Patuakhali District, community participants commented how little they had known about climate change before the Climate Caravan:

People had thought that Cyclones Sidr and Aila were a curse from God rather than an outcome of lifestyles in the Global North. The Caravan has motivated people to respond to climate change in their communities (Interview, Patuakhali District, 2011).

This is important because, in the past, the belief that cyclones and other extreme events are acts of God has contributed to the reluctance of coastal residents to respond to cyclone warnings, resulting in fatalities (Haque, 1995; Alam and Collins, 2010; Paul and Dutt, 2010).

The Caravan events attempted to draw upon the self-activity of peasant communities (e.g. local understandings and experiences concerning farming practices and perceptions of changing climates) as important spaces of knowledge production about the world (Escobar 2008). Hence, the workshops and seminars also provided the space for the articulation of popular common sense as peasant testimonies discussed changing weather patterns; the impacts of extreme weather events upon agricultural practices; landlessness and debt; and transformations taking place in Bangladesh's agriculture.

Further, several workshops also provided spaces for discussion of food sovereignty practices. For example, activist-farmers from India and Sri Lanka shared their experiences of practising agro-ecology and how it might be practiced in Bangladesh.

### *Political Organisation*

Concerning political organisation, there were generative impacts on solidarity-building between the BKF and BKS and social movements that had participated on the Climate Caravan. The Caravan helped to increase the organizational strength of the BKF and BKS through the increased cohesion between movement members from different districts in the country (Interview, Dhaka, 2011). This was facilitated through the Climate Caravan bringing different activists from different districts onto the Climate Caravan where they met with fellow BKF and BKS activists in other districts and spoke about their experiences during the Climate Caravan's events. As one BKF activist commented:

The Caravan was able to make a bridge between people in the North and South – who are facing different types of extreme weather events - to facilitate greater mutual understanding (Interview, Barisal District, 2011).

Due to the attendance of various local government officials at several events, the Climate Caravan was also thought to increase the level of confidence amongst BKF members that the movement has the capacity to act, as another BKF activist argued: It has allowed movement members to be able to argue about key issues with other sectors of society especially local administrative and government officials. Hence local leaders have also been empowered by the Caravan since they will now have greater access to the local authorities; and their lobbying and advocacy power will have been increased (Interview, Dhaka, 2011).<sup>8</sup>

The Climate Caravan also contributed to the fashioning of solidarity between movements. The importance of the participation of peasant activists from other countries was recognised by a BKF activist who commented:

The presence in communities of activists from other South Asian countries and from countries in the Global North, was important in that it showed that the problems of those communities was of concern to others, and that the voices from the community were valued. This generated the feeling that local villagers were not alone in their struggle (Interview, Patuakhali District, 2011).

International participants felt that it had provided an opportunity for activists to share experiences from their different movements' struggles and national contexts; explore how they might create longer term solidarities, in particular bi-lateral campaigns with the BKF and BKS; fashion joint campaigns with other movements; and take their experiences back to their own countries and struggles (Interviews, North and South Bangladesh, 2011). Many of the international activists already had worked together for many years (during their movements' participation in a range of networks such as PGA (Asia) and LVC). The Caravan acted to further deepen the relationships between them as a female Indian LVC activist noted:

The Caravan is a resource. We have formed relationships, deepened networking ties, and we have begun to plan future actions together. I think it was encouraging for communities to see an international presence, and that others care about the problems of people in Bangladesh and want to learn from them. This is solidarity (Interview, Satkhira District, 2011).

The Climate Caravan provided a productive space for generating future networking strategies – e.g. activists from India, Nepal and Bangladesh decided to organise planning meetings in 2012 in Kathmandu, Nepal (during a South Asian regional LVC meeting); and 2013 in Jakarta, Indonesia (during the 6th International LVC conference) concerning a more extensive caravan through all three countries in 2014. While challenging common sense understandings of climate change and neoliberal agriculture, and introducing peasant communities to food sovereignty practices, the Climate Caravan nevertheless was also confronted by place-specific gender relations which pose challenges to the philosophy of praxis in Bangladesh to which I now turn.

### **Spaces of encounter 2: gender and the Climate Caravan**

The inclusion of an explicit gender dimension to the Climate caravan and its linkage to issues of climate change and food sovereignty attest to the commitment of the

BKF and BKS to women's empowerment and rights. However, it is recognised amongst South Asian activists that inclusion of a 'gender dimension' to initiatives can improve the chances of funding for initiatives such as the Climate Caravan.<sup>9</sup> As I discuss below, while there is discursive recognition of the inequalities faced by women, this has yet to be translated into fully addressing structural and material inequalities faced by women within social movement struggles (Nagar, 2000; Desai, 2005).

### *Consciousness*

Peasant struggles over resources and labour are simultaneously struggles over socially constructed meanings and identities, women's material circumstances shaping their ideological contestations (Agarwal, 1994). Hence women's family commitments can undermine political involvement, traditional gender norms naturalising women's docility and domesticity (Silvey, 2003). However, the BKS has enabled peasant women to develop points of antagonistic interest and use these to develop gender consciousness. For example, BKS activists are conscious of their subordinate situation and pose ideological challenges – through their own political organisation - to the inequalities of resource distribution and control, and authority (of male family members). Hence, the BKS' list of demands include the abolition of the 'present master-slave relationship between men and women' which would include freeing women from 'domestic slavery' and 'economic slavery...of married life of women through the participation of both men and women in social production' and 'the participation of women in all spheres of

social...life' (BKF, BKS and LVC 2011: 17-18).

While the impacts and causes of climate change, and the role of food sovereignty in responding to both neoliberal agriculture and climate change were addressed at workshops, the gendered dimensions of these processes - such as how extreme weather events disproportionately impact women, or women's primary role in agricultural practices - were inadequately addressed. The Caravan programme content was primarily developed in the week prior to the Caravan's departure by BKF activists, owing to most of their earlier efforts being focused on fund raising for the Caravan and on planning and preparing the route (in collaboration with the BKS). A discursive acknowledgement of gender inequality (e.g. in the Caravan booklet written in English and provided to all Caravan participants) was not adequately transformed into the social processes of knowledge generation and transmission or the material practices of the Climate Caravan as I discuss below.

#### *Political Organization and women's participation*

Discussing women's activism in Gujarat, India, Desai (2012) argues that women's participation in grassroots politics continues to be marked by a politics of (in)visibility which is placed. Women's visibility is most pronounced at movement rallies and marches where they are frequently mobilised en masse by movements. However at village-based movement decision-making meetings, women's active participation declines markedly.

Gendered responsibilities influenced the level of women's participation in the Climate Caravan - when and where women were able to participate - and over-determined the form of their participation. In most of the Caravan seminars and workshops, men comprised no less than seventy per cent of the participants, although

there were significant levels of female participation at the four public rallies. The timings of Caravan meetings were frequently inconvenient for women, owing to the gendered division of labour that positions them as housewives (rather than workers or activists) and requires them to cook for the family as well look after children and attend to unforeseen events such as sickness, family problems etc. For example, one of the initial workshops of the Climate Caravan (in Kurigram district) was devoted to the issue of gender in relation to climate change and food sovereignty. However, by the time the workshop commenced most of the women in the village had departed to their homes to prepare food for their families.<sup>10</sup> Even when women attended workshops and seminars, they frequently had to leave early for the same reason.

Part of the Climate Caravan's organisational process included holding review meetings each evening on the bus in which most of the international activists were travelling to discuss workshop content, levels of participation etc. These discussions included several BKF leaders, a BKS leader, and usually six or seven international activists.<sup>11</sup> After the workshop discussed above, the low level of female participation was raised as an issue that needed to be addressed by several female international activists. The BKF and BKS leaders discussed this and said that the problem would be addressed.

As a result, the following workshop at Ghogadah (Kurigram sub-district) was held in the morning, since the majority of men in the village had to work in the fields, but the women (one hundred and sixty - 95 per cent of the participants) were available to participate. During the workshop, women commented that they felt empowered by being able speak in front of a predominantly female audience, and articulated an acute awareness of the problems that confronted them and what they required to overcome them. While one peasant women noted that: "the Caravan has helped build increased understanding of the vulnerability of women in the context of climate change", most of

the discussions in the workshop centered on the economic difficulties facing women in the villages (e.g. concerning landlessness and debt) and in particular how women's action was constrained by everyday social relations such as their lack of decision-making power and the insufficient time and opportunities available to develop women to women activities (Interviews, Ghogadah, Bangladesh, 2011).

Further, even when women *do* participate in initiatives power inequalities can be concealed, what Agarwal (2001) terms 'participatory exclusions' (see also Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Women's participation within community initiatives in Bangladesh is frequently circumscribed by gendered positions of subordination, for example the public character of meetings often reinforces social norms of who can speak (Sultana, 2009a). During the Caravan, while BKS leaders and female international activists (from India, Nepal, Pakistan and Australia) frequently spoke at meetings (and facilitated some of the workshops), local female BKS members tended to be very reticent to speak in public. As the workshop in Ghogadah inadvertently attested, women are frequently uncomfortable speaking in public spaces and are more likely to participate more fully if men are not present (Sultana, 2009a).

Moreover, Climate Caravan events were held in Bengali and English - the latter being the *lingua franca* of international communication for Asian activists. However, there was a gendered dynamic to interpretation: none of the BKS activists or leaders spoke English, and hence interpretation was conducted by BKF activists. While BKF and international activists received full interpretation, at times BKS speakers, despite speaking at some considerable length, received very brief interpretation from BKF activists. Indeed, during one workshop, while a BKS leader was speaking, the BKF interpreter broke away to answer his mobile phone.

Beyond participation in the mass rallies and a few of the workshops, much of BKS women's participation in the Climate Caravan was either placed in the kitchens that cooked the food, or was compromised by family responsibilities. While sourcing and preparing food is crucial reproductive labour the gendered division of labour reflects the predominance of gendered organisational models of leadership within South Asian peasant movements that favour charismatic males (e.g. see Featherstone, 2003) and continues to compromise the level of women's participation in spaces of discussion and education such as the workshops and seminars. This was noted by a prominent BKS activist:

The Kishani Sabha contributed a lot to the Climate Caravan, through the participation of local leaders. We purchased food and did the cooking. I was involved in cooking but this was an important part of the Caravan...this is practical food sovereignty. We expected more female participation but we did not get as many as we expected. Some leaders were invited to come with the caravan team but they could not make it; many women leaders from the North were not able to join caravan team because of family problems. We tried to organize more community involvement but the schedule was tight and we did not always have enough time. We had limitations on the caravan but other Kishani Sabha leaders were also involved in workshops and seminars. The Kishani Sabha does not lead so much as the Krishok Federation but it was successful (BKS activist, interview, Patuakhali district, 2011).

Further, the levels of participation of some of the international female peasant activists were far greater than that of BKS activists. Ten of the twenty-five international activists were women, several of whom spoke at nearly all of the events. In part this reflects power inequalities between those responsible for transnational organizing (many of those 'on the bus' particularly the non-Bangladeshi activists) and those at grassroots level ('off the bus'). Certainly, there were grassroots BKF and BKS activist participating on board the buses, to enable activists from different districts in Bangladesh to meet one another during the course of the Caravan. However, the international activists' 'on the

bus' were relatively better off economically, had higher levels of education (many also spoke English), and were better connected politically (for example amongst those international activists participating were a female Nepali Member of Parliament, and senior party and movement activists), and socially (many were on Facebook and all had email accounts) compared to those male and female activists in the villages that the Caravan visited. This reflected the reality that much of the process of constructing solidarities between (Asian) movements falls to a few individuals who conduct much of the routine (international) organisational work, mobilise resources and facilitate communication and information flows (Eschle and Maiguashca, 2007, 2010; Routledge and Cumbers, 2009). Further, because of its reliance on cyber-connectivity and travel, transnational solidarity work privileges urban, middle class educated elites (Desai, 2005).

While attempting to engage and communicate with peasant villagers, the Climate Caravan in part reaffirmed certain socio-economic boundaries that separated many of those on the bus from those off of it. Thus those women who were in senior positions in their movements or political parties, and/or those who had English language skills tended to feel at ease speaking publically and readily contributed to Caravan events. Moreover, because social reproductive tasks seriously undermine the amount of time and energy women have to participate in organisational activities (Nayak, 1990), female international participants were women who were older (past procreative age and caring commitments), single or widowed, or women with adult daughters or daughters-in-law who were able to do domestic work (Lingam, 2008). Nevertheless, the presence of such women in active speaking roles can be empowering to women in the villages that the Caravan visited, as noted by a women in a workshop in Bogura: "it was good for us to hear from women from different countries and struggles, it gives us courage to fight for

the Kishani Sabha”. Useful knowledges can be generated by the exchange of experiences of gendered inequalities and the struggle to survive. These may contribute to an ‘affective shift’ (Hemmings, 2012) – such as a moment of anger or frustration – that can provide the catalyst for transformation, connecting women’s knowledges of inequality and gendered subordination to the broader economic relations of the peasant struggle. However, while such (transnational) exchanges can broaden solidarities, it is only through local and national-level activism concerning the politics of the reproductive sphere that solidarities can be deepened (Desai, 2005). I will address this below.

### **Engendering the philosophy of praxis: the 'struggle within the struggle'**

The Climate Caravan was initiated to contribute to the fashioning of counter-hegemonic common sense within the BKF/BKS and between them and other peasant movements and addressed the two primary terrains of Gramscian political struggle, consciousness and political organisation. The spaces of encounter were generative, contributing to the process of raising consciousness (both amongst Caravan participants and within BKF/BKS organised villages), and enabling the BKF and BKS to further develop a shared common sense with other movements around agrarian issues such as landlessness, food sovereignty and climate change building on its work in the South Asian region within existing initiatives such as LVC (Interview, Shariatpur, 2011). Participating movements were provided with an intensive exposure to BKF and BKS organised communities, their views and their experiences of land occupation across Bangladesh. From an organisational perspective, the Climate Caravan enabled the strengthening of the BKF and BKS at both local and national levels, and facilitated the deepening of solidarity networks concerning land struggles between movements already

participating in networks such as LVC and the Asian Peasant Coalition (Interviews, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2011).

However, writing about women's participation in the Kerala Fisherworkers' struggles in India, Nayak referred to their ongoing negotiation of oppressive gender relations as 'the struggle within the struggle' (1990: 147). The philosophy of praxis of the Climate Caravan was problematized by unequal gender dynamics manifested in the character of women's participation. Feminists have long argued that the body is the mediator of social relations and a primary site of struggle. Solidarity building between the BKF and BKS and between them and other peasant struggles needs to be constructed from the embodied experiences of women (Hyndman, 2001; 2003; Sundberg, 2007; Koopman, 2011; Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy, 2013), since women's bodies act as the point of definition of forces of community, family, religion, male identity and the market (Vargas, 2005; Estrada-Claudio, 2011). Therefore, the analysis of hegemony within the peasant struggle in Bangladesh needs to commence from what Mohanty (2003) refers to as the bottom-up reading of marginalisation that begins not with the landless peasant, but rather the body of the landless peasant woman.

Hence, the philosophy of praxis in Bangladesh must proceed from the everyday realities of social reproduction in homes, fields, villages and the gendered relations of peasant's everyday lives (Federici, 2010; 2012). These can be discussed through the spaces of activist encounter such as those of created by the Climate Caravan. For example, during one of the workshops on the Caravan, one peasant woman noted: "we need greater decision-making power amongst village women so we can participate more in our community". Another peasant woman noted the difficulties of balancing work and

activism, as well as the need for more women-focused initiatives: “land occupation activities are important but they take time away from our work activities. We need more direct interactions with women from other villages so that we can share knowledge and build solidarity” (Interviews, Kurigram, Bangladesh, 2011).

Gramsci’s concern with political organisation and education remain critical elements in peasant struggle. However, Gramscian politics can be extended to pose its antagonism *not only* against an external opponent (such as the state), *but also* to focus upon the internal power/gender relations within social movements (Eschle and Maiguashca, 2007). Such an extension could be framed around a politics of relational dispossession that connects the corporeal vulnerability of women to the feminist struggle for self-determination (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013). For example, women are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and through patriarchal norms and practices are dispossessed of voice, participation and time in political activities, the BKS notwithstanding. However, women are central to not only the process of land occupations (securing the occupation through socialisation and social reproduction processes) but also to food sovereignty practices (such as seed-saving, see below). A philosophy of praxis informed by relational understandings of dispossession needs to challenge male common sense concerning the politics of social reproduction, and also seek to develop solidarity around shared vulnerabilities (e.g. concerning access to land, food production and responses to climate change) to enact shared responsibility for such vulnerabilities.

For the BKF/BKS this implies a philosophy of praxis that addresses the structural, discursive and material dimensions of the political economy of agriculture and the associated cultural politics of gender in Bangladesh (Hayes-Conroy and Hayes-Conroy,

2013). Alternative understandings of the world proceed from "knowing to understanding to feeling and *vice versa* from feeling to understanding to knowing" (Gramsci, 1971: 418). A spatial politics is required that commences from the feelings and experiences of peasant women and the everyday practices of farming and land occupation, and engages with Gramscian concerns of political organizing and the production of common sense.

Concerning everyday practices, as noted earlier, women's reproductive labour *secures* land occupations in Bangladesh, after the initial appropriation of land. For example, women have a key role on the conservation, propagation and germination of seeds (Akhter, 2007). Such practices pose important challenges to the corporate control of agriculture and are therefore key in any struggles over access to land as well as food sovereignty. The tendency of women to 'root' themselves in place once land is occupied (Casolo, 2009) can be used as a starting point for opening discussion about the equal role for women in decision-making concerning agricultural issues. Indeed gender should represent the primary antagonism within peasant politics. The political organizing of the BKF/BKS can provide mutual community forums as sites of intervention for women, commencing from peasant women's lived experience to examine issues of social inequity, climate change and social reproduction (Ledwith, 2009). At a gender workshop on the Climate Caravan, one BKS peasant farmer put it thus: "It is important to share our experiences as women. We need women to women connections and solidarity with men who are gender sensitive" (Interview, Shariatpur, Bangladesh, 2011). This has the potential to be the seed from which a genuinely 'reproductive commons' (Federici, 2010; 2012) might emerge, where the importance of women's reproductive labour acts as the focus around which both movement organising concerning land occupation and more egalitarian gender relations are fashioned.

Concerning the production of common sense; discourses of peasant solidarity such as articulated by activists on the Climate Caravan can mask, or indeed suppress,

gendered inequalities and hierarchies (Nagar and Raju, 2003; Sangtin Writers Collective and Nagar, 2006). While the Climate Caravan workshops provided forums for discussion about the impacts of climate change and the connections to food sovereignty practices, they failed to connect up these discussions to ongoing gender inequalities. The rallies and demonstrations stressed peasant unity and struggle concerning land occupations and responses to climate change but largely omitted gender issues.

Women continue to need to articulate their own struggles against oppression and exploitation and not suppress them in the interests of peasant unity. While Bangladeshi peasant women have the BKS from which to organise, male popular common sense needs to be rooted in the reality of women as workers and activists and as the producers and reproducers of labour power (Mies et al. 1988). However, place-based politics produces and is produced by relations of power and difference and cannot simply transform the situation of women farmers in Bangladesh. Rather it is important to commence from an understanding of how such relations are shaped by and shape the politics of land, labour and social reproduction (Casolo, 2009). This brings us to a discussion of political organisation.

Concerning political organisation, male and female activists bring their own forms of gender consciousness into political work (Pulido 2006), and this can reinforce the gendered dynamic whereby men circumscribe women's activism, isolating it as 'women's issues' (Nagar, 2009) and absent themselves from gender-based workshops (Nagar, 2000; 2009). Therefore, a war of position requires a conscious prefigurative content that places the politics of social reproduction at the forefront of peasant struggles (see Rowbotham et al. 1979). This will require place-based transformative initiatives that reflect emerging sovereignty debates concerning land and (women's) bodies. Hence at the international conference of LVC in Jakarta, Indonesia in 2013, the

women's assembly called for sovereignty demands of peasant movements to incorporate 'land, territory and body'.

The BKF and BKS need to analyse how women activists have to (re)negotiate their daily lives to accommodate the demands of activist labour (e.g. attendance at meetings and rallies), in order to examine how the spatial dimensions of activist practice might be socially productive and open to transformation, and in so doing, transform other spatial and gender practices (Nagar, 2000).<sup>12</sup> Women's empowerment is comprised of resources (e.g. land ownership), abilities (e.g. education and training) and achievements (i.e. the extent to which gender inequalities are transformed) (Kelkar, 2009; Hillenbrand, 2010). This will require the BKF/BKS addressing both the lack of independent funds for the BKS and the two key constraints on female mobility, namely women's lack of personal income, and the sexual division of labour (e.g. gendered routines), where women have to negotiate with men to leave the home (Beaulieu, 2010). At a practical level, rather than women taking the burden of other women's activism (e.g. by looking after the children of female activists when they attend rallies), the men of the BKF could take on temporarily childcare and cooking responsibilities.<sup>13</sup>

At the evaluation meeting following the end of the Caravan in Dhaka, the need for more gender balance and female participation in future Caravan programmes was recognised. However, women's participation in solidarity-building initiatives such as the Caravan is not enough. Rather, it is the character of that participation and its potentially transformative effects on women's mobility, self-esteem, emotional wellbeing, and consciousness that are key. Hence the transformation of gendered routines must be a

clear priority of the BKF. This is because, as Sara Koopman (2011: 280) argues, social transformation must take place “from all sides”, even if that requires utilizing (male) privilege to enable it.

There is a dialectical relation between consciousness raising and the role of women. There needs to be further development of female leadership and decision-making, within the BKS and in the relations between the BKS and the BKF, because men still dominate debates in mixed gender encounters (Diaz-Alba, 2010). While the BKS has women cadre emerging from their ranks but they remain lacking in English language skills, which is crucial as the *lingua franca* of transnational social movement organising in Asia. This is recognised by both BKF and BKS and is beginning to be addressed by six-month activist training programmes in English language, computer and movement organising skills for women and men, particularly to increase women’s active involvement in international activist encounters, for example in LVC. This is important because the presence of women activists in leadership (and speaking) positions from other peasant struggles (such as occurred during the Climate Caravan) is an important step in beginning to transform common sense amongst both female and male peasant activists (Gidwani and Paudel, 2013).

Everyday struggles against gender oppression underlie struggles for land and food sovereignty, and responses to climate change. This is because the “material means of reproduction is the primary mechanism by which collective interest and mutual bonds are created” and “the first line of resistance to a life of enslavement” (Federici, 2010: 288).

As I have tried to show, this manifests itself in the everyday practices of land occupation as well as during international solidarity building activities such as the Climate Caravan. However, women under-participated in the activities of the Climate Caravan. In this

sense, the Climate Caravan can be seen as a conjunctural event emerging from immediate peasant circumstances and opportunities, whereas women's empowerment will emerge from organic developments that emerge from the enduring predicaments of gender inequality and the politics of social reproduction necessary to address them (Morton, 2007).

As a result, radical movement and trans-movement activism and solidarity building must actively privilege struggles over social reproduction within broader struggles for agrarian change. At local and national levels of organising specific workshops and tools are required to enable women to describe, share and analyse their daily economic and gendered experiences and relate these to movement activism. Triple labour is a co-responsibility of men and women and this is as true in Bangladesh as it is amongst activists in the Global North where environmental justice activists continue to ignore the reproductive sphere (Buckingham and Kulcur, 2009). The struggle to incorporate a gender perspective within landless peasants movement that includes an acknowledgement of both women's subordination (as an integral element in capitalist exploitation) and the gendered character of knowledge remains "long, full of contradictions, advances and retreats" (Gramsci, 1971: 334). However, it is only through such struggle that emancipatory social relations between men and women can be fashioned.

## **Acknowledgements**

This research was supported by grants from the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland, and the *Urban Studies* Journal. The author would like to thank Chris Philo, Kendra Strauss, Manisha Desai and Farhana Sultana for comments on earlier drafts of this paper, members of the Human Geography Research Group at the University of Glasgow, participants at the 8<sup>th</sup> **Stockholm Anthropology Roundtable on *Social Movements, Alternative Publics and Political Dissent*, University of Stockholm, and my anonymous referees** for invaluable comments on earlier versions of this material.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Cyclone Sidr, in 2007, caused 3500 deaths (Karim and Mimura, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Equity and Justice Working Group coalition, and the Oxfam-led Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihood

<sup>3</sup> Literally seclusion.

<sup>4</sup> The *Aabt Sangathan* also includes the BKF and BKS; the Floating Labour Union (100,000 members); the Floating Women's Labour Union (150,000 members); the Bangladesh *Adivasi Samiti* (indigenous committee, 50,000 members the Rural Intellectual Front (5,000 members); the Ganasaya Cultural Centre (200 members); and the Revolutionary Youth Association (5,000 members).

<sup>5</sup> It was funded by the Rosa Luxembourg Foundation, Misereor, Grassroots International, La Via Campesina, the More and Better Network, Umweltzentrum, Foundations DO and ASB, and a range of individuals from the Global North.

<sup>6</sup> Participation was from India (Andhra Pradesh Vyavasaya Vruthidarula Union; Karnataka State Farmer's Association; Institute for Motivating Self Employment), Nepal (All Nepal Peasants Federation; All Nepal Peasants' Federation (Revolutionary); All Nepal Women's Association; General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions; Jagaran Nepal), Pakistan (Anjuman Muzareen Punjab [Tenants Association Punjab]), Sri Lanka (Movement for National Land and Agricultural Reform; National Socialist Party) and the Philippines (Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas [KMP, Peasant Movement of the Philippines]), as well as activists from La Via Campesina (South Asia); the U.K.; Germany, and Australia

<sup>7</sup> Participation numbers are based upon cumulative headcounts taken at each event.

<sup>8</sup> A declaration concerning land rights and climate justice was written based upon the experiences of the caravan and was distributed to Climate Justice Now! Networks to be read out at Durban, South Africa during the mobilizations around COP17; and was also sent to the Bangladesh government delegation attending the COP17 talks of the UNFCCC.

<sup>9</sup> Personal communication, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> This was the result of logistics: because of long journey times between Climate Caravan 'stops', the workshops often commenced later than had been planned.

<sup>11</sup> These tended to be an Indian female LVC activist; three Australian activists (two of whom were female); two English male activists (including me); and one male Nepali activist.

<sup>12</sup> I too have a responsibility here to discuss such matters with BKF activists as part of ongoing solidarity practices.

<sup>13</sup> The *Shramik Sangathan* in Maharashtra, India (a land rights tribal organization) were doing this in the 1980's. I am grateful to Manisha Desai for drawing my attention to this.