Convergence as political strategy: social justice movements, natural resources and climate change

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ABSTRACT
Critical scholars and activists have now been contending with a widely recognised convergence of global crises for a decade. The issues have intersected decisively, with staple food sources proving inaccessible for the world's poor, banks foreclosing on the most vulnerable, fuel sources causing war and impacting migration, and climate change-related instabilities shaking low-income communities to their core. At the same time, agrarian, environmental, indigenous and fishers' movements – among others – have used this moment to converge in their own right. This article explores this intertwining of social justice movements with an eye on such interrelated challenges. Its overall objective is, on one side, to provide some broad empirical brushstrokes on the intertwining of transnational social justice movements at the local, national and regional scales as they work with and trade frameworks of food sovereignty and climate justice. On the flip side, this article offers a set of tools to analyse and understand the politics of convergence as political strategy – as a means of advancing global social justice – against the rising tide of climate-related resource grabs.

Introduction
Agrarian and environmental issues have always overlapped, and constitute a political relationship that is marked by ebbs and flows. Today, the ability of working people to gain and maintain not only access to, but also control over land, water, forests and oceans has been complicated by the twin contemporary challenges of resource grabbing and climate change mitigation. Environmentally driven resource grabs take place through 'green' and 'blue' initiatives that are closing off terrestrial and aquatic spaces like never before. Many such mitigation attempts come on the heels of the fourfold food price, financial, fuel and climate crisis, while others have been overhauled in response to it. Programmes modelled after reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+), such as climate-smart agriculture and blue carbon, have essentially allowed rich countries to continue polluting practices by purchasing offsets in the Global South. This point where resource grabbing and climate change coalesce indicates the surge of natural resource control dynamics in the Anthropocene – a new enclosure.
Transnational actors including states, corporations, global governance entities, social movements and others have been pulled into the rip current ensuing from these practices and become entangled there. For radical, and traditionally sectoral, (trans)national agrarian and environmental/climate justice movements, resistance through convergence is increasingly used as a strategy to counter the modern iteration of enclosure. This is seen, in part, through intricate organising practices that reflect the global in the local, while at the same time ensuring that the political priorities of transnational movements are grounded in local struggles and solutions. For radical movements, system change is a dominant master frame to challenge a neoliberal order rooted in capitalism, colonialism and empire, as well as an upswing in authoritarian populism. Two key components of this systemic focus are food sovereignty and environmental/climate justice, concepts and political projects that are strategically complementary within the realm of agrarian and environmental/climate justice movements. Together, movements are governing from below and building political power – a new alliance.

This article explores the symbiotic nature of this intertwining of movements – how they react, interact and decisively act – based on the intersection of resource grabbing and climate change mitigation. At the core of contention is what has become a global carbon complex. Initiated by payment for ecosystem services, and subsequent mechanisms of financialised sequestration and related practices, the carbon complex is continually reconfiguring territory across forests, fisheries and farmlands. Since the carbon complex brings together an array of (trans)national actors, movements are themselves coming together in new ways to defend territory while responding to the climate crisis on their own terms.

To unpack these elements, key sets of factors that apply to convergence, or alternately divergence, as political strategy are considered. This pentagonal analytical framework, an analytic approach to understanding convergence (see Figure 1), is organised as follows: First,
it establishes the issues of resource grabbing and climate change, and movements for agrarian and environmental justice. Second, it looks at the intersections of class, from the subaltern to the elite, and identity, particularly race and ethnicity. Third, it brings in ideology, ranging from radical/outside to mainstream/inside strategies, coupled with governance, including rights-based legislation and policy implementation. Fourth, it explores the local and global scale, on which food sovereignty and climate justice are used as the framework to realise political projects. Fifth and finally, it considers the Global South and North as space, and land/forest and sea/water as territory. This analytic approach to understanding convergence is probed through its application to three exploratory vignettes of social justice movements at different scales in the Navajo Nation, Indonesia and West Africa. In each case, alliance-building through convergence is a prioritised strategy of local, national and regional resistance to swells of transnational enclosure in the era of climate change.

Snapshots of convergence

West Africa: Fighting for environmental justice on agrarian grounds

West African agrarian justice movements such as the Network of Peasant Organizations and Agricultural Producers in West Africa (ROPPA) and Mali’s National Coordination of Peasant Organisations (CNOP) have predominately engaged with the framework of food sovereignty to articulate their grievances against land and water grabbing. As key actors, small-scale farmers and their fisher and pastoralist counterparts use food sovereignty as a way to express their position, which is starkly opposed to that of mere hunger reduction through food security as promoted by mainstream policies. This stance was reflected by the food sovereignty forum held at Nyéléni in 2007, where Malian peasants hosted allied West African and international agrarian and environmental justice movements such as la Vía Campesina and Friends of the Earth International to pen the declaration detailing the concept as a political proposal. At its core is the ‘right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems’. However, over the course of the decade that has followed, the struggle in Mali and neighbouring West African countries has increasingly shifted towards climate-related resource capture including biofuels and climate-smart agriculture. This has caused movements, in turn, to adopt frameworks of climate justice to complement – but not override – their existing work on food sovereignty. A good example is a focus on agro-ecology, which emphasises and is itself a strategic frame bridging food and climate struggles. With these fresh environmental narratives have come a host of new political alliances and opportunities. The Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles – West Africa is one such iteration of this process, as its members incorporate environmental/climate justice into the new movement’s political platform that is focused on putting a stop to natural resource grabbing. Concurrently, the Convergence is looking inward to consolidate national platforms throughout the subregion that is economically connected through the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and outward to seek new partners at the transnational level.
Navajo Nation: Weaving agrarian justice into the fabric of the environment

Radical North American environmental justice movements, intentionally diverging from their issue-based mainstream counterparts, are rooted in struggles for racial justice under a legacy of colonisation and slavery. By choosing to engage with the framework of environmental (and later climate) justice, movements are acknowledging both historical and current injustices. Capitalism and ‘modernity’, as promoted through European conquest, have been continually underpinned by a fear of nature and desire to dominate it – and since Europeans associated non-European ‘others’ with nature, they too became the subjects of systemic fear and domination. For movements of indigenous people and others subject to discrimination, especially in the Global North, the systemic target has remained consistent with environmental justice as its entry point. However, environmental campaigning is an often-localised political pursuit that largely lacks an overarching rights-based framework. Teaming up with food movements and borrowing agrarian frameworks such as food sovereignty and the right to food to complement existing environmental justice work is partially remedying that challenge. Contemporary resource grabbing has raised that point where injustices related to climate and capital accumulation are breathing fresh life into struggles for sovereignty. The US/Canada-based Indigenous Environmental Network has made the strategic decision to become a member of the US Food Sovereignty Alliance and the Climate Justice Alliance, showing how food sovereignty frameworks are informing its most local constituents. The Navajo Nation-based Black Mesa Water Coalition is a pilot project for the Climate Justice Alliance’s Our Power campaign, which converges with agrarian movements through new food sovereignty initiatives, offering its members opportunities to promote their indigenous and environmental struggles and solutions that might have otherwise remained confined to the climate movement. At the same time, Black Mesa Water Coalition maintains an indigenous identity and uses that for convergence as well, as demonstrated by its participation and leadership in the struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline where more than 280 tribes met on Standing Rock Sioux territory. That water-inspired political battle culminated in the largest gathering of indigenous people in North America since the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876.

Indonesia: Seeing struggles for justice, from the looking glass to the kaleidoscope

Indonesia is at the ultimate confluence of resource grabs and climate change mitigation. With the third largest tropical rainforest area on the planet, the world’s second longest coastline, and an extractivist past that continues with no end in sight, social justice movements in the country have been fiercely divided over how to manage the islands’ cornucopia of natural resources. These tensions come on the heels of decades of oppressive neoliberal policies under the Suharto regime and previous periods of European colonisation. Indonesian agrarian and environmental social justice movements have been particularly influenced by outside forces, whether transnational social movements or non-governmental organisations (NGOs), since the 1990s. On the radical side, alliances between community organisations and La Vía Campesina led to the birth of the Indonesian Farmers Union (SPI) that would host La Vía Campesina’s international secretariat for eight years. Those relationships also fed into the creation of WALHI, the Indonesian branch of Friends of the Earth International that remains one of its most active. At the same time, mainstream environmental actors immersed
in corporate partnerships have successfully persuaded many indigenous communities to support, and even manage, REDD+ and related carbon sequestration and conservation programmes – something they had been less successful in achieving in parts of the world like Latin America. Meanwhile, fishing communities are under mounting pressure to abandon coastal livelihoods that have already been compromised by pollution from the expansion of oil palm in order for blue carbon projects. The Indonesia Traditional Fisherfolks Union (KNTI), like SPI and WALHI, is closely connected to the transnational movement that provides linkages across borders, in this case the World Forum of Fisher Peoples (WFFP), and it is building strategic alliances with peasants and indigenous peoples through joint food sovereignty and environmental/climate justice campaigns. The intertwining of radical social justice movements in Indonesia is thus moving from issue-based sectoral outreach (i.e. agriculture, indigenous, climate, fisheries) to a more horizontal and multi-sectoral process, which has become clear in agrarian, oceanic and environmental resistance to the carbon complex and related forms of resource grabbing.

**Issues and movements**

The issues of resource grabbing and climate change mitigation, having intersected decisively across the contemporary political landscape, have changed the political nature of relationships between agrarian and environmental/climate justice movements as they respond to and protest resulting grievances. This subsection provides some preliminary theoretical mechanisms to decipher such processes.

Charles Tilly’s concept of *repertoires of contention*, ‘the whole set of means that a group has for making claims of different kinds on different individuals or groups,’ is instrumental. Repertoires of contention can be used as toolboxes for protest devices. Whereas the previous generation of ‘new’ social movements kindled by the contentious structural and institutional shifts of the 1990s such as land, trade, food and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) shared common repertoires, the accelerated commodification of nature through the carbon complex occurring today has resulted in even more common grievances. Since radical agrarian and environmental movements are converging on the broad basis of system change, the protest devices within their repertoires of contention can be assembled in accordance with political opportunities. Currently, the realm of climate change has eclipsed national liberation and trade as a political opening that cuts across categories. However, it is critical to point out this process builds on the work and mobilisation around globalisation previously carried out by social justice movements.

For example, in the first vignette, movements are responding to climate change as a political opportunity that encompasses other causes as well. As West African movements branch out to engage in transnational political spaces under the banner of the Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles – whether ‘outside’, in spaces such as the World Social Forum, or ‘inside’ in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) civil society processes, for example – they are increasingly drawing from not only environmental but also agrarian and fisheries protest issues within their repertoire of contention. This movement is steadfast in its commitment to the rights of its base in saving ancestral seeds, maintaining small-scale artisanal fisheries, and practicing other forms of agroecology. It promotes those activities in ways that highlight their ability to simultaneously tackle resource grabbing and the climate crisis. At the regional level, the new convergence
of West African social movements chose to link local and national policy asks by organising a caravan\textsuperscript{17} to meet with groups of activists as well as politicians in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Senegal – a tactic that South Asian and Latin American agrarian movements have used for years.\textsuperscript{18} By emphasising environmental/climate justice ‘asks’ in meetings with leaders as part of the caravan and within the context of natural resource grabbing, the new convergence was able to express a firm stance against land and water grabbing in a way that was less threatening to authorities without diluting their message.

Indeed, the intersection of issues has added more protest tools to the given repertoire. Analysing West African movement strategies with that in mind shows that if resource grabbing were entirely unrelated to climate change, environmental grievances might not be such a large part of agrarian movements’ repertoire of contention – and, therefore, environmental/climate justice would probably not be an appropriate protest tool. Arguably, in order for convergence to occur, movements must share common repertoires of contention, but not necessarily the same prioritisation of their contents.

Pushing repertoires of contention a step further is seeing their construction as a form of collective action that is the base of a given social justice movement, whether its political priority be agrarian or environmental. Tilly and Tarrow theorised that collective action, when brought together with two other familiar parts of social life, contention (consisting of claims, subjects and objects) and politics, results in \textit{contentious politics}.\textsuperscript{19} Governance is a key piece of contentious politics, namely that (1) people in control of governments have advantages over those who do not; (2) governments decide the rules of the contention process; and (3) coercive means such as military and police forces answer to governments. The role of the state is critical, yet the prevalence and current surge of \textit{global} governance have complicated this scenario, as will be discussed shortly. Since social movements are categorised historically rather than universally,\textsuperscript{20} they will reprioritise the tools within a repertoire of contention according to local realities shaped by past injustices when engaging in contentious politics.

Such becomes apparent in the second vignette. The Navajo and Hopi people, like many indigenous communities throughout the Americas, are marked by waves of dispossession that occurred when European colonists restructured their territory and accumulated capital. Black Mesa Water Coalition identifies itself as an environmental movement that has fought against the depletion of the Navajo Aquifer, and is networked nationally with the Climate Justice Alliance, regionally with the Indigenous Environmental Network and transnationally through the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance. The movement’s most notable political win was the active role it played in shutting down a Peabody Energy coal mine in Navajo Nation. Even though environmental justice through water is at the heart of its work, the coalition is borrowing food sovereignty, in opposition to resource grabs, as a political strategy as it interfaces with national as well as tribal and state governmental structures. A concrete way that this movement is addressing the intersection of the issues is by offering agroecology, with a focus on water, as an alternative that binds the contentious politics of both resource grabbing and climate change.

These new configurations of agrarian and environmental/climate justice movements, contextualised within the fight against increasingly fused instances of resource grabbing and climate change mitigation, contain many other sets of factors that affect a given political outcome. First and foremost are class and identity.
Class and identity

Recognising the class and identity politics of social justice movements is a key starting point that informs the other factors of convergence. This subsection addresses these factors, building on the issues and movements described previously.

Class differentiation reaches back to canonical debates that persist into the present over the ‘agrarian question’, focused on whether or not capitalism has the ability to fully penetrate the countryside. The unique trajectory of rural agricultural movements suggests that it has thus far failed to do so. Such a path in the history of agrarian movements, a pattern that differs from proletarianisation, diverges from many other social movement alliances. Among these are labour unions and indigenous environmental/climate justice movements – the very coalitions used to explain most political science theories on movement building. Taking these differences related to proletarianisation into consideration, a serious examination of the potentials and limitations of class politics within the parameters of convergence begins with the agrarian question.

The Great Soviet Encyclopedia defines the agrarian question as ‘the question of the laws of development of capitalism in agriculture, the relations between classes which arise on this basis, and the class struggle connected with it.’ Pulling apart the components of this query, Bernstein posed four sequential questions that get to the core of the social relations of production and reproduction: ‘Who owns what?’, ‘Who does what?’, ‘Who gets what?’ and, ‘What do they do with it?’ Together, these questions provide an analytical arsenal for root cause analysis of the nature and state of capital. Bernstein reminds us that they are not solely applicable to agrarian societies but are useful across time, space, scale and territory – making them quite relevant to environmental movement actors confronted with the same or similar forms of enclosure as their agrarian counterparts and compatriots. Sequentially, ‘social relations of property shape social divisions of labour, which shape social distributions of income, which in turn shape the uses of the social product for consumption and reproduction – which, in the case of capitalism, includes accumulation.’

New left historian Thompson observed, in the context of the English labour movement, alliances of working-class people may use solidarity, collectivism, mutuality, political radicalism and religious identity as a manifestation of concerted agency. In West Africa, the Convergence deliberately included workerist groups and organisations in its early formation and current structure. The synergies and tensions between labour and the peasantry in this new context have yet to unfold.

Identity politics – including race/ethnicity, religion, gender and generation – are clear factors at play within and between social movements. The identity dynamics of race and ethnicity are particularly essential to unpacking the alliances and divisions that arise outside class lines and can be seen through indigenous identity politics. For example, the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline in the northern prairies of the US both divided and united poor working people. For poor whites living along the pipeline’s lengthy path who tend to be politically conservative, its construction was widely looked upon with favour, where access to cheap oil and job creation overrode ‘invisibilised’ environmental concerns. Wealthy whites, including landed farmers, living in the pipeline’s original path succeeded in getting it diverted due to their environmental concerns – it was rerouted to nearby Standing Rock reservation which is under semi-autonomous Sioux tribal jurisdiction. But for low-income indigenous people living there, its construction on their tribal lands was largely viewed to be a direct
threat to their indigenous identity and their very survival. Using discourse such as ‘water protectors’ and ‘water is life’, in opposition to a ‘violation of the sacred’, they brought many allies together in a struggle against dispossession.

The nature of transnational agrarian and environmental justice movements, particularly as they converge in the current global space, is rooted in class and identity concurrently. Scholars have oftentimes drawn a line between these two factors, where class-based movements have tended to be theorised as movements for redistribution, while identity-based movements have been widely viewed as movements for recognition. These two paradigms inevitably inform ideology and governance. In the first, redistribution, dealing with injustice likely involves income redeployment, labour reorganisation or rudimentary economic structural transformation. The second paradigm, recognition, suggests the need for symbolic or cultural change that respects identities on bases such as race and ethnicity. Fraser posited that ‘virtually all real-world axes of oppression are bivalent’, calling for an analytical approach that tackles the primary and mutually reinforcing root causes of maldistribution and misrecognition at once.

Transnational agrarian and environmental/climate justice movements show such features, particularly as they converge and exchange/meld frameworks. Indonesia is a useful example with which to unpack some of these concepts. While the national agrarian justice movement SPI is a culmination of smaller groups battling class differentiation in the countryside, WALHI is tightly connected to cultural and identity struggles including ‘environmentalism of the indigenous’. Even if not necessarily linked to the politics of convergence, it may be instructive to look at the experiences of localised movements in Indonesia. For instance, Togean Island peoples in Sulawesi used ‘indigenous knowledge’ political discourse as a means to reclaim land that had been reallocated for a national park. In contrast, Sumatran Sosa people positioned themselves as masyarakat adat (‘customary law’ peoples) in order to salvage their ancestral lands that had been grabbed by private and state oil palm corporations. Both groups were balancing the need for redistribution and recognition in the face of maldistribution and misrecognition at once, and in doing so providing empirical testimony to the bivalent nature of class and identity politics.

Class differentiation – rooted in the agrarian question – is a pressing issue that has caused longstanding divergence among agrarian justice movements. This clearly surfaces around workers and labour unions. Likewise, identity politics have separated the environmental/climate justice world. Yet precisely linked to the intertwining of movements and issues, class and identity are increasingly interconnected, and must be addressed at once. Doing so pushes us to better understand the political economy and, in turn, the underlying ideology that works hand in hand with governance from below.

**Ideology and governance**

The related factors of ideology and governance further disaggregate points of alliance across a spectrum of claims, subjects and objects joined together by convergence as a political strategy. A key feature of that process is how movements ideologically grasp the issues on which they interact, the circumstances under which those issues occur, and how that relates to governance. While some social actors agree with interim market-based solutions, others insist on longer term structural change based on root cause analysis. For environmental/climate justice movements that insist upon system change rather than climate change, and
for agrarian justice movements making claims for land, water and territory, as well as food sovereignty, the battle is clearly the latter, one that challenges capitalism from a pro-poor perspective.

These ideological questions reflect a trinity of political tendencies in governing the global land grab that is equally relevant to the governance of other natural resources and the climate crisis. The first tendency is regulate to facilitate, meaning that land grabbing (or, in the eyes of its proponents, land deals) is a positive solution with which to solve multiple crises. For this camp, which includes the World Bank along with many state and aligned elite actors, resource accumulation provides relief from hunger by large-scale monocrop agricultural production and the job creation that is necessary to manage such enterprises. Second, there is a tendency to regulate to mitigate negative impacts and maximise opportunities. Those who throw their hats in this ring are likely to do so based on the assumed ‘inevitability’ of the dominant model of resource capture and the ‘impossibility’ of redistributive resource policies. The ‘big greens,’ along with the majority of intergovernmental bodies that are charged with soft law, such as the UNFCCC and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), are predominantly located in this camp – focusing their efforts on private–public partnerships and related mechanisms and agreements. The final tendency is regulate to stop and roll back land and resource grabs, with those subscribing to this position seeing the current enclosure as a threat that has little to do with solutions and everything to do with the root cause of capital accumulation. Put another way in the context of climate change mitigation, ‘capitalism itself needs to be transformed if we are to “decarbonise” the global economy.’

Each empirical social movement vignette explored in this article falls squarely into this category, coming from an anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist and anti-neo-colonialist perspective. Related to the political strategy of convergence, and instances of divergence, it is fundamental to understand the connections between not only those who seek to stop and roll back resource grabbing and those who favour facilitation, but also the dynamics that arise between the stop and roll back pole and the more centrist stance of mitigation. Climate change initiatives have proven to shed light on that relationship in a way that land grabs of previous configurations were unable to.

The multiple convergences occurring in Indonesia are useful for exploring the dimensions of these political alliances and contestations. Indonesia’s national experience is one shaped by its heterogeneous indigenous population across a seemingly infinite island archipelago geography straddling two oceans. It is also a history wrought with waves of colonial conquest and rural massacre and repression. During the ‘New Order’ regime led by Suharto, an era that coincided with the birth of the environmental justice movement, radical agrarian activists calling for agrarian reform were in large part forced to go clandestine, while environmental issues headlined. One successful way to operate an agrarian activism network underground has been to double as an environmental coalition, and use that organisation as a front. Since environmental targets (eg clean air, biodiversity, conservation) are less threatening and more elusive than agrarian ones such as income redistribution and comprehensive land reform, groups working with them in mind have been able to avoid authoritative crackdowns on their operations.

This strategic shift is hardly unique to Indonesia, where agrarian activists simultaneously engaged in struggles for national liberation and democracy have borrowed from environmental repertoires of contention to mask related agrarian issues that were seen as a threat to the state or occupying power. Contemporary environmental movements in parts of the
world where (trans)national agrarian movements are largely absent – among them the former Soviet Union, China, the Middle East and North Africa – may therefore be key arenas of political struggle against resource grabbing and contain more radical elements than may appear on the surface. In the event that a political space should open up for such civic alliances, one of two things may occur within a given network, as was the case in Indonesia. First, environmental movements are free to continue organising with the less threatening – and, not coincidentally, more fundable – repertoire of contention, thus gaining access to critical inside spaces such as the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP). This has not surprisingly been the path chosen by the ‘big greens’, with the International Indigenous Peoples’ Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC) moving in that direction as well. Second, environmental movements in transitioning regimes may choose to engage in radical *justice* work that includes root cause analysis. The change in WALHI’s rhetoric after the collapse of Suharto’s rule is an example that falls within this category. When the political space suddenly opened, the movement quickly aligned itself more closely with its umbrella organisation Friends of the Earth International as well as with La Vía Campesina as an outspoken critic of land/resource grabs.

While these kinds of actions portend divergence within environmental movements, they also open up space for convergence between multi-sectoral movements. The rise of the *carbon complex* that combines resource grabbing with climate change mitigation in Indonesia and elsewhere has yielded such results. Hence, radical environmental, agrarian, indigenous and fishing movements are finding new ways of unifying their resistance to these new forms of capital accumulation and territorial restructuring – and, in doing so, configuring a more robust repertoire of contention. The politics of ideology fundamentally inform governance, particularly how rights-based regulatory frameworks can be used from below to stop and roll back resource grabs in the Anthropocene.

**Scale and framework**

Food sovereignty and climate justice, with agroecology at the interchange, are political proposals and frameworks being used by and increasingly exchanged between agrarian and environmental/climate justice movements. This subsection explores these frameworks in relation to scale. The convergences taking place in West Africa and North America are indicative of three processes of transnational contention mapped by Tarrow that are helpful for examining scale. Each procedural step is presented as a set of actions, ranging from the local to the global. The first order consists of global framing, or the ‘mobilization of international symbols to frame domestic conflicts’, paired with internationalisation, meaning a ‘response to foreign or domestic pressures within domestic politics’. Second, an order of diffusion, or the ‘transfer of claims from one site to the other’, takes place coupled with scale shift, where the ‘coordination of collective action at a different level from where it began’ unfolds. The final set of processes consists of externalisation, the ‘vertical projection of domestic claims onto international institutions or foreign actors’, and transnational coalition formation, the ‘horizontal formation of common networks among actors from different countries with similar claims’. Tarrow explained that these six processes tend to occur in combination, but can also take place alone. Additionally, it is possible for a movement to move through the trifecta of orders in the opposite direction. The following empirical discussion looks at both scenarios.
In the first vignette, we can see the West African movements looking outward through an attempt to externalise their struggles at the global level and build a new coalition, the Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles. They have done this in part through global framing, as the new name for their movement indicates, while remaining committed to domestic concerns that impact member organisations such as strengthening national platforms through specific local campaigns. For example, in Ghana, Convergence member organisations are working to stop illegal mining and grabbing of arable land while training peasants and fishers to engage with rights-based regulatory frameworks such as the Tenure Guidelines. They have successfully shut down illegal mining operations. In Senegal, Convergence member groups put direct pressure on foreign and domestic actors engaged in land grabbing through mass mobilisations – attracting the attention of the media, elected officials, and others. In both instances, local groups used such experiences to inform the priorities of national platforms, cut across the greater ECOWAS region and connect to the global. By focusing on the internationalised struggles of land and water grabbing, the Convergence has easily matched the issues to the primary alternative master frames of food sovereignty and a more secondary strategic framework of climate justice. From there, the West African convergence began to diffuse these claims to different geographies, first across Francophone and Anglophone countries in the subregion, and then more transnationally during peak protest moments such as the World Social Forum in Tunis and COP21 in Paris – resulting in a scale shift. These actions set the stage for the final set of orders, externalisation and transnational coalition formation. The complementary frameworks of food sovereignty and climate justice have proven to be integral to this step: the Global Convergence of Land and Water Struggles is able to provide the foundation for a transnational movement even outside of peak protest opportunities while engaging in regional actions such as its West African caravan for land, water and seeds. This allows the movement space for growth while remaining fundamentally focused on localised struggles.

The second vignette in North America paints a slightly different picture, where transnational environmental/climate justice actors are, in part, looking inward in attempts to concretise their claims at the grassroots level through subnational/local movements such as the Black Mesa Water Coalition. The Indigenous Environmental Network has already established itself as a vertical claim-maker at the transnational level, especially through its relationship with Grassroots Global Justice Alliance and other global actors like Friends of the Earth International and No REDD in Africa. Thus, the scale shifts in the opposite direction towards internalisation. Global claims are diffused to inform grassroots processes of collective action, where the larger coalition offers support to national, subnational/tribal and local movements – indeed, different sites from where the frameworks of climate justice and food sovereignty were popularised in transnational social movement processes. At its most local level, Black Mesa Water Coalition benefits from well-established and internationalised global framing that solidifies its actions on the ground in the Navajo Nation. Those frameworks additionally provide political leverage for tribal intervention in national political struggles in the US. The struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock – resulting in both wins and losses for environmental/climate justice movements – proved to be a vital space for convergence between and within indigenous groups across geographical scales.

Undoubtedly, these are somewhat messy configurations and are in no way cut and dried. It is important to underscore that the goals of each of the two previously mentioned movements are not confined to the direction of scale that is highlighted above. Indeed, as
mentioned, the Global Convergence in West Africa is in an intense process of consolidation of local movements and national platforms, while indigenous movements in North America are actively pursuing political opportunities and alliances at the transnational level. However, both the outward focus shown in the West African context and the inward emphasis in North America demonstrate something important. For convergence, these elements effectively map the global in the local (through global framing and internalisation), together with the local in the global (through externalising contention and building transnational coalitions). In other words, the transnational end of social justice movements is built entirely on local struggles – the absence of the grass roots would prove such movements empty. But local struggles occur in environments and political contexts that are inherently globalised. Winning them in a way that positively affects the poor and marginalised requires political sophistication that transcends borders.

Space and territory

Space and territory are often-interchangeable concepts encompassing geographies that are both asymmetric and interrelated. Socially constructed notions of a Global South and North and the separation of land/forest from sea/water resources are increasingly blurred and redefined with the occurrence of resource grabbing in the Anthropocene and the complexities of global governance. Likewise, social justice movements grapple with these contexts as they define and organise their base members. For example, agrarian reform may be a political ask for peasants in a given part of the world, while for fishers its reformulations of private property may be less valuable. A useful theoretical handle that aids in deciphering empirical realities posed by these threats and opportunities is uneven geographical development.

The theory of uneven geographical development was intended by Harvey to interpret the ‘extreme volatility of contemporary political economic fortunes across and between spaces of the world economy (at all manner of different scales)’.

Using four conditionalities that are at once independently specifiable and symbiotically dynamic, Harvey outlined the uneven nature of geographical development. The first conditionality is ‘the material embedding of capital accumulation processes in the web of socio-ecological life.’ This point connects geographical idiosyncrasies with the processes of capital accumulation, social struggle and environmental transformation. Second, uneven geographical development is characterised by Harvey’s well-known ‘accumulation by dispossession (a generalization of Marx’s concept of “primitive” or “original” accumulation under which pre-existing assets are assembled – as labor powers, money, productive capacity or as commodities – and put into circulation as capital).’ Accumulation by dispossession assumes that Marx’s primitive accumulation had to repeat itself in order for capitalism to escalate, but in doing so was consistently met by its counterweight – dispossession. The third conditionality of uneven geographical development is ‘the law-like character of capital accumulation in space and time’.

This point assumes that since accumulation was unleashed within the project of capitalism, cycles of expansion and crises of capital are inevitable, but can be corrected through temporal shifts or spatial fixes. Finally, uneven geographical development addresses ‘political, social, and “class” struggles at a variety of geographical scales’ with varied provenance, structures and meanings. Accumulation and dispossession affect constituents of various kinds of social justice movements differently, but similar stories of land and water struggles help identify geopolitical trends.
The conditionalities of uneven geographical development can be articulated empirically through the carbon complex. Elements of the carbon complex are particularly visible in Indonesia, but certainly reach far beyond that Southeast Asian island archipelago nation. Thus, the carbon complex is not contingent upon lines demarcating Global South and North, and this subsection looks at the process more globally. Transformation of agrarian and environmental processes has been compounded in widespread environmental degradation, deforestation and ocean acidification over the course of several decades. Capital accumulation is both cause and effect; the former is seen through industrialisation and related mechanisms and the latter witnessed through the proposed response of payment for ecosystem services that set the stage for REDD+ and its spinoff programmes. Dispossession ballasts this configuration where those who make their living from land and sea become subjects of resource grabbing under the guise of climate change mitigation, whether through expulsion or exploitation to make way for, or even manage, carbon capture projects. Subsequently, since such cycles have already been set into action, they are incorporated into policy.

In the case of climate change mitigation, that process took place at the highest levels of global governance – and it is one supported by intergovernmental institutions, signatory nation-states and corporations. This point works at the juncture of the previously explored first and second tendencies enunciated by Borras et al. in relation to governing the global land grab: regulate to facilitate and regulate to mitigate negative impacts and maximise opportunities. The carbon complex is a mechanism that began with REDD+ as a manifestation of payment for ecosystem services; its architecture is encroaching into farmlands through climate-smart agriculture, and oceans and marine ecosystems through blue carbon. Uneven geographical development theory tells us that capital-driven initiatives will be marked by highs and lows, cyclical periods of expansion and crisis that are in turn adjusted by temporal shifts or spatial fixes. Global governance regulatory mechanisms may be considered such shifts or fixes by incorporating clauses that seemingly align climate change mitigation to the interests of poor or otherwise marginalised working people. However, when the pendulum of accumulation and dispossession meets the gravitational force of social struggle based on class or other identity politics, social actors are likely to react and resist in a way that they see as being aligned with justice. Such working people, a large part of them rural, confronted with a carbon complex across differentiated spaces of Global South and North are choosing to integrate into new horizontal alliances with vertical political targets.

Conclusion

We are currently witnessing a widely recognised and protracted trend of convergence ‘from above’ among multiple crises at the transnational level. This is exemplified through the fusion of resource grabbing and climate change mitigation, wherein green and blue initiatives are enclosing forest, farmland and fishery areas in what has become a global carbon complex. In response to these interconnected issues, movements are converging and forming new alliances ‘from below’ in resistance and as an act of building political power. Analysing and understanding convergence between and within agrarian and environmental social justice movements requires theoretical tools that respond to newfound empirical realities and respect historical contexts at once. This article provides some preliminary means for doing so by employing an analytic approach to understanding convergence. Each set of factors is
paired interactively, and designed to fit together within the structure of the polygon (see Figure 1) and revolve around convergence as political strategy.

First, the issues of resource grabbing and climate change have provoked reactions by agrarian and environmental justice movements within repertoires of contention connected to the emergence of a global carbon complex as a common grievance. These reactions have pushed historically sectoral contentious politics to a common tipping point. Second, class and identity politics have reshaped the agrarian question based on the issues and movements at hand towards one that is inherently ecological as well. Since land and labour collide in this formulation that seeks to understand the overall political economy and political ecology at the transnational level, the contemporary convergence must be bivalent in respect to social movement priorities for both redistribution and recognition. Third, ideology and governance position social justice movements whose overarching goal is system change in a way that distinguishes their political asks. Such is the case with radical movements that wish to push political change from below in order to stop and roll back resource grabs rather than considering such actions inevitable, or even useful. Fourth, scale and framework allow ample space for movements to converge and reconfigure their messages at the transnational level in accordance with political opportunity. Food sovereignty and climate justice are complementary political tools, and contain interchangeable elements that can traverse the spectrum from the local to the global. Today, agrarian justice movements are increasingly drawn to the framework of climate justice, while environmental/climate justice movements are likewise making headway in their work on food sovereignty – both diverging from original patterns in order to reinforce political power through convergence. Fifth and finally, the carbon complex and interlinked processes have reconfigured space and territory, contributing to an unmatched form of accumulation by dispossession and the related metatheory of uneven geographical development.

Contemporary social justice movements responding to climate-related resource grabs are increasingly marked by elements of convergence as a means of political strategy. Some of the immediate takeaways based on new forms of political interactions between agrarian and environmental/climate justice social actors are as follows. First, water is emerging as a key point of struggle at the intersection of resource grabbing and climate change. This is most notable in that sea/water resources must be taken into account within the politics of the governance of territory – discussions that must also include grazing lands, forests and other areas that are utilised by a diverse group of food providers. Second, new alliances of agrarian and environmental justice movements are resurrecting working-class debates that hinge on labour. Examples of movements that fall somewhere between labour unions based on class differentiation and peasant movements largely informed by radical agrarian populism are those of indigenous peoples and fishers. These two constituencies need to be taken seriously in agrarian and environmental/climate justice, as their livelihoods move across a broader spectrum and increase the potential for greater radical political power from below. And, finally, the ‘system change’ master frame shared by actors working to stop and roll back resource grabbing through food sovereignty, agroecology, and climate justice is a clear indication of the crisis of neoliberal policies. At a time when authoritarian populism – marked by nationalism, racism and the patriarchy – is resurgent, democratic social justice movements are uniquely positioned to respond through emancipatory rural politics.48

Rethinking power dynamics around natural resource control in the Anthropocene through far-reaching and unapologetically radical convergences may be a political opening to make headway into that process.
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Notes

1. Ribot and Peluso, “A Theory of Access.”
2. Fairhead, Leach, and Scoones. “Green Grabbing.” Benjamin and Bryceson, “Conservation, Green/Blue Grabbing and Accumulation,” by Dispossession in Tanzania.
3. For more on climate-smart agriculture, see Newell and Taylor, “Contested Landscapes,” and for more on blue carbon, see Barbesgaard, “Blue Growth.”
4. See Brent, Schiavoni, and Alonso-Fradejas, “Contextualising Food Sovereignty,” Claey’s and Delgado Pugley, “Peasant and Indigenous Transnational Social Movements Engaging in Climate Politics,” and Tramel “The Road Through Paris,” for more mapping of social movement convergence.
5. Tramel, “The Road Through Paris.”
6. These vignettes are exploratory in nature, each deserving further in-depth empirical research. Preliminary studies have been carried out by the author in each geographical area, and those have included work with the majority of the movements mentioned.
7. Nyéléni, “Declaration of Nyéléni.”
8. See Vermeulen and Cotula, “Over the Heads of Local People.”
9. Altieri and Toledo, “The Agroecological Revolution in Latin America”; Rosset et al., “The Campesino-to-Campesino Agroecology Movement.”
10. Borras, “Land Politics, Agrarian Movements and Scolar Activism.”
11. See Global Convergence, Dakar to Tunis; Global Convergence, “Green Book of Convergence,” and Tramel, “The road through Paris,” for context of this nascent movement.
12. eg Pellow, Resisting Global Toxics.
13. See Keck and Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*; see also Martinez-Alier et al., “Is There a Global Environmental Justice Movement?”
14. Edelman and Borras, *Political Dynamics of Transnational Agrarian Movements*.
15. Damanik, “Fisherfolks are Pushing the Solution.”
16. Tilly, *The Contentious French*, 4.
17. For a report of the 2016 West African caravan, see Global Convergence, “Capitalization Document.”
18. Edelman and Borras, *Political Dynamics of Transnational Agrarian Movements*.
19. Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*.
20. Ibid., 11.
21. Edelman and Borras, *Political Dynamics of Transnational Agrarian Movements*.
22. See the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia*.
23. Bernstein, *Class Dynamics of Agrarian Change*, 22–3.
24. Ibid., 24.
25. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*.
26. eg Calhoun, *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*.
27. Fraser, “Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics.”
28. Ibid., 8.
29. Afiff and Lowe, “Claiming Indigenous Community.”
30. Borras, Franco, and Wang, “The Challenge of Global Governance.”
31. Ibid.; see also Deininger, “Challenges Posed by the New Wave.”
32. Borras, Franco, and Wang, “The Challenge of Global Governance.”
33. Böhm, Misoczky, and Moog, “Greening Capitalism,” 1617.
34. Peluso, Afiff, and Rachman, “Claiming the Grounds for Reform.”
35. Ibid.
36. For a comprehensive study on protracted and complex strategies for land and labour organising in hostile political environments (Eritrea, South Africa, Palestine and Nicaragua), see Connell, *Rethinking Revolution*.
37. Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism*.
38. Ibid., 32.
39. Ibid.
40. Ibid., 32.
41. Ibid., 33.
42. Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism*, 71.
43. Ibid., 77–90.
44. Ibid., 90–5.
45. Ibid., 75, 95–109.
46. Ibid., 75, see also 109–15.
47. Büscher and Arsel, “Introduction: Neoliberal Conservation.”
48. Scoones et al., “Emancipatory Rural Politics.”

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